

Penwith Short Stay School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134753
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	381728
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Christine Emerson

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Gary Owens
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
School address	The Old Lescudjack Infant School Penbrea Road Penzance TR18 3NX
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Introduction

Inspection team

Christine Emerson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed nine lessons or parts of lessons, including four joint lesson observations with the headteacher. All class teachers were seen at least once. Discussions took place with students, members of the management committee, the headteacher of the local authority's additional educational provision, and staff. The inspector took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection although no parents had accessed it, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, improvement planning, students' records and detailed assessment information for students' progress and behaviour. The inspector scrutinised the views of students and staff and analysed the four questionnaires which were returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Penwith is an average-sized pupil referral unit. Students at the unit have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from primary and secondary schools in the Penzance area. Almost all students are dual registered with mainstream schools. The nature of the unit's work means that student mobility is high, with students returning to mainstream schools or moving on to other placements. Of the 33 students on roll, seven are girls. Just over 30% of students have a statement of special educational needs. The statements are largely for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, although the unit is now developing its provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders. All students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Since the previous inspection, the unit has moved to a new site. The unit makes use of some alternative providers, such as a farm project, to support students in developing their academic and personal and social skills. The present headteacher took up his post in September 2011.

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 which provides a calm and safe environment where purposeful learning can take place. Students enjoy attending, achieve well and make good progress in improving their behaviour.
- Achievement is good because the unit is successful in re-engaging disaffected students in education. Many students have weak attainment on entry because of their disrupted education. However, as a result of carefully planned individual learning programmes, they make good progress. Good strategies to develop key skills ensure that students achieve well in literacy and numeracy.
- All groups of students, such as the small number of girls, are achieving well. However, the range of accreditation available is not always sufficient to recognise students' achievement.
- Teaching is good. Relationships between staff and students are good and students are well motivated. Questioning in lessons is searching and students join in well in discussions. However, on occasion, learning lacks sufficient pace and at times marking does not provide students with enough feedback on how to improve.
- Systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching but they are not yet sufficiently well refined to precisely identify areas of underperformance and spread good practice.
- Students' behaviour is good, as a result of the unit's effective behaviour policy. Most students make good progress in improving their attendance and overall attendance figures for the unit show an upward trend.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and students say that they feel safe when they attend the unit.
- The unit is well led and managed, with some notable improvements in the short time in which the headteacher has been in post. Although the number of students returning to mainstream education has increased markedly, the unit recognises that the reintegration of students with more complex needs is not fully effective.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - drawing up a detailed programme of lesson observations and work scrutiny which includes observations in all subjects and for different year groups
 - identifying key focus areas for scrutiny, including the pace of learning in lessons and the marking of students' work, to ensure that consistent strategies are in place throughout the unit
 - giving all teachers opportunities to observe others teaching.
- Review the range of accreditation offered to ensure that all students achieve a good number of suitable qualifications.
- Increase partnership working with feeder schools, through their representatives on the management committee, to support the successful reintegration of students with complex needs.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students thrive in the highly supportive environment which the unit offers. They soon realise that learning can be fun and quickly begin to catch up with the work which they have missed previously as a result of poor behaviour. For example, in mathematics lessons, a good variety of well-organised practical tasks and very good individual support ensure that students tackle challenging tasks with confidence. As a result, they achieve well. Students' good achievement is acknowledged by the small number of parents who completed the parent questionnaire. Although their attainment is low, students make good progress in English and mathematics, with slightly over 40% of students progressing at a rate above that expected for all students nationally. Although relatively weaker, the rate of progress in science has improved after being given more teaching time. Since the last inspection, there has been more emphasis on developing literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, in a food studies lesson, students demonstrated good progress in developing reading comprehension skills through reading, discussing and carrying out instructions in recipes. Reading records demonstrate that students read well-matched texts and are heard reading daily. The inspector heard four students reading. All demonstrated a range of word attack skills to tackle unfamiliar words and a good understanding of what they had read. The unit carefully analyses the progress of different groups of students, making interventions where necessary, and consequently all groups achieve equally well. It is proactive in addressing students' special educational needs. For example, those students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia are given coloured overlays to help them to decipher print. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

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Outcomes for students are good. In 2011, all the Year 11 leavers went on to college courses or further education and, at the time of the inspection, all these young people had successfully sustained the placements. The unit is highly focused on improving students' behaviour and attainments with a view to returning younger students quickly to mainstream schools. This is reflected in the good improvement in the number of students reintegrating successfully. However, a few students with more complex needs remain at the unit for longer because strategies to return these students are less well developed.

Quality of teaching

Very good staffing ratios enable teachers and support staff to give students high levels of individual attention. There is a very good focus on promoting students' social and moral development through well-targeted questions and discussion. This was evident when good questioning resulted in a student giving some thoughtful answers about the dangers of substance abuse. Teaching is effective in delivering a broad curriculum which includes a strong focus on developing functional skills in literacy and numeracy. Staff work well together as a team and are highly sensitive to the personal and social needs of the students. They are expert at recognising when students are experiencing difficulties and skilled at de-escalating problematic behaviour. However, in a small minority of lessons, too much time is spent focusing on the personal needs of the students so that the pace of learning slows. Lessons are carefully planned and draw well on information gained from assessment so that work is well matched to the levels of different learners. This represents good improvement from the previous inspection. As a result, all groups of students, such as the small number of primary aged pupils, learn well. Parents recognise this and say that their children are well taught and make good progress. An example of this was in a science lesson, where a primary-aged pupil was given activities which were at just the right level of challenge to help him to understand the properties of magnets. Consequently he was able to explain clearly how you can use a magnet to make things move.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and make lessons interesting and lively. This was evident in an outstanding music lesson, where the teacher was extremely skilful in leading a group of students to improvise, using drums and guitar. The students demonstrated huge enjoyment and made excellent progress in playing their instruments and learning important social skills such as how to cooperate together. Students are very positive about the quality of teaching and say that they are given very good individual support. Teachers give students very good ongoing feedback in lessons. However, although there are many examples of high quality marking, a small amount lacks detailed feedback to help students improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students respond well to the high expectations of good behaviour and ethos of

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respect which characterise all aspects of the unit's work. The points system is used consistently and effectively to promote the good behaviour seen in lessons and this motivates students well to try to control their behaviour and work hard. Students' individual records, and parents' responses to the questionnaires, demonstrate the good improvements in behaviour which students make and the good quality of behaviour over time. Younger students say that earning 'smiley faces' helps them to behave better. Students are adamant that there is no bullying of any type and that they feel safe, and most parents who responded agree. The small number of girls say that they feel very safe attending the unit and that everyone gets on well together. Students are encouraged to reflect on their actions and so develop a clear view of what is right and wrong. There are no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed term exclusions has fallen significantly. Although staff are properly trained to use restraint techniques, records indicate that they have not needed to use such strategies for a long time. Students' behaviour at lunchtimes, when they eat a healthy meal 'family style' with the staff, is very good. Students are proud of the improvement in their attendance and punctuality. Students' behaviour and safety is promoted well through the work of the family support worker and other agencies, including the community police constable.

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and the management committee have high aspirations for the unit and are working effectively together to develop the provision. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination, which is evident through the good support which the unit provides for students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Senior leaders ensure that assessment and tracking systems are used to flag up any underachievement quickly. Links with mainstream schools and colleges, and with a variety of outside agencies, are effective in supporting most students well to move on successfully from the unit. The unit recognises that these links, particularly those with feeder schools, are not yet strong enough to support fully the transition of students with complex needs. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The unit is now housed in spacious and well-kept accommodation, with a good range of specialist teaching areas and good resources. As a result, teaching time has increased and the curriculum offer is much broader, with good opportunities for practical work in subjects such as food science and art and design. These improvements to the accommodation and the curriculum have helped significantly to enhance the quality of teaching and learning over time. Professional development and the monitoring of teaching have also contributed to this improvement, although such monitoring is not always sufficiently rigorous and there are too few opportunities for teachers to observe good practice. The unit has also successfully enriched the curriculum by linking into facilities such as the farm project, where the students are trained on a working farm. This promotes students' personal development and develops skills which are valued in the workplace. The rate of students' progress has escalated markedly this year, together with a strongly rising rate of attendance and a falling

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rate of exclusions. Students in Years 10 and 11 can follow a variety of accredited courses. However, the unit rightly acknowledges that the range of accreditation is not wide enough. There has been strong improvement in assessment. Thorough systems are now in place to measure progress in English, mathematics and science. Given its track record of improvements over time, the unit has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve further.

The promotion of students' social and moral development is good overall and permeates all aspects of the unit's work. The curriculum provides students with good opportunities for personal reflection, working with others and learning about other cultures in the wider world, including their literature and music. However, they have fewer opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures in the UK.

The management committee is very positive about the rapid way in which the unit is improving and provides effective support for development planning. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and the vetting of staff is thorough.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Penwith Short Stay School, Penzance TR18 3NX

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I came to visit you this week. I enjoyed meeting you, talking to you about the unit and looking at your work.

The unit is ensuring that you receive a good education. It is pleasing that you are making good improvements in your behaviour and attendance. Your behaviour in the unit is good and you try hard in lessons. Teaching is good. As a result, you are making good progress with your work. I have asked the unit to develop the way in which teaching is monitored and ensure that teachers share good practice with each other.

You told me that you feel safe and enjoy the good variety of lessons and other activities which are offered in the unit. I have asked staff to look at developing the accreditation which is offered so that you can gain a wider range of qualifications.

Some of you told me that you will shortly be reintegrating to mainstream schools. I have asked the management committee to work with staff in the unit to help more of you to successfully move back to mainstream.

You can continue to help the unit to improve by coming to school regularly and trying your best.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Emerson
Lead inspector

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