

Inspection of a good school: Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit

CETL, Brierton Lane, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 4BY

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Outcome

Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit has been through a period of change over the past 18 months. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in September, pupils say there has been a huge change in culture and atmosphere. Staff agree. The school is now a calm and friendly environment. Pupils are happy, safe and able to learn.

Staff know the pupils well. Pupils respond to the positive relationships built by staff. Staff have worked hard this academic year to change the way they react and respond to pupils. This helps pupils to be more in control of their anger and emotions. Leaders' analysis shows that pupils' behaviour has improved significantly.

Staff ensure that day-to-day routines, rewards and sanctions for negative behaviours are clear. They consistently implement these. This ensures pupils know exactly what they need to do. Staff greet pupils every morning. Over breakfast, they gauge what support a child may need to settle into learning. Pupils say they are not worried about bullying because other pupils are not 'allowed to get away with it'. Classes are small and pupils feel they build strong friendships.

Teachers have high aspirations for pupils and their next steps in life. By the time a pupil leaves the school, they have secured a college or apprenticeship place.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

All pupils who attend Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit are taught a range of subjects. In some subjects, such as English and science, the information that the pupils need to learn is well structured. This helps pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge and to build on their skills. In other subjects, the approach to organising what pupils learn is not as clear.

Teachers ask questions to check that pupils understand what is being taught. This does

not always help teachers to pinpoint the specific things that the pupils are struggling with. Not all subject leaders check what pupils know and what they still need to understand. For example, in personal and social development, pupils learn a selection of standalone topics. This does not give teachers the information they need to assess pupils' knowledge of these areas. Where teachers do this, they help pupils to understand and remember their learning. For example, in English, teachers helped pupils to discover the important meanings behind quotations from 'An Inspector Calls'.

Some pupils who are on the roll of the pupil referral unit attend alternative provision, where they learn functional skills and attend vocational courses such as in sport or joinery. Pupils enjoy these provisions. However, pupils on alternative provision do not always access the same standard of education they would receive in the pupil referral unit. For example, the wider curriculum subjects, including history and geography, are not covered by all alternative providers.

Pupils who attend school behave well. Any behaviour issues in the classroom are dealt with quickly and with humour. Staff say they are trained to meet the needs of pupils earlier, before behaviour becomes a barrier to learning.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils respect the teachers as they 'talk to us fairly, like adults'. Staff know the pupils well and this supports the pupils to learn because they want to be in school.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. Pupils spoke confidently about how they are taught to keep themselves safe by discussing topics such as drug misuse, smoking cessation and healthy eating. They access a wide range of sporting activities, both through the rewards programme and playing in a football league with other schools.

Careers education and positive progress for post-16 is a focus for leaders. Careers leaders provide pupils with a clear understanding of what they can achieve after school. This work is supported by strong links with a local college. Leaders ensure that pupils receive helpful advice about their next steps. As a result, pupils are well prepared to leave school after Year 11.

The new headteacher and governors are committed to the school and its pupils. They have a clear vision for the future of the school and understand what is still to do. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They challenge and support leaders about the progress being made.

The headteacher has introduced a new middle leadership programme to develop various areas of the school, such as teaching and learning. Staff appointed to these roles are at the beginning of their development. The roles add strength to leadership and leaders believe this has been vital in securing the rapid improvement that has been shown since September.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable in this area. Staff spoke confidently about policies and procedures relating to keeping children safe.

The member of staff with responsibility for safeguarding is diligent and has strong knowledge of the local issues facing pupils at the pupil referral unit. Leaders work well with other agencies to keep pupils safe. Leaders make sure that pupils get the help and support they need in a timely fashion.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variation in how well curriculum leaders understand and plan what pupils should learn. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the necessary subject expertise to develop a curriculum that is structured to help pupils learn effectively and remember their work across all subjects.
- Although the overall provision for pupils' personal and social development is strong, it is only since September that this has been developed as a curriculum subject. Leaders need to ensure that work to develop the personal and social development curriculum and assessment methods continue to bring this subject into line with the school's curriculum as a whole.
- Staff in the newly formed middle leadership tier within the school are passionate and committed. Leaders need to continue to develop these roles with appropriate guidance, support and subject-specific personal development.
- Leaders currently use a wide range of alternative providers that are developed and quality assured in conjunction with the local authority. Leaders need to continue to develop autonomy in their use of alternative provision to ensure that pupils are not only safe while at these provisions, but receiving a high quality of education leading to meaningful outcomes.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the pupil referral unit to be good in February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	131294
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10110856
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Caroline Read
Headteacher	Martyn Gordon
Website	www.hartlepoolpru.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

Information about this school

- Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit is a secondary pupil referral unit that caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. The pupil referral unit also has a small class of pupils educated as part of a home and hospital service.
- The school currently has 31 pupils on the roll of the pupil referral unit and a group of pupils who are on a dual roll with their mainstream school.
- Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit has seen significant staffing changes over the past 18 months. A new headteacher was recruited for September 2019. The pupil referral unit has also seen numbers of referred pupils fluctuate during this time period.
- The pupil referral unit runs a breakfast club.
- At the time of the inspection, Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit used eight alternative provision placements: Evolve, Right Trax, Middlesbrough College, The Keys, Skills Academy, Belle Vue, Jesmond Gardens and Box Clever.
- There are 22 pupils who attend alternative provision for all or part of their weekly timetable.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. Two pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey. We took account of one response to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- An inspector visited a pupil on alternative provision at Box Clever and held telephone conversations with staff at Right Trax and Evolve.
- We evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at English, mathematics, personal and social development, and science. We discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ann Muxworthy

Ofsted Inspector

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