

Maidstone and Malling Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit

MARC, c/o Infozone, 3 Palace Avenue, Maidstone, ME15 6NF

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because:

- Students make good progress, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy.
- The proportion of students achieving accreditation in a range of courses has significantly increased since the previous inspection.
- As a result of a rigorous focus on improvement by the headteacher, the quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- During their time at the unit, students' attitudes and behaviour improve and they regain interest in education. Students' attitudes are positive and learning is rarely disrupted because of inappropriate behaviour.
- Students say the unit is a safe place to be and that staff are friendly and supportive.
- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership of the unit and rigorously checks the quality of the commissioned provisions.
- The support of both the management committee and the local authority has contributed well to improvements since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' expectations of the pace of learning are not consistently high across all the provision.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to be involved in assessing each other's work.
- Although the unit promotes good spiritual, moral and social development, it is less successful in broadening students' knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity of today's society.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed five lessons involving one teacher and three tutors. Three of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. All students at Kings Reach were following an induction activities programme, which involved off-site activities. Opportunities to observe formal teaching opportunities were therefore limited. Only one lesson at Kings Reach was observed.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the local authority, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the head of education for Kings Reach and with the students attending the main site. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with the chair of the unit's management committee. The inspector visited a small group of female students at the Kings Reach woodlands centre, where they were staying for two days as part of their induction programme.
- There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). However, the inspector took into account the results of the unit's regular surveys of parents' views.
- The lead inspector looked at a range of documentation, including the unit's self-evaluation and improvement planning, data on students' progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Alternative Curriculum PRU model is based on a commissioning structure with coordination and quality assurance being led by the headteacher.
- Since the last inspection, there have been changes in provision. Currently, there are now three provisions:
 - the main site in central Maidstone provided by the local authority
 - the commissioned Kings Reach Charity Alternative Curriculum boys' group
 - the commissioned Kings Reach Charity Alternative Curriculum girls' group.
- All three sites provide education for students who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. Both the Kings Reach sites also provide a small number of alternative full-time placements for students at risk of exclusion who remain on the roll of their mainstream school. Students join the unit at different times during the year.
- In addition, a new mentoring service was piloted last year. The intensive mentoring assessment programme (iMAP) provides a rolling six-week support programme to mentor students within the unit or in their mainstream schools. It offers intensive one-to-one support for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, academic engagement and assessment.
- Currently, almost all students are boys, and almost all students are of White British background. None of them has a statement of special educational needs, but all are supported on school action plus.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, supported by pupil premium funding, has historically been well above the national average. As a large proportion of the students had only joined the unit the week before the inspection, accurate data for the current year were not available.
- The unit is subject to reorganisation as part of the local authority's review of pupil referral units.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of the pace of learning are consistently high across all the provision
 - providing opportunities for students to assess each other's work in order to deepen their understanding of their learning.
- Provide more opportunities for students to experience and learn about the range and diversity of cultures and cultural activities in today's society.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- As a result of missed schooling because of exclusion, negative experiences of mainstream education and, for many students, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, attainment on entry to the unit is well below that of students' peers in mainstream schools.
- Careful initial assessments inform staff of students' individual strengths and weaknesses and help them plan work to ensure students' needs are met. Each student is given an individual education plan with clear academic targets for improvement, which are reviewed regularly in order to gauge the progress being made and determine any extra support that may be needed.
- For most students, attainment remains below that of their peers in mainstream schools when they leave. However, most make rapid progress and many gain accreditation in a range of courses, including functional skills in literacy and numeracy in particular. This helps increasing numbers to move on to college courses or apprenticeships and the proportion of students not in education, employment or training has been reduced over time.
- School data show there are no significant differences in progress between boys and girls or for those students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Progress in lessons seen during the inspection was good and endorses the headteacher's judgements as a result of his monitoring and evaluation. The school's progress data confirm that students make good progress over time.
- Of the 22 students supported by iMAP last year, the very large majority were successfully reintegrated into mainstream school or transferred to the unit.
- Students are adept at using information and communication technology (ICT) to research and present their work. This was clearly evident in a science lesson, where students were identifying examples of the six kingdoms as part of the unit of work 'Survival in Nature'. In English, students are confident in using word-processing software and developing their use of language through the use of a thesaurus.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The unit's induction programme enables staff to get to know the students well and supports their planning to ensure students' individual needs are met.
- A strength of the teaching seen is the consistent and sensitive way in which staff manage behaviour, keep students on task and encourage progress in learning.
- This was particularly successful in a mathematics lesson, where students were identifying the rules in a range of number sequences. Although some had initial difficulties with this task, students were kept engaged with a variety of different problems to solve.
- Starter activities are used well and are successful in motivating and engaging students. Learning intentions and outcomes are made clear so students are fully aware of what is expected of them. This paid dividends in an English lesson, where all students happily completed the task at hand, worked independently and responded well to the appropriate adult support throughout. They were proud of their accomplishments and willingly showed their work to the inspector.
- Although teaching is good overall, there are occasional inconsistencies across the unit in ensuring the pace of learning is robust and challenging. As a result, some students drift off task too quickly and the quality of their learning is not sustained.
- In addition, there are not enough opportunities for students to be involved in assessing each other's work. In an English lesson, students had confidently read out their completed written work. However, instead of encouraging students to evaluate each other's work, thus extending their speaking and listening skills, the feedback was delivered by the tutor.
- Students told the inspector that they also found teaching to be good because of the variety of activities offered and the individual help offered by staff. In addition, students were highly positive about the fortnightly assessment reviews of their progress towards their

academic and personal development targets. Inspection evidence confirmed the positive impact of these strategies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The unit successfully meets its core aim of re-engaging and motivating students.
- Prior to joining the unit, many students have experienced behavioural issues in their mainstream schools. On the whole, they settle quickly into the well-established routines in the unit and their behaviour in lessons is good.
- Typical behaviour over time also improves; this is reflected in a reduction of the number of hours lost through fixed-term exclusions. There have been no permanent exclusions. This supports students' personal development well and helps them prepare for life beyond the unit.
- Attitudes to learning are generally positive because behaviour in lessons is managed effectively. In the lessons seen, students worked well individually, as well as in pairs, collaborating well with one another and the adults in the room. However, occasionally, where the teacher's expectations of students' attitudes to learning were insufficiently high, the pace and quality of learning dipped.
- Although some had a few reservations, parents who responded to the unit's regular questionnaires are positive with regard to the behaviour and safety of students at the unit. Responses from students to the questionnaires provided by the unit are similarly positive.
- Students told the inspector that working relationships with staff are good, because they understand students' needs and are always willing to help if students have problems. They are also appreciative of the opportunities provided through a variety of accredited courses, which give them added focus and improve their motivation. This has resulted in much improved attendance for many.
- Students also told the inspector that there is no bullying and that if there were it would be dealt with immediately. They are also well aware of issues surrounding internet safety, including the use of social networking sites. The unit's procedures for controlling access to the internet are robust and effective.
- A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education promotes students' personal safety and well-being. This includes learning about sexual health and the effects of unhealthy lifestyles.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly effective in evaluating the work of the unit and driving improvement. The appointment of senior leaders, including a deputy headteacher and a head of education at Kings Reach, has added suitable breadth to the day-to-day management of the unit.
- There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in students' achievement in literacy and numeracy.
- Leadership and management of teaching have been particularly effective. The 'good in 10' programme during the previous academic year provided a clear focus on what was needed to move the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good and, where appropriate, what further support and professional development were required. The impact of this was seen in the predominantly good teaching seen by the inspector.
- The improvements since the previous inspection have resulted from accurate self-evaluation which in turn has led to carefully targeted planning. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the unit well and, supported by the management committee and the local authority, has a strong awareness of what needs to be done to ensure further improvements.
- The well-planned curriculum, including a relevant induction programme, meets the needs of students and contributes well to their good progress. The curriculum enables students to improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In addition, it contributes to their all-round

personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although it is less effective in raising students' awareness of the cultural diversity of society.

- The local authority has given the unit good support to enable it to move forward to a position where its overall effectiveness is now good. It fulfils its statutory duties for the unit well, including those for safeguarding and appraisal of the headteacher. With the support of the headteacher, the local authority ensures tutors are appraised regularly and their professional development needs are catered for.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the management committee, in its contribution to the governance of the unit, has improved. It provides both effective challenge and a wide range of support to improve outcomes for students.
 - The management committee was particularly supportive during the recent changes in commissioned provision at the unit.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135465
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	402704

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Adrian Young
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2012
Telephone number	01622 751671
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