

# Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135467
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	381893
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Ellis HMI

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>	62
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Rosemary Joyce
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Lowry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20–21 May 2009
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<b>Age group</b>	14–16
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	13–14 September 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Ten sessions were seen and eight teachers were observed teaching. Meetings were held with groups of students, the chair of the management committee and staff. Inspectors observed the unit's work and looked at students' files, development plans, the unit's tracking data showing students' progress and attainment, teachers' lesson plans, students' work and the displays around the six sites. In addition, they analysed the questionnaire responses of 17 parents and carers, 28 students, and 14 staff and took their views into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The use of assessment information in the different centres to accurately identify students' starting points and needs, and measure their progress over time.
- The actions taken to support and challenge students who do not attend regularly.
- The uniformity and consistency of systems and procedures across the six centres and the extent to which they provide accurate and timely management information.

## Information about the school

Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provides for students permanently excluded from school, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Students attend one of six provisions which, collectively, make up the unit. One is a local authority establishment and the remainder are owned and managed by commercial organisations which are commissioned to provide education and training. Each is led by a centre manager. The pupil referral unit oversees and monitors the provision for students across all six centres. Priority is given to students in public care and those leaving secure provision. There are more boys than girls on roll. All students have special educational needs and two have a statement of special educational needs. Most students have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties and some have complex needs. Few students are from a minority ethnic background, and none speaks English as an additional language. A deputy headteacher has recently been appointed.

**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: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

- This is a satisfactory pupil referral unit. Most students enjoy learning and develop the skills and abilities that they need for the next steps in their education or training.
- Students' welfare and well-being underpin the work of the unit and students are looked after well. The positive relationships between staff and students contribute to students feeling safe and re-engaging successfully with their learning.
- Good, productive links with parents, carers and other agencies support students well, both in their learning and in their personal development. One parent summed it up when writing about the unit, 'In just a short time, my child's attitude to learning and his enthusiasm to attend has rocketed. An amazing turn-around.'
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and most lessons ensure that students' needs are met and students are fully involved in their learning. A strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills helps students overcome gaps in their learning.
- The use of assessment to identify students' behavioural needs is excellent, but the use of assessment to identify precise levels of attainment and plan next steps in learning is not fully embedded across all centres.
- Students' attitudes to learning and attendance improve significantly while students attend the unit. Behaviour is good and most students attend regularly. However, there are too many students who have very poor attendance and consequently overall attendance is low.
- The leadership team has an ambitious vision for the unit, but the different centres do not yet share a single corporate ethos.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and most weaknesses have been tackled effectively. For example, there has been a steady improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and improvement in student attendance. These improvements demonstrate that the unit has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.
- There is no consistent mechanism for students from the different centres to engage in decision making or to have a collective voice.
- Each centre has its own distinctive character, but the unit as a whole lacks a cohesive identity. There are plans for centres and their communities to participate in more joint ventures but these plans are at an early stage of development.

**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

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Provide more opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and contribute to collective decision making.
- Build on improvements to student attendance to close the gap with the national average for secondary schools.
- Use assessment consistently well across all centres to identify the precise levels at which students are working and use this information to plan lessons and activities that closely match the needs and interests of all students.
- Realise an ambitious vision to raise standards by supporting and engaging parents and carers and their communities to create mutually beneficial partnerships and a distinct single identity for the unit.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Students join the unit at various times during the school year with attainment that is generally below average because of discontinuity in their education and barriers to learning. Inspectors observed almost all groups of students making at least satisfactory progress in their learning and personal development in lessons and other activities. Students are tested on entry to all centres and this is followed by routine teacher assessments. These assessments show that most students make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress in their learning. Some students make accelerated progress, particularly in the vocational options. Outcomes in accredited courses over the last three years show that, from often low starting points, most students make satisfactory progress in the subjects that they study. However, success rates for accreditation in mathematics and English vary widely between centres.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted strongly and there are good opportunities for regular physical activity. However, students sometimes choose not to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students are provided with good support and guidance to help them overcome their individual difficulties and students who attend regularly are prepared well for the next steps in their education or training. They say they feel safe and that there is always someone you can turn to if you have a problem. Behaviour in lessons and around the centres is generally good and rates of exclusion are reducing, but they are still relatively high for this type of provision. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and most students attend regularly but, despite the unit's best efforts, the proportion of students who are persistently absent remains too high. Although students are regularly consulted as individuals, there are not enough opportunities for them to take up posts of responsibility or to have a collective voice in making decisions about their learning and well-being.

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

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory. The majority of teaching that was observed was good, but a small proportion was less than satisfactory. Scrutiny of information resulting from the unit's own monitoring of teaching indicates that teaching has improved steadily where teachers have been challenged and supported to improve their lessons. The good relationships between staff and students also contribute strongly to learning. Most teachers use assessment information to ensure that lesson plans identify tasks and activities that are generally pitched at the right level for the students. However, the use of assessment to support learning is not yet fully embedded to a consistently high standard across all centres.

The curriculum is satisfactory and there are plans to develop it further. The range of options available to students varies from centre to centre as a result of each centre's particular specialisms. Students are carefully screened to make sure that they attend the centre that is most appropriate to their needs. Students who attend the centre based at a local college have a very wide choice of vocational options, while at other centres these choices are more limited. There is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. All students have opportunities to study and achieve GCSE accreditation in several subjects, where this is appropriate, and there are clear pathways for students to progress to the next stage in their education and training or into employment.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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There are good induction arrangements for students who are new to the centres and provision for potentially vulnerable students is good, so there are no significant variations in the rates of progress for the different groups. Students and parents and carers are very positive about the quality of support they receive. Students say that they feel valued and that the adults who work at the centres are interested in helping them to succeed. Good use is made of a wide range of external agencies and health and education professionals to support students in overcoming barriers to learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked hard to establish an aspirational vision that is shared by staff but, despite this, the unit lacks a distinctive corporate ethos. Students identify closely with the individual centres they attend and do not feel part of an overarching organisation. The leadership structure has been developed to incorporate a new deputy headteacher post. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has only been in post a few days and has not had time to have any significant impact on the work of the unit. Essential systems and procedures that ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the centres are in place and safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Although there are common procedures and policies across all centres these are not yet applied consistently and there remain variations between centres. Centres are located across a wide geographical area and not connected to a single management information system. Consequently, there are sometimes delays in sharing information about students. For example, attendance data are collected at the centres daily but only transferred to the central office once a week. The management committee is supportive but it is now looking to develop its role and members are planning to be increasingly involved in monitoring progress and in holding the unit to account for its work. This is an inclusive provision where all students, regardless of their background or ability, are valued and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. Target setting ensures all students have targets by which their progress can be measured and they are routinely involved in assessing their own progress towards their individual targets.

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Strong partnerships with parents and carers, external agencies and local schools make a good contribution to students' personal development. The unit knows its community well and is seeking ways of strengthening community involvement in the work of the unit by bringing together the communities associated with each of the different centres.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were happy with their child's experiences at the unit. Parents and carers who provided written comments noted improvements in confidence and self-esteem when students transferred to the unit.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at the Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	29	12	71	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	47	8	47	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	7	41	8	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	29	10	59	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	35	9	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	5	29	10	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	24	12	71	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	4	24	10	59	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	7	41	9	53	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	47	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	35	8	47	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	41	9	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	7	41	10	59	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



15 September 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 4NE**

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the inspection. I would particularly like to thank those of you who took time to show us your work or to speak to us about your experiences. I hope you will take time to read the full report that will be published on our web site ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

We judged the unit to be satisfactory overall and we were pleased to see that you are cared for well and most of you told us that you are now enjoying learning. You also told us that you feel safe and respected by the adults you work with. We saw that you get on well together. We were pleased that most of you have improved your attendance and are suitably prepared for the next steps in your education.

These are the key things that we would like the unit to do to improve further.

- Give you more opportunities to have a say in how things can be improved, so that you influence decisions about what happens at the different centres.
- Support and challenge students who do not attend regularly so that their attendance improves.
- Make sure that the work and activities that teachers give you are always set at just the right level and take account of your interests and prior achievements.
- Get the different centres and groups of parents and carers working together more effectively to create a single learning community.

I am sure that you will want to play your part by supporting staff and helping to make the necessary improvements.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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