

Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit

Brierton Lane, Centre for excellence in teaching and learning, Hartlepool, TS25 4BY

Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and staff have created a highly positive culture for learning. This is helping pupils raise their aspirations for what they can achieve in education and life.
- The headteacher has acted with determination to improve the quality of teaching and has a clear vision for further developments.
- School leaders ensure that most Key Stage 3 pupils successfully return to mainstream education.
- Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Pupils in Key Stage 4 gain a wide range of qualifications and skills to enable them to successfully take their next step in life.
- Members of the management committee use their knowledge and expertise very effectively to monitor, challenge and support the work of the school.
- Effective teaching is helping many pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding which have arisen due to previous interruptions in their education.
- Well-planned learning activities engage and capture pupils' interest, helping them to increasingly take an active part in their learning.
- Pupils are taught an exciting range of subjects in school with additional vocational courses offered by alternative providers. These reflect and meet the needs and abilities of pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled at supporting pupils to manage their behaviour and engage in their learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe as they are well cared for and given support that meets their individual needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Uncertainty over the future vision and funding for the school is hampering effective forward planning by the headteacher and management committee.
- Some pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour, especially if they find an activity tricky.
- The increasingly complex social, emotional and behavioural needs of their pupils require the skills of staff to be broadened further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school continues to improve, by:
 - the management committee and the local authority resolving funding issues that are presently preventing clarification of the school's vision for the future
 - the management committee and the local authority promptly clarifying their future vision for the school.
- Further improve the progress pupils make by:
 - encouraging pupils to become more independent in their learning and behaviour, especially when they are finding an activity challenging
 - continuing to broaden the skills of staff to meet the complex social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and staff have created a culture in which pupils can succeed. Pupils are enabled to make significant improvements in their academic and social development and many begin to believe they have a chance of success in the future.
- High expectations underpin all developments in the school. The headteacher has acted with determination to ensure that all staff are clear about the expected quality of teaching, learning and support given to pupils. Close monitoring of teaching ensures that all teachers know how to improve the impact of their work and this is having a positive effect on the progress that pupils make.
- Phase leaders are effective and have contributed to the improvement in teaching and learning. Pupils' progress is monitored on a fortnightly basis and if the progress of a pupil begins to slow a tailor-made support plan is put into place. Subject leaders are required to have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement in their subject to ensure that pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
- Pay progression for staff is managed through challenging performance targets which are linked to school priorities and pupil progress.
- The school is well kept and the attractive displays of pupils' work reflect the high expectations for pupil progress and behaviour. The headteacher is actively working to improve the learning environment for home and hospital pupils, including provision of a dining area and additional teaching space.
- Music production, art, photography and sport are examples of the wide range of subjects that pupils may study while at the pupil referral unit. While the emphasis is on developing the key skills needed for success in English, mathematics and science the curriculum is broad and reflects the interests of pupils, helping them to engage in learning.
- Every opportunity is taken to help pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, when studying healthy lifestyles pupils prepared a meal that would be eaten during Chinese New Year, and during an outdoor learning session Key Stage 3 pupils undertook a bike ride in aid of Sport Relief.
- Leaders carefully monitor pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress at alternative provision. Alternative provision closely matches the interests and aptitudes of pupils and as a result pupils gain accreditation at Level 1, and some continue in vocational training post-16.
- Breakfast club, regular opportunities to take part in charitable events, the close partnership with the pupils' host schools, and the support provided for families reflects the school's commitment to tackle all forms of discrimination and foster good relations.
- Successful reintegration into mainstream school is a key priority, especially for pupils in Key Stage 3. Pupils are supported to make good progress in all subjects. They are carefully supported to develop social, emotional and behavioural skills to improve their attitudes to learning. 'The team around the PRU' meetings ensure the host school, family and relevant external agencies remain fully involved in the learning journey of the pupil and this close partnership aids successful reintegration.
- The small amount of pupil premium funding is used to good effect, and disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- Parents are well informed of the progress that their child is making, through regular contact and termly written reports. Parents' comments following parent/teacher meetings are positive. For example, a parent wrote that their child 'was happier and doing better with [their] work'.
- The local authority regularly checks on the school and has provided funding for a school improvement partner to work closely with the headteacher. This has helped ensure that the school's view of its own performance and priorities for improvement are accurate, closely monitored, and have a positive impact.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The management committee is highly supportive of the school and the members use their professional knowledge and skills to drive forward improvements. Many members of the management committee are leaders from the schools that send pupils to the school and so have a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils.
 - The management committee receives information about pupils' progress regularly and in great detail. Members use this information to check the quality of teaching and to challenge the leaders to do all

that is possible to support students to fulfil their potential.

- Consultations are currently underway with the local authority over the future vision and funding for the school. Until this is resolved the long-term planning for development by the headteacher and management committee is severely restricted and will impact on the speed of improvement currently being seen in the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive relevant training in a range of safeguarding issues, and appropriate checks are made on all staff. Leaders ensure the safety of the pupils throughout the school and while attending alternative provision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Skilful teachers and teaching assistants build strong relationships with pupils. The positive atmosphere created by staff allows pupils to feel supported and helps them to learn. The learning and behaviour of recently arrived pupils is not always as strong but improves quickly.
- Well-planned learning activities capture pupils' interest and this encourages them to meet the high expectations set by staff. For example, in a Year 10 music production lesson pupils showed well-developed listening skills and demonstrated they were able to use subject-specific vocabulary to explain the impact that some electronically produced effects, like reverb, chorus and ping-pong, have on the listener's response to music.
- Assessment is well used to inform planning to fill in gaps in learning and help pupils catch up. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson the teacher knew what pupils needed to do to extend their understanding of percentages and checked their understanding by encouraging them to apply their learning to independently solve a problem.
- Work is regularly tailored to meet individual need, including for the most-able pupils and those with disability or special educational needs. In the home and hospital classroom teachers make good use of providing a number of different activities to meet the needs of different groups. For example, while Year 11 pupils developed their ideas for suitable merchandise in film studies, a Year 10 pupil was exploring differences in fabrics for textiles, another completed an assessment from their host school and another was working independently on a literacy task. All were highly engaged in their learning and could confidently explain their learning objective and success criteria.
- Reading is increasingly well taught. Many pupils come to the school with little confidence in their literacy skills, but quickly progress through being regularly encouraged to read at an appropriate level from the school's reading scheme. Pupils develop the skills to read extracts from a wide range of genres. By responding in writing they quickly develop their skills of comprehension. Few pupils currently read for pleasure, but the school has well-considered plans to offer opportunities to develop this further.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to keep pupils engaged in their learning and to help them build up resilience to keep going even when they are not enjoying an activity or are finding it hard. Some pupils find this really difficult but many, through the right amount of support, become more independent and begin to take responsibility for the outcomes of their work. In a personal, social and health education lesson pupils in Year 8 were happily washing up, wiping down and sweeping up while their cakes were in the oven – tasks that they were previously reluctant to do!

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's good work to promote pupils' personal development is a priority, and staff work with determination to support each pupil to manage the challenges they face.
- The school works with a wide variety of organisations and agencies to provide relevant information, support and guidance on issues as diverse as domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, racism, sexual relationships and healthy lifestyles. The skills of staff are not fully broadened enough to help them meet, on a day-to-day basis, all of the pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 study citizenship at GCSE level, and this is used to provide many opportunities to explore the risks that may arise in modern Britain, including knife crime, gangs and radicalisation. British values, including the rule of law, tolerance, democracy and diversity are fully covered in an age-appropriate and relevant way to engage pupils' interest and understanding.

- Pupils talk with understanding about the different forms of bullying including racism, homophobia and cyber bullying. Bullying is rare, though there are recorded incidents of 'falling out'. Pupils trust staff to listen to them and deal with any incident promptly and effectively.
- Pupils say they feel safe and staff always follow up any concerns. Pupils appreciate the clear boundaries set by the school, for example the removal of mobile phones on entry, as pupils say 'it helps you to focus on work, no one minds, it has always been the same'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Many pupils make rapid improvements in their attitudes to learning. Consistently high expectations for behaviour are supported through a well-structured monitoring system. Each pupil is fully aware of their individual behaviour strengths and their areas to improve in each subject.
- Most pupils cooperate well with one another and are respectful to staff. For the majority of pupils the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour reduce significantly over their time in the school. Fixed-term exclusions have declined and are infrequent.
- Behaviour in lessons is good, with pupils mostly working hard and listening well. Pupils spoke of increasing confidence in their ability to learn and pleasure in making good progress. Some pupils find it very hard to remain positive in their attitudes to learning when they are challenged to tackle work that is tricky or that they may not like. The skilful staff ensure that such infrequent episodes of poor behaviour do not impact on the learning of others.
- Behaviour at alternative provision is closely and regularly checked. That pupils behave well was reflected in a comment made by a provider that a pupil was 'a hardworking, highly motivated fast learner'.
- Attendance for three quarters of pupils improves significantly while at the school. Attendance is robustly monitored and any absence is immediately followed up and may be the subject of a home visit. The school works actively with pupils to help them recognise the importance of regular attendance, though overall it remains below that typically found in a mainstream school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils often join the student support centre and home and hospital with levels of attainment well below those typical for pupils of a similar age in mainstream schools. Poor attendance and disruptions to their learning mean that many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils, particularly in the student support centre, often arrive disillusioned with learning and feel that education has little to offer them.
- Pupils in Key Stage 3 who typically stay in the student support centre for about a term make good progress. High expectations, positive relationships and effective teaching help most pupils to focus on their learning and begin to catch up, especially in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in home and hospital make good progress from their starting points. In 2015 all pupils in Year 11 gained some qualifications with two thirds of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics. Absence has an impact on the level of attainment for some pupils.
- All Year 11 pupils in 2015, in the student support centre, achieved at least five GCSEs. Half of the pupils met their target grade based on entry and most were within one grade of their target. This reflects good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils may join the school at any time. They typically make good progress in English, mathematics and science if they attend the student support centre or home and hospital. A very small number of pupils are 'hard to reach', and refuse to engage in learning or to attend. These pupils do not make good progress and the school works with external agencies to help address their needs regularly and to keep them safe.
- Pupils with disability and those with special educational needs make good progress as the individuality of approach to all pupils ensures that whatever their needs are, they are well met. This allows each individual to achieve well and reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates. Regular monitoring ensures that swift, tailored-to-need action is taken if progress slows.
- The small number of most-able pupils are suitably challenged to do their best. They too often have gaps in their learning and are supported to catch up. The most-able pupils gain qualifications that enable them to study higher-level qualifications when they leave the school.

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. In 2015, all Year 11 pupils moved on to a training or college course.

School details

Unique reference number	131294
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	10002124

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Anne Malcolm
Headteacher	Kieran Sharp
Telephone number	01429 264950
Website	www.hartlepoolpru.co.uk
Email address	ksharp@hartlepoolpru.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is an alternative provision school that works in partnership with the five secondary schools in Hartlepool and, in exceptional circumstances, local primary schools.
- The school offers two distinct types of support to pupils. The student support centre offers up to 24 full- and part-time places for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 (occasionally Key Stage 2) who have been excluded, are at risk of permanent exclusion, or who have become disengaged from learning. Home and hospital offers up to 12 full- and part-time places for pupils who, by reason of illness, disability, social, emotional or mental health issues require alternative educational arrangements to ensure they receive an education which meets their needs.
- The majority of Key Stage 3 pupils in the student support centre stay for up to a term before returning to mainstream education. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and those in the home and hospital generally remain for longer periods with the ambition to successfully complete a range of qualifications and transfer to post-16 education or training.
- Most pupils have experienced disruption to their education or have refused to attend school in the past.
- The school provides a free breakfast club for pupils in the student support centre.
- The majority of pupils are boys and most are of White British heritage.
- Typically, the number of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium is above average. However, the school does not receive the funding for those students who are dual-registered. The vast majority of pupils are dual-registered. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The school uses five alternative providers for a small number of pupils: Nacro, Right Trax, Outdoor Ambition, Bell Vue and Total Training.
- Since the previous inspection the school has moved to a different site. There have been a number of changes to staff, including a new headteacher being appointed in September 2015, and the home and

hospital provision has been integrated.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons taught by teachers and teaching assistants. The work in pupils' books was evaluated jointly with a senior member of staff.
- Two visits were made to alternative provision.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the management committee, the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with pupils during and outside lessons.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who had completed questionnaires provided by the school. Two parents responded to the online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, at break and lunch.
- The views of staff were gained from meetings with a range of staff and 15 returns from the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised. This included the school's records about the quality of teaching, pupil progress monitoring, individual behaviour charts, safeguarding procedures, recruitment information, attendance, the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.

Inspection team

Fiona Dixon, Lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Judith James

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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