

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST HELENS P.A.C.E.
PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

St Helens

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104757

Teacher-in-charge: Mrs. M. Simpson

Reporting inspector: Mr F. Carruthers
21285

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th July, 2000

Inspection number: 196005

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Pupil referral unit
School category:	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Derbyshire Hill Road, St Helens Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	St Helens Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Mr A. Hough
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr F. Carruthers	Registered inspector	Science, Information Technology, Art, Design and technology, Geography, History, Music, Religious Education, Equal opportunities	What sort of unit is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the unit led and managed?
Mrs M Kerr	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the unit care for its pupils? How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?
Mr. J. Morris	Team inspector	English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

St Helens Primary Assessment Centre for Education (PACE) is a pupil referral unit for primary aged pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have been or who are in danger of being excluded from mainstream primary schools because of their poor or very challenging behaviour. The unit caters for up to 24 boys and girls, full or part-time. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 boys on roll, eight attending full-time and four attending part-time. They are currently taught in three classes, one for pupils in each of Years 3, 5 and 6. None of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or are learning English as an additional language. All the pupils remain on the roll of their previous primary school as well as registering at the unit, in order to assist them to re-integrate into mainstream school. All are on the unit's register of pupils with special educational needs and nine of them have statements of special educational needs, relating specifically to behavioural difficulties. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils' families are often low and a number of pupils are in public care. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the unit is well below average for pupils of their age. During the term in which the inspection took place, pupils at the unit were in the process of transferring to mainstream or special schools. These changes are in anticipation of developments in the Pupil Referral Service, which will see the unit provide time-limited places for pupils. From next September a new intake of pupils will attend part-time at the unit and part-time in their mainstream schools, supported by staff from the unit. A few of the current pupils are to remain at the unit.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The unit provides effective provision for the pupils. They achieve well and their attitudes improve over time, so that a good proportion are able to return successfully to mainstream classes and do well. The quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the unit are good. Given the nature of the difficulties the pupils have, their well below average attainment on entry and the good progress they make, the unit provides good value for money. The cost of educating a pupil at the unit is much less than at many special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

What the unit does well

- The unit is successful in supporting the pupils, helping them to achieve well, to attend regularly and to have improved attitudes to their schoolwork. A good proportion of pupils successfully return to mainstream primary schools.
- The quality of teaching is good and staff, through their caring approach, manage well the challenging behaviour that many pupils exhibit. A particular feature is the good teamwork evident among staff.
- Provision in information technology is good and the pupils are taught well. The use of the computerised Integrated Learning System has helped to improve the pupils' motivation and attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Provision for the pupils' moral development is very good and for their spiritual and social development it is good.
- Links with local primary and special schools are good and help the pupils when they transfer to schools. Effective teamwork between unit staff and visiting specialists has good benefits for the pupils.
- The leadership and management of the unit are good and a number of aspects of the work of senior staff and the management committee are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards that the pupils achieve in solving problems in mathematics and in investigative skills in science are too low.
- The teachers' expertise to teach a range of subjects is insufficient. The use of time in some lessons is unsatisfactory and the pace of lessons can be too slow.
- There is no overall plan for teaching subjects other than English, mathematics, science and information technology and there are insufficient lessons in personal, social and health education.
- The monitoring of teaching by senior staff is unsatisfactory.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the local education authority.

HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Progress since the last inspection in June 1997 has been good. The important issues relating to the role and function of the unit have been successfully resolved and the unit now has a clear purpose. There have been

significant improvements to the buildings so that the unit has become an attractive, welcoming place for pupils, with a number of valuable features such as the Quiet Room and the information technology suite. The unit is more successful in re-integrating pupils into mainstream primary schools than in the past and uses better the assessment of pupils to plan what is taught. Insufficient is currently done, however, to improve the teachers' expertise to teach subjects of the curriculum and to plan for the range of subjects taught. While pupils' individual education plans now have targets for improving the pupils' learning as well as behaviour, many are still too vague.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

Progress in:	by age 11	Key	
English	B	very good	A
Mathematics	B	good	B
Science	B	satisfactory	C
personal, social and health education	C	unsatisfactory	D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	poor	E

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average. However, in relation to their prior attainment, the pupils, including those with statements of special educational need, achieve well. Pupils make progress in all aspects of reading and writing and most are able to cope with the demands of work if they return to mainstream school. In mathematics, the pupils' basic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division improve but their ability to solve problems is under-developed. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of topics they cover in science, such as life processes, the properties of materials and the solar system but their skills of investigation are below what is expected of pupils at the end of the key stage. The pupils' attainment in information technology is similar to that of pupils in most schools and the pupils achieve very well. This is the result of the good provision and teaching. Progress in personal, social and health education is satisfactory and this is because of the impact of the general ethos of the unit. However, there has been insufficient time devoted to the teaching of this subject. Pupils make good progress over time in managing their own behaviour, though targets in their individual education plans are often too vague.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Overall, pupils' attitudes to the unit are good and parents report that these improvements are noticed at home.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Many pupils have complex behavioural problems and are easily frustrated, becoming angry when things go wrong. However, through the consistent approach of the staff, behaviour improves over time and a number of pupils return to mainstream primary schools successfully.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They learn to apologise for unacceptable actions, they learn how others feel and they gain a better understanding of the consequences of their actions.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are good and make an important contribution to pupils' progress while in the unit.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Key Stage 2
Lessons seen overall	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons seen and very good or better in ten per cent of lessons. It was unsatisfactory in five per cent of lessons observed. This was only one lesson. Significant strengths are the caring approach of all staff to the pupils and the good strategies they have developed to handle unsatisfactory behaviour. The teaching of literacy and information technology is good. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Of particular note is the good use made of information technology to help teach basic skills in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils achieve well in these subjects in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching of problem-solving skills in mathematics and of skills of investigation in science is under-developed and there are shortcomings in the teachers' expertise to teach across the range of subjects the unit offers its pupils. Insufficient time is given to the teaching of personal, social and health education. The teaching of art and history, however, is good. Overall, the quality of the pupils' learning is good and the pupils acquire new skills well. Pupils become motivated to try their best, they get to know their own strengths and weaknesses and there is clear evidence of progress by the majority in their levels of concentration and independence. These are below what would be expected of pupils in mainstream primary schools.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a satisfactory range of subjects taught. However, there is no overall plan for teaching subjects other than English, mathematics, science and information technology. Insufficient emphasis is placed on personal, social and health education and the contribution of the community to pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good overall and the pupils make good progress. However, targets for improvement in pupils' individual education plans are too vague.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for the pupils' spiritual and social development is good and for their moral development it is very good, as a result of elements such as the Daily Meeting, the unit's behaviour policy and opportunities for socialising at breakfast and lunchtimes. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are very good. All staff know and care for the pupils very well and there are good systems in place to improve the pupils' attendance, attitudes and behaviour. Procedures to monitor the pupils' learning through assessment are satisfactory overall.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the teacher-in-charge and other key staff	Leadership and management by the head of service and by the teacher-in-charge are very good. They have clear vision of what the unit should be achieving and are making excellent progress towards achieving it.

How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	The management committee is very effective in shaping how the unit is to develop and, very ably led by the responsible officer, fulfils its responsibilities very well.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Whereas the monitoring of the provision overall by officers of the Local Education Authority and by the management committee is good, the monitoring of teaching by senior staff is insufficient for the needs of the unit.
The strategic use of resources	The senior managers make good use of all grants, funding and resources to support the work of the unit.

Levels of staffing are good and support staff make a significant contribution to the success of the unit and the progress of the pupils. The adequacy and condition of the accommodation are good but the outside areas, such as playground and grassed areas, lack sufficient features to stimulate the pupils at playtimes. Levels of resourcing are satisfactory overall. Resources to develop the pupils' skills in information technology are excellent. However, there are shortages of play and construction equipment for younger pupils. The senior managers apply principles of best value well and are very aware of the relative costs of provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties taught at facilities both within and outside the borough.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Parents expressed great appreciation of the unit staff and the support they provide for their children. They feel they are kept well informed about how their children are doing and like the way they are told about the positive things as well as the negative issues. They feel welcome in the unit and are confident that their children make good progress.	No concerns.

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and achievements

1. Many of the pupils on entry to the unit lack the self-esteem and skills to participate successfully in lessons without much additional support. This is particularly evident in reading, writing and mathematics. The attainment of the majority of pupils is well below average on entry and in the unit there is evidence that the pupils make good progress over time. Several pupils during the course of the school year have re-integrated into mainstream primary schools successfully and others are in the process of doing so. This is a measure of the success of the unit.
2. Attainment in English by the end of Key Stage 2 is below average overall, notably in literacy. In Year 3 the pupils' knowledge of the alphabet and letter sounds and skills in basic spelling have improved considerably since the introduction of the computer-based, Integrated Learning System, called 'Success Maker.' In one lesson using the Success Maker there was clear evidence that the program improved the pupils' confidence, helped them to re-focus their attention when interest flagged and to make progress. One pupil in Year 3 has improved by ten months through using the reading readiness program. Using the initial reading workshop, pupils have improved their reading ages by between 7 and 12 months. In Year 5 there is evidence of progress in handwriting skills, vocabulary skills, dictionary work, creative writing, poetry and rhyming. By Year 6, pupils have made progress in creative writing, poetry and reading, though standards are still below expectations. Pupils who re-integrate into mainstream primary schools frequently continue to develop their skills in reading and writing well and achieve results in end-of-key stage tests that are in line with national expectations.
3. By the end of the key stage, pupils' attainment in mathematics is below national expectations but the pupils have achieved well. Most pupils are underachieving in numeracy skills on entry to the unit. It is clear that their behavioural problems in the past have severely affected their knowledge and understanding of basic number concepts. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows evidence of good progress in presentation and learning across the school. The pupils in Year 3 deal with basic number concepts of addition and subtraction and also measure using standards units. In the Year 5 class, pupils make progress in addition of money, measuring, estimating, time, the digital clock, reading timetables and some practical applications of number skills. In one excellent lesson, using the Integrated Learning System, pupils increased their speed in computation and developed their self-confidence to apply their knowledge and numerical skills to simple problems. Records show excellent progress by all pupils since the introduction of the project in September 1999. In Year 6, pupils' understanding of time, fractions, shopping problems, fractions, decimals, percentages, bar charts, measurement, shapes and parallel lines all improve. However, their skills of problem solving are under-developed.
4. Attainment in science is below national expectations. However, the pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, which is often well below average on entry. Pupils in Year 3, for example, study water and know that salt added to water will assist buoyancy. They can name the main parts of the body and understand in simple terms the five senses. Their understanding is more typical of pupils in Year 1. Pupils in Year 5 investigate the growth of beans and strawberry plants. They measure growth and convert their findings to a chart using a data-handling package in information technology. Their understanding is more age appropriate than that of pupils in Year 3. In Year 6, the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of structure and main organs of the human body. They learn about energy sources in food and can describe which vitamins and minerals are present. They can describe what happens when condensation takes place and they investigate

magnetism. Overall, the concepts in the work they cover are appropriate for pupils in Year 6 but their investigative skills are below what is expected and their understanding of what constitutes a fair test in an investigation is insecure. They find technical terms difficult to learn and recall. Good progress is evident, however, in their workbooks, with work well illustrated and presented neatly.

5. Attainment in information technology is in line with that expected of pupils at the end of the key stage and this is the result of good teaching using software of good quality to develop skills of word processing, desktop publishing and graphics particularly. Skills of data handling are less well developed. The pupils achieve very well over time.
6. Attainment in religious education is below the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus but the pupils' progress is satisfactory. Pupils have some awareness of the customs and rituals associated with Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. They know about Creation myths from cultures across the world. Progress in personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall and this is because of the opportunities the pupils have to reflect on their personal development in Daily Meetings and Circle Time. The pupils generally achieve well in art and history. Much work on display, illustrating Roman and Egyptian times, indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with that expected of pupils in Key Stage 2. In physical education, pupils have improved their swimming skills by their participation in the Local Education Authority's Aqua Skills award scheme and over 90 per cent of pupils can swim one length at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils make progress in gymnastics, including stretching, balance, movement and spatial awareness. There is also evidence of progress in ball skills, particularly throwing and catching linked to small games. There was insufficient evidence to judge attainment in design and technology, geography and music.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Overall pupils' attitudes to the unit are good. Parents spoke about the improved attitudes in their children that have been noticed at home while they have been at the unit. At times the pupils arrive for school in a disturbed state but the staff are skilled at working with them to develop a more positive and calm manner for the beginning of the day. Good progress has been made in pupils' enthusiasm for learning since coming to the unit, though at times the pupils display an attitude that they could not care less. Tolerance levels amongst the pupils are frequently low and they are easily distracted but there are also times when they show a good involvement in and enjoyment of their work. This was frequently seen in the computer suite and in other lessons such as a Roman role play in history.
8. Behaviour of pupils in the unit is satisfactory overall. The pupils have complex behavioural problems when they come to the unit and they make good progress. This is due to the staff working well together as a team to apply consistently the effective system for behaviour and anger management in the unit. This includes the use of rewards and sanctions based on a token economy. Pupils can take responsibility for their own behaviour by being given 'time out' to reflect on their actions. In extreme cases this may include a period apart from their fellow pupils in the safety of the Quiet Room. There are also occasions when the unit has to exclude pupils for a fixed period because of dangerously aggressive behaviour. There are opportunities in the Daily Meeting to deal with problems raised by pupils. Instances of name calling, bullying and oppressive behaviour are well dealt with effectively.
9. The Daily Meeting and Circle Time in the classroom are used well to help pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the feelings of others. They learn, for example, to apologise, to accept the apology of others and to reflect on how another person may be feeling at a happy event, such as a birthday, or because of something that has upset them. Pupils are encouraged to be

responsible for their own work and behaviour and are often asked to think about the choices they are going to make. There are few opportunities, however, for pupils to show initiative, take responsibility or undertake small tasks.

10. Levels of attendance are good, given the pupils' previous attitudes to school, and this makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress in both their behaviour and their achievement. There are relatively low levels of unauthorised absence and exclusions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is good. Of twenty lessons observed, five per cent were excellent. This represents one lesson. Five per cent were very good, 45 per cent good and forty per cent satisfactory. One lesson was unsatisfactory. This is an improvement on the quality at the previous inspection, when teaching was judged to be sound overall and fifteen per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.
12. Strengths of the teaching include the caring approach of all staff and their very high expectations that the pupils' behaviour can be improved with time, patience and consistent effort. The staff have developed a good strategy to manage behaviour in class, based on giving pupils responsibility for their own actions and providing rewards and sanctions in a token economy. A significant factor is the consistency with which all staff use the behaviour management system. Teachers and some support staff have received good training in this aspect of their teaching and have passed this training on to other members of staff.
13. A further strength is the teaching of computer skills. All pupils have regular opportunities to use the networked computers in the information technology suite. They learn good skills in word processing, desktop publishing and graphics as a result of the good quality of teaching by the support assistant, who has responsibility for managing the suite, and the teachers. The pace of these lessons is good and pupils produce a good amount of work, thanks to the level and quality of support they receive which helps them to persevere and overcome their impatience when things become difficult.
14. The teaching of literacy is good. Teachers have received some training in using the National Literacy Strategy but have yet to introduce fully all elements of the model lessons. The quality of teaching in English ranges from good to satisfactory and overall is good. The best lessons are well planned, with opportunities to encourage speaking and listening. In one lesson based on Christianity using a Big Book for reading, there was evidence of good individual and group reading. The teacher initiated discussion well and there was active involvement in speaking and listening, with teacher and pupils displaying a good sense of humour when one pupil spoke about "gold, 'Frankenstein' and myrrh".
15. Teaching of mathematics ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory and overall is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the unit has made good efforts to introduce the National Numeracy Strategy. However, there is clear evidence that the staff require additional training on the three-part lesson, in particular the pace of lessons, the use of resources and the development of investigative work. The teaching is bolstered well by the Integrated Learning System on the networked computers. This matches the pitch of exercises precisely to the attainment of the pupils and it teaches in a clear manner skills and concepts that have not been understood. The pupils achieve much success and the target of 100 per cent success becomes an attainable reality. Pupils become well motivated by collecting a variety of certificates. These become part of their Record of Achievement.

16. Shortcomings in teaching include the teaching of problem-solving skills in mathematics and investigative skills in science. As a result skills are under-developed. The teachers' expertise to teach across a range of subjects, such as design and technology, music and physical education is also limited. Lesson planning often lacks learning objectives and as a result these lessons lack purpose. This was evident in a design and technology lesson, in which pupils made a box from card. Although the lesson was given an appropriate context – the secretary needed somewhere to keep elastic bands – there was little emphasis on design and too much on a simple making process. A further weakness is the use of time. Sometimes lessons are delayed or over-run and this has an impact on the following lesson. For example, during the inspection, the lessons when pupils choose options as part of the reward system were cut short because earlier sessions took too long. At other times the pace of lessons slowed and the focus was lost because teachers spent too long dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour.
17. Art and history are taught well. For example, one lesson with pupils in Year 6 involved experiencing a variety of foods and drinks favoured in Roman times. Pupils sampled apricots, pine nuts, spiced chicken and honey, some for the first time. The quality of learning was good.
18. The marking of pupils' work is clear and supportive and provides opportunities for pupils to receive points. The teachers demand good standards of presentation for all work that is included in pupils' folders.
19. Generally, the quality of learning in lessons is good and pupils acquire new skills well. This is especially evident in lessons in information technology. Pupils frequently demonstrate poor skills of concentration and independence, however, and these characteristics of their learning are below what would be expected of pupils in mainstream primary schools. However, there is clear evidence of progress over time by the majority of pupils in these aspects, as a result of the quality of provision in the unit. A good proportion of pupils are able to re-integrate into mainstream schools. In addition, the teaching also helps the pupils to develop a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in learning and behaviour. Over time this helps to raise the pupils' low self-esteem.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

20. The unit is not legally required to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum and religious education or to provide opportunities for collective worship. In practice, pupils are offered a range of learning opportunities with a strong emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy. The information booklet states, "We aim to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum to Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics, science and information technology". The unit is making positive progress in linking its curriculum more closely to the work covered in mainstream primary schools and to the National Curriculum. The vast majority of pupils have displayed unacceptable behaviour within mainstream schools. This has resulted in poor concentration, low work rates and low attainment in literacy and numeracy. These weaknesses have restricted the pupils' experience of a broader curriculum. The efforts to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, linked closely to the Integrated Learning System based on the networked computers, are part of the school's development plan to cater for these weaknesses in the pupils' learning and it is clear that these strategies have improved the pupils' motivation, learning skills and individual attainment.
21. Progress on the key issue at the last inspection to develop schemes of work has been satisfactory but more remains to be done. Although at present there is no overall curriculum plan for teaching

subjects other than English, mathematics, science and information technology, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils are satisfactory. There is evidence of good work in individual classrooms on various aspects of music, art, religious education, history and geography, but there is a lack of overall co-ordination and planning. The extension of the school day from September is designed to extend the breadth of the curriculum offered. Currently, because of the shortness of the lunch break and the transport arrangements at the start and end of the school day, there are no extra-curricular activities.

22. There is insufficient time given to teaching personal, social and health education and a lack of overall co-ordination to give the required priority to pupils' personal development. The subject is taught on an ad hoc basis in Circle Time, science and English. In addition, staff take the opportunity to develop social skills throughout the day. For instance, during the breakfast sessions in classrooms and the lunch period in the dining hall, teachers and support staff actively encourage good habits and social interaction. However, there is no overall plan in place, that has clear objectives to teach personal, social and health education. Staff are aware that there is a need for better overall planning and are due to address the issue in the current school development plan.
23. There is good overall provision for pupils with special educational needs, with clear evidence of individual pupils making good progress in managing their behaviour and learning. However, provision for two younger pupils, working towards Level 1 in Year 3, is frequently inappropriate, with insufficient learning resources to appeal to the pupils at this level. One Year 3 pupil has been at the unit for over 27 months without a statement of special educational needs and this is unsatisfactory. The strategic review of special educational needs in the local authority is designed to ensure that the placement of pupils at the unit will be subject to more regular and rigorous review and will be time-limited.
24. Equality of access and opportunities to participate in all curriculum activities are good. Key features of the support offered to pupils were seen in the caring attitudes of the teachers and learning support assistants towards the pupils and the effective teamwork in classrooms and other areas of the school. During the course of the inspection good opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills and higher levels of work were seen in the computer suite. The planned development of the unit as a time-limited placement, as part of a broader continuum of provision, is a good development to promote a return to mainstream education or the opportunity to enter a more specialist school.
25. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is currently unsatisfactory. Evidence of visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum is limited. There are few educational visits to extend the learning experiences and social skills of pupils. For instance, although there is evidence of rewards in the form of visits and an end-of-term trip, there is no evidence of pupils putting into practice basic literacy and numeracy skills by visiting shops or local places of interest such as churches, libraries or banks. Neither are these linked to programmes of study.
26. The provision for the re-integration of pupils into mainstream schools is good. The policy of registering pupils both at the unit and at mainstream schools is seen by staff at schools as a positive means of offering pupils the opportunity to return to school. However, in the past, information regarding the educational progress of individual pupils referred to the unit has not always been made immediately available to the unit. Now the unit is functioning as part of a continuum of provision and because of the initial involvement of the Outreach Team of support teachers and other workers in schools, all aspects of communication have improved.
27. Reports from staff at the mainstream schools indicate clearly their appreciation of the new system and the effectiveness of the work of staff at the unit. At one school visited during the inspection,

the staff stated that they were delighted with the change in a pupil's behaviour and in his attitude to schoolwork. During a meeting with the pupil, he was keen to talk about his improvement whilst at the unit, the support he had received to help him to cope in the mainstream school and his very good end-of-key stage test results. He was looking forward to going to the mainstream secondary school with his friends. Pupils are benefiting from the new system of positive links between the unit and schools. This is already evident in terms of curricular links and support for staff and pupil during the early stages of re-integration.

28. The development of a multi-agency approach in the Pupil Referral Service has strengthened the work of the unit, particularly where there is evidence of a breakdown in family relationships and the need for additional support. During the course of the inspection a visiting clinical psychologist was working with a pupil helping him to learn self-control and develop his self-esteem. The effective teamwork between the staff in the unit and the visiting specialist has improved the pupil's behaviour in the classroom.
29. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is good and the Daily Meeting makes effective use of prayers, singing and giving time for discussion on pupils' behaviour and attitudes. There is currently no overall focus for reflection, however, in terms of a theme for the week or thought for the day. Circle Time is used well in one class but there is no overall co-ordination of this aspect.
30. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. On entry the majority of pupils show low self-esteem and have frequently experienced failure in their school and home lives resulting in open displays of anger and frustration and poor social skills. The unit's behaviour policy with its emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour, the skill of staff in defusing situations and the consistent caring approach of staff help to promote the pupils' moral development very well. The rewards system is effective in giving the pupils a structure for behaviour management and enabling them to learn to make choices regarding their behaviour.
31. Provision for social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to develop social skills during breakfast and lunch times. There is evidence of good staff teamwork and of staff having high expectations of manners and behaviour during these activities. At one breakfast session the learning support assistant congratulated the pupils for showing politeness and each pupil was awarded a Pace-O, the unit's currency for rewards.
32. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are good examples of work on Africa in geography, the Egyptians and Romans in history and good wall displays of artwork. One teacher had worked in Africa and brought in artefacts she had collected as part of the display. The pupils were keen to talk about the Masai storage urn, drums and jewellery and there was evidence of effective learning. During the inspection one class arranged a Roman feast. There was good evidence of learning and application of social skills as pupils asked other pupils visiting their class if they would like something to eat or drink. There is also evidence of work on other faiths, artwork by Van Gogh and the music of classical composers. However, there is no overall strategy and planning for cultural development and only limited enrichment of cultural experiences through planned visits and the use of visiting speakers.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good. The ethos of the unit is of a caring family community in which staff work as a supportive team. They are very attentive to the guidelines laid down by the local authority for child protection, are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk and take action appropriately. The teacher-in-charge works very

closely with other organisations concerned with the welfare of the pupils, including the Educational Welfare Service and Social Services. The size of the unit enables the staff to know the pupils very well. The staff monitor their personal development closely with weekly targets and are always ready to talk to pupils or their parents or carers about matters of concern.

34. The inside of the building provides a very welcoming and safe environment for the pupils with a Quiet Room provided for pupils who need time and space to regain their composure when they become disturbed. There is some unevenness to the playground, which may present a hazard of tripping.
35. The unit has good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good attendance. Staff offer pupils points for attendance. They ring the parents or carers as soon as an escort reports a pupil is absent without a known reason or if a pupil goes off site during the day. The unit works in conjunction with the Educational Welfare Officer to support families where a pupil has a problem with absenteeism. Good behaviour is expected in the unit and there are simple, effective rules in the classrooms to improve and maintain pupils' behaviour. Pupils collect points for behaviour at all times of the day, which are converted into Pace-Os. These lead to tangible rewards. The pupils learn how consistently good behaviour is rewarded more than occasional bouts of acceptable behaviour. They learn how sanctions lead to a loss of points and how the pupils can achieve more desirable rewards by delaying the time when they exchange their Pace-Os for rewards. The Daily Meeting provides a forum where issues of oppressive behaviour can be discussed and dealt with. Where possible family and carers are involved in helping pupils to control their behaviour and on one occasion a grandmother came into school to support a distressed pupil.
36. Progress has been satisfactory on the key issue to improve the use of assessment to guide curriculum planning. In the past the unit has not always received evidence of a pupil's level of work from the previous school and there have been many cases of the unit providing work in isolation of the curriculum in mainstream schools. With the development of the unit as part of a continuum of special provision, no pupil is referred to the unit without prior support from the Outreach Team, so that all records of a pupil's level of work are collected by the support teacher prior to referral. The use of assessment and the sharing of information on curriculum planning between the unit and the mainstream school are improving as a result.
37. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. Each pupil's performance is monitored through an individual education plans and annual reviews. The plans include targets for learning as well as behaviour and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, there is currently a lack of consistency across the classes in recording ongoing progress.
38. Progress on the key issue to make targets in individual education plans more specific and measurable has been unsatisfactory. Specific short-term learning targets are not identified clearly enough and as a result opportunities to monitor progress in terms of objectives are missed. Staff are aware of this weakness and it is prioritised for attention in the current school development plan. There is good practice evident in the use of targets linked to the 'Success Maker' programs in literacy and numeracy, which give feedback to pupils and establish specific short-term learning targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. No parents or carers returned the Parents' Questionnaire but from the parents' meeting and the limited number of parents spoken, it is evident that they regard the unit highly. One parent whose child is now fully integrated into mainstream school said that he would not have done so without

the work of the unit. There is a warmth and welcome in the unit, which the parents are drawn to and they appreciate the open-door policy that the unit operates and the support which the staff offers to whole families.

40. The links that the unit maintains with parents and carers are satisfactory. The staff make good use of telephone contacts and messages passed on by the transport escorts both to affirm pupils' needs and to keep parents informed about difficulties the pupils may be having. The quality of the annual reports is very good with academic, personal and behavioural achievements and targets recorded. Most parents attend review meetings as a result of the encouragement they are given but they are not sufficiently involved in the setting of targets in the pupils' individual education plans. The use of the home/school book is inconsistent and no newsletters are produced. The prospectus contains a lot of in-depth information but its style and language make the information difficult to read.
41. Since September 1999 a home-school agreement is signed at an initial meeting by parents or carers, the pupil and the mainstream school. Each undertakes clear responsibilities. During the inspection, there were examples of parents, carers and other family members coming in to help pupils with behavioural difficulties.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

42. The leadership and management of the unit are good. A number of aspects of the management are very good but there are a few shortcomings. These findings are a significant improvement on those at the previous inspections, when key issues were identified about the overall effectiveness of the unit. At that time, there were no clear role and function for the unit in relation to other services of the Local Education Authority, the day-to-day management of the unit had been in the hands of an acting principle for more than three years and there was little long-term planning for the development of the unit. The findings of this inspection are that the management committee, ably led by the responsible officer, is very effective in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and is fully aware of its part in guiding the unit forward. A thorough review of the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs in the borough has established a clear place for the work of the unit. The strategy, which is being implemented from this September, creates a continuum of provision and the unit will provide time-limited places for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who will attend part-time at the unit and part-time in their mainstream schools, supported by staff from the unit.
43. The leadership provided by the head of service and the unit's teacher-in-charge is very good. Both have a clear vision of how the unit is to develop and a full understanding of their individual roles in the management structure. They have promoted high quality teamwork among staff so that the aims of the unit are fully reflected in the way the unit operates. Detailed plans for the development of the unit form part of the overall plan for the Pupil Referral Service and indicate clearly an awareness by the senior staff of where improvements need to be made. For example, whereas both senior staff and the responsible officer have a good overview of pupils' emotional and behavioural needs and plans for how the unit's provision is to develop, they have recognised in the plan that there is a need to monitor much more rigorously the quality of teaching and the curriculum that is being taught. The plan has clear priorities and criteria by which its success can be judged. Financial planning is good and staff make very good use of new technology to track budget forecasts and daily transactions. The head of service has undertaken performance management training in recent months and plans to introduce the new national guidelines are well in hand. The head of service is very successful at attracting funding for the school, for example in relation to the buildings and to the development of information technology, and both she and the teacher-in-charge use specific grants well to enrich the provision. The senior managers apply principles of

best value well and are keenly aware of the relative costs of provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties taught at facilities both within and outside the borough.

44. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the pupils. The delegation of responsibilities to staff is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. There are subject co-ordinators for English, mathematics, science and information technology, who have appropriate roles and responsibilities. Co-ordination of other subjects is under-developed and is planned for in the unit's development plan as part of the review for Curriculum 2000. The unit particularly benefits from the expertise of one member of the support staff who manages very well the information technology suite, planning the use of the Integrated Learning System and assisting the subject co-ordinator to plan the teaching of computer skills. Her work makes a significant contribution to the provision for information technology, which is a strength of the unit.
45. The accommodation is good. In response to the key issue at the last inspection, the head of service has initiated major improvements to the quality of the premises, making it more secure, well decorated, attractive and welcoming. A recent improvement is the Quiet Room, where pupils can take time out when things become too difficult for them in class. There is a good sized hall which has been recently re-furnished and a very well equipped information technology suite, which is made available for timetabled use by a nearby primary school in addition to the pupils in the unit. Staff make a good contribution to the ambience of the building by producing displays of good quality. The exterior of the building has been re-painted but the playground is uneven, lacks features and markings and does not provide a stimulating space for the pupils.
46. Levels of resourcing for most subjects are satisfactory. There is a full list of resources available for reading, including details of Big Books, sets of books and resources for the Literacy Strategy. At present neither resources nor books available in the library are coded in terms of reading age and interest levels. In addition there are no comics, newspapers or magazines available to develop reading for pleasure. Resources for information technology are excellent. Classrooms have their own computers as well as networked machines in the suite. There is a lack of appropriate equipment for younger pupils whose attainment is well below average. For example, there is insufficient practical and construction equipment for them to use in lessons.
47. Overall, the unit provides effective provision for the pupils. The pupils achieve well and their attitudes improve over time, so that a good proportion are able to return successfully to mainstream classes and do well. The leadership and management of the unit are good and staff and management have made good improvements since the previous inspection. Given the nature of the difficulties the pupils have, their low attainment on entry and the good progress they make, the unit provides good value for money. The cost of educating a pupil there is much less than at many special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. The management committee and staff should
 - (1) Put a greater emphasis on teaching pupils how to solve problems in mathematics and how to carry out investigations in science (paragraphs 3, 4, 15, 16)
 - (2) take steps to improve the expertise of staff to teach across a range of subjects through in-service training of good quality and opportunities for staff to see best practice in other schools and units * (paragraphs 15, 16)

- (3) write a whole-school plan for teaching all subjects offered by the unit, including personal, social and health education * (paragraphs 21, 22)
- (4) improve the monitoring of teaching, giving particular attention to the pace of some lessons and the use of time. * (paragraphs 16, 21, 44)

In addition, managers and staff should include in their action plan the following points for improvement,

- (i) make targets in pupils' individual education plans more specific * (paragraph 39)
- (ii) make more use of the community, through visits and visitors, to help the pupils' learning (paragraph 25)
- (iii) develop the outside play areas to promote stimulating play activities (paragraphs 35, 46)
- (iv) improve levels of resourcing, when finances allow, to help the learning of younger pupils. (paragraphs 23, 47)

* Features in the current school development plan

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	5	45	40	5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	12

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	12

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
Unit data	6.7

Unauthorised absence	%
Unit data	3.9

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for last whole term before the inspection

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	6	0	6

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	Unit	16	0	50
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	Unit	16	16	0
	National	68	69	75

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	12
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	36	
Other minority ethnic groups		

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	128

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	195 776
Total expenditure	195 776
Expenditure per pupil	10304
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	12
Number of questionnaires returned	0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

At the meeting for parents, the parents expressed great appreciation of the unit staff and the support they provide for their children. They feel they are kept well informed about how their children are doing and like the way they are told about positive things as well as the negative issues. They feel welcome in the unit and are confident their children make good progress. There were no concerns.