

**A report on**

**The Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU**

**Bryncethin Campus  
Brymenyn  
Bridgend  
CF32 9NZ**

**Date of inspection: January 2025**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

## About The Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU

Name of provider	The Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Multi-site provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	86
Pupils of statutory school age	86
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/03/2017
Start date of inspection	20/01/2025
<p>Further information</p> <p>The Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU provides education for pupils aged 5 to 16 years. There are four sites including the PRU, which has delegated responsibilities to arrange and oversee all the education other than at school (EOTAS) provision for the local authority. Pupils who attend the PRU have a wide range of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. Pupils may also have social, emotional and mental health needs. Admission to the PRU is through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHs) Panel or the Access to Education Panel. Most pupils are dual registered with their mainstream schools and can attend full-time or part-time depending on the recommendation from the panel.</p> <p>The Foundation Phase to lower secondary provides a ‘revolving door’ model. These pupils experience learning opportunities through a thematic approach. Pupils access two full days sessions at the PRU. The remainder of the time is spent in mainstream school to ensure that pupils continue to have a broad and balanced curriculum and maintain a sense of belonging within their mainstream school. PRU staff provide outreach support to mainstream schools to support these pupils maintain their placements.</p> <p>There is one group of Year 2 pupils who attend the PRU full-time. These pupils have been identified as needing a full-time special school placement. Special school places are not available until they reach Year 3. There are six secondary classes where pupils attend the PRU full-time in addition to the revolving door for younger secondary pupils.</p>	

The EOTAS provision is designed to meet the specific needs of pupils who cannot attend school. Pupils are educated individually or in small groups through a home virtual package or in designated premises in the local authority. These pupils are registered at the PRU.

Ty Llidiard is an Adolescent Mental Health Unit based in the Princess of Wales hospital. The learning centre operates a full-time timetable during school hours and all patients of statutory school can attend this provision. Links are made, with the permission from parents with the young person's mainstream school to ensure the continuity of studies.

Currently there are 86 pupils are registered at the PRU aged 5 to 16 years. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year period is 55% just above the national average of 53%. All pupils are registered as having additional learning needs (ALN).

The PRU was last inspected in March 2017 and was placed in Estyn review. The headteacher came into post in 2020.

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Summary

The PRU provides an exceptional level of care, support, and guidance, prioritising the well-being and learning of all pupils. It offers a calm and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, respected, and valued. Staff set high expectations for pupil learning and behaviour, fostering positive working relationships built on trust. Pupils benefit from tailored therapeutic services, which have significantly improved their well-being and academic progress, with many expressing confidence and enjoyment in their education.

Teaching at the PRU is flexible and tailored to individual needs, ensuring that pupils are engaged and supported to achieve their best. Lessons are well-planned, incorporating pupils' interests and building on prior knowledge. Staff encourage independence, resilience, and confidence, enabling pupils to make strong academic and personal progress. There is a broad and inclusive curriculum offer, with full-time online learning available for those unable to attend the main site. Older pupils achieve positive outcomes, while areas such as extended writing for younger pupils are being developed further.

The PRU actively involves pupils in decision-making, empowering them to voice their opinions and contribute meaningfully to their progress. Staff build strong relationships with families, adopting a gradual supportive approach. As a result, pupils' attendance improves notably compared to their time in mainstream schools.

Leadership at the PRU is strong, with a clear vision focused on respect, well-being, and academic progress. Robust safeguarding measures ensure that pupils are safe and informed about their rights. Partnerships with families, external agencies and local schools are highly effective, further strengthening the PRU's holistic support.

While there are challenges, such as access to full-time special school placement for younger pupils and attendance reporting policies that do not fully reflect the PRU's context, the PRU continues to create a supportive, inclusive learning environment where pupils can thrive both academically and personally.

## Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the PRU continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen the planning and tracking of pupils' progressive skills development
- R2 Provide consistent opportunities for younger pupils to develop and apply their extended writing skills

## What happens next

The PRU will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

## Main findings

### Spotlight: Well-being, care, support and guidance

The pupil referral unit (PRU) excels in providing exceptional care, support, and guidance, addressing the diverse well-being needs of its pupils across all sites. Post-pandemic, the PRU has effectively adapted to support the increasingly complex mental health challenges faced by children and young people.

The PRU creates a calm, nurturing, and purposeful environment, fostering strong well-being and academic progress. Staff are highly effective role models, cultivating positive relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Nearly all staff maintain high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour, creating a supportive and aspirational culture.

### Spotlight: Therapeutic support

Pupils value their experiences at the PRU, with nearly all expressing genuine respect for staff, peers, and their environment. Many pupils highlight the PRU as a welcoming space where they feel safe and cared for. The well-established integrated therapeutic approach across the PRU has led to significant improvements in pupils' well-being, attendance and emotional regulation, and as reported by parents and carers, strengthened family relationships. Parents and carers deeply appreciate the PRU's support, with a very few crediting it for helping their children overcome critical life challenges.

Pupils at the PRU develop key skills such as resilience, persistence, and independence. They respond well to constructive feedback and challenging tasks, growing in confidence and achieving academic success. Older pupils, in particular, demonstrate strong study skills and consistently meet or exceed their expected outcomes.

The PRU actively encourages pupil voice informally and formally through the school council and eco committee, empowering pupils to contribute meaningfully to their learning and environment. Older pupils are articulate and confident in expressing their views, often acknowledging the PRU's role in helping them overcome challenges and achieve both personal and academic growth.

Overall, the PRU has effective systems to support the attendance of pupils. PRU staff build trusting relationships with families, advocate for parents and carers, and collaborate with external agencies to support pupils. Through a gradual and sensitive approach, most

pupils show improved attendance compared to when they attended mainstream school, marking a significant achievement given their prior educational experiences.

## **Teaching and learning**

The teaching and learning provision at the PRU is highly effective, with nearly all staff demonstrating a flexible approach tailored to the individual needs and well-being of pupils. Teachers skilfully use a variety of strategies and resources to engage pupils and support their progress. Support staff are delegated appropriately within classes. Where this is most successful, they make an important contribution in maintaining pupils' engagement and developing their learning. As a result, nearly all pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning and demonstrate very positive attitudes.

Most teachers use effective questioning techniques to support and deepen pupils' understanding. Using higher-level questions and allowing time for pupils to organise their thoughts, staff enable most pupils to develop strong thinking skills and make notable progress. As a result, most pupils develop effective thinking skills, making strong progress in lessons and achieving the standards of which they are capable. Lessons are well-planned, building on prior learning and incorporating pupils' interests. Well-planned opportunities for pupils to direct their learning, such as planning topics and activities, contribute to their confidence and supports them to take pride in their work.

Classroom routines are well-established, offering essential stability for pupils. Transitions between activities are managed smoothly, helping pupils to meet expectations and fully engage with learning. Staff assess pupils' progress skilfully and use this information well to plan next steps. Daily reflection time encourages pupils to self-evaluate their learning and behaviour, leading to strong progress towards their individual targets.

The PRU provides a broad and balanced curriculum across the range of provisions, which meets the needs of all pupils well. Senior leaders articulate their vision of a curriculum that is person-centred and holistic. Well-being is at the heart of the curriculum, distilled from their belief of 'regulate before you can educate'. The PRU offers a range of worthwhile qualifications, delivered skilfully by subject specialists, enabling older pupils to achieve successful outcomes.

### **Spotlight: Equity of curriculum offer**

Leaders ensure an inclusive and equitable curriculum offer for all pupils, including those who are unable to attend the main site. These pupils benefit from full-time online teaching and learning delivered internally by PRU staff. This ensures a consistent approach for these pupils, with full access to all available qualifications, in line with that of their peers. This is a significant strength of the provision.

Teaching staff have a beneficial focus on the individual needs of pupils and help them to develop skills in important and related areas of learning. With support from subject

specialists, nearly all staff have a suitable focus on the development of skills across the curriculum. The planning and tracking of progressive skills development over time are at a very early stage of development. During their time at the PRU, most pupils develop a wide range of important skills that support their learning effectively. For example, most pupils make strong progress in developing their communication, numeracy and creative skills. However, opportunities for younger pupils to develop and apply their extended writing skills are underdeveloped.

Pupils who have joined from Welsh-medium provision continue to access learning through the medium of Welsh. Most pupils experience appropriate incidental Welsh throughout their day and respond positively to Welsh greetings with plans underway to strengthen discrete Welsh lessons.

## **Leadership**

The assured leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leaders ensures that the PRU operates effectively across its four sites. Their clear vision, founded on respect and strong values, has created an environment where staff and pupils share exceptionally positive working relationships. This leadership together with the depth of understanding and commitment by staff directly fosters a safe, therapeutic learning environment that prioritises pupil progress and well-being.

Leaders demonstrate flexibility and adaptability, enabling the team to address challenges effectively. For instance, the ability to absorb the lead role for Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) during staff absences has ensured continuity of service. However, such operational responsibilities occasionally limit senior leaders' strategic focus, potentially impacting the long-term sustainability of leadership capacity.

There are well-established effective processes and systems in place that support self-evaluation work well. These include robust performance management for all staff, and a clear schedule of key monitoring and evaluation activities. As a result, leaders have a secure understanding of their strengths and further areas for improvement. This proactive approach leads to continuous development, ensuring that the PRU remains effective in meeting pupils' needs.

Partnership working is highly effective and supports the needs of pupils and families successfully. Parents and carers highly value the effective communication between staff and themselves and the bespoke support they offer both to their children and as a family. The management committee has a strong commitment to support and act as a critical friend for the PRU. The recent changes in the leadership of the management committee are at the early stage of implementation.

Robust working relationship between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the therapeutic practitioner team effectively support the highly complex needs

of pupils across the different provisions. Ty Llidiard staff have a strong collaborative working relationship with the medical team at the hospital to meet the significant mental health needs of their pupils. This provides a cohesive approach to the treatment and educational needs of pupils.

Partnerships with mainstream schools, facilitated through the 'revolving door' model, support dual placements and help pupils transition back to full-time education. Local authority services, including lead workers and the careers adviser, further support the PRU's work effectively. However, the PRU faces challenges such as provision for younger pupils who require full-time special school placements, which block potential places for other pupils to access the 'revolving door' provision at the PRU.

A strong safeguarding culture, embedded within the PRU, effectively promotes pupils' awareness of keeping themselves safe and developing their understanding of their rights. Staff demonstrate diligence in implementing consistent reporting processes and dynamic risk assessments, particularly for pupils exhibiting self-harmful behaviours. This focus on safeguarding creates a safe learning environment for all pupils.

Although the local authority supports the PRU, policies around attendance reporting are misaligned with the PRU's context. Current guidelines fail to accurately reflect the attendance patterns of pupils building attendance gradually or attending essential medical appointments. This policy issue undermines the PRU's efforts to improve attendance among its most vulnerable pupils.

The PRU's commitment to professional learning has resulted in a highly skilled workforce. Leaders and staff contribute to regional improvement initiatives to share effective practice. Despite operational challenges, leadership at the PRU continues to create a supportive, inclusive, and forward-thinking environment, positively impacting pupil progress and well-being.

### **Additional information**

The PRU's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The PRU's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The PRU has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and management committee members manage the PRU's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.



## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the PRU and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, management committee, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the PRU's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their PRU
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the PRU council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the PRU to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the PRU's self-evaluation processes
- consider the PRU's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the PRU has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of PRU documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the management committee, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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