School report

Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit

Hepscott Park, Stannington, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 6NF

Inspection dates	3–4 June 2015

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.

- Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit is a good school. The visionary leadership of the headteacher, enthusiastically supported by other leaders, has successfully improved many aspects of the school's performance since the last inspection.
- The effective and helpful management committee makes an admirable contribution to the vision and leadership of the school. To realise this shared vision they are working with the local authority to maximise and enhance the school further.
- The majority of pupils arrive with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. They quickly respond to the encouragement provided by the staff by settling in well making good progress in their social and emotional skills.
- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Very well-planned, exciting activities engage pupils in their learning.
- Pupils across the school make good progress in English and mathematics. This is because there are many engaging and interesting opportunities in lessons to practise and develop their skills. The most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and numeracy.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is good and this is demonstrated during lessons and when pupils participate in activities around the school.
- Relationships with staff are excellent thanks to a caring supportive environment. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in a friendly, caring school.
- The curriculum is good. It provides many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers skilfully use assessment in lessons to help pupils engage in their learning, however, teachers' comments in books are not always used by pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils are not always engaged by the homework set by teachers.
- Currently, teaching assistants have too few opportunities to develop more expertise and gain extra knowledge in order to support high quality learning in classrooms.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons and part lessons taught by five teachers and one high-level teaching assistant. In addition, the inspector with the headteacher made a number of short visits to lessons to check the quality of learning for the most able pupils.
- The inspector also met three pupils to talk about their work and experience of the school.
- The inspector met with a number of staff, including the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Meetings were also held with the management committee.
- The inspector looked at the work of the school, including pupils' behaviour, and analysed documentation in relation to attendance, safeguarding, pupils' work, self-evaluation and the school's system for checking on pupils' progress. The inspector examined pupils' work in different year groups.
- The inspector looked at the school's recent parental questionnaire and held a conversation with a parent. There were not enough responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the inspector to be able to view.

Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a Pupil Referral Unit for pupils aged seven to 14 years from across Northumberland County.
- Pupils are mainly referred by schools because they are at risk of being permanently excluded, although some have been permanently excluded and referred by the local authority. There is an increasing, though small number, of pupils with special educational needs and mental health issues and a small number of pupils who have not been able to find a school place elsewhere.
- There are significantly more boys on roll than girls and a small number of pupils looked after by the local authority.
- Over one-third of pupils are disadvantaged, which is higher than average. These are pupils eligible to support through the pupil premium funding because they are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority. Currently, the unit does not receive any of the funding for these pupils. Funding allocations will change from April 2016.
- The school does not receive the primary school sports funding.
- The school provides nurture groups, one of which is for a small number of primary age pupils with special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similar proportion speaks English as an additional language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers' comments made on pupils' work are acted upon by pupils to help them to improve.
- Ensure teaching assistants further develop and use their skills and abilities to lead learning in lessons.
- Ensure teachers provide engaging homework that pupils want to complete.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher leads the school with passion, commitment and a strong belief that all pupils will have opportunities to achieve their best both academically and personally. School leaders and the management committee share this view and together they have developed a positive culture where all staff strive to be the best they can be. As a result, the school has improved in all aspects of its work and commitment to continued improvement for excellence.
- The school has sound processes for self-evaluation. Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school's performance. Priorities for further improvement are, therefore, clearly identified and acted on. The management committee play a key role in these processes and check regularly through their monitoring how effective identified actions are being implemented.
- The leadership team has a clear priority of ensuring high quality teaching and learning. Through their monitoring and engaging with the management committee, they have made sure that what is learnt from monitoring of teachers' performance is used to provide bespoke training. This has had a positive impact on the delivery of literacy and assessment across the school. The school has rightly identified that teaching assistants need training to develop more expertise to support some areas of the curriculum.
- School leaders are committed to making sure that every child makes as much progress as possible. This is reflected in the thorough analysis of individual pupil's data, use of assessment information and regular progress meetings. Although the school does not receive funding for disadvantaged pupils, middle leaders have used data about their progress well to provide effective intervention programmes for literacy and numeracy.
- The curriculum is engaging and strongly focused on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills so they make good progress and for some outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The good range of enrichment within the curriculum, including visits and sports activities, adds richness and enjoyment to pupils' learning. This has a very positive impact on pupils' emotional well-being and contributes very well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders at all levels promote tolerance for all pupils and help them be very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils say that staff make sure they know the difference between right from wrong, and the excellent relationships promote a good understanding of equality, different beliefs and issues of discrimination.
- Parents feel highly valued by the school. Leaders ensure they communicate effectively with them on the progress their children are making. Parental comments include,' I get calls every week about my child's progress.'
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils in literacy and numeracy. Leaders have identified that intervention programmes to develop literacy and numeracy skills have led to pupils' greater confidence in applying these skills in other subjects.
- Safeguarding meets requirements with much effective practice strengthening the good care and support for pupils and their families.
- The local authority provides effective challenge to the school and has recently worked with leaders to evaluate the impact of the school's actions to improve teaching and learning. This has led to the school using a better selection of texts to support literacy lessons.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The management committee is fully committed to the school and its pupils. It makes a good contribution to leadership through both support and challenge. It knows the strengths and weaknesses very well. The management committee are fully involved in checking on teaching and behaviour and looking carefully at how well pupils are doing. They understand the use of data and know how the school compares with similar schools.
  - The committee make very effective use of performance management to improve continuously the outcomes for pupils. It ensures particularly that the management of the headteacher's performance has a good impact on school improvement.
  - It has a high level of educational and other professional expertise and suitable training has been accessed to meet its statutory requirements. Financial management is good.
  - All safeguarding aspects meet current requirements.
  - The management committee are working with the local authority towards clarifying admissions to the short-stay school. Their discussions aim to establish the nature of future admissions to the school and how the local authority would like to develop the provision further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although many pupils enter the school with low attainment and social, emotional and behavioural needs, they soon settle into the well-considered routines of the school. Their behaviour and any other problems are managed extremely well in a caring, supportive environment.
- The good behaviour of pupils is demonstrated in their willingness to work hard. Prior to arriving many pupils have had difficult experiences at school and a reluctance to engage in work. The supportive induction to school means they quickly engage in their lessons. Parental views include, 'Since my son has been going he has not been in trouble because they have time for him. He gets on with his work and he loves school and won't stay off.'
- Staff are highly skilled in maintaining a positive atmosphere at all times. This is because they use skilled techniques to ensure pupils are calm and stress free. Comments from parents, staff and pupils are positive about the good standard of behaviour they see in the school.
- Previously some pupils may have had experience of bullying before they attended the school. Conversations with pupils reveal that they now feel safe and looked after well. They, like their parents, do not see bullying as an issue. Pupils speak confidently about how staff are always there to help them if they have concerns.
- The school has been highly effective in improving attendance, which is now well above average for similar schools.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Risk assessments are rigorous to ensure that pupils' needs are considered and well planned for any activity or visit.
- Pupils know that if they have any concerns they can approach an adult who will help them sort out any difficulties that they may be experiencing. Through the curriculum and staff role models they learn how to keep themselves safe, both in and out of school.
- Pupils were able to explain how to stay safe when using computers. In a lesson about beaches, staff were careful to check the safe use of the internet and that pupils were researching information appropriately.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is good, ensuring that all pupils make good progress. The school's monitoring of the quality of teaching shows that it has improved since the last inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations and help pupils deepen their understanding in lessons through exciting activities, in order to make good progress in all areas of their learning. However, teaching assistants are not used as effectively as they could to lead learning.
- Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons because they are enjoying their learning. Staff give pupils good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently, and younger pupils become more confident in working with others.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. Tasks are well planned and effectively assessed verbally during lessons to develop understanding.
- Skilled support in literacy ensures pupils can complete their task, offer their views and make good progress in their work. Literacy skills are promoted very well across subjects.
- Teachers' routinely check pupils are making progress against their individual targets for learning and behaviour. However, sometimes teachers' comments in books are not acted on by pupils to improve their learning and the homework they provide will motivate pupils to complete it.

The achievement of pupils is good

- As a result of pupils not attending school often enough and/or their poor behaviour, most pupils' attainment is below national expectations when they start in this unit. However, pupils' progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects is good. This is evident through school data and the analysis of pupils' work over time.
- All groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.

- The most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and numeracy. This is because of teachers' high expectations and the highly effective challenge they give pupils as a result.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is similar to that of other pupils in the school. This was very evident in an English lesson, for example, where pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 were involved in acting out their play to develop their understanding of rhyme. All pupils were fully involved and achieved equally well, including those from disadvantaged groups. Pupils enjoyed and were totally absorbed in their play, reading and saying their lines in rhyme. Pupils with special educational needs who are members of the primary nurture groups achieve exceedingly well in their social and emotional skills. The excellent care helps them to settle exceedingly well, despite their previously challenging circumstances.
- Pupils make better than expected progress in reading. This is because there are daily reading and phonic sessions, well-planned interventions and skilled staff to support them in lessons.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	132130
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	449503

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	7–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Richard Bishopp
Headteacher	Tom Dexter
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
Telephone number	01670 514963
Email address	admin@pru.northumberland.sch.uk

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