

# The Meriton Education and Support for Young Parents

Meriton Street, St Philips, Bristol, BS2 0SZ

## Inspection dates

11–12 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The Meriton is a happy unit which greatly builds up the confidence, self-belief and self-esteem of young parents.
- Students make good progress, achieve well and are fully prepared for the next stages of their lives. Students make exceptional gains in their communication skills and nearly all leave The Meriton with grades A\* to C in GCSE English.
- Teaching is good. Relationships between adults and students are both supportive and productive. Staff expect much of their students who respond with eagerness and enthusiasm.
- Staff are entirely successful at encouraging students to see their potential as learners, aim high and work hard.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Students are unfailingly courteous and thoughtful toward staff and to each other. They feel completely safe and secure and are increasingly confident about keeping themselves safe in different situations.
- The driving force behind The Meriton's success is undoubtedly the gifted and dedicated headteacher. She has built up a close-knit staff team which excels in encouraging students' confidence and excellent behaviour. Leaders are ensuring that teaching is improving and that students' achievement is accelerating.
- Programmes of study encourage a good range of skills, contributing very well to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the arts, visits and contributions from visitors. Students are prepared very well for life in modern Britain.
- The management committee has a thorough knowledge of the quality of the unit's work. This enables them to hold leaders to account.
- Students following post-16 courses achieve well and make good progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, time is not used well enough to ensure a brisk pace of learning.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students follow up on the advice they are given on how to improve their work.
- Progress in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English.
- The unit's procedures for gauging the skills and abilities of students when they join The Meriton are not always rigorous or reliable enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across The Meriton. Evidence was also scrutinised relating to the quality of teaching over time, including evidence from the local authority, management committee observations, and observations carried out by senior leaders and an independent consultant.
- Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation relating to students’ progress, their behaviour and well-being, procedures to ensure the safety of the students and their attendance. In addition, inspectors examined a range of students’ work.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher and other senior staff, the Chair of the Management Committee and one other member, a representative of the local authority, two groups of students and the headteacher of HospitalEd. Inspectors also spoke to several parents and former students at The Meriton. The lead inspector attended part of a management committee meeting.
- There were not enough responses to register on Parent View (the online questionnaire). However, the inspectors took account of a recent parent survey and the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Tim Gilson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Meriton Education and Support for Young Parents, known as The Meriton, is a pupil referral unit (PRU) providing education and support for pregnant young women and young mothers.
- There are 48 students on the roll of the school. Of these, 40 are post-16. The age range of current students is between 14 and 19.
- Students are often taught in mixed-age groups on courses that are appropriate to their needs.
- The Meriton provides early years care for babies and young children between the ages of birth and three years. This is managed by The Meriton's management committee and is subject to a separate inspection report.
- Nearly all of the small number of pre-16 students are supported by the pupil premium. This is additional government funding to support disadvantaged students who are eligible for free school meals or are looked after.
- The Meriton does not receive any Year 7 catch-up premium.
- There are no disabled students or students with special education needs currently on the roll of The Meriton. Nearly all students are White British and a small number are from minority ethnic groups.
- Many students start at different times of the year to the usual admission times and several students have their studies interrupted by maternity leave for up to 12 weeks.
- There are too few students following pre-16 courses to comment on the extent to which The Meriton meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The Meriton uses a number of alternative providers to supplement and complement the courses it offers. These include: 'Rock Steady' offering courses in construction, and 'Wheels' where students study car maintenance and learn to drive.
- The headteacher retired in January 2015, after leading the school for many years. She has returned to lead the school two days per week, aided by an assistant headteacher. In April 2015, The Meriton is due to merge with the City of Bristol's hospital education service, HospitalEd. Both will be led by an executive headteacher and the day-to-day leadership and management of The Meriton will be by an assistant headteacher. The authority is currently in the process of appointing this assistant headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to raise students' achievement further by making sure that:
  - the pace of learning in lessons always encourages students to make rapid progress
  - students respond to teachers' spoken and written advice about how to improve their work
  - teaching challenges students to develop and apply their mathematical and problem-solving skills further
  - the unit's assessment of students when they arrive at The Meriton is more accurate and reliable and, therefore, is better able to be used to track progress and plan for the learning needs of individual students.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- This small PRU, one of only a small number of its kind in the country, has been led with exceptional clarity and drive by its gifted headteacher. She has built a highly effective and cohesive team that works exceptionally well with her. All are passionate about achieving high quality provision and the best possible outcomes for students.
- Leaders have created a safe, calm working environment where high-quality relationships are characterised by support, regard and trust. Expectations are high. As a result, students invariably respect the staff and show great consideration for each other and for their work.
- Teaching is good and is improving, being checked accurately and regularly. Effective management of staff performance and carefully chosen training ensure that staff and school needs are met well. Leaders are accurate in their judgement about how well the unit is doing and what it needs to be better. They give good support to staff so that they know how to improve.
- Staff responsible for aspects of the unit's work, including subject and middle leaders, are growing in effectiveness. They are increasingly involved in checking the progress of students and are gaining confidence and expertise at checking the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- Leaders recognise that the way in which The Meriton assesses the abilities of its students when they join the unit is not fully effective. Many young parents join The Meriton with incomplete information on their prior performance. The unit seeks to complement this by using tests based on parts of past examination papers, to set a baseline on which student progress can be measured. This gives only a partial picture of students' abilities. Therefore, it is difficult for the unit to gauge accurately students' progress over time and what students need to do to improve.
- The curriculum provides young parents and pregnant young women with the opportunity to access a broad range of courses and a variety of activities. It is highly successful at building up students' confidence, self-belief and self-esteem. In this way these young parents are given opportunities to enjoy their education and achieve their potential. The curriculum inspires interest and does much to re-engage students in meaningful learning that will take them to the next step when they leave The Meriton. Several students have progressed to courses in further or higher education when they leave the unit.
- The Meriton's focus on ensuring that all students are encouraged to gain qualifications in the key skills of English and mathematics does much to ensure that they are better able to contribute to society and achieve economic well-being when they leave the unit.
- Students are given good quality guidance and practical support to make decisions that will reflect their aspirations for the future.
- The Meriton promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them for life in modern Britain extremely well. In an English lesson, students who were developing their skills in persuasive writing, eagerly took part in a class debate about the rights and wrongs of smacking children. Each listened well to the arguments put forward by others and responded with their own counter-arguments.
- Leaders are rigorous, yet sensitive, in checking the attendance and behaviour of these young mothers, including those who attend the off-site provision.
- The unit uses its pupil premium funding very effectively. Each entitled student benefits from additional support in English and mathematics, one-to-one teaching, and the provision of enrichment and off-site activities. Leaders ensure that breakfast is always provided for its young mothers and their children.
- The Meriton is highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and tackling discrimination.
- Partnership working with colleges, other organisations and agencies, and parents and carers is very effective. Parents are closely consulted in decision making, kept very well informed about their daughter's academic progress and well-being and are effusive in their praise for The Meriton. One parent echoed the views of many when she told inspectors that The Meriton has '... changed my life ... and the life of my daughter'.
- The unit's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that staff are consistent and vigilant so that all students are kept safe.
- The Meriton has received minimal support from the local authority as it judges the unit to be very effective.
- Although leadership and management have many excellent features, especially their nurturing of the personal development and well-being of the young mothers, they are not outstanding because too few students make rapid gains in their learning, especially in mathematics.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- The management committee is effective. The members know the unit and its services well. Members have a clear overview of the quality of teaching and of students' achievement and related data.
- Members of the committee are fully involved in the appraisal of the performance of the headteacher and keep close checks to make sure that any pay awards to staff are linked securely to students' progress.
- They make sure that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well enough and that students understand British values so that they are well prepared for life when they leave The Meriton.
- The management committee offers the right balance of challenge and support to school leaders and keeps a close eye on how effectively the unit spends its additional funding to make sure that disadvantaged students make up any lost ground.
- The management committee is acutely aware of its responsibilities to make sure that the forthcoming merger with HospitalEd is managed in a way that does not dilute the ethos or the effectiveness of The Meriton.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They show a great eagerness to learn and many have a strong appetite for learning. This, indeed, is a huge achievement considering that a great many of the students have had a fractured history of education before coming to The Meriton. Some have experienced severe crises in their lives. Several have had very poor attendance records and showed a great reluctance to learn.
- The great success of The Meriton is the way in which it has instilled a sense of self-belief and self-worth into many of these young women. They respond, often for the first time in their lives, by showing a genuine love of learning.
- They are punctual and well prepared, despite caring for newly born babies. They learn with confidence, knowing that their babies are well cared for just a few metres along the corridor. One student spoke for many when she said, 'The Meriton has turned my life around.'
- Students respond very well to the well-established routines. They get on very well together and with the adults who teach them, showing great respect for the property and for their work. Students' books are kept exceptionally neatly. They take pride in sharing their work and helping each other to learn when appropriate.
- The Meriton has evidence of dramatic improvement in attendance for individual students. This is greatly aided by the welcoming and supportive atmosphere and close work with parents and outside agencies such as health workers.
- Although behaviour in lessons and around The Meriton is exemplary, achievement is not yet outstanding because aspects of teaching are holding back progress from being rapid.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents, staff and students are completely confident that safety is a high priority at the unit. Leaders have ensured that the suitability of all those working in the different aspects of the unit have been securely checked.
- Students say they feel completely safe. They are growing in confidence in how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of circumstances, including the internet and the inappropriate actions of others.
- They say that there is no time or place at The Meriton when they do not feel secure. Students say that staff 'go that extra mile' for them. They are all assured that, if they have a problem, adults at The Meriton will help them deal with it and sort it out for them.
- Students have a strong understanding of the different kinds of bullying and about discriminatory language. Many say that they have experienced such unkindness in the past but there is no trace of it at The Meriton. One young mother told inspectors, '... we are in it together here – we help each other...'

**The quality of teaching****is good**

- The quality of teaching is consistently good across the unit and is sometimes outstanding.
- From the point of referral, teachers quickly establish excellent relationships with students. Teachers have

good, and sometimes expert, knowledge in the nurture and teaching of students who have previously been disillusioned with school.

- Teachers make lessons interesting, lively and relevant to the lives of these young mothers. They expect much of their students and so learning is productive and often fast paced. Students take great pride in their work and relish being successful in the tasks they are set, often their first taste of success in education. This feeds their appetite for learning which is sustained over the whole day. Quite often they do not want to pack away and leave the room at the end of a session.
- Sometimes, the pace of lessons is not judged well enough to ensure students' best progress. When this happens, some students lose concentration and may make slower progress.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to check students' understanding skilfully. They provide them with clear information about how well they are doing, how to improve and what the next steps are towards their goals.
- Learning and progress are sometimes held back, however, because teachers do not always make sure that students follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.
- Teaching across The Meriton promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well by providing opportunities for reflection on moral issues and for developing teamwork.
- The teaching of communication skills is particularly effective and is a strength of the unit. Teachers go to great lengths to encourage students to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills. Students are constantly prompted to articulate their ideas and comment on the views of others in high-powered class discussions. This is often followed up by carefully crafted written text using a wide range of vocabulary.
- The teaching of mathematics is good because the staff patiently explain concepts and mathematical ideas in a way that is readily understandable to most students. Progress is not as rapid as in English however, because some students are not always moved on to the higher work of which they are capable, particularly to extend their higher-order mathematical skills.
- Teachers track the progress of individual students carefully and provide sensitive feedback to them about what they need to do to improve. The initial assessments of students when they are referred to The Meriton, however, are based on too narrow a range of evidence. This does not always give teachers precise enough information about what students already know, understand and can do to enable them to plan the precise steps in students' learning.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- When students start at The Meriton, at various times of the year, their attainment is usually below that typically expected for their age. This is often because their circumstances have prevented the smooth flow of learning in the past. Once in the unit, students rapidly begin to re-engage with learning and their rate of progress improves.
- Students make rapid progress in their personal development. They do this because they make good gains in their learning and staff are highly successful at helping students find solutions to the often chaotic problems in their lives.
- Students benefit greatly from the various alternative providers used by the unit. From car maintenance at 'Wheels' to go-karting and boxing, students gain a range of practical and personal skills that adds to their self-confidence and resilience.
- Students make outstanding progress in developing their skills in literacy. The unit places great emphasis on literacy across the whole curriculum. As a result, students are articulate in discussion across a wide range of topics. They increasingly speak with confidence and knowledge, showing a willingness to listen and consider other points of view. They read aloud with confidence and expression and readily apply their writing skills in a variety of subjects.
- Across other subjects of the curriculum students make good progress. They make good progress in mathematics, although some students could do even better. From a very wide range of different starting points, students do well in gaining GCSEs and vocational qualifications. The unit does not enter students early for examinations and staff give very careful attention to ensuring that individual students are entered for examinations at the right time.
- Because students develop a very wide range of skills in English and a good understanding of mathematics, they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives, for employment or for further or higher education.
- The most able students do particularly well and gain in confidence. Work is well tailored to their needs and challenging targets stretch them well. Many students have progressed to university courses in the recent past.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of groups of students, including those who have

disabilities or special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and those who are disadvantaged.

- The unit uses pupil premium funding very effectively to fill gaps in eligible pupils' learning through individual support for students. Because of the small numbers of students following pre-16 courses at the school, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others in the unit and nationally.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The majority of students at The Meriton are now post-16, a significant change from the recent past when most were below the age of 16. The unit makes good provision for these students and offers a wide range of academic and vocational opportunities that is geared very precisely to the individual circumstances and ambitions of each of these young women.
- Across the unit, students make good gains in their learning and make rapid gains in English. In recent years, virtually all students have left the unit with good GCSE grades in both English and mathematics, and many students have gained the very highest grades in English.
- Students gain qualifications across a range of level 2 and level 3 subjects, such as health and social care, art and design, science, catering and education for the future. A few students do not make enough progress in some subjects because their learning is interrupted by their maternity leave.
- Teaching on post-16 courses is good and is particularly effective in English. Teaching challenges students to think for themselves or to work through problems in order to deepen their understanding.
- The unit very successfully teaches the skills necessary to prepare the students to continue their education. The impact of this is seen in the high proportion of students who progress to foundation and degree courses in higher education.
- The behaviour of students on post-16 course is invariably impeccable. Students pay attention in lessons and are good role models for younger students around the unit. They are rapidly developing the study skills and learning habits necessary to enable them to pursue their own learning.
- Students on post-16 courses speak highly of their teachers. They feel completely secure and understand how to keep themselves safe.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108908
<b>Local authority</b>	City of Bristol
<b>Inspection number</b>	449538

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	48
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	40
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Management Committee
<b>Chair</b>	Esther Nye
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Bowery
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 September 2009
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