

# Northern House School (City of Wolverhampton) Primary PRU

Valley Park Campus, Cromer Gardens, Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 0UA

## Inspection dates

3–4 July 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This pupil referral unit (PRU) is very well led. The executive headteacher has established an ambitious vision for all pupils and staff. Senior leaders and their staff work very hard with each pupil to help modify behaviour.
- The PRU has a welcoming, orderly and calm ethos. Pupils feel safe and happy. Regular routines help pupils to settle in well and frequent communication between staff ensures that any problems are dealt with quickly.
- Staff spend considerable time assessing pupils' different needs as they arrive. A well-organised programme of intervention, including work with individuals and groups, helps pupils to overcome many of their difficulties.
- Very positive relationships in the PRU foster optimistic attitudes and confidence in pupils. With excellent care, this leads to pupils' outstanding social and emotional development. Pupils' conduct is usually good. Attendance rates are very high.
- Teaching is good because it is grounded in these strong relationships. Staff know their pupils very well and help them experience success. Occasionally, the work set for pupils lacks relevance or is too easy. A few staff lack specialist subject knowledge.
- Pupils are taught the subjects of the national curriculum. Effective planning helps fill gaps in pupils' knowledge in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Alongside classroom-based learning, pupils benefit from a wealth of imaginative and interesting extra-curricular activities, which help raise aspirations of what pupils can achieve.
- Staff work effectively with other schools and agencies. Many pupils are vulnerable and need extensive support from a range of sources, which is coordinated well.
- Regular liaison with parents and carers encourages an integrated approach to improving pupils' behaviour. Most parents and carers are very pleased with the progress made by pupils.
- Governance is very effective. The local governing body provides robust challenge and support to school leaders. It discharges its statutory responsibilities well.
- The PRU receives very good support from Northern House Academy Trust, of which it is a member. The trust has ensured effective leadership, provided relevant training and monitors progress closely.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that all work set for pupils is sufficiently challenging.
- Introduce new work in ways that help pupils to see its relevance.
- Provide further training for staff, particularly in phonics and foundation subjects, so that all teachers and other adults have sufficient subject expertise.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the PRU opened, the executive headteacher and other senior leaders have made rapid progress in establishing a calm, orderly and welcoming learning environment. They are quick to respond to the changing needs of pupils, including by adjusting provision to take account of a growing number of pupils whose difficulties mean they are unlikely to return to mainstream education.
- Leaders are very ambitious for pupils. They are supported very well by an enthusiastic and committed staff. Staff work hard to develop confidence and self-belief in pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes are fostered by a series of well-developed routines, which give pupils frequent opportunities to experience and enjoy success. The PRU's ethos and approach to helping pupils is reflected in the trust motto: believe, achieve, succeed.
- All staff are trained regularly, including in promoting positive behaviour and emotion coaching. A large proportion of staff have been appointed to the PRU recently and they are given good support. Senior leaders make frequent checks on how well pupils are doing and give staff clear direction where improvement is needed. Key subject leaders are developing their roles well. A few staff lack specialist knowledge of teaching phonics and in foundation subjects.
- Pupils' emotional, social and academic needs are assessed carefully when they join the PRU. A bespoke set of therapeutic interventions, coupled with consistently applied approaches to managing behaviour and strong links with parents, ensure that most pupils learn to behave well at the PRU.
- Pupils are taught the subjects of the national curriculum. Within this, reading, writing and mathematics are given high priority. This helps to bridge the substantial gap in skills, knowledge and understanding that most pupils have in these core subjects.
- Many pupils stay at the PRU for a very short time. For these pupils, the curriculum is tailored to their individual needs. For pupils who stay at the PRU for longer periods, leaders are introducing more in-depth study of foundation subjects.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety of outdoor learning opportunities, provides pupils with interesting and enriching learning experiences. For example, pupils learn to work and achieve together when working with animals or when in the forest school. A programme of sporting activities and trips extends pupils' understanding of the wider world and fosters aspirations.
- Leaders and other staff liaise very effectively with other schools and agencies. This close cooperation means that pupils only join the PRU after detailed consultation. Many pupils have a range of complex needs and PRU staff are effective in securing additional or external support.
- Leaders and their staff promote equality of opportunity well. All pupils can take part in activities. Links with the special school on the same campus give pupils access to a wide range of resources, ideas and equipment.

- Pupils' social and moral development is a strength of the PRU. At different times of the day, and throughout their stay, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and relationships. A programme of visits, including to different places of worship, promotes understanding of different cultures and supports the teaching of religious education. Pupils are given ample opportunities to learn about the importance of fundamental British values such as respect, tolerance and the rule of law.
- Additional funding is used well to support pupils. The pupil premium and the physical education and sports premium funds are spent on additional staffing and resources, which help to improve pupils' outcomes. All pupils in the PRU have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that staff regularly review the impact of the support provided to pupils.
- Leaders and other staff in the PRU have benefited from being part of the trust. Trust officers have worked closely with the PRU, and its local governing body, to establish a caring, secure and positive learning environment. In particular, leaders have been very well supported in improving pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance of the PRU is very effective. It provides strategic direction and robust support to PRU leaders.
- Local governing body members have relevant and extensive experience. Some governors have overseen the PRU's development since before it opened. They take a keen interest in the PRU's performance and their strong and purposeful working relationship with leaders gives them a good understanding of the PRU's strengths and the challenges it faces.
- Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities effectively, including for safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is very well led. Systems used by the school to keep pupils safe are well organised. Staff are vigilant and alert to potential issues. They know pupils very well. Communication between staff is regular and detailed. Staff work very well with other agencies.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say staff deal with bullying or unkind behaviour very quickly. Pupils know who to talk to if any difficulties arise. Pupils are taught about potential dangers in age-appropriate ways. For example, older pupils know how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet.
- Visits and trips are planned carefully to ensure the well-being and safety of pupils. Possible risks to pupils are assessed regularly. Careful checks are made on adults working in or visiting the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The site is suitably secure.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers usually plan lessons that help pupils reach their social, emotional and academic objectives. They provide activities that build on what pupils already know and can do. They regularly give pupils opportunities to practise what they have learned. This builds confidence and gives pupils experience of success.
- Teachers provide a well-ordered and structured environment, which helps pupils to thrive as learners. Routines in classrooms are very well established. These give teachers and pupils a very secure foundation on which to build. Very strong relationships between staff and pupils usually permeate everyday life in the classroom.
- Pupils usually tackle their work with interest and enthusiasm, particularly if they understand its relevance. Pupils frequently display positive attitudes to learning, which is reinforced by regular praise.
- Most but not all staff have enough specialist subject knowledge. Some support staff lack detailed understanding of how to teach phonics. Other staff do not have a depth of knowledge in foundation subjects. The PRU staff benefit from sharing some staff and resources with the special school that is sited on the same campus.
- Most staff successfully manage the complex task of teaching curriculum content to individual pupils who are at different stages. They are adept at intervening quickly if pupils struggle or become distracted. Some pupils are in the PRU for only a short period. For these pupils, teachers focus mostly on filling gaps in prior learning.
- Reading is usually taught well. Pupils are encouraged to read a range of age-appropriate texts. Staff model the importance of reading through frequent 'drop everything and read' sessions. Some early phonics teaching is uneven.
- Assessment is regular, thorough and detailed. It helps staff and pupils focus on key learning goals.
- Many pupils enjoy practising skills and reinforcing what they already know. This builds stamina and confidence in pupils. However, in a few instances, teachers ask pupils to repeat work when they could provide more challenging activities.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils arrive at the school with many social and emotional difficulties. Staff get to know pupils quickly and settle them into regular routines. Pupils know what to expect when they are in the PRU. Staff's care for pupils is detailed and comprehensive, including for children looked after. It helps pupils develop optimism, confidence, positive relationships and trust in others.
- The breakfast club provides a calm and healthy start to the day. Pupils do a daily 'skipping session' before lessons, often competitively, which they participate in eagerly.

Before formal lessons begin, pupils review together recent issues and reflect on their success in overcoming challenges. This work is led expertly by staff and provides an uplifting and positive beginning to the day's work.

- In all these sessions, and throughout the day, pupils are regularly encouraged to think beyond the immediate and understand the consequences of their actions for themselves and for others. Through this, they are helped to respect themselves, each other and the world they live in. Staff work very hard to give pupils opportunities to practise behaving well and to display positive attitudes.
- Pupils' individual profiles are used to plan key therapeutic interventions. These are discussed with pupils, parents and carers and reviewed regularly. A key element of this is identifying when difficulties may arise and what pupils can do about them. All pupils develop a range of strategies to regulate their emotions and manage their responses to others. Pupils who return to mainstream education do so armed with these strategies, which usually leads to successful reintegration.
- Pupils learn about their personal development, and other relevant topics, through a well-organised programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils participate keenly in community work, for example planting flower beds locally, volunteering on supermarket tills, and helping support a soup kitchen. They learn about the wider world through trips and visits to the school by, for example, the police and fire services.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The excellent social and emotional progress made by pupils means that they usually behave appropriately. The PRU's basic rules – act sensibly and stay safe – are well understood by pupils. Pupils usually listen well in lessons and follow instructions with only a few reminders.
- Close supervision ensures that all staff keep a watchful eye on pupils throughout the day. Pupils move around the PRU sensibly. Their behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good. Staff are quick to notice any potential difficulties and usually stop any situations escalating.
- Pupils are mostly very kind to each other. They are polite and show respect to visitors. Pupils' good behaviour, which is practised regularly and reinforced by praise, sets an example for new pupils. This helps new pupils adjust their behaviour so that they settle in well. Some pupils' behaviour lapses when they do not see the relevance of the work they are doing.
- Communication between staff, and with home, is regular and effective. It ensures that positive relationships are maintained and that all staff know of any issues. Staff act consistently with pupils and know them and any issues well. For example, taxi and bus drivers often spend time with pupils, teachers and other staff at the end of the day before pupils are transported home.
- Pupils' behaviour is tracked individually. Staff make good use of this to organise further interventions, including any further training for staff. Recording of all incidents is meticulous.

- Instances of poor behaviour decline markedly once pupils settle in the PRU. The overall behaviour of pupils has improved notably over the last three years.
- Staff are well trained in managing behaviour, including in relation to physical restraint, which is used only when necessary. All instances of restraint are reviewed carefully.
- Pupils' attendance is very good. Nearly all pupils attend very regularly while they are at the PRU. Most pupils' attendance improves while they are at the PRU.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils achieve excellent outcomes in their personal development. They are helped to overcome significant social and emotional barriers to learning. Most develop markedly more positive attitudes because of the help they are given.
- Most pupils leave school with the personal attributes and self-awareness needed for them to succeed in the next stage of their education. For some pupils this is to a mainstream school. For an increasing number this is to a special school for pupils with social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) difficulties.
- Nearly all pupils arrive at the school with large gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Few are working at the standards expected for their age. Highly supportive care, good behaviour and effective teaching usually help them make good academic progress from their different starting points, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Younger pupils are taught to read using phonics and take part in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Most pupils become more confident readers as they move through the school.
- In mathematics, most pupils are working below the standard expected for their age. Younger pupils are helped to learn number facts. Many can recall these very well but struggle to apply them to new contexts. Nearly all older pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding because of disrupted learning in their previous school. Many pupils struggle to apply their mathematical knowledge to new situations.
- Pupils' achievements are assessed by staff at the end of Year 2. Year 6 pupils are assessed using the national key stage 2 tests. Overall, these assessments show that pupils make good academic progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the PRU.

## School details

Unique reference number	143150
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10088460

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr William Powlett Smith
Executive headteacher	Mr Adam Price
Telephone number	01902 558149
Website	<a href="http://www.northernhousewolverpru.schooljotter2.com">www.northernhousewolverpru.schooljotter2.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:a.price@northernhouse.org.uk">a.price@northernhouse.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Northern House School (Primary) PRU is a specialist alternative provision for pupils who have been, or are at risk of being, permanently excluded from their mainstream school. There are more boys than girls. The majority of pupils are White British.
- The PRU is for boys and girls aged between five and 11 years. It shares a campus with Northern House School (City of Wolverhampton), which is a specialist school for pupils with SEMH difficulties aged between 5 and 16. It is part of the Northern House Academy Trust, which is overseen by a group of trustees. The trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility for governance to a local governing body.
- Most pupils at the PRU have SEMH difficulties. Pupils who already have an education, health and care plan do not attend the PRU unless it is for a short-term stay.



- The PRU is very small, although the number on roll varies throughout the year. During 2018/19, 41 pupils were taught at the PRU for part or all of the school year. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is very high.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across the PRU on both inspection days. They observed pupils' behaviour around the school. They spoke with pupils about their work and met with them at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders and other staff to discuss the work that pupils do. They met with senior leaders, local governing body members and the trust's chief executive. They scrutinised a range of documents, which included key information about safeguarding, pupil profiles, assessment and pupil outcomes. Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books across a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views, including two written comments from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They also considered numerous parental responses to the PRU's own parental questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Johanne Clifton	Ofsted Inspector

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