

# Inspection of Merit Pupil Referral Unit

Willeton Street, Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 9JA

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Inspection dates: 4–5 December 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The pupils at Merit Pupil Referral Unit are very positive about the school, and they are right to be. The school takes very good care of pupils, many of whom have found mainstream school difficult. The school seeks to promote responsibility, relationships and resilience. It is successful in doing this. Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. Pupils encourage one another. They recognise that everyone is different and that all face challenges in life. Pupils do not fall out with each other very often. However, when they do, staff respond quickly and help them to mend their relationships.

Leaders expect pupils to attend school regularly. They expect them to behave well, and do their best in lessons, regardless of how they might be feeling. Leaders strike an appropriate balance between supporting and challenging pupils. Pupils are benefiting from this. Pupils told us that they are now enjoying going to school much more than they used to. Pupils study a range of academic subjects. However, they also have regular opportunities to go outside to learn about the world and develop important life skills, for example communication and teamwork. Pupils have recently enjoyed working together making hammocks and shelters in a local forest.

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

The school provides a high standard of care for pupils who have found mainstream school difficult. Leaders and staff make sure that there are appropriate plans in place to help pupils settle into the school swiftly. Before pupils start at the school, leaders find out lots of information about them from their previous school. For example, the subjects they have been studying, and whether they have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or any other specific needs. Pupils with SEND achieve well. This is because staff know what they need to help them learn, and they use this information when they plan lessons. Most pupils in the school did not attend their previous school regularly. However, the majority now attend school almost all of the time. When pupils are in school they enjoy being there, they are keen to learn, and they behave well.

Leaders are managing the school effectively. They have chosen a range of subjects for pupils to study, and most pupils achieve well. Leaders recognise, however, that some pupils would like an even broader range of subjects at key stage 4. For example, pupils told us that they would like to study history, art and music.

Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and they teach topics in a sensible order. This enables pupils to use what they have learned in one lesson in future lessons. For example, in art, pupils in key stage 3 were using drawings from an earlier lesson to help them create clay sculptures. However, sometimes teachers are overly focused on preparing pupils for answering GCSE examination questions. And, they do not always check that pupils have learned the important details about a topic before they move on to something new. This is noticeable in English and science.

The school also offers home tuition and hospital provision. This is not as strong because work is not always matched to what pupils need. Leaders have recently introduced plans to improve the quality of education in the hospital provision, and through home-tutoring. However, these plans have not been in place long enough to have had an impact.

Pupils experience a wide range of opportunities that are preparing them well for the future. There are cultural visits to cities such as Chester, and they have regular personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. During these lessons, they are taught about how to manage money, and how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils also receive good careers advice. Many have decided on what they want to do for a career, and they are looking forward to college.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise keeping pupils safe. Staff know the pupils well. They understand what each pupil needs to help them stay safe, and to feel safe. All staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Staff are vigilant and know the signs that might suggest a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff communicate well with each other. They meet every morning to share important information about pupils. When staff are worried about a pupil, they pass on their concerns to leaders without delay. Leaders are equally swift to access support from other agencies when it is required.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Assessment is not used as effectively as it should be, to ensure that pupils have understood the component parts of what they are learning, and are ready to move on to the next topic. This is noticeable in English and science. Therefore, leaders should ensure that assessment is used effectively, to check that pupils have understood what they are learning fully, before they move on to a new topic.
- The quality of education provided for pupils in receipt of hospital provision and home-tutoring is not as high as it is in the rest of the school. Leaders should ensure that the systems they have introduced to improve the quality of education in the hospital provision, and through home-tutoring, are fully embedded and effective.
- The range of subjects available at key stage 4 is not as broad as it could be. It does not include subjects such as history, art and music. Some pupils would like to study these subjects, and would benefit from studying these subjects. Therefore, leaders should ensure that the curriculum is broad enough to meet the needs of all pupils.

## 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're 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134159
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111656
<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Management Board
<b>Chair of management board</b>	Ceri Bedford
<b>Teacher in charge</b>	Melinda James
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.meritpru-stoke.org.uk">www.meritpru-stoke.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 December 2015

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection the management board has been reconstituted and a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school includes a hospital provision. The hospital provision operates from the Royal Stoke Hospital, Newcastle Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6QG. The school also operates a home tuition service. The hospital provision and home tuition service cater for pupils between the ages of 4 and 18.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are dual registered.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the teacher in charge, deputy teachers in charge, and a range of staff including curriculum leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Inspectors met with members of the management board, and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors focused on English, science, art and personal, social, health and

economic (PSHE) education during the inspection. Inspectors considered the school's curriculum plans, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including leaders' plans to improve the school, records of management board meetings, and the school's attendance and behaviour records.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff training and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.

### **Inspection team**

Niall Gallagher, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Owen

Ofsted Inspector

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