

St David's Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique reference number	130991
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	381288
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Farrell

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Paul Barns
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Coningsby Street Hereford HR1 2DY
Telephone number	01432 274485
Fax number	01432 351695
Email address	admin@st-davids.hereford.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Farrell

Additional inspector

The inspection was carried out with two days' notice. During the inspection, eight lessons were observed on the centre site, the hospital site, at venues used by external providers and at students' homes, comprising five hours teaching. Eight teachers/ tutors were seen. Meetings were held with a group of students, staff, the chair of the management committee and a representative of the local authority. The inspector noted there were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), observed the pupil referral unit's work and looked at a range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, assessments of students' progress, and development planning, and scrutinised nine parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

St David's offers provision for students experiencing a range of difficulties preventing them attending mainstream school. These include difficulties with behaviour and sometimes substance abuse, fear of attending school and mental health problems. A few students have statements of special educational needs and the remainder are considered to be at the 'school action' level of special educational needs. Many students have been permanently excluded from their previous schools and have spent considerable time away from schooling with very poor records of attendance. About half the students arrive during the school year, doubling the unit's roll as the year progresses. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009. St David's provides a centre where up to 32 students can be educated and from March 2011, became responsible for a small number of students in a hospital class in the local general hospital and for home tuition of students. Curricular opportunities are arranged with a range of external providers such as local companies.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good unit in which students make good progress and achieve well in a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. In the centre and the hospital class, achievement is good. Home-tutored students progress well in engaging with education and building relationships with their tutor, often after considerable difficulties in these areas.
- Individual students and groups of students such as boys and girls, and students whose circumstances make them vulnerable all achieve well.
- Teaching is good throughout the unit. Lessons are well paced and challenging. Relationships between students and staff are warm and trusting and staff are very responsive to students' individual needs and interests. Questioning in lessons is searching and marking is constructive and up to date.
- Students are courteous and welcoming. Behaviour in the centre is good and sometimes excellent. In the hospital class, too, behaviour is good. Home-tutored students respond positively to the efforts of tutors to re-engage them in education and develop positive relationships. Students feel safe and strong procedures help ensure they are safe. Students' moral and social development is especially well developed.
- The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage well, ensuring that high expectations of students' behaviour and achievement are sustained and forging a deeply committed staff team. The innovative curriculum is modified regularly to ensure it fully meets students' changing needs and interests. Academic and personal progress is effectively assessed and tracked to ensure students are doing as well as they should be.
- A secure start has been made in bringing together the three aspects of the unit's work since the hospital class and home tuition became part of its remit. However, the service is not as seamless as it should be and home tuition

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lessons are not monitored frequently enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the centre, the hospital class and home tuition form a seamless service including by greater sharing of staff and their expertise; and through wider sharing of resources.
- Ensure that leaders regularly observe home tuition sessions.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the unit with attainment that is below average often because of considerable periods of missed schooling. Students in the centre make good progress and achieve well in a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics and vocational areas. By the time they leave, their attainment is broadly average. Progress in Year 10, as the unit works unstintingly to engage new students and deal with barriers to learning, is slower than that in Year 11. Students in the hospital class achieve well and when possible, return to mainstream schooling. Students who are taught at home and who often have the severest needs make good progress in becoming engaged in learning and in starting to develop a positive relationship with their tutor.

Students make good gains in literacy and numeracy as indicated by initial testing and subsequent assessment. They gain a good range of academic and vocational qualifications carefully tailored to their needs and including GCSEs, BTEC and Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications. Students are well prepared for future work or training and a high percentage go on to work, training or further education on leaving. Different groups of students including boys and girls, students looked after by the local authority, students with statements of special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals all achieve well.

In all lessons observed, students made good progress and the unit's observations of lessons, progress data and scrutiny of students' work demonstrate this is typical of their performance over time. Parents and carers are confident about the good progress their children make and students themselves recognise they are achieving well, often after periods of failure elsewhere and long absences from schooling.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good in the centre, the hospital class and in home tuition. This includes teaching in English and mathematics, and a range of other academic and vocational

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subjects. All lessons observed in all venues were good. Teaching is enthusiastic and relationships between students and teachers are warm and respectful. Planning is 'to the point' and lessons make it clear to students what they are expected to learn. Questioning is used well to stretch students and to check how much they understand. In an English lesson in the centre, for example, the teacher used questioning well to probe students' understanding. The activities which included analysing newspaper bias were pitched well to provide challenge and stimulate interest. Information and communication technology is used effectively in lessons. Work is accurately pitched to match the students' levels of attainment and reflect their interests. This is helped by the staff knowing individual students very well and making effective use of the accurate progress data. Challenging targets are set which students meet.

Because classes are very small in the centre and in the hospital class, students' errors are explained and discussed as they arise. Marking is encouraging while also indicating how they can improve. The pace of lessons is well judged and, where possible, brisk. In home tuition, the one-to-one nature of the sessions is beneficial and is used well to adapt sessions to capture students' interests. In the hospital class, students' interests, for example, their enthusiasm about a film they had seen together, are used well to encourage discussion.

The unit's lesson observations indicate good teaching over time. Students and parents and carers consider teaching to be good. The points that could be improved to make lessons outstanding are different for different teachers and have been identified by the unit from its own observations. The thoughtfully planned and flexible curriculum supports teaching well, helping ensure a wide range of stimulating activities. Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example, encouraging social skills and respect by their own example.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour in the centre is good and sometimes it is exemplary. In the hospital class, students also behave well. Students in home tuition sessions can be the most reluctant to engage in education and the skills of the home tutors are used well to encourage the students and give them confidence to try. Students say they feel safe and parents and carers too are confident about their children's safety. Students act safely and with consideration for others in all the venues of the unit and when they are working with outside providers they respond well to safety requirements and work very hard. Parents and carers and students themselves recognise that behaviour is good.

Typically, students are courteous to adults and to each other. There is minimal evidence of bullying and the unit has clear policies in place to deal with bullying on the rare occasions when it occurs. Exclusions are low and for short periods and students return promptly and fit back into routines and expectations quickly. The unit's efforts over several years to develop a welcoming ethos with high expectations

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shows in the very high standards of behaviour that students set for themselves and others. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong and their social skills are very well developed. Learning mentors make a valuable contribution to students' development and good behaviour. Students know they are free to express their views and that they can always turn to someone who will listen to them.

In the centre, attendance is low compared with mainstream schools but is improving year on year and has improved rapidly in the last six months. There are individual examples of very marked improvements in attendance as students become engaged in all that the unit offers. The management committee and the unit place great emphasis on attendance and do all they can to improve it, including by working very closely indeed with other services and with parents and carers. Punctuality to lessons is good.

Leadership and management

Members of the management committee have a wide range of knowledge and expertise and the committee's effectiveness has improved in the previous year. Plans to move to a single management committee for St David's are well considered. The local education authority and the management committee work closely together and are very clear about their respective responsibilities. Safeguarding meets current requirements well. Lessons observed jointly by the headteacher and the inspector indicated the accuracy of the unit's judgement of the quality of teaching over time. Comprehensive appraisal systems ensure that staff's professional development needs are identified and suitable support and training put in place so that they are knowledgeable and confident in their roles.

The rich, varied and innovative curriculum and related accreditation are regularly monitored and adjusted to meet the needs and interests of students. The very wide range of external providers is well chosen and contributes strongly to the relevance and enjoyment of the curriculum. Activities include car maintenance, farm work, and orienteering. Drug and alcohol abuse and other health issues are addressed seriously through the curriculum and by specialist partnerships. Equal opportunities are well promoted, for example, by the unit tracking students' progress and intervening as necessary and because the ethos conveys clearly its lack of tolerance of any kind of discrimination.

Partnerships are very strong and links with other services and agencies enable the unit to greatly enhance what it provides. Links with parents and carers are good and appreciated by them. Students' progress in learning and in behaviour is carefully and accurately monitored and interventions are put in place where targeted progress is not as good as expected. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is very important to the unit and it is particularly effective in promoting social and moral development, having a transformative effect on the lives of many students. The unit has improved the accuracy of its tracking of progress and its monitoring of teaching in the centre and the hospital class. Self-evaluation is very accurate and staff are ambitious to do better. The unit's capacity for sustained

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improvement is good.

Since it became responsible for the hospital class and home tuition, the unit has made a secure start in coordinating these services and the work of the centre. Opportunities are sometimes missed to make the three aspects into the seamless service that it could be, for example, by sharing staff, resources and expertise more. Home tuition is monitored through leaders following the progress students make and through supervision meetings between senior staff and tutors, but home tuition lessons have not been observed as frequently as they should be.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St David's Pupil Referral Unit, Hereford HR1 2DY

It was a pleasure to meet you when I inspected St David's recently. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for talking to me when circumstances allowed in your lessons. Thank you, too, to those of you who met me to speak about your work and other aspects of the pupil referral unit. You made it very clear to me how much you valued what the unit offers.

St David's is a good unit in all its aspects: the centre, the hospital class and the home tuition service. You achieve well in academic and vocational subjects. Your behaviour is always good and sometimes excellent and I noticed especially how courteous you were to staff and to each other. Very well done. The teaching is good in all the aspects of the unit with well-planned and well-paced lessons that capture your interest. The unit is well led and managed and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming.

There are two things the unit could do better so I have asked the staff to:

- ensure the centre, the hospital class and the home tuition service work together more closely
- make sure the lessons of the home tutors are regularly monitored.

I am sure you will all want to play your part in these improvements. For example, you could make sure you take full advantage of the new opportunities offered by the greater sharing of staff and resources.

Every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell
Lead inspector

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