

# Thanet and Dover Alternative Curriculum PRU

Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135466
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	381892
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 January – 1 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Bill Stoneham

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	133
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Micheala Clay
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	January 2009
<b>School address</b>	Westwood Centre Westwood Industrial Estate Enterprise Road Margate CT9 4JA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 231758
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<b>Age group</b>	14–16
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	31 January–1 February 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	381892



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham

Additional inspector

Gail Allen

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Seventeen lessons were observed, each featuring a different teacher or tutor. All five sites under the direct control of the service, located in Margate, Ramsgate, Dover (two sites) and Deal, were visited and a visit was made to an off-site provision. Discussions were held with members of the management committee, students, the headteacher, senior staff and a variety of stakeholders, including a number of headteachers whose schools work in partnership with this service. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the service's work and looked at students' work. In addition, questionnaire responses from 32 parents and carers, 46 staff and 53 students were analysed and their views taken into account.

## Information about the school

This service, which is responsible for five centres, also utilises places in further education colleges in Broadstairs, Dover, Folkestone and Ashford, and provides home tuition for students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Students attending the centres have been, or are likely to be, permanently excluded from school, usually because of their challenging behaviour. Most have a severely disrupted education history. Approximately 70% are boys. There are twice as many students in Year 11 than there are in Year 10. Almost all are White British but a small number of students are from Eastern Europe countries and speak English as an additional language. Approximately 75% of the students have special educational needs, most usually associated with behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. About 8% have a statement of special educational needs. A significant minority are involved with other agencies such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Youth Offending Service (YOS). At the time of the inspection, there were no physically disabled students in attendance. A small minority of students are in the care of the local authority. Since the previous inspection, significant changes have been made to the service's management structure.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This service offers a good education. Attainment is improving and most students are prepared successfully for college and the world of work.
- Achievement is good and improving. Students, including the most vulnerable, make good progress, with many developing improved attitudes to their learning. Staff expectations of what students can achieve are high.
- Attainment on entry is low because of the students' previous experiences. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing students' skills in literacy, including reading and writing, and numeracy to ensure that they reach higher levels. This is done efficiently in most lessons, although not all.
- Most lessons are taught well and successfully engage the students, enabling them to make better than anticipated progress. A further feature of the good lessons is the effective support offered by teaching assistants. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, target setting is not always clear and does not consistently inform lesson planning.
- Most students improve their attendance and behaviour. Attendance is close to the national average, and behaviour in lessons and around the buildings is invariably good and occasionally outstanding. On the rare occasions when behaviour is more challenging, staff apply the agreed procedures effectively.
- Students are offered a safe learning environment. Safeguarding arrangements are secure, including the provision made for their education on other sites.
- High-quality partnership work with many different organisations contributes significantly to the good and improving outcomes.
- Changes in the management structure have contributed well to improved outcomes. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She is supported by an excellent and knowledgeable management committee. Staff are committed to improving provision and morale is high. These factors have helped the service to make good progress since its previous inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise individual attainment by
  - adopting a more consistent approach to developing and applying the students' skills in reading, writing, spelling, communication and mathematical skills across all subjects of the curriculum

- ensuring all students have clear and measurable shared targets in literacy, mathematical skills and behaviour that inform lesson planning more effectively.
- Consolidate and improve further the quality of teaching so that by the end of the current academic year the teaching in all lessons is at least good.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Students' low attainment on entry reflects the disruptions they have suffered in their education. During the time they spend in the service, most make at least good progress, with a minority making outstanding strides. The achievement of most students, including those with special educational needs, is good. This view is endorsed by a majority of parents and carers who completed the inspection questionnaire. Students who speak English as an additional language are achieving well, and the extensive monitoring and tracking information provided by the service shows little variation in the performance of boys and girls. Looked after students are similarly achieving well. Each centre, including off-site commissioned college provision, boasts good levels of achievement. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has improved significantly. All students are now offered more GCSE subjects to study and far more vocational options are available. These changes have seen attainment rise and students' achievements improve. Virtually all now leave with at least one qualification. All groups of students are gaining far better qualifications than expected when they joined the service. Allied to this, behaviour, attendance and social skills are improving. When they leave at the end of Year 11, the students are far more confident to make their way in the outside world. Over the last three years, the number of students not progressing to college, a training place or the world of work has been low; in 2011, this figure was below 2%.

Students acquire knowledge and understanding well across a range of subjects. Many, including girls and students with special educational needs, are gaining good vocational skills in areas such as leisure and tourism, motor vehicle maintenance and land studies. In most lessons, reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are improving well. In a minority of less effective lessons, these skills are not nurtured with consistency. In the better lessons, students are given opportunities to read aloud. They are keen to do so and most read reasonably fluently and with little hesitation. In a good film studies lesson, students, including some who speak English as an additional language, made good progress in planning a storyboard for a film that they will be directing later in the course. Their written descriptions were clear and easy to read and they showed considerable skill in using computer-editing programs to plan their work. Standards of work are frequently below the national average but gaps are being closed rapidly. Most are making good progress, with a significant number doing even better than this because the relevance of the curriculum has improved and students are rising to the challenges set.

## Quality of teaching

Most teaching is good and lessons are planned well. The work planned succeeds in challenging, engaging and interesting the students. In the best lessons, students' learning is good so that they make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure all students are appropriately supported and encouraged. Independence is promoted well. This was illustrated well in a travel and tourism lesson where the students had to plan a visit to the science museum. Students were given different tasks, which they fulfilled well, using skills such as writing, synthesising and decision making. In a land management lesson undertaken on a local farm, learning was good because the students followed the safety instructions well and worked effectively in a team to 'muck out' the animals and complete other set tasks involving literacy and the application of mathematical skills. Where learning is satisfactory rather than good, the development of students' reading, writing, spelling, communication and mathematical skills is not planned for well enough. In addition, the targets set for literacy, mathematical skills and behaviour are less clear and do not readily inform lesson planning.

Successful lessons, allied to the well-planned curriculum, promote the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Good promotion of cultural development is evident through work in art and music. A good art lesson seen promoted students' cultural and moral development successfully. Students were encouraged to reflect on the nature and content of the work of the street artist, Banksy, while dwelling on the fact that his work is graffiti and is frequently illegal. Their social development is enhanced by the provision made for physical education, including sports as diverse as badminton, fencing and surfing. Many lessons have a good spiritual dimension, for example in the work on restorative approaches to conflict and animal husbandry.

Students' work is regularly marked and assessed well, with students given clear advice on how to improve, although spelling and grammatical mistakes are not corrected with consistency. Parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching provided. They are confident the service is helping their children to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and numeracy. Evidence from lessons largely confirmed this view.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are provided with safe, secure and well-cared-for working environments. All centres are looked after well and the students take pride in the good quality displays of their work. Safeguarding procedures are robust. All sites are safe and appropriate provision, including detailed risk assessments, is made for off-site education. Incidents of bullying and harassment, including those based on race or gender, are rare. When they arise, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Behaviour is good. Many students have been placed in the service because of challenging behaviour expressed in other educational settings. Considerable work is undertaken to ensure improvements in behaviour, and the conduct of every student is carefully tracked and monitored. All students are set individual targets relating to their behaviour, including their attendance. Data show that attendance has improved

and virtually all students have far better attendance records now compared with when they attended mainstream schools. However, a number of parents and carers, staff and students who responded to the inspection questionnaires raised doubts about the quality of behaviour. The service has good policies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and the sanctions that can be applied are clear. Most of the behaviour observed during the inspection was either good or outstanding. The quality of the behaviour contributes positively to the good progress students regularly make in lessons. On occasions, challenging behaviour was witnessed. In each case, the teachers and support staff applied the service's behaviour policy swiftly and robustly. Order was regained promptly and the disturbance to the lesson was minimal. Learning was not adversely affected in these situations.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She has skilfully overseen the changes in the management structure of this complex organisation that have led to students receiving a better education. She is well supported by her excellent and knowledgeable management committee and her good staff team. Staff morale is high. Staff are firmly committed to the vision to improve the life chances of youngsters whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and are often disenchanted. There is a strong focus on improving students' achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously, especially through a richer and broader curriculum, and any discrimination is tackled decisively. Leaders and managers at all levels are keen to help the students and to improve the service even further. They are appropriately supported by the local authority.

Accurate self-evaluation has led to improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Improved target setting has led to better academic, personal and social outcomes, although some inconsistencies remain in the small number of less effective lessons. A keen focus on professional development has also contributed to the improved outcomes by enhancing staff expertise in meeting students' learning needs. These improvements, allied to outstanding partnership work with local schools and a plethora of agencies, demonstrate strong capacity for further improvement. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place. Provision for all students is good. Consequently, there are no significant variations in the rates of progress of the different groups. The management committee has an excellent understanding of the complexities of this provision. They give the headteacher strong support and members are fully involved in monitoring progress and holding the service to account.

A broad and varied curriculum is offered, which supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It has improved considerably since the previous inspection, with students offered a far wider choice of subjects. This has led to better achievement because students can follow programmes of study that meet their own specific needs. All students, regardless of their background or ability, are valued. Students are encouraged to seek responsibility. This is reflected in schemes such as a partnership with a local church to raise funds for a school in Uganda. An above average number of parents and carers are generally positive about their children's experiences. As one parent commented: 'Since starting here, my son's behaviour and attitude to learning have improved. This has created a better home life, too. I now

look forward to the daily telephone calls from his staff.'



## 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](http://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.**



2 February 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Thanet and Dover Alternative Curriculum PRU, Margate CT9 4JA**

You may recall that a colleague and I visited you recently. Thank you for making us so welcome; we enjoyed our visit. You told us that your school was good and that it is helping you to succeed. We agree; you are receiving a good education. Many of you are making noticeable strides in your education and personal development. All staff really help you to do this.

We identified a number of good features. You benefit from a good and improving curriculum, teaching that is invariably good, and outstanding care. The work done with your parents and carers is successful and excellent partnerships with many education and other partners also make a key contribution to your good learning and progress. You are fortunate to have such a committed staff; they all want you to do well.

We liked many things that we saw. Some of your art work is impressive and some of you are composing some good music by applying your computing skills. We were impressed to hear about the farm work you undertake and the fact that some of you are learning sign language so that you can speak with the hearing-impaired students who work at the farm with you. Developing such skills is something quite special.

Although we have concluded your learning is good, we have asked staff to ensure that even more effort is made to improve your standards of work in literacy and numeracy. We have also asked them to ensure that target setting in lessons is more consistent and we have set staff a target for consistently good teaching to be reached by the end of this school year. All of you can help staff achieve these improvements by attending regularly, behaving well and working hard.

Thank you again for making us so welcome. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham  
Lead inspector

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