

Pace

Inspection report

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Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	377122
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Lead inspector	Linda Clare

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Appropriate authority	The management committee
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Headteacher	Irene Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Clare

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited three teachers and one senior learning assistant in their classrooms and observed seven lessons or parts of lessons. The inspector observed letters and sounds teaching sessions in both key stages, visited meeting time and listened as pupils read in class. One 'learning walk' to check pupils' participation in lessons was also undertaken. Discussions took place with staff, pupils, a member of the management committee and the local authority manager. The inspector also spoke with the headteachers of two primary schools where pupils at the Unit are enrolled and attend for part of each week. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan, assessment tracking and attendance data. Minutes of the management committee meetings, safeguarding and case study documents were also seen. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and reviewed information provided by parents and carers in four completed questionnaires. The inspector also took into account the views of pupils and those of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Information about the school

The Primary Assessment Centre for Education (PACE) is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which provides part-time provision at its base and support for both pupils and their teachers in their mainstream schools. PACE is part of the local authority's Behaviour and Inclusion Improvement Service. Students may be referred to PACE at any age from five to 11. All referrals follow a period of intervention by the co-located Behaviour Improvement Team in pupils' mainstream schools. Pupils stay at the Unit for an average of two terms. Following local authority re-organisation PACE introduced provision for Key Stage 1 pupils from September 2011. At the time of inspection, there were five pupils on dual rolls with their local primary schools and almost twice that number going through the admission process on a rolling programme. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above average. Pupils come from all parts of the local authority and all are from White British backgrounds.

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

- PACE is a good Pupil Referral Unit. Excellent relationships, high levels of trust and the consistent and effective promotion of behaviour in a warm, caring environment are strengths of the unit. To improve to outstanding the PRU needs to strengthen pupils' writing skills, align systems to coordinate and moderate literacy outcomes and further extend the emerging strength of the newly opened Key Stage 1 provision.
- Pupils' achievement and progress overall are good. Pupils enter PACE at different times of the year with skills below those usually expected for their age groups. They make good improvements in their behaviour, communication and basic skills and their rate of progress is good. These gains contribute strongly to closing the gap in achievement for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Those leaving at the end of Key Stage 2 achieve standards broadly in line with national expectations.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and some outstanding features were seen in a number of the lessons observed. Lessons are planned thoroughly and structured to engage and motivate pupils, however, writing skills are insufficiently emphasized. The senior learning assistants are an invaluable and integral part of the teaching team and seamlessly take the lead in school-wide responsibilities.
- Pupils' personal skills develop well as a result of the school-wide emphasis on social and emotional well-being. Overall behaviour is good and pupils feel safe, secure and valued by staff who know them very well. They learn how to manage more successfully their feelings and to cooperate with others more effectively.
- The headteacher's calm, focussed leadership is very well supported by the strategic skills of the teacher coordinator. Together they provide effective management of both teaching and the PRU's performance. Newly revised systems are embedding well although assessment of literacy is not yet consistently accurate. The management committee is fully informed and supportive. The new nurture provision at Key Stage 1 is managed well and evolving. Work to link the current curricular provision to Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes is at a very early stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' writing skills by:
 - ensuring more systematic development of the skills of writing as pupils progress
 - providing further opportunities to use writing both with support and independently across the curriculum
 - reducing the reliance on worksheets and one word response materials in lessons.
- Ensure consistency and accuracy in the moderation and assessment of literacy outcomes by:
 - comparing and moderating the results of the independent learning system (ILS) against classroom monitoring levels to ensure greater consistency
 - moderating assessment levels against the levels used in pupils' mainstream re-integration placements
 - securing opportunities to moderate literacy levels with local primary schools.
- Further extend the emerging strength of the newly opened Key Stage 1 provision by developing the curriculum to link with the Early Years Foundation Stage learning outcomes.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' overall achievement is good. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and feel they make good progress. Parents and carers unanimously agree. Learning in lessons is effective because most pupils know what they are trying to achieve and are increasingly able to work independently, with a partner or as part of a group as behaviour improves. With greater self-confidence, pupils become more willing to answer questions and listen respectfully to the opinions of others.

Pupils join PACE with histories of interrupted schooling, gaps in learning and poor behaviour. Progress is good and accelerates as pupils improve their attitudes to learning and recognise the consequences of their actions. The goal of re-integration is always in sight as pupils learn to successfully combine three day attendance at PACE with two days of PACE-supported learning in their own primary schools. Evidence from previous cohorts shows pupils make consistently good progress overall while at PACE. This is reflected over time in the monitoring, achievements and destinations of prior cohorts of pupils, the significant majority of whom have returned to and remained in mainstream education.

Standards attained by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with their peers. For a very small number who are working at below average levels the gap is closing as a result of improvements in behaviour and re-engagement in learning. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 is average and the PRU has not yet had any pupils who have reached the end of Year 2. Assessment information is used well by teachers to set work which matches accurately pupils' needs and challenges them to do better. Pupils have easy to follow timetables and child friendly targets so that they know the next steps to take to improve their work.

Pupils make good progress in reading, listening and speaking skills and in mathematics at both key stages. These skills are very effectively promoted through the regular teaching of letters and sounds in class and by daily computer-based individual learning system (ILS) programmes in both English and mathematics. This combination of taught and self-regulated work motivates and encourages pupils as their daily scores are linked to the PRU's reward system. Numeracy skills also develop well due to thorough planning and sequential learning through practical tasks in both Key Stages. The 'hands on' focus to learning contributes to the slightly better progress pupils make in mathematics than in English. Although overall progress in writing is good, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils do not always make enough progress in lessons. There is a reliance on worksheets and other materials which require limited writing activity. Although the content in literacy and themed topic work links well to individual learning programmes, these sheets offer pupils less opportunity to develop the style and presentation of their work.

The PRU meets the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs pupils and those known to be eligible for free school meals effectively. All groups make similar levels of good progress. Improving pupils' social, emotional and academic progress means the gap in achievement is closing for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good across the PRU. In questionnaires returned and in conversation parents, carers and pupils all agree they are pleased with the quality of teaching provided at PACE. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, planning is good and expectations high. Teachers provide intensive, well structured and sequential learning steps to success. This good practice is not always evidence in writing and skills are taught less systematically failing to build successfully on prior learning. Although progress in writing is good overall, in lessons learning is not always effective because of the reliance on worksheets and single word answers. In one-to-one sessions, skilled support staff use repetition, appropriate language structure, short sentences and plain text to aid understanding for those who need that extra boost to their learning. Questioning is used effectively and pitched accurately because staff have a good overview of the needs of the pupils. The pace of learning varies and teachers judge the receptiveness of pupils to modify or extend plans accordingly. Most lessons show good pace, however the very small numbers of pupils in some groups limit opportunities for exchanging views and opinions.

In the best lessons, there is a good emphasis on key words and pupils are given more 'thinking time' to process language. Teachers make effective use of the recently redesigned curriculum to extend skills across subjects and also add interest. Themes capture imagination well and creativity in devising practical learning foster curiosity. In one lesson - 'Matthew's Basher' – a mythical creature was created through visual, oral and thinking skills to much enjoyment and evident pride by its creator. The accompanying story boards and recorded tale reinforced speech and language learning very effectively.

Pupil learning is checked regularly. In one lesson observed pupils' understanding of 'chronological order' and the vocabulary of mathematics was an integral part of the lesson. Ongoing review and discussion ensures pupil confidence in their next steps. This is supported by good levels of praise and encouragement. Books are generally marked carefully with guidance to pupils on how they may improve their work, however, writing is

less frequently highlighted. Literacy levels generated by the ILS system show a marginal difference to those attained and assessed in classroom practice. This discrepancy is leading to some lack of consistency in the PRU's assessment which makes it difficult to ensure accuracy when comparing with the National Curriculum levels assigned to pupils in their mainstream schools.

Teaching has a positive impact on the good progress pupils make in their social and cultural development. For example, as part of the current 'Chocolate' theme pupils are sponsoring a cocoa plant in the Amazon which also has links to their eco and gardening activities. The calm approach to managing behaviour effectively teaches pupils how to cope with difficulties and leads to effective learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A clearly defined, positive but firm approach allows staff to set and maintain acceptable and consistent behaviour boundaries. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally good and contributes appropriately to good learning. Most pupils respond positively to staff direction. Pupils work well in lessons, motivated by a reward system which allows them to earn PACE-O's for good work and behaviour. Conduct about the school is good. Incidents which may occur as a result of frustration are recorded and carefully managed, time out is offered and a return to class smoothly managed. From this evidence behaviour observed in school appeared typical for the PRU. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise. As one parent commented 'Considering the way he was before, he's brilliant – he's come on so much since coming here, his behaviour has improved'. The majority of pupils agree behaviour to be good.

Pupils, parents and carers are unanimous that bullying is dealt with effectively should it occur due to an appropriate focus on respect and pupils' understanding of right and wrong. The 'Block out Bullying' wall is a constant reminder and pupils are proud to watch 'bricks' inscribed with their kind deeds and actions build to block out the bully. Pupils say they feel safe and know what constitutes an unsafe situation. Social skills and emotional literacy sessions promote moral understanding exceptionally well. In an outstanding lesson observed, pupils had to choose a statement card then communicate the feeling described on the card to the group. Positive statements resulted in smiling pupils miming happiness. Negative statements saw the pupils tearing a little piece away from a paper figure, pinned to the board. The very powerful imagery of a literal 'piece of me' being torn away by unkind comments was very well explained by the pupils as an outcome of bullying.

Attendance is average against schools of a similar type. Punctuality to school and between lessons is good. The duality of the PRU's roll ensures that pupils remain a firm and visible part of their mainstream schools and supports their sense of 'belonging'. The use of PACE-O's to support mainstream placements maintains their fair access to the reward system.

Leadership and management

The revised management structure has provided impetus for much change and development since the last inspection and the new systems are embedding well. The headteacher's high expectations and goals are embraced by all staff and morale is high. The strong team ethos and collaborative approach to continuous improvement underpin the PRU's good

performance. Work with primary schools is well regarded. One headteacher noted that PACE had 'turned around one pupil through his very positive experience there', echoed by a second headteacher who said that pupils make 'huge strides' whilst on the dual roll regime.

Effective use of performance management ensures staff accountability. Training initiatives and a strong programme of professional development for all staff to enhance behaviour management skills has strengthened the PRU's consistency of approach.

The curriculum is good and developing well. It provides a good balance of experiences with a clear focus on preparing pupils to return to their mainstream school. The new nurture focus at Key Stage 1 is proving effective in meeting the needs of younger pupils. Joint planning of pupil targets with partner primary schools ensures curricular breadth and balance. These high levels of planning do not yet include links to Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is promoted very effectively across the curriculum from planned reflection time in Key Stage 1 to focused curriculum themes on cultural diversity. These are often linked to enterprise activities such as making Chinese New Year zodiac bookmarks to sell for charity.

Senior managers evaluate school progress accurately and the management committee, strengthened since the last inspection, is taking a more focussed view of PACE's progress. Much has been achieved to develop and extend already effective provision. The tangible results seen in the new management structure, the revised curriculum and the child friendly documentation introduced are evidence of the PRU's good capacity to sustain improvement. Engagement with partners, parents and carers is strong and supports PACE in its work very effectively. Safeguarding meets all current regulations, risks are appropriately assessed and procedures for the recruitment of staff are in place. Equality of opportunity is good and permeates all aspects of the PRU's functioning. Closing the gap in achievement for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and returning the majority of pupils referred to PACE to have a 'fresh start' in their original primary schools are evidence of this success.

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.
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.



14 March 2012

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Pace, St Helen's, WA9 2LH

I am writing to thank you for being so polite and helpful last week when I visited your school. Your views were really interesting and have helped me to come to my decisions. This is what I found:

- PACE is a good school which helps you to make good progress in your work and your overall achievement is good. You and your parents and carers think that the staff there help you a lot and I agree. I also agree with you that they are really good at looking after you and making sure that you are safe.
- Your attendance is generally good at both PACE and your primary school. I was pleased to hear from some of your primary school headteachers how much better you are becoming in working with other people and with each other.
- The teaching and learning at PACE is good and you are making good progress in your English and mathematical skills. This is because you enjoy your individual programmes on the computer and try really hard to get better scores each day. Your literacy and numeracy skills are mostly developing well but you could do with a little more help to improve your writing.
- Your behaviour is improving and I agree with your parents and carers that PACE has helped you a lot to make friends and learn how to get on with your work in lessons sensibly. You like collecting PACE-Os for good work and behaviour. I'm sure the very good 'tips' from the pupil who saved up for a trip to the ice cream parlour will help others to collect more PACE-Os in the future.
- Your headteacher is a good manager and knows what the school does well and where it needs to improve to make it even better for you.

To help your school to improve further, I have asked the headteacher of PACE to:

- look at how everyone can help you to improve your writing skills
- make sure that the levels you achieve on your computer programme are the similar to those you are getting in your books and files
- provide even more activities for very young pupils so that they too can be helped by PACE, and the right work will be ready for them.

You can help by making sure that you continue to work as hard as you can and by coming to school every day. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Clare
Lead Inspector

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