

Sunderland Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108754
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309791
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mr Terry McDermott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	130
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Mitchell (Interim Chair)
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	May 2003
School address	Stannington Centre Stannington Grove Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR2 9JT
Telephone number	0191 5532200
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Age group	4–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Sunderland pupil referral unit (PRU) caters for pupils between the ages of 4 and 16 (Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4) who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools, or who have been permanently excluded. The PRU consists of five settings: one for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (on two sites at Farrington and Valley Road); one for each of Key Stage 2 (at Carley Hill), Key Stage 3 (at Tudor Grove) and Key Stage 4 (on two sites at the Lombard Centre and the Cheadle Centre); and the fifth for School Returners (at Carley Hill) and Young Mums (at Hendon). Strategic leadership and management responsibility rests with the local authority through the Management Group. Leadership and management of the Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 settings have been devolved to schools where pupils are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils join the PRU throughout the year, and some are later reintegrated into mainstream schools. From the end of Year 8 onwards, very few pupils in the Key Stage 3 and 4 settings return to mainstream. The number on overall roll and the number in each setting vary considerably throughout the year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Boys outnumber girls by three to one. All pupils come from a White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils enter the PRU with standards which are well below average for their age. The progress they make varies between the settings. Progress is good in the Foundation Stage and the unit dealing with pupils who have severe difficulties in attending school. In Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 progress is satisfactory. In the Key Stage 4 setting, which comprises over one third of the pupils, progress is inadequate because work often does not challenge pupils enough, and because attendance is poor. Therefore, progress overall is inadequate and standards remain well below average.

Pupils' personal development is inadequate. Attendance is inadequate across the PRU. On average, about a quarter of the pupils on roll do not attend at any specific time. It is worst in Key Stage 4 where, despite improvements, pupils generally attend for barely half the time. The behaviour of those pupils who do attend is satisfactory. They are polite and enjoy their time in the units. Parents of these pupils are strongly supportive of the work of the PRU, as reflected in the comment, 'After nine years of unrest, my child has finally found a place which caters for all his needs'.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Examples of good teaching and learning in lessons were seen on most of the PRU's sites. Despite satisfactory teaching, excessive absence makes learning too slow. Therefore achievement overall is inadequate.

The curriculum is inadequate. It does not meet pupils' learning needs well enough. This shows itself particularly in the disaffection displayed by older learners. Although there is a growing range of accreditation opportunities at the Cheadle Centre, provision is not yet as good as it should be. The curriculum on offer at the other centres is at least satisfactory, especially for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

There are shortcomings in the procedures and systems used in Key Stage 4 to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils: staff do not always know where some pupils are. In addition, a significant proportion of pupils do not have access to their full educational entitlement. The academic guidance for pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 is strong. Staff work closely and sensitively with the most vulnerable pupils in the Young Mums and Returners units to rebuild their confidence in order to cope with learning. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 4 is not tracked reliably; teachers have too little information to guide them in planning challenging lessons.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Previous inspections, going back to 1998, raised issues about evaluating the effectiveness of the PRU's work and improving attendance. These issues have not been addressed. Too many pupils do not attend regularly, notably at Key Stage 4; lines of responsibility are unclear and self-evaluation is inaccurate. Managers have not made sufficient improvements

across the broad spectrum of the provision since the last inspection. Capacity to improve is inadequate.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The number of children in the Foundation Stage is small. Provision is good and helps children to make good progress. Children are well supported in an attractive and stimulating learning environment, which is well complemented by a good outdoor activity area. Appropriately qualified staff work hard to move children forward in their learning, by planning activities which place an emphasis on social and emotional development. This helps children to develop positive attitudes to their lessons and thus to reintegrate well into mainstream settings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of all pupils are applied rigorously.
- Raise standards and improve achievement.
- Improve leadership and management to ensure that all pupils receive the same quality and full entitlement of provision.
- Improve the accuracy and reliability of self-evaluation.
- Improve attendance across the PRU, and particularly in Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter the PRU with standards which are well below average as a result of disruption to their previous education in mainstream schools. Those who attend regularly make at least satisfactory academic progress. This enables an increasing proportion of pupils to reintegrate successfully into mainstream schools, particularly from Key Stages 1 and 2. Similarly, more pupils move forward into further education, training or employment after they leave the settings for Young Mums and Returners and Key Stage 4. However, for too many pupils, the PRU does not use data effectively to set appropriately challenging academic targets. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 4, where few pupils achieve good GCSE results. Some achieve several unit awards or Entry Level qualifications, but the number they can achieve is severely limited by a combination of very poor attendance and incomplete coverage of work. Standards remain well below average and achievement overall is inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Pupils' personal development and well being are inadequate. Attendance is inadequate overall, and very poor in the Key Stage 4 setting. The whereabouts of absent pupils is not always known to staff; in too many cases, the school does not know whether they are safe or not. Those pupils attending school show many positive attitudes; their behaviour is satisfactory and fixed term exclusions are low. Pupils develop healthy lifestyles by participating enthusiastically in organised physical activities, and eating healthy breakfasts and lunches. However, some continue to smoke during breaks. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is

satisfactory. Almost all of those who attend contribute positively to reflective group discussions, and listen carefully to the views of their peers. They take on responsibility willingly and sensibly, and their smiling faces and calm demeanours attest to their enjoyment of what they are doing. Recent initiatives in Key Stage 4 have increased the number of work related opportunities for pupils, although take up is inevitably low because of excessive absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. Learning is often satisfactory, but sometimes it is limited because of excessive absence. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 4, where lessons often do not take place and learning time is lost. However, good teaching was seen in lessons in most settings. There are good relationships between adults and pupils in all lessons. Support staff and teachers work well together to ensure that help is always available when needed. The effective use of a range of learning resources, including interactive whiteboards, is typical of most lessons. Pupils work well independently, particularly when using information and communication technology (ICT) to research topics or to compose and produce finished documents. However, this good practice is neither consistently applied, nor sufficiently widespread. Teachers often do not have a clear enough picture of what pupils already know and can do. This leads to learning targets that lack challenge, particularly for the most able, and often in Key Stage 4. Marking is inconsistent, and does not inform pupils clearly enough about what they must do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate because it does not help all pupils to make enough progress overall. It is satisfactory for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and is tailored to fully meeting these pupils' needs. One Key Stage 4 site is inadequate both in accommodation and levels of staffing and this restricts the variety and range of curriculum and as a result pupils make inadequate progress. Adults work hard to make the best of the resources they have, and this clearly shows, for example, in the very impressive artwork on display in many settings. However, there is no opportunity for pupils to continue this work and gain accreditation in Key Stage 4. Though many opportunities exist in Key Stage 3 for pupils to gain enrichment through sport, residential visits and other cultural activities, this is not true to the same extent in any other setting. In Key Stage 4, too many pupils are offered an impoverished curriculum. In the Young Mums setting, the curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives and most are able to move on to further education or training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

There are a number of strengths but these aspects of provision are inadequate overall because of weaknesses in ensuring pupils' safety. Staff show real dedication and commitment to the care, guidance and support of pupils. They know their pupils well, and have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and their difficulties. Pupils

appreciate the time and effort which teachers, tutors and mentors give them. All settings are supported effectively by a wide range of professional agencies, other schools, and their partner settings. Staff are hampered by systems which do not provide reliable information quickly enough on what pupils already know, or on the progress pupils are making. Teachers' own assessments lack the precision needed to set pupils clear and challenging academic targets, though behaviour targets are consistently and rigorously set and applied. Child protection procedures meet requirements but arrangements for ensuring the safety and well being of all pupils are inadequate overall. Strategic leaders and senior managers do not ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 4 have access to the education to which they are entitled. They do not work with sufficient rigour and determination to improve attendance, and they do not know the whereabouts of too many of those who are absent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The arrangements for the leadership and management of the PRU are inadequate. Strategic organisation and direction lack clarity; roles and responsibilities are ill-defined. This has caused development planning to lack sharpness, made progress ponderous, and slowed down the implementation of vital recommendations for improvement. Strategies to improve attendance have failed. Leaders and managers at all levels have not ensured that every pupil has had a good opportunity to be safe and happy, to participate fully and effectively in learning, and to achieve well and make good progress. Self-evaluation is too optimistic and has masked the significance of some major weaknesses and areas of concern. The capacity for further improvement is inadequate. The PRU does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



20 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sunderland Pupil Referral Unit, Sunderland, SR2 9JT

Thank you very much for helping us when we visited your school recently. You were polite and friendly when talking to us, and told us that you got on well with the adults who were helping you with your learning. We could see that you make good improvements in your behaviour, and that you look after the buildings you are in.

In several of the different settings of the PRU, we found that you make at least satisfactory progress in learning, but this does not happen consistently enough for all pupils. We therefore judge that the PRU as a whole requires 'special measures' to help it to improve.

Here are some of the things we noted that the PRU does well:

- All the adults are dedicated and committed to doing their very best to see that you settle well, build your self-confidence, and move forward successfully. This is shown by your steady successful return to mainstream school or learning, particularly for younger pupils and those of you who have had particular difficulties.
- Most of the learning environments in which you have your lessons are pleasant and welcoming, and enhanced by displays of your very good art work.

There are some aspects that need improving and we have asked your teachers to:

- Make sure that all of you in Years 10 and 11 learn all the things you should be learning.
- Check much more closely on the whereabouts of those of you who are not in the PRU at any particular time.
- Take effective steps to improve your attendance, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- Raise the standards that you reach in your work, and improve your achievement and progress.
- Ensure that the school's evaluation of the work in each unit is rigorous, highlights concerns precisely, as well as celebrates good progress.

Each of you can help by making sure that you come to school regularly. I wish you all good luck for the future. Other inspectors will be visiting your school regularly to check on the progress being made.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott
Lead inspector