

# Inspection of an outstanding school: The Buckinghamshire Primary Pupil Referral Unit

Units 1 and 2, The Abbey Centre, Weedon Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 9NS

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from the thought and care provided by this school. Often, their lives are transformed with adults doing their utmost to put pupils back on track with their education. Kind staff teach pupils how to behave and how to learn. Everyone is welcome and pupils feel they belong. Pupils are happy as they chat and learn positively together.

Through very high expectations, clear rules and boundaries, pupils thrive. The curriculum has been smartly designed to provide pupils with what they most need. This helps pupils to move on to a successful destination that is right for them.

Behaviour is excellent. Pupils work calmly in lessons with staff on hand to help them. Staff really understand pupils' emotions to ensure learning is not disrupted. Pupils settle in securely and enjoy taking on duties to develop teamwork and responsibility.

The school introduces pupils to experiences they have not been able to do before. This clean slate motivates pupils to explore the world around them and truly enhances their wider development. Trips, visitors and sport open up possibilities for pupils. 'Social time' is a daily highlight where staff foster pupils' language and debating skills.

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

The school is ambitious and unwavering in seeking the best education for the pupils who pass through its doors during an academic year. The school makes it abundantly clear that pupils stay for the shortest time possible. Headteachers of pupils' home schools cannot praise highly enough the important work that staff do at this school. All pupils who attend have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The work around

transition into the school is exemplary. Parents are delighted with how well their children do when they attend.

Thorough assessments on entry enable staff to identify what curriculum and pastoral support each pupil needs. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised to ensure pupils master the basics. The school has implemented a new phonics programme that is helping pupils who find learning to read more difficult. External support has enhanced the school's practice. Pupils benefit from one-to-one teaching to accelerate reading fluency. For some pupils, they are now reading independently for the first time. Staff guide pupils to wise book choices to broaden their knowledge.

The curriculum is ambitious and offers breadth of study. A 'gaps-led' approach works successfully as teachers plan content that addresses missing knowledge and misconceptions. This boosts pupils' esteem and ensures they have the right building blocks to access new content. The school has been deliberate in its subject selection to include a greater focus on communication and language and physical education.

Although a strong curriculum is in place, teachers can sometimes be unsure of how best to teach a concept and choose the most appropriate activities. There is not always a firm and collective school understanding of the best ways to help pupils learn the most important knowledge and skills.

The personal development programme for pupils is strong. The school cleverly threads personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education throughout each day. Staff react well to wider issues in pupils' lives to teach up-to-date content there and then. Pupils learn to develop their decision-making and viewpoints and they eagerly elected representatives to the school's 'PRU Council'.

There is a clear structure and determined focus to help pupils regulate their behaviour. Staff are highly trained to nurture warm relationships, de-escalate situations and expect pupils to focus on learning. The school is forensic in analysing patterns to any changing behaviour and puts in swift action where needed.

The management committee plays a pivotal role in holding the school to account. They challenge exceedingly well and are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff look out for each other and agree that leaders are always there to help and listen.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Across the school, the teaching of the curriculum is not consistently highly effective and well embedded. This impacts upon how well pupils gain the knowledge they need. The

school should continue with its professional development package to enable staff to become experts across the curriculum.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2013.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136684
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256568
<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	44
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Lawrence
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stuart Cateridge (executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bucksprimarypru.co.uk">www.bucksprimarypru.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The Buckinghamshire Primary Pupil Referral Unit operates across three separate sites: The Oaks in Amersham; Pathways in Aylesbury; and Woodlands in High Wycombe.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils are at risk of being permanently excluded. Most pupils attend the school on short-term, part-time placements. These pupils are dual registered with their home school. Some pupils are on single-registered placements. The school's aim is to support the reintegration of pupils into mainstream school.
- The local authority commissions outreach support where the school works with other schools within Buckinghamshire to help reduce the risk of pupils being excluded from school.
- The chair of the management committee took up post in February 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with members of the management committee, including the chair and vice-chair. He held video calls with a school improvement adviser from the local authority and a group of headteachers who have pupils attending the pupil referral unit.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and PSHE. To do this, they met with subject teachers, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions, Ofsted's online surveys and the school's internal processes for gathering parent feedback.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement priorities, policies, curriculum documents, behaviour records, pupil profiles and commissioning agreements.

## Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Bulmer

Ofsted Inspector

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