

St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Service

Alexandra Park, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2BG

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders are well respected, take decisive action to improve the provision and have developed a very positive ethos for learning in the unit.
- Teaching and achievement have improved since the last inspection and students make good progress. Some students make outstanding progress. Students make very good progress in reading.
- The management committee provide challenge, support and expertise that require leaders to account for actions taken.
- Students often come into the unit with a history of very poor behaviour. They are supported well and, as a result, their behaviour improves rapidly.
- Applications for accreditation in English and mathematics are rising and an increasing range of courses are undertaken.
- Students' work is assessed well. They work towards clear targets, benefiting from many new opportunities that had previously been closed to them.
- Support for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Students' social skills and their understanding of moral issues are particularly well developed.
- The centre provides a safe learning environment that re-engages many students and allows them to build confidence and self-esteem very well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of students making outstanding progress is not yet sufficient, as opportunities provided in the classroom are not always taken full advantage of.
- The school does not define clearly enough outstanding progress. Individual targets and challenges do not promote the highest aspirations, particularly for the most able students.
- Leadership is strong but is not yet firmly embedded at all levels.
- Students are not given enough encouragement to respond to feedback and improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- A tour of the school and a range of lesson observations were undertaken, some of which was carried out jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, school staff, students, a parent of a student who had recently moved to another school, and members of the management committee.
- There were no responses to Parent View, but the school's own survey of parents was taken into account.
- The views of staff were gathered from the 14 questionnaires returned and from meetings and conversations throughout the inspection.
- Students' work was looked at during visits to lessons. Case studies provided detailed progress information. The school's own student progress-tracking information and results from public examinations were also considered.
- The inspector observed the unit's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, attendance, behaviour analysis, alternative provision documents, policies and procedures, and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Paul Scott, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit provides alternative provision for students who have been permanently excluded, were at risk of exclusion or are in need of specific support to help them to be more successful in mainstream education.
- Some of the students attending are dual-registered. This means that both the unit and a mainstream school take joint responsibility for their progress, usually during a period of reintegration into a mainstream school setting. The period of time that students remain at the unit varies considerably. Almost all students have missed substantial periods of time in school.
- The unit is currently being led by an acting headteacher, who was previously a member of the leadership team.
- The majority of students who attend the unit have special educational needs. A number of students receive a statement of special educational needs when they are in the unit.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is above the national average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The unit currently uses one alternative provider, The Empire Gym in Bristol.
- The unit collaborates with a wide range of secondary schools in the area. This is primarily to facilitate students moving between mainstream schools where additional support is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further by:
 - fully implementing individual staff development plans.
 - ensuring that students are provided with appropriate individually dedicated challenge so that more are enabled to make the outstanding progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the progress that students make in their learning by:
 - making sure that students respond more readily to teachers' directions and guidance
 - further refining the unit's analysis of their tracking systems, so that outstanding and good progress is more clearly defined
 - setting more precise targets in lessons
 - ensuring that the most able students are provided with appropriate levels of challenge to reach their potential.
- Further develop leadership capacity by broadening opportunities for all staff to take more leadership responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have clarity of purpose, high expectations and a clear focus on encouraging students to engage in learning. There is a positive atmosphere in the unit. Staff are supportive and fully committed to the school's ethos. Morale is high and staff are proud of their contribution to the achievement of students.
- There is an effective focus on improving the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, and developing the range of accredited courses offered. Arrangements are in place to link staff performance to pay progression. Staff have benefited from good training opportunities.
- Senior leaders are developing a system of tracking the progress being made by students and the standards they reach. Targets are set for individuals, but are not precise enough. Analysis of students' performance gives evidence of good progress, but outstanding progress is less well defined.
- Leaders involve parents and students in planning what will best suit their individual needs. The great efforts by the school to ensure effective communication with parents and students have helped to develop positive attitudes to learning. Parent surveys highlight the support and encouragement the unit gives to help students and their families.
- The unit has a highly inclusive philosophy. Good relationships are fostered and equality of opportunity is strongly promoted. Students learn to understand how their behaviour impacts on others and how they can become positive contributors to the wider community. Students respond well to the positive role models that staff demonstrate.
- Safeguarding arrangements promote good practice and help to minimise risk. They meet statutory requirements. Attendance, although below the national average, has improved considerably for most students. Staff make extensive efforts to make it easy for students to attend regularly. A small number of students miss out on the help provided by the unit because of poor attendance.
- Middle leadership roles are not fully developed and so opportunities to move things forward more rapidly are missed.
- The unit has a well-thought-out curriculum that allows students to get back into the habit of learning. Opportunities to develop mathematics and English, especially reading, are ranged across the curriculum. This engages learners and helps build confidence. The specific alternative provision, provided by a local gym programme, caters for a range of individual interests such as boxing. This also encourages students to work hard in all areas of schooling as it helps to improve their general attitudes to learning.
- The school monitors the alternative provision very thoroughly. Its analysis of the impact is based on a range of indicators which demonstrate good progress by individuals who attend it.
- Additional funding such as the pupil premium is used well to provide additional support. Disadvantaged students and those with specific learning issues are helped to make the same good progress as their peers.
- The local authority provides regular support, assisting leaders in developing the management of the unit, such as checking their self-evaluation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the management committee offer a wide range of relevant experiences and professional knowledge. They understand the key priorities and are focused on improving teaching to ensure that students' progress is further accelerated. They know the centre well, provide strong support and challenge leaders to account for their stewardship.
 - Through visits and questioning they have developed a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They consider information on the unit's performance and check its effectiveness in improving achievement. They are fully aware of the performance management arrangements and ensure that processes are in place to reward good teaching and tackle any under-performance.
 - Governors have a good grasp of how funding is used, including how effectively the pupil premium is used to provide appropriate additional support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most students enter the unit with a record of poor behaviour. Good use of individual behaviour plans and consistent approaches by staff to manage behaviour issues help instil a sense of responsibility. Students learn to control their own behaviour, developing much more positive

attitudes to learning as a result. Some students make exceptional improvements in their behaviour.

- Students demonstrate a commitment to their learning, as seen in the pride they take in their work. Generally, positive relationships have been established with staff and with their fellow students. This has helped students to enjoy learning, build their confidence quickly and take part in the full range of opportunities available.
- On occasion a small number of students are not fully motivated to learn. Clear guidance and support is used effectively in developing positive attitudes, as well as raising self-esteem and a personal sense of worth.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good
- Many parents, staff and students say that the school provides a safe environment for learning. Training in safeguarding is undertaken by all staff and processes and procedures to support vulnerable students are firmly in place.
- Staff carefully record incidents of concern. This includes the use of physical interventions – in which staff have been fully trained – where needed for safety reasons. Analysis of incidents shows improvements in behaviour and helps to inform any further support the unit may consider necessary.
- Students are aware of the different forms of bullying and are helped to understand how they can keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about potential dangers of the internet. Students said that they can speak to staff in the school if they have a problem.
- Attendance is low overall compared to that usually found in secondary schools. Many students placed in the unit have a history of low attendance in their previous school. The work in the unit supports students and parents very well in this respect, improving attendance significantly and helping students re-engage in their learning. A small number of students are often absent despite a great deal of effort, persuasion and discussion. The unit is very proactive in encouraging attendance and in adapting provision to support the progress of individuals.
- The alternative provision acts to further encourage students' positive attendance routines, as they are very motivated to take full advantage of this popular initiative.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching and its impact over time is typically good. This is evident from lesson observations, students' work, information on students' performance, and discussions about learning.
- The staff in the unit work hard to get to know students well. They build positive relationships that help individuals to enjoy attending the unit and learning a range of subjects. The positive ethos encourages and supports students to build their confidence and realise the importance of learning. The wide focus on achievement supports students' good social development as well as their good academic progress.
- The calm, deliberate and persistent approach of teachers means that there are consistent and clear boundaries in classrooms and students are able to fully participate in the variety of well-planned lessons.
- Teachers use targets well to motivate students and monitor their progress over short periods of time. Literacy, in particular reading, and mathematics are developed well in some lessons. There is still some work needed to apply teaching methods consistently.
- Good questioning and feedback to students help them to know what they have to do and thereby hasten their progress. Students do not always know what outstanding progress might look like for them, but are clear about the simple next steps they need to make. The opportunities to respond to feedback are not always given a high enough priority.
- Teaching is individualised and groups are small. Teaching assistants contribute well to students' progress and help them to build their confidence. The wider support team also focuses students on making good choices and often anticipates when students need additional support. This enables timely support to be given to individuals and minimises the impact that poorer approaches to learning might have on other students. Some teaching has an outstanding impact, but not enough is outstanding across the unit. Teachers' extensive and precise understanding of individuals is not yet used fully to challenge all individuals to aspire to their potential.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The vast majority of students joining the unit have very low starting points for their ages. They often have a history of missed or broken education. Students stay for varying lengths of time but make good progress in their learning during their time at the unit. Standards are still below those found nationally, but students in Year 11 make good progress in mathematics and English, and particularly in reading. Some make outstanding progress.
- There is a wide variation in ability, and after an initial assessment period students quickly begin to fulfil their own potential. GCSE and entry-level certificates are pursued. This helps students to re-engage successfully and to familiarise themselves with mainstream school work.
- The success in external accreditation, including GCSE, is increasing. Students are proud of their success and all but one of the students leaving in Year 11 in the last three years have gone on to training, education or employment.
- Prior to their time in the unit many students had made very little progress since the end of Key Stage 2. The school's performance-tracking information demonstrates very impressive improvements in English and mathematics for many students. The unit is particularly successful in promoting reading skills and many students who join the unit well below their chronological age for reading make outstanding progress in reading.
- The school carefully tracks the progress of groups of students, such as those with special educational needs, vulnerable and disadvantaged students. Case studies indicate that variations in performance of different groups within the unit relate to the ability of individuals and that progress on an individual basis is good. Lack of challenge does not always allow the most able students to achieve as well as they could.
- The pupil premium funding has been targeted in providing specific support for individual students including literacy and mentoring. The small number of students in Year 11 and the fact that students may also have special educational needs makes comparisons to national attainment measures difficult. Inspection evidence shows there are no notable differences between the performance in English or mathematics of disadvantaged students and that of other groups during their time in the unit.
- The unit checks the success of its support work with its mainstream feeder schools. Many students return to mainstream education and are successful in holding their places.
- Many students obtain a statement of special educational needs while in the unit. They achieve well and go on to college or to mainstream or special schools.
- The alternative provision is monitored closely, showing that students are making good progress in their physical activities.

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	133160
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	447981

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Susan Pearson
Acting Headteacher	Aileen Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2011
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