

St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133160
Local Authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	381481
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane HMI

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Valerie Neel
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Eight lessons or part lessons were observed led by six members of staff. Meetings were held with a representative of the local authority, members of the management committee, staff and students. The inspector looked at policies, records and assessment information. Questionnaires completed by staff and students were analysed. Two questionnaires were received from parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the unit's work looking in detail at a number of key areas.

- The learning and progress of individuals and different groups of students.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.
- The current effectiveness of the management committee in supporting and challenging the pupil referral unit.

Information about the school

St Matthias Park is one of four pupil referral units in the City of Bristol. It predominately works with students who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. Numbers on roll vary considerably. During the last academic year 100 students were supported by the pupil referral unit, a large majority were boys and a minority were from minority ethnic communities. At the time of the inspection, 24 students were educated on site full- or part-time and 15 others were supported in mainstream provision. Of the students educated on site a minority have a statement of special educational needs or are currently undergoing statutory assessment related to their social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. Currently there are two students on role who are looked after by the local authority.

Since the last inspection the local authority and the pupil referral unit have developed the role of St Matthias Park. It now offers a range of different interventions and support, often in partnership with mainstream schools. Students attend the unit for a few weeks or up to one year.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Matthias Park is a good pupil referral unit. It offers students, many of whom have found mainstream education challenging, a fresh start. They successfully re-engage in learning and then make good progress towards reaching the levels expected for their age or in the skills and knowledge needed to gain accreditation. They make significant strides in most areas of their personal development. The unit's tracking and analysis of data show that the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are looked after and students from different ethnic groups make the same good progress. A few pupils make excellent progress with aspects of their learning, most notably their attendance and their attitudes to learning, which allows them to reintegrate to mainstream schools or to transfer to further education very successfully.

Students' behaviour and their engagement in learning significantly improve while at St Matthias and are good. This is due to the very caring staff who support students well. Very close teamwork results in effective and consistent responses to the students. Counselling or learning mentor sessions support individuals effectively. A strong reward system related to behaviour and learning skills is valued highly by students and is very effective.

The recent development of the curriculum to create tailored programmes or 'remits' gives a keen focus to the small group work and is a significant factor in bringing about students' good progress. Following an effective initial assessment and induction, successful work quickly results in the students' return to mainstream or special schools or to work on nationally accredited courses so that those in Year 11 leave with recognised qualifications.

Attendance at St Matthias Park is low overall as data are adversely affected by the variable attendance of a small group of students. However, much of the students' attendance is broadly average and some attend very well. It is clear that through very close monitoring, targeted work, an engagement with parents and carers and the use of rewards and incentives, attendance for the majority improves significantly, including those who have been persistently absent from their previous schools.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. All lessons are underpinned by good relationships between staff and students. Subject matter is interesting and individual support is quickly on hand to maintain good behaviour and help students complete their work successfully. A significant strength in the teaching is the way in which it develops

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students' social and behavioural skills, which in turn has a very positive impact on their outcomes. At times information on the students' prior assessments is not used to inform the objectives and the activities sufficiently. This means the intended learning outcomes for individuals are not always clear. On occasions, questioning or support are not targeted enough.

Leaders and managers have successfully refocused the work of St Matthias Park and maintained high morale and commitment among staff giving it good capacity to improve. Self-evaluation correctly identifies strengths and areas for development. The headteacher is ambitious for the unit. She knows students well, is very visible throughout the day, and clearly models for the staff the kinds of interactions and practices she expects. Monitoring of teaching is regular but does not always lead to systematic action that is rigorously followed up to address areas for improvement that have been identified. The chair of the management committee is very supportive. Recent changes have made the committee more effective. Due to a number of changes in the local authority some responsibilities are currently unclear and this means that the challenge to the pupil referral unit is not always consistent. Monitoring is frequent and in depth but the way in which the vast range of data is presented does not always enable leaders and managers to quickly evaluate the quality of provision and outcomes for students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that by Spring 2012 it is consistently good or better by:
 - using assessment information to plan clear lesson objectives, success criteria and activities that meet students' different learning needs
 - ensuring additional support is targeted to develop good learning
 - improving monitoring systems so that checks are made on the effectiveness of actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Improve the consistency of ongoing support and challenge to the pupil referral unit by:
 - clarifying further the different roles and responsibilities of the local authority and the management committee
 - summarising and presenting monitoring data so that leaders can be informed quickly and clearly about the quality of provision and the impact on students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The vast majority of students who attend St Matthias Park re-integrate into mainstream or special schools successfully. Those who are supported through the 'managed move' process achieve well, and sometimes very well, at their destination

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school. Those students who are admitted late in their school career during Year 11 attain nationally accredited qualifications at GCSE or entry level in a range of subjects or are successful in adult literacy and numeracy courses. Almost all students who leave St Matthias Park continue to further education or training. Students leave the school with Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards recognising their achievements in the wider curriculum.

It is evident from students' work that, as their engagement and behaviour improves they produce more work of increasingly better quality. The quality of presentation, the use of punctuation and correct grammar develop well. Writing begins to include more complex structures. Students acquire a good knowledge of scientific and mathematical concepts. Combined with their improved social skills, this means that they make good progress, whatever their starting points. Many of those who have special educational needs related to difficulties with literacy make accelerated progress in reading during their time in the unit. As well as developing their basic skills, including using information and communication technology confidently, students learn to work together, be respectful, punctual and to develop workplace skills and habits that prepare them very well for their next destination.

Students are very loyal to St Matthias Park. Many return to visit after they have left the unit. Students learn to work together and develop responsibility for their environment. They feel very safe and trust that adults will ensure that any problems will be sorted out quickly. Inappropriate behaviour is isolated. Many of the students are developing the skills to be more reflective. They are aware of the challenges they face and changes that may be needed. They demonstrate their ability to consider in lessons issues such as tolerance of cultural diversity, racism and rights and responsibilities. They engage well in the mix of different sporting or cultural activities in the community that the unit provides. Students develop a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They engage in sporting activities and are well aware of the dangers of alcohol, unsafe sex and drug abuse. They respond well to the expectations of the unit, for example, in avoiding high-energy drinks, eating the breakfast provided to give them a good start to the day. A few individuals have made significant changes to their way of life towards living a healthier lifestyle as a result of the unit's intervention.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ 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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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are purposeful. Adults are sensitively tuned into the needs of their group. Students know that they will be helped when they encounter difficulties. The best teaching includes stimulating and challenging subject matter, for example with discussions of the 'Big Bang' theory, algebraic equations, the process of law making or about a stimulating piece of literature. Opportunities provided enable students to develop independent learning skills and consolidate their basic skills. Questioning is targeted at just the right level to challenge students to enable them to consolidate their learning. However, these good elements are not consistent in all lessons. At times the intended outcomes of the lessons are too broad, with whole-class activities not sufficiently tailored to students' individual learning needs.

The responsive and flexible curriculum means that students can follow a programme that suits their needs and aspirations. A wide variety of enrichment activities motivates students and helps them to learn new skills, for example in karate or ice skating. These are also good opportunities for students to develop team-working skills, taking risks in their learning and displaying their better behaviour in a range of situations, including in the wider community. The strong emphasis on citizenship, personal, social and health education and the social and emotional aspects of learning means that students have a wide variety of opportunities to reflect on how to become good citizens.

The good care, guidance and support for students are underpinned by the strong commitment of staff to the success of students. Daily briefings and weekly meetings about individual students keep every member of staff fully up to date on successes and potential challenges. The consistent application of the reward system, with students' progress carefully monitored and displayed in bar charts on the classroom walls, is a key factor in motivating students to improve their behaviour. The aspiration of many is to be a 'graduate', which is the recognition given to students who have maintained good behaviour for a number of weeks, and they are rightly proud when this goal has been achieved. There are very effective systems for induction and transition. Learning mentors guide students through the process of joining and leaving, working well with parents and carers. There are effective relationships with partners in social care, health professionals, the police and other agencies.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have very effectively managed the pupil referral unit through a period of change so that it is a more flexible provision and more responsive to the needs of the local authority, local schools and academies. There is an effective team approach with effective middle managers and individuals at different levels taking on responsibilities, for example, with learning support assistants monitoring behaviour.

Safeguarding procedures are good. The unit takes the safety of its pupils very seriously. The management committee's improved structure with individual members linked to key areas such as health and safety or safeguarding means that members are better informed and more able to offer support. With recent changes to local authority management arrangements there remains some lack of clarity relating to reporting and accountability arrangements. Monitoring is very regular. There is a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the unit. The way in which evaluations are presented does not always enable leaders to be informed quickly and clearly about the quality of provision and the impact on students and enable the local authority or the management committee to challenge the unit systematically.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Assessments of provision and outcomes involve checks on whether any particular groups are underachieving. The provision is then adapted if necessary, for example offering additional opportunities on site for girls. There is robust tackling of any racism or any discrimination to create a harmonious and cohesive community. Students have considerable opportunities to learn about diverse national and international communities through the curriculum, educational visits and visitors. The unit is very aware of the particular needs of its parents and carers. It works hard to keep them informed about the progress of their child and engage them in the process of making education a more positive experience. The unit's own evidence shows that levels of parent and carer satisfaction are high.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Only two questionnaires were returned from parents and carers. Both of these were positive in the vast majority of areas. The only adverse comment received was about the practice of permitting smoking on the site. The inspector raised this with the unit. The practice is kept under close review. The inspector found that measures to improve students' health, including informing them about the dangers of smoking, were very effective and had led to a reduction in students' smoking.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthias Park 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 inspector received two completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 39 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	1	50	1	50	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)	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	50	1	50	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).

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



1 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit, Bristol, BS2 9UR

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you recently. I was very impressed by your willingness to talk with me at breakfast, at lunch and in your classrooms. A particular thanks to those students who talked with me in the headteacher's office. It was so good to hear your positive views of St Matthias Park and the improvements it is helping you make.

I found that:

- St Matthias Park is a good pupil referral unit
- you are making good progress, particularly in the way you behave in class and in your learning skills
- staff care for you very well, you feel very safe and trust adults to sort things out for you
- you do lots of interesting activities
- the way in which the unit has organised you into different groups is very helpful to quickly get you to another school or to help you gain qualifications
- the unit is managed well by Mrs Neel and others.

To make the unit even better I have asked Mrs Neel and the teachers to make sure the teaching is always good, in every lesson. I have also asked the local authority and the management committee to make sure that they keep challenging the unit to get better. You can help St Matthias Park by always trying your best, continuing to improve your behaviour and making sure you attend every day.

It was a privilege to meet you and visit St Matthias Park. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

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