

The Pupil Referral Service, Peterborough

Williamson Avenue, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE3 6BA

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, leadership capacity has become overstretched as the range of services provided has grown.
- The three centres operate as separate units. A lack of coherence across the provision results in inequalities in pupils' experiences.
- Middle leaders do not have access to all the information they need to help them make the improvements required.
- Governors have an overgenerous view of the quality of education that the service provides because some information given to them is inaccurate.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially for the most able pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is uneven across key stages, centres and subjects.
- Too many pupils stay on part-time programmes for too long and so they do not make the progress they should.
- The number of pupils placed on fixed-period exclusions is too high. Leaders are not precise enough in identifying improvement strategies to keep pupils in school.
- Arrangements for safeguarding the high proportion of pupils on part-time provision are inadequate.
- Attendance records are inaccurate. There is insufficient leadership oversight of the attendance information held by administrators.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff are effective in using the agreed restraint procedures or the designated 'calm' rooms appropriately. This means that, potentially, vulnerable pupils are unsafe.

The school has the following strengths

- Full-time programmes offer a suitably broad range of subjects and qualifications. Alternative provision is well matched to pupils' needs.
- Strong working relationships exist between staff and pupils, especially at key stage 4.
- Most pupils progress into further education, training and/or employment at the end of Year 11.
- There is effective provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and for vulnerable pupils in the 'Gems' and 'Compass' groups.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently address the serious concerns in the school's safeguarding arrangements by:
 - reducing the number of pupils on part-time timetables
 - ensuring that programmes are reviewed appropriately to reduce the amount of time pupils spend in part-time provision
 - implementing effective strategies to reduce the number of pupils placed on fixed-period exclusion
 - ensuring that all pupils attend school as regularly as they should
 - reviewing the effectiveness of the 'calm' rooms in the primary phase, and making sure that all staff are trained appropriately in the use of restraint.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - reviewing leadership capacity in the context of the range of services currently offered
 - sharpening improvement planning and making best use of all the available information to develop strategies to secure rapid improvements
 - ensuring that there is consistency in the staff's application of leaders' expectations and pupils' experiences across centres
 - checking that staff in the different centres have consistent access to the information they need to make any changes required
 - implementing assessment systems more effectively so that pupils' progress is monitored appropriately across subjects and used to set high expectations
 - ensuring that the information presented to the governing body is accurate and sufficiently detailed for governors to hold leaders to account effectively for the service's performance.
- Secure good teaching, learning and assessment to improve outcomes for all pupils by:
 - making sure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information well to match learning activities more closely to pupils' needs and abilities
 - creating better opportunities for the most able pupils to complete more complex tasks to enable them to attain higher standards
 - ensuring that staff know, and consider appropriately, the specific needs of pupils with SEND when planning for their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership is weakened by leaders' capacity being overstretched as the range of services provided for the local authority, schools and families has increased. Some middle leaders are relatively new and inexperienced.
- The education provision is oversubscribed. To some extent, leaders have managed this by placing pupils on part-time programmes. However, safeguarding arrangements for these pupils are not effective.
- There is a lack of coherence across the provision. Although the service aims to function as a single school, the three centres operate as separate units. Communication across centres is an ongoing concern.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that centre leaders, who are all relatively new in post, have access to all the information they need to improve their work. In one centre, staff were unsure about who held the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) role for the provision.
- There are elements of mistrust in some senior leadership decisions. This is, in part, because some centre-based staff do not always understand why decisions, for example those which have led to the loss of teaching space and resources, have been made. Consequently, the morale of some staff is low. These tensions are not conducive to a positive learning environment or equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Leaders do not check well enough to ensure that the information gathered about the school's performance is accurate. The information held in pupils' attendance records is inaccurate and this is a safeguarding concern. Further inaccuracies include misleading calculations in management information based on pupils' part-time attendance. These inaccuracies have contributed to governors' overgenerous view of the quality of education that the service provides.
- Leaders have not ensured a consistent approach to the reviews undertaken for pupils on part-time programmes. The implications of the part-time provision for individual pupils, including for those with SEND are not appropriately risk-assessed. Too many pupils remain on part-time patterns of attendance for too long. This compromises their safety when they are not in school. Arrangements for consultation with parents and carers about the provision have only recently been put in place.
- Management information about the high proportion of pupils on fixed-period exclusions is not recorded in enough detail to inform improvement strategies effectively. The broad categories in use, for example 'persistent disruption', address the symptom rather than the cause. Consequently, records are not precise enough to help middle leaders improve their planning to keep pupils in school.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is still developing under new leadership arrangements. While regular checks are made on teaching quality, the information is insufficiently focused on what pupils can or cannot do because of the teaching. As a result, it does not provide a strong enough basis to help teachers to rapidly improve their practice in planning for effective learning.

- Leaders have not ensured that the good practice existing in some centres is shared well enough. Consequently, the quality of provision across subjects, within and across centres, is uneven.
- The committed team of centre-based staff is holding an acceptable standard of education together, but serious weaknesses in leadership are a barrier to the service's capacity for continued improvement.
- The curriculum offers pupils on full-time programmes suitable access to a broad range of learning experiences and qualifications, including opportunities to study for GCSEs in some subjects. Good provision is in place to meet pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) needs and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- The 'Gems' programme for vulnerable girls, most of them with significant gaps in their mainstream education, offers good quality support in a safe environment. Girls work towards levels 1 and 2 literacy, numeracy and vocational qualifications appropriately matched to their ability. Many of them move on to further study at the end of Year 11.
- Similarly, Year 11 pupils recently arrived in the city with little or no English language skills grow in confidence in the Compass group. They often make strong progress with their literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In lessons, they are well motivated and eager to learn.
- For the few pupils on extended placements with alternative education providers, the provision during their time in the placement centre is well matched to individual needs, so they make stronger progress than they would in school. Suitable arrangements are in place for checking their attendance and how well they are doing on their courses.

Governance of the school

- In January 2018, the school's management committee was reconstituted as a board of governors. Governors are still coming to terms with this change in status.
- Appropriate committees have now been set up with oversight of finance and resources, and curriculum and standards. Regular reports are provided for the full governing body and the new committees by senior and middle leaders.
- Over time, a lack of detail and inaccuracies in some of the information given to governors have not allowed them to focus their attention, for example, on ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and that the number of pupils on extended part-time provision is reducing. Consequently, they have not been effective in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Governors acknowledge that they have only recently been alerted to these safeguarding concerns.
- Governors maintain suitable oversight of the school's finances, including the spending of additional funding, such as pupil premium funding and funding for primary sport and physical education. However, the depth of their understanding of the difference this makes to pupils' outcomes is limited.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Senior leaders have not taken adequate steps to ensure that the high number of pupils on part-time programmes are safe. Too many vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, are left to work away from the school, often without the ability or motivation to do so. This lack of supervision, frequently over extended periods of time, together with inaccuracies in the recording of pupils' attendance represent serious safeguarding concerns.
- In the primary phase, leaders have not ensured that all staff are effective in using restraint, or in using the school's 'calm' rooms, appropriately to manage pupils' behaviour. While leaders explained that pupils choose to go to these 'calming' spaces, this was not the practice observed during the inspection.
- In some cases, primary-aged pupils are detained in the small, grey, high-ceilinged 'calm' rooms for too long. There is no safe way of opening the doors from the inside because the handles are too high for a younger pupil to reach. This is not conducive to the promotion of positive or calming behaviours and is a further serious safeguarding concern.
- Suitable safer recruitment procedures are in place. All the required pre-employment checks are completed for new staff members. Staff training covers the signs to look out for when a pupil may be at risk of harm or radicalisation. The school's procedures for reporting concerns are well understood.
- Leaders are currently in the process of transferring safeguarding records to a centralised electronic system. Appropriate checks have been put in place recently to ensure that the links between the paper-based and electronic information are made clear so that nothing is missed.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the well-considered programme of PSHE. Staff are caring and supportive. The curriculum provides age-appropriate opportunities for pupils to understand and discuss important issues, such as sex and relationships, knife crime, county lines and the dangers of gang affiliation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan for pupils' next steps of learning. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough and so pupils do not make the progress they should.
- In some subjects, especially in history at key stage 3 and in science lessons in primary and secondary phases, activities in pupils' books are often based on worksheets. While this is sometimes appropriate, it limits opportunities for pupils to practise writing at length.
- Activities are not matched well enough to pupils' interests or needs. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 10 boys had little interest in calculating the cost of a dinner party for 20 people and so the lesson was unnecessarily disrupted. In Year 10 English, a word search activity presented little challenge for the most able pupils in the group.
- Changes have been made to assessment systems, but staff are inconsistent in the way

that they use the required target sheets in the primary phase. The work in primary pupils' books shows limited evidence of consistently strong progress, often because of gaps in their learning.

- In science at key stage 3, pupils' targets are appropriately focused on improving their behaviour. However, there are few references in the targets set to pupils' subject-specific knowledge and skills development.
- Inspectors saw stronger teaching in information and communications technology, mathematics and English at key stage 3. In these lessons, teachers' planning was more consistently focused on sequencing learning on strong foundations of previous knowledge. Consequently, pupils make suitable progress in these subjects when they are in school.
- In art, pupils often complete work to a high standard. The teaching of art to GCSE level is especially strong on the Honeyhill site. The art room is spacious and well equipped, with impressive displays, for example of pupils' colourful three-dimensional models and well-crafted, thoughtful paintings.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils on part-time programmes do not receive their entitlement to a full-time education. Too many of this group remain on these programmes for far too long, without any detailed review or end point. This limits part-time pupils' personal development as well as their opportunities to make academic progress.
- Inaccuracies in the recording of pupils' attendance mean that leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of attendance across the provision. Nevertheless, many pupils on full-time programmes now attend school more regularly than they did previously in their mainstream education.
- Pupils give high praise to the positive relationships they have with staff. The staff's commitment to doing the best they can for the pupils they serve was reflected in the often-strong working relationships inspectors saw during their time at the service.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel that teachers understand them well. Many could explain how they have been helped to make changes in their behaviour since they joined the service. Secondary pupils at the Honeyhill centre said they felt 'part of a community', that bullying was rare, and that staff dealt with things quickly if they 'kicked off'.
- The provision for pupils' PSHE is a strength of the service. Effective work with external agencies, including health professionals and the police, enhances the curriculum. Pupils benefit from external speakers and joint projects, such as producing materials aimed at reducing hate crime.
- During the inspection, the Compass group were working hard to develop resources to share with others on stalls at the school's annual 'International Day'. Their ideas were based on, for example, famous people from their wide range of home countries and

examples of local food. At lunchtime, the pupils in the dining hall could identify the flags from each of the different countries displayed and speak about the diversity of the cultures represented in the school.

- The few pupils on three-day placements with alternative education providers typically attend regularly and improve their progress over time. The service maintains regular checks with the provider on how well pupils are doing. However, pupils are not required to attend the appropriate centre on the remaining two days each week. This means that they do not have access to their entitlement to a full-time education, or a wider programme of personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Across the service, pupils' attitudes to learning are closely linked to the quality of teaching they receive. When the work set is not relevant to pupils' needs and interests, too easy for some or too hard for others, relationships begin to break down. This results in off-task and occasionally belligerent behaviour.
- Typically, staff are effective in encouraging pupils to return to their learning, but sometimes this takes too long. There are variations in the effectiveness of staff in managing pupils' behaviour within and across the centres.
- In the main, high levels of supervision ensure that most pupils' conduct is appropriate outside of lessons. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are relatively calm and orderly. Inspectors observed staff and pupils eating together in typically sociable environments. However, dining space is more limited on the Fletton site and pupils' lunchtime behaviour was less positive at times.
- Most pupils on full-time programmes improve their behaviour during their time with the service. Many of them were polite and confident in speaking with inspectors about their learning. They could explain how their teachers had helped them to improve and to make better choices than was the case in their previous schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils on part-time programmes do not spend enough time at the centres. Consequently, too few of them, including pupils with SEND, do not make strong enough progress over time. Only a small proportion of pupils who join the service are reintegrated successfully back into mainstream education.
- The most able pupils, especially in key stage 4, do not routinely make the progress they should. This is because the work teachers set is often too easy and does not challenge pupils to think hard enough about what they are learning.
- Curriculum changes in the primary phase are focused on improving the school's approach to the teaching of reading and extending opportunities for pupils to write at length. However, changes are at an early stage of implementation and aspects, such as topic work, are still being developed.
- By the end of Year 11, most pupils on full-time programmes leave the school with a range of level 1 and 2 awards. A few gain GCSE qualifications, for example in English,

mathematics and art. Pupils on alternative education programmes typically gain vocational qualifications that allow them to progress to further study at the next level.

- Good-quality pastoral support and the PSHE programme help pupils to improve the wider skills they need to succeed in employment and life beyond school. The high importance given to developing good working relationships is a prime example of this work.
- A strong focus on careers information, advice and guidance ensures that a high proportion of Year 11 pupils are supported to gain places in further education, employment and/or training.
- Staff take great care to ensure that vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND and pupils from the Gems and Compass groups, are not disadvantaged as they prepare to leave the service. Much time and effort are put into preparing CVs, coaching pupils for interviews and, admirably, attending interviews with them if pupils need extra support.

School details

Unique reference number	110601
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10105836

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Coles
Executive Headteacher	Claire George
Telephone number	01733 452673
Website	peterboroughpprseducation.co.uk
Email address	pprs@peterborough.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2018

Information about this school

- The Pupil Referral Service, Peterborough provides primary and secondary education for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Most pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The aim is that some pupils will reintegrate successfully back into mainstream schools.
- Around two thirds of the pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with SEND and pupils who speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
- Some pupils are dual registered with their mainstream school and with the service. Discrete provision is offered for vulnerable girls (Gems), with a separate programme for Year 11 pupils who have recently arrived in the United Kingdom with limited or no English language skills (Compass).

- Other services offered include primary and secondary behaviour support for local schools, and work commissioned by the local authority linked to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- The provision is based across three learning centres. Primary pupils are taught on the city site. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are taught at the two other sites close to the city in Fletton and Honeyhill.
- Centre leaders are relatively new in post and one is in an acting lead role.
- A small number of pupils are on alternative education programmes at Peterborough Alternative Curriculum Education (ACE) and City College, Peterborough.

Information about this inspection

- The executive headteacher was not available in the school at the time of the inspection.
- Safeguarding concerns raised on the first day resulted in the inspection converting from a one-day section 8 no formal designation behaviour and safety inspection, to a full section 5 inspection. Consequently, a third HMI joined the inspection team for the second day.
- Inspectors observed teaching at all of the centres and across all key stages. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. A member of the inspection team visited pupils on placements with an alternative education provider.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, the attendance officer, two governors, including the chair of governors, staff, parents, pupils and the director of services from the local authority. They spoke informally with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also looked at their work in books.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own survey information of the views of staff and parents. There were no responses available to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A wide range of documentation provided by the service was checked. This included policies, evaluations of the service's performance, safeguarding and attendance records, and information about pupils' behaviour, achievement and progress.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kim Hall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tim Bristow	Her Majesty's Inspector

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