

Tower Hamlets PRU

Harpley Centre, 21 Tollet Street, London, E1 4EE

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- As a result of good teaching, most students successfully re-engage with education and achieve well in a range of subjects.
- Progress is faster in English than in mathematics because the provision has focused more on improving students' literacy than numeracy.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students feel safe, show respect for staff and each other and are eager to learn. Staff have very positive relationships with students.
- Parents are supportive of the provision and praise the positive impact on their children's behaviour and achievement.
- Since the start of the academic year, half of all students have been successfully re-integrated back into mainstream schools.
- The headteacher has quickly and accurately identified the provision's strengths and priorities for further improvement. Senior and middle leaders provide consistency across the five sites to enable students to achieve well.
- The management committee has successfully taken on new responsibilities. It has maintained the previous strengths of the provision and now provides good support and challenge to leaders to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Students who attend the hospital provision make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few opportunities for students to improve their oral language skills in responding to searching questions. They are not encouraged strongly enough to communicate their understanding of their learning as fully as possible, particularly the most able.
- A few staff do not plan lessons well enough or check to see if students have fully grasped what is required of them. As a result, students are not always sure about how well they have succeeded in individual lessons.
- Not all leaders are confident in using information about students' progress to check

- Not all middle leaders have a clear role in checking the quality of teaching.
 - Students do not attend school regularly enough, despite improving on previous patterns of attendance.
- if they are doing well enough.
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Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 22 lessons, across all five sites, with almost all lessons being observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Informal discussions were held with groups of learners, and included listening to students reading.
- There were no submissions to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors took account of the provision’s own surveys of parents and carers, and three staff questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Management Committee, the headteacher, centre managers, senior and middle leaders, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors evaluated documentation, including information on the students’ current progress, the curriculum, and development plans, as well as procedures and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tower Hamlets Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) caters for Key Stage 1 to 4 students who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools or are at risk of permanent exclusion. It also makes provision for those without school places. In addition, the provision provides for sick children requiring individual or hospital tuition.
 - The provision operates on three main sites which are: Third Base in Bow for Key Stage 3 and Year 10 students, The Harpley Centre in Stepney for Key Stage 4 students, and Tommy Flowers in Aldgate for Key Stage 4 students.
 - The unit also has three additional sites: The Royal London Children's Hospital School (RLH) in Whitechapel, which caters for sick children at Key Stages 1 to 4; The Short Stay Unit in Bethnal Green for Key Stage 3 and 4 students on fixed term exclusions; and individual tuition for those who are unable to attend group tuition.
 - Alternative provision is also provided by Tower Hamlets College, Old Ford, Peacocks Gym, Fairbridge, Motorvations and the East London Beauty Academy.
 - In 2012/13 the number of students on roll in the non-hospital provision, peaked at 188 in June 2013, with a total of 346 different students being taught; over 500 children were taught at the RLH.
 - Just over a half of all students are of Bangladeshi heritage, with the next largest group being White British. There are twice as many boys as girls.
 - Almost all students are supported at school action plus, with 12 having a statement of special educational needs.
 - The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is the proportion of the students who speak English as an additional language or who are at the early stages of learning English.
 - The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (those eligible for free school meals, those in care and those with a parent or carer in the armed services) is above average. The local authority looks after three of the students, but none of the students in the provision are from service families.
 - There are currently no students in Year 7 and so the provision does not receive the Year 7 catch-up funding. The primary sports funding grant is held by the school in which each student is on roll, and at present, the provision doesn't receive any portion of this funding.
 - Almost a third of all students are involved with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) usually as a result of their behavioural needs.
 - No students are entered early for public examinations. Occasionally, a small number of Year 10 students are entered early for work-related courses.
 - The headteacher was appointed in September 2012, and since that time a number of key senior, middle and administrative appointments have been made.
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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of mostly good teaching and learning by:
 - giving students more opportunities to answer searching questions so that they are challenged to communicate their understanding and so to reach higher levels of achievement
 - ensuring teachers provide clear feedback to students on their work so that they know how to improve
 - ensuring teachers' planning ensures students are clear as to what is expected of them and how their success will be measured.

 - Improve still further the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including the management committee, by:
 - strengthening the rigour with which students' progress information is analysed so that trends are more accurately identified and interventions made more swiftly
 - improving rates of attendance still further by working even more closely with parents and carers so that they give real assent to the importance of regular attendance
 - strengthening the monitoring role of middle leaders still further to improve the quality of teaching.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Students arrive at the provision with levels of skill that are below those expected for their ages and abilities. This is as a result of many having experienced failure in their previous schools. As a result, they lack confidence and have significant gaps in their learning. This is often due to erratic patterns of attendance, often because of exclusion, negative attitudes to learning or medical conditions.
- Students join the provision at different times and the longer the students remain in it, the faster they progress, particularly at Key Stage 4. Achievement information on individual students shows that there is no significant variation between the achievement of different groups, in particular disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those receiving support for mental health difficulties. However, by the time they leave in Year 11, although standards remain below average in English and mathematics, the gap in attainment for all students has closed significantly.
- In 2013, there was a six percentage point increase in students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to G including English and mathematics, a clear improvement on the previous years' performance.
- Progress in English is faster than in mathematics. This is because of a robust training programme to improve students' literacy skills through one-to-one support. A good example of this was seen during an English lesson, where students were confident enough to read aloud fluently to a visitor, from an information leaflet they had designed about the attractions of visiting Iceland.
- Lesson observations and the provision's increasingly reliable information on learners' achievements show that students' progress is continuing to improve rapidly, with most students, irrespective of their ethnic heritage, achieving much higher standards in English and mathematics than at the previous inspection. Students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding have made similar progress to their peers while in the provision.
- Students who attend the hospital teaching make rapid gains in their personal development, enabling many to re-engage with education and start to make up ground that has previously been lost in their learning, as a result of the careful planning for their individual needs.
- The provision has an increasingly strong record in enabling students to return to mainstream schooling, often after a short period, especially at Key Stages 2 and 3. Since the start of the academic year, half of all students have been successfully re-integrated back into mainstream schools.
- A small number of students spend part of their timetable studying off-site. Their rate of progress is good with all providers and is similar to that of students in the provision. There are effective arrangements for checking their work, attendance, punctuality and behaviour.
- All students now achieve some form of accredited qualification, with most learners reaching their target levels. However, achievement is not yet outstanding because the proportion of students who do not successfully proceed on to education, employment or training is too high.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- Teaching across the provision promotes equal opportunities and good learning for all students across the range of lessons in all sites. Teachers use good displays and sustain well an excellent learning environment to provide worthwhile opportunities in all subjects for students to develop their basic skills. For example, subject-specific key words and examples of students' graded work are prominently displayed in all classrooms.
- Reading is well taught across the provision, giving students the opportunity to develop their confidence and resulting in their being able to read aloud their own compositions or comment on

the work of their fellow students in the class, for example.

- Staff are skilled at engaging and motivating students and at helping them to overcome obstacles to learning. Students particularly enjoy the opportunity to solve problems. This was observed in a personal development lesson on budgeting, where students enthusiastically discussed and computed their weekly expenditure derived from pocket money or part-time work. They also grappled with the benefits of saving.
- Teachers use questioning and students' answers well to check on students' progress in grasping new skills, knowledge and understanding. However, this practice is not as consistently well applied across all of the provision. As a result, the communication and understanding skills of the most able students are not always sufficiently developed.
- Teachers do not always provide clear enough feedback to students on their learning and written work. As a consequence, students do not always have a clear idea of how to proceed in improving their work.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is woven into their daily lives. There are many opportunities for students to participate in the arts through writing poetry, sometimes in their home languages, composing music and reflecting on the lives of people who are from different cultures and have different beliefs. During the inspection, members of a well-known London orchestra visited the hospital provision to lead workshop-based music-making activities. Here students thoroughly enjoyed the experience of working and cooperating with each other and performing their own music.
- There is a high ratio of support staff to students. However, they are not always deployed effectively to support students' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They are friendly and polite to adults and each other and behave well in lessons because they are generally interested in what they are learning. At break times, they are well supervised and they respond well to adults. Lunch is a social occasion that is enjoyed by all students
- Exclusions have been reduced over the past year from 99 days to 58, due to a behaviour strategy, initiated by the current leadership of the provision. There have been no permanent exclusions.
- The provision has an effective behaviour policy which is consistently and fairly applied across all centres. Students know that they must abide by the expectations and rules of the provision and readily accept the need to hand in mobile phones and hats on arrival.
- Students told inspectors they enjoy coming to the provision, and feel safe and well cared for, and, as a result, most behave responsibly and cooperatively.
- In a recent Ofsted aspect survey on safeguarding, parents and carers agreed that their children enjoy attending the provision and are safe.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because not all students are able to actively prevent different forms of bullying and they are sometimes over reliant on adult supervision in their learning.
- Attendance for many has improved considerably throughout the provision when compared to their previous mainstream school. During the past year, attendance has improved by nine percentage points across the provision. This is as a result of the robust follow-up strategies for both absence and punctuality.
- The provision's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Rigorous safeguarding practices are in place and staff take the necessary steps to ensure students are safe. Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe while using the internet. The refurbishment of some sites has contributed to students increasingly feeling safe; as one group commented, 'Here we have more space, are safe and feel less stressed.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, through his high expectations, energy and determination, has created a welcoming and calm ethos where all students are given the opportunity to achieve their best, irrespective of their background or past difficulties. He is well supported by senior colleagues and, despite a period of considerable change, the provision has overcome a number of staffing difficulties and morale is buoyant. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because leaders have not ensured that teachers' planning ensures students are clear as to what is expected of them and how their progress will be measured.
- As a result of increasingly robust arrangements for managing teachers' performance, only those teachers who meet the required standards, as judged by the headteacher, are able to move up the salary scale. The headteacher and interim deputy headteacher secure continuity and consistency across the provision's five sites by providing frequent, regular opportunities for staff to learn together, discuss students' progress, and share good practice and resources.
- The provision's monitoring of the quality of teaching involves informal classroom visits and formal lesson observations. The senior team currently leads this process with subject leaders increasingly involved. As a result of training in lesson observation techniques, senior staff are able to make accurate judgements on the quality of teaching, which were confirmed by inspectors. In addition, teachers are encouraged to watch one another's lessons and to provide constructive feedback. This has made a strong contribution to improving the quality of teaching. However, not all middle leaders are confident in their monitoring role, with some requiring further training in order to bring about more rapid improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Systems for recording and analysing information about students' progress are enabling leaders to build up a clear picture of how well different groups are achieving in each class. This, in turn, allows leaders to keep a close eye on students who show signs of underachievement so that additional support can be planned. However, not all staff are confident in analysing information on students' progress.
- Since the last inspection, the range of courses at Key Stage 4 has been designed specifically to reduce the number of students who do not proceed to education, employment or training. This has been achieved by introducing a personal development and employability skills course, mentoring, work-related courses and a pre-apprenticeship programme with strong pastoral care, information, advice and guidance.
- Parents speak highly of the support and range of activities offered by the provision to meet the learning needs of their children.
- The provision has worked well with the local authority following the re-organisation of PRU provision in the borough. It has also received invaluable support and advice from the local authority's senior improvement adviser, who has often been instrumental in securing additional funding for the provision.
- Successful partnerships with external agencies, together with strong partnership collaboration with local secondary schools, has been strengthened by leaders' increased involvement in a wider range of strategic and operational groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the newly formed management committee provide effective support for the headteacher, who ensures that the performance and salary progression of staff are monitored. The Chair, together with members of the management committee, has undergone specific training in budget delegation and the future leadership of pupil referral units. The committee members receive reports from the headteacher and external advisers, and ask probing questions so that they fully understand the issues facing the provision, particularly information on students' progress and how it compares with similar settings. They are well informed about the quality of teaching, and there is a planned programme of visits arranged. Committee members have a good overview of the provision's financial resources to drive its priorities forward. This includes directing appropriate funds for students attracting the pupil premium to make sure that individual learners are supported and helped in lessons. However, the impact of strategies supported by this funding has not been fully evaluated. Full regard is given to the

well-being and safety of students, who are very vulnerable at this time in their lives.

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	100889
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	425476

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	
Headteacher	John Watkin
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 September 2010
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