

Poplar Adolescent Unit

Rochford Hospital, Union Lane, Rochford, SS4 1RB

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in all subjects, because the teaching is good. Students receive well-tailored support that motivates them to improve further.
- Teachers meet students' needs well through one to one and small group work.
- Teachers have high expectations and enjoy excellent relationships with students.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding and their attendance high. They like coming to the unit because they feel 'just like everyone else' and they know it will help them look to the future.
- Poetry, art and music are used extremely well to support students' expressing their feelings and emotions. Students' achievements in these subjects contribute to their emotional well being very well indeed.
- Students say they feel very safe. They know they need to 'get well' or 'better'. They feel strongly that being in the unit helps them.
- Students have an excellent understanding of others' needs and cultures. Staff work extremely well with the young people themselves, medical staff, families, 'home' schools and outside agencies to ensure a real 'team around the child' approach is in place.
- The teacher in charge provides strong leadership and is steadily bringing about improvements in teaching.
- The management committee and subject leaders' roles have developed well since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress is not outstanding because the teachers do not always use assessment information skilfully in order to set work that is at the right level for all students.
- The time available for learning is short on some days because education time is interrupted by meetings and therapy.
- Although the management committee now brings many skills to the unit and is well informed, it is not yet fully confident in challenging the teacher in charge, staff and students to do even better.
- The unit does not always identify quickly those students with additional learning needs who require specialist assistance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which three were observed jointly with the teacher in charge. In addition, she made a number of short visits to other lessons, heard students read and looked at their work.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the management committee, local authority representatives, ward staff and the unit's staff, including subject leaders.
- The inspector observed handovers between medical staff and education staff and attended community meetings.
- Although there were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be recorded, the inspector held telephone conversations with parents and considered the unit's own evidence of parents' views.
- The inspector observed the unit's work and looked at a number of documents including: the unit's self-evaluation and planning for improvement; the data the unit keeps on students' current progress and achievement; evidence as to how the unit works with partners to secure the well being of students; records relating to behaviour and attendance and the unit's safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The unit is located within Rochford psychiatric hospital where students are in-patients. It provides for up to 16 students who have psychiatric conditions including deliberate self harm, attempted suicide and psychoses.
- The unit is an integral part of the hospital provision and unit staff work with ward staff, consultants, clinical psychologists, family and social workers and therapists.
- Students are admitted to the psychiatric ward within the unit for stays of between 72 hours and up to a year, but the average stay is around six weeks. They come from South Essex, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Bedfordshire and Luton and occasionally further afield.
- There is a frequent turnover of students and nearly all are also registered with their home schools or colleges. No Key Stage 3 students were at the unit at the time of the inspection.
- The unit does not receive pupil premium for any students currently nor has done in the past.
- There are currently no students with a statement of special educational needs attending the unit.
- The unit is managed by the Essex County Council Children's Support Service and is governed by a management committee.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that much more of it is outstanding by:
 - developing further the ways teachers use the information gained from assessments, including information about reading and spelling levels and needs, so that lessons consistently challenge students and are always well matched to their needs and next steps.
- Improve the leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - extending the training the members of the management committee have received, especially on understanding the numerical data on students' progress, so they can question the teacher in charge and subject leaders even more closely to account for the unit's performance
 - ensuring that the time available for education is interrupted as little as possible
 - ensuring that students with additional learning needs are quickly identified and catered for.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress in English and mathematics because teachers skilfully provide personalised programmes of study for all. Progress is held back for a few students when the activities provided do not challenge them sufficiently, and when lessons are interrupted.
- Whatever their age, students study and achieve well in the subjects they want to because of excellent links between home school staff and the unit's tutors. This prepares students very well for their next placement or their return to school.
- Students' attainment is broadly in line with that of others of their age. A few achieve levels above those of others of their age as in the work observed in writing and poetry. For example, one student produced poetry and lyrics to put to music, with minimum support; another Year 10 student produced a fantasy story with detailed descriptions and fluent language; both pieces of work showed a remarkable command of written language to express ideas.
- Students make good progress in other subjects especially in art and music because of the skills and enthusiasm of the teachers and the ways in which these subjects are used to help them express their feelings.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs, for example students with visual impairment, achieve as well as other students, because the unit staff put into place specific adjustments to teaching or the environment that are required,.
- Occasionally students arrive with additional learning difficulties, such as with spelling or reading, that have not been previously identified. These students, although few in number, do not achieve as well as they could because there is currently limited specialist support available, for example, from the local authority educational psychologist to help the unit to quickly identify their needs and to give guidance on how to provide for them.
- Parents and students comment positively on the progress they make although a few wish there was even more time for learning, so they could improve even more. The inspection found that although students made good progress overall, the time for learning is too short on some days for even better progress to be made because of the interruptions for therapy and other appointments or meetings.

The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all teachers are good at getting the best out of students even though students often have low self esteem and confidence on entry and some are disaffected with the world and school. New students settle in remarkably quickly because of the staff's skills in building relationships and working with home schools and the medical team.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with students. They make good use of marking and praise to increase students' self-confidence and aspirations, so that they begin to look towards the future with optimism.
- Teachers' use of questions and of practical resources, including computer technology to help students to work things out for themselves, is particularly strong. Teachers plan individual students' work carefully, and also make sure they have many opportunities to work in small groups such as in food technology, and to discuss their work with each other.
- Most teachers use their lessons well to promote students' personal and emotional development as well as their numeracy, communication and literacy skills. Some teachers are not as skilful as others in supporting reading and spelling even when it is clear that a student has difficulties in these areas.

- Teachers are good at tailoring their programmes for students who are of sixth form age by ensuring there is a clear focus on the next stage in life that the student is about to take.
- Most teachers make good use of information about students' levels in the subjects they teach to set work at the right level. However, in a very small number of lessons staff are overly cautious about giving students harder tasks to do or extending the learning more. Students themselves say that sometimes the work is too easy.
- Each day teachers carefully monitor students' progress even though some students attend the unit for a very short time. They review individual achievement week by week so that even small improvements in learning, for example in mathematics in calculations, are recognised and taken into account in future lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The excellent support for students' personal, social and emotional development permeates everything the unit does and means that students have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. The behaviour of all students, including those who are of sixth form age, is exemplary.
- Students have many opportunities to work together and to take responsibility for their own learning. They research and write about many relevant topics in subjects like science, history and English. Through music and art, as well as from educational visits, they have many opportunities to consider other cultures and beliefs.
- The unit provides very strong support for students' well being. Students and staff regularly sit down together to consider their life goals, so that students are challenged to achieve even more and are well prepared to move on smoothly to the next stage of their lives.
- Students say they like coming to the unit because the teachers are 'really helpful and they do more than they have to'. They know their teachers respect and value them and their own behaviour reflects this. They are respectful to each other and adults, and try to do their best even when they are not well.
- Students are highly successful in making positive relationships with others and in managing their own behaviour. This is because of the very high expectations that everyone, including medical staff, has of them, and because teachers are very skilled at motivating and involving students so that they begin to believe in their own capabilities.
- Students are adamant that bullying does not happen, but do understand the different forms it can take and what to do if it should ever happen. They say they feel very safe and like to come to the unit because it makes them feel 'ordinary' and the same as others.
- All parents agree that their children are kept very safe. They are pleased with how well their children are supported and helped to understand how to keep safe. This is reflected in the high attendance of students at the unit, whatever their age or needs.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff, the management committee and the local authority share a strong vision and ambition to enable students to have the best opportunities when they leave the unit and return to their home schools and colleges. Their priority for all students is to rebuild self-belief, resilience and emotional well being. Students and parents say the unit does indeed help them to believe in and

understand themselves better.

- The unit's leaders know what needs to be done to make it even better. There are regular checks to find out how well staff are performing, coupled with a good range of staff training that is steadily improving teaching, learning and progress.
- Since the last inspection the leaders have put into place more effective ways of checking up on students' progress and there are improved daily procedures for sharing and receiving information alongside medical staff. Staff are now quickly brought up to speed on how well individual students are doing both personally and academically and the steps forward they need to take.
- Unit staff work hard in order to promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination, for example through the strong personal social and health education programme, the attention paid to each student individually and the respect demonstrated for everyone's point of view and background.
- Through self-reviews and joint reviews with medical staff, students generally receive the support they require although the unit leaders correctly recognise that more needs to be done to support students who have additional learning needs, particularly in spelling and reading.
- The unit has an extensive range of partnerships with other agencies, home schools and parents and carers as well as with similar provisions. Staff use these links well to provide a good range of activities and experiences for students that build up their enthusiasm and effectively enable them to recognise their own needs and achievements.
- However the time available for learning is sometimes limited because of the interruptions and meetings that take place during the school day and this restricts the amount of depth that some subjects can be studied in.
- Concern for student's safety and well being is given a very high priority. Procedures are followed meticulously. There are excellent working arrangements with the medical staff, other agencies and parents to safeguard all students.
- The unit does not receive additional monies such as pupil premium. However it is well resourced and the teacher in charge reflects and reviews carefully with the management committee and the local authority on how the monetary resources available will be best spent.
- The unit receives good support from the local authority children's support service to improve its work further, although it does not currently receive educational psychologist support. The adviser has already identified points for improvement with the unit leadership, similar to those found in this inspection. The adviser has begun to help them to address these through performance reviews and additional training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is ambitious for every student and is highly mindful of their medical needs. Members of the management committee are determined to play their part in making sure the unit achieves their high expectations for its work. The management committee is well informed about the unit's work and has improved the ways in which it checks on how well things are going. Members regularly visit the unit and question the teacher in charge about his report. The committee is less confident about how to challenge the unit's leaders so as to improve the provision further. The committee checks that staff pay is justified by teaching performance and the results achieved. The committee promotes opportunities for staff to work with subject leaders in other schools and provides staff training in areas such as 'suicide', 'self harm' and 'bereavement.'

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	135778
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	402737

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	PRU
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Dr Rewant Desai
Headteacher	Val Scott
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2010
Telephone number	01702 538000
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