

INSPECTION REPORT

Alternative Education Service

Jarrow

LEA area: South Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108666

Headteacher: Mrs. C. A. Marchant

Reporting inspector: Mrs. K. W. Halifax
25439

Dates of inspection: 8th - 12th October 2001

Inspection number: 198971

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	5 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Youth Block Perth Green Community Association Inverness Road Jarrow Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE32 4QA
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Barbara Hughes, Director of Education
Date of previous inspection:	17 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25439	Katharine Halifax	Registered inspector	English Science Art Humanities Personal, social and health education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the unit The unit's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
14066	Gillian Hoggard	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
22178	Kate Robertson	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Though the Alternative Education Service has been in existence for a number of years, the Young Mothers' Unit, social inclusion and a jointly funded project with Barnado's and social services were added in April 2000. The provision is based on five sites and caters for excluded pupils, schoolgirl mothers, school phobics and pupils who are being assessed for learning difficulties. Whilst the Service caters for pupils from the ages of five to sixteen, all of the 89 pupils were secondary age at the time of the inspection. Over half of these were in Year 11. The Service has an agreed maximum number of 141 full time equivalent pupils, with 89 taught at any one time. There are far more boys than girls. Almost all pupils are of white European heritage. All speak English as their first language. There are no refugees or children from travelling families. All pupils have special educational needs of which 39 have Statements for their learning needs. Though most have moderate learning needs or emotional and behavioural difficulties, an increasing number have phobias and more complex needs. The area served by the Service has high unemployment, many families being second generation unemployed. Most of the families are entitled to free school meals or family credit. At the time of the last inspection, the provision was very different with only 20 pupils and catering only for fifteen and sixteen-year-olds. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

This is an effective provision with many strengths. The quality of teaching is good and this has resulted in improved standards. Every year an increasing number of pupils are achieving more passes in General Certificate of Secondary Education, many with higher grades. A significant number of pupils return to mainstream education or are placed in more suitable schools. The Service is very well led and managed. The headteacher and staff have a clear vision for the future of the Service, are committed to high achievement and have the capacity to maintain a good rate of improvement. Unit costs are low for a unit of this type. The Service gives good value for money.

What the unit does well

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has resulted in dramatic improvement in the Service in the four terms she has been in post.
- Teaching is good for 11 to 14 year olds and very good for 14 to 16 year olds. This is reflected in pupils' learning.
- Significant improvement in pupils' attitudes behaviour and attendance have been achieved because of the successful way the Service monitors and encourages them.
- Teachers, support staff and other professionals work very well together as a team using their particular strengths to meet the varying needs of pupils.
- Highly effective links with the community and other educational establishments provide very good learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good and prepares them well to be good citizens.
- Work undertaken in the performing arts gives pupils confidence and contributes well to their personal development.

What could be improved

- Weaknesses in the accommodation affect what can be taught and how it can be taught.
- Financial planning and the allocation of funds by the Local Education Authority means managers are not able to plan for the long term. This had led to unsatisfactory resourcing in some subjects.
- The Local Education Authority places pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs without sufficient consideration for those already at the unit.
- Imprecise learning objectives and the ad hoc ways pupils are taken out of lessons at Simonside Lodge limits their progress.
- The overview and knowledge subject managers have of what is happening on all sites could be improved.

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

The Service has changed significantly since the last inspection in October 1997 and now caters for a much increased number of pupils with a far wider range of educational needs. Nevertheless, very good improvement has been made since the last inspection, mostly in the last eighteen months since the appointment of the headteacher. All the key issues identified by the last inspection have been remedied. Standards have improved because pupils have the chance to work for a far wider range of nationally recognised qualifications with more achieving graded passes in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Improved opportunities for staff training have brought about significant improvement in the quality of teaching. This is reflected in the progress of pupils of all abilities. An increasing number of pupils are returning to mainstream education or more appropriate provision. Though the number of excluded pupils is higher than at the last inspection, the comparative figure has gone down when taking account of the increased number of pupils. Learning opportunities and links with the community have been strengthened. This is demonstrated in pupils' personal development. The Service has gained a National Achievement Award for improvement in standards between 1997 and 2000.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By age 16	Key	
English	A	very good	A
Mathematics	A	good	B
Science	B	satisfactory	C
Personal, social and health education	A	unsatisfactory	D
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	poor	E

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

Pupils' achievements are good in English, mathematics, history and geography by the age of fourteen and very good by the age of sixteen. Achievement is very good in personal and social education in both age groups. Though pupils achieve well in science in both age groups, their progress is limited by the facilities available. This means they cannot study some aspects of the subject. Similarly, pupils' achievements in information and communication technology are limited by a lack of equipment. Teachers arrange for some pupils to work in other establishments and so achieve well. Achievement in design and technology and religious education is satisfactory by the age of fourteen. Achievement in religious education is very good by the age of sixteen. Achievement in art is good at Simonside Lodge and satisfactory at Chuter Ede and Perth Green. The rate of progress of pupils at Simonside Lodge is sometimes limited because some spend only two days in education, and because they are taken out of lessons for therapy without prior arrangement. Educational objectives for these pupils are unclear. By the age of sixteen, pupils take GCSE examinations in up to six subjects and many achieve commendable grades. All sixteen-year-olds leave the Service with a good number of nationally recognised awards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Good. Pupils make good improvement in their attitude during their time at the school. They improve their concentration and persevere, even when things get difficult.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most pupils make very good improvement in their behaviour. They are particularly well behaved out in the community, for instance at college and when taking part in conservation work. Odd incidents are quickly dealt with by staff so cause minimum disruption.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils relate to each other and to staff in a positive way. Most are beginning to take responsibility for their learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most pupils make good improvement in their attendance, but a significant number still have low attendance rates.

Pupils aged fourteen to sixteen, Years 10 and 11, show greater maturity, a more positive attitude to their work and are generally better behaved than those aged eleven to fourteen who are in Years 7, 8 and 9.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.

Teaching and learning is good for eleven to fourteen year olds and very good for fourteen to sixteen year olds. The teaching of English, mathematics and science follows this pattern. The teaching of personal, social and health education is very good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils make good improvement in numeracy and literacy because these aspects are taught well with teachers providing opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in all subjects. Teachers and support staff work very closely together, managing pupils' behaviour well and creating a good climate for learning. Support staff have a wealth of experience, many having an in depth knowledge of pupils and their families through work out of school, for instance as youth workers. All staff are sensitive to the needs of all pupils and so pupils of all abilities make good progress. In the two lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, activities were not planned properly, the pace was slow so pupils became bored and did not learn. Where teaching is very good, pupils are inspired by their teachers; they respond to the urgency of the lesson and make very good gains in their knowledge and skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils have access to a good range of subjects and courses that prepare them well for returning to other schools and for life after school. Not all subjects are taught at all bases because of the constraints of the buildings. Links with the community and other schools and colleges add considerably to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Care is taken to make sure pupils of all abilities are given equal chances. Special arrangements are made to help pupils with more complex needs gain qualifications.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Opportunities provided allow pupils to acquire skills for independent living and to become good citizens. Whilst provision for pupils' cultural development is good, staff recognise the need to give more thought to preparing pupils for living in a multi-racial society.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Good overall. The Service provides a close, caring community. However, some of the buildings pose health and safety problems. Parents receive good information and think well of the Service. The involvement of some parents in their child's education is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher is an excellent leader and manager. She is well supported by her very capable deputies and senior managers. Many subject managers are new to post and have not had chance to check what is happening at other bases.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The committee is composed of a range of professionals who support the Service well. They are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Good. Careful analysis of national test results, attendance figures and pupils returning to mainstream schools has encouraged managers to set challenging targets in order to improve further. Good use is made of the principles of best value when making decisions and purchases.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Managers are imaginative and creative and make best use of very limited resources to promote effective teaching and learning.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	Unsatisfactory. Some of the bases are poor and restrict what can be taught. Whilst there is a good number of staff to teach all groups, often they do not have enough equipment. Insufficient administration time is allocated to the Service.

There are problems with the way Local Education Authority finances the Service, and the way they place pupils with more severe behavioural needs. This often has a negative effect on established groups of pupils already in the Service.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The improvement in their child's behaviour.• Pupils are more willing to tackle schoolwork.• Staff manage pupils well, have high expectations and do a good job.• Staff and managers are very approachable and work well with parents.• The service is managed well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework their child receives.• The behaviour of pupils at Chuter Ede.• Parents find it difficult to see the Service as one provision.

The inspection team agrees with the strengths identified by the parents and carers. In response to their concerns, the amount of homework varies but is satisfactory overall and is used well to support pupils studying for national examinations. The behaviour of pupils at Chuter Ede is variable, but is affected by the poor accommodation and the influence of pupils attending the adjoining pupil referral unit. The headteacher and staff are working hard to bring all aspects of the Service together.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the Service is low because their education has been disrupted by periods of absence, a poor attitude to school and behavioural difficulties that have affected their learning. Pupils have many gaps in their knowledge in most subjects. The Service is successful in settling most pupils and encouraging a good attitude to work. This has a positive effect on pupils' academic progress.

2. Taking account of their previous attainment and special educational needs, pupils' achievements are good by the age of fourteen and very good by the age of sixteen. Pupils make good progress in their personal development through all that happens in the bases. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in that all pupils now study for nationally recognised qualifications with more able pupils achieving GCSE and others being awarded Certificate of Educational Achievement. A good number of sixteen-year-olds are working towards National Vocational Qualifications Level 1 at local colleges. Pupils at the All Saints base have completed their portfolios for Key Skills communication and numeracy and a number have passed examinations in communication and in information technology. The number of passes gained in GCSE has increased significantly since the last inspection, with many pupils achieving higher grades.

3. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of pupils from different races. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11 because of the support they receive and because of the quality of teaching. For example, pupils who have a phobia about attending school and mixing with others are given individual tuition by a member of staff at lunchtime to help prepare for GCSE English. Similarly, pupils who are more able achieve well because teachers plan additional activities for them. This is good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils attend Simonside Lodge only two days a week, whilst they make satisfactory gains in their learning their rate of progress is reduced because educational objectives are not always clear and because they are taken out of lessons on an ad hoc basis for counselling.

4. Though standards are below those expected nationally of fourteen and sixteen-year-olds, taking into account most pupils enter the Service with poor skills in literacy, achievement in English is good by the age of fourteen and very good by the age of sixteen. Pupils in Year 11 are working towards Certificate of Educational Achievement with more able pupils studying for GCSE. Pupils throughout the Service make good progress in **speaking and listening** because of the emphasis placed on this aspect. Teaching is good for eleven to fourteen-year olds and very good for fourteen to sixteen year-olds. This pattern is repeated in all aspects of English. Teachers of both age groups work hard to build pupils' confidence. Work done to address the key issue identified by the previous inspection through the introduction of English GCSE in speaking and listening has brought about significant improvement in standards. Through activities such as discussion groups, drama and lunchtimes conversations with staff pupils gain confidence and understand their opinions are valued. Though some pupils find it difficult to make eye contact most make a verbal response when spoken to. When they arrive, many answer using single words or phrases, but as they become more confident and relaxed they take part in discussions, wait their turn to speak and make mature contributions to discussions, for example, when debating smoking. Pupils with specific targets make good progress for instance in speaking appropriately to staff. Most know how to adapt their speech depending on the listener and

talk politely to visitors whilst adopting a suitably relaxed tone with their classmates. Pupils in Year 11 taking the drama option use their talents to very good effect, playing their parts well, interpreting the script and portraying a range of emotions such as fear, excitement and frustration.

5. Standards in **reading** are improving by the age of fourteen because of the introduction of the literacy strategy. Pupils' make very good progress in their reading and their achievements are now good. Almost all pupils have been reluctant readers in their previous schools. By the age of fourteen the majority are functional readers because of the way literacy is taught. By the age of sixteen, most pupils are able to read a range of texts accurately, some fluently and with expression, Though few pupils read for pleasure, pupils in Year 11 are gaining a good knowledge of a number of writers because of their teacher's enthusiasm and the courses provided. Many express a preference of authors and say why they like or dislike a piece of text. Pupils' skills when finding information from reference books is limited.

6. Achievements in **writing** are good by the age of fourteen and very good for fourteen to sixteen-year-olds. Many pupils feel they have failed as writers because this has been an area of conflict in their previous schools. With good teaching they quickly gain confidence. By the age of fourteen pupils write in sentences using full stops and capital letter. Simple words are generally spelled correctly but writing lacks imagination. Nevertheless they compose satisfactory letters requesting seeds from horticultural companies to grow in their wildlife area, and letters to an 'agony aunt' expressing concern about their 'daughter's dress sense'. Pupils in the fourteen to sixteen age group make very good progress because of very good teaching. Teachers give pupils a framework of ideas so they rapidly gain confidence in writing independently. By the age of sixteen, pupils achieve GCSE or Certificate of Educational Achievement depending on their ability. All pupils who entered GCSE gained a creditable grade. Most pupils complete application forms and write letters for work experience placements. More able pupils compose poems and write accounts using direct speech and paragraphs. Pupils of all abilities use imaginative vocabulary because of the way they are taught. For example, pupils in Year 11 extend their vocabulary at a rapid rate because they are expected to contribute words associated with feelings starting with each letter of the alphabet. Very few pupils write using a cursive script which puts them at a disadvantage when handwriting letters of application for work or training. Pupils use their literacy skills well in other areas, for example, writing an account of the Berlin air lift, or when comparing the different ideologies of capitalism and communism.

7. Achievement in **mathematics** is good for pupils aged eleven to fourteen. Teaching, though uninspiring, is nevertheless effective because of the structure of the numeracy strategy. Pupils in this age group work their way through a commercially produced programme, receiving individual help where required. By the age of fourteen, pupils handle money confidently and many are competent using the four rules with whole numbers and decimals. Very good teaching for pupils in the older age group results in pupils achieving GCSE or Certificate of Educational Achievement. Pupils build on the knowledge of number, estimating their answers before working them out accurately. Much of the mathematics is practical and relevant to pupils' lives, for example constructing and reading a graph converting pesetas to sterling. Pupils use their knowledge well in other subjects, for instance knowledge of perimeters is drawn on when working out the amount of wood required to frame a piece of design work or in science when comparing the length and width of limpet shells.

8. Standards in **science** are satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in lessons in both age groups because of good teaching. However, their overall knowledge is limited because the accommodation limits what aspects of the subject can be taught. Science at Chuter Ede is

mostly learning about life processes. By the age of fourteen, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the workings of the human body. They locate bones such as the clavicle and scapular on a diagram and then find their own. By the age of sixteen, a small number of more able pupils achieve GCSE and others Certificate of Educational Achievement. Pupils at Perth Green have a sound knowledge of electrical circuits, knowing how to build a circuit and what to look for if a circuit is broken. Teachers use the locality well for example the beach for a shell survey and a water survey. Pupils have a good understanding of the composition of water in the estuary because of their work testing for nitrates and nitrites.

9. Pupils' achievements in **information and communication technology** are satisfactory for pupils aged eleven to fourteen. Their progress is hampered by a lack of suitable equipment and software. Pupils up to the age of fourteen have information technology lessons off site, and follow a course using word processing, databases and spreadsheets. Only three pupils were observed using computers during the inspection. They demonstrated basic keyboard and mouse skills, and could change type and size of font. One pupil knew about cells in spreadsheets, could add cells and enter data. It was only possible to observe one lesson for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen, and only two pupils were present. They showed basic word processing skills, including changing type, size and colour of fonts, could highlight text, use drop-down menus and dialogue boxes, and save and print their work. However, both were frustrated by having to wait for access to a working printer. Year 11 pupils who attend college use the computer to write reports and CDROM to sit the theory part of their driving test. Teaching and learning observed ranged from good to unsatisfactory, but was mostly satisfactory, and the majority of pupils made progress during lessons. By the age of sixteen, some pupils make very good progress, gaining many skills over time and achieving highly with some passing GCSE and others gaining Certificate of Achievement. However, achievement depends on pupils' access to computers off-site. Displays show good use of graphics using desk-top publishing. Pupils use digital cameras confidently and have produced a CD about local history which is in use in local churches. They also collaborated in the production of a CD-Rom about the Service, which is of a very high standard, and could form the basis of a website. Pupils rarely use computers in other subjects because much of the equipment is out of commission and the range of software is very narrow.

10. Achievement in **religious education** is satisfactory for pupils up to the age of fourteen and very good for fourteen to sixteen year-olds. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Though some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the eleven to fourteen age group, scrutiny of work shows that some progress has been made by pupils in this age group during the first few weeks of term. Effective planning and teaching for fourteen to sixteen-year-olds has resulted in very good discussion and acquisition of knowledge. The teacher inspires her pupils, who work with attention and interest and acquire learning skills that they transfer to other subjects. By the age of sixteen, they have a good understanding of beliefs and how religion influences peoples' lives. Pupils participate in discussion seriously and sensitively and back up their opinions with sound arguments. They listen with respect to the opinions of others. In a good lesson on Abortion, the Christian Perspective, they showed good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils achieve GCSE or Certificate of Educational Achievement depending on their ability.

11. Pupils' achievements in **humanities** are good by the age of fourteen and very good by the age of sixteen with pupils gaining GCSE in geography and Certificate of Educational Achievement in history. By the age of fourteen, pupils have an understanding of World War 1, knowing which countries were involved and locating them on a map of the world. In geography, they know how volcanoes and earthquakes occur commenting how the movement of plates, for instance in the mid-Atlantic, causes trenches and ridges. Very

good teaching for fourteen to sixteen year olds results in very good achievement. Pupils' knowledge of history and geography is very well supplemented by work undertaken in religious education and studies of the locality. By the age of sixteen, pupils know about the Cold War and of the differences in political systems and beliefs of the world 'Superpowers'. Their knowledge of local history is extensive and they recognise the reasons for the decline of shipbuilding in Jarrow. They are aware of the recreational use of the environment and why leisure time has increased in more recent years. From work in the locality they have knowledge of the road and rail structures serving the area, and of the various bridges across the River Tyne.

12. Pupils' achievements in **art** are good by the age of fourteen at Simonside Lodge and satisfactory by the ages of fourteen and sixteen at Chuter Ede and Perth Green. Pupils at Simonside Lodge are confident and work with a good range of media to express their ideas and imagination. Teaching at this base is generally good. The teacher has high expectations of the standards pupils will achieve and has planned a programme that develops their skills systematically. As a result pupils demonstrate good detail in their observational drawing and show an idea of proportions in the human body when drawing portraits. Pupils have a good awareness of art from other cultures through their appreciation and work in the style of artists such as Monet, Van Gogh and Seurat. Some high quality African art has been produced by way of tie-dye, animal patterns and dramatic sunsets over the African landscape. Pupils readily discuss how they composed their work, what they found difficult, and talk with pride of work framed and displayed around the base.

13. Pupils' achievements at Chuter Ede and Perth Green are limited by the range of media on offer and by the teachers' low expectations that pupils are unable to use sketchbooks or work with paint. Teaching for these pupils is just satisfactory. Much of the work is on a large scale with pupils using an overhead projector to trace outlines and colouring their work using felt tip pen. A number manage to portray the idea of texture, but felt tips are a difficult medium to do this successfully. Whilst there is some development of skills, most emphasis is placed on the quality and use of colour. When pupils use other media their work is of a higher standard. For example, when they are interpreting their interests, the work of one pupil shows good progress in his observational skills and use of shading to show light and dark in drawings of chess pieces. A second pupil has produced a high quality piece of observational work of a baseball cap using oil pastels. Pupils working towards GCSE are compiling a portfolio, but at this early stage in the academic year have very few examples to show.

14. **Design and technology** is taught only to pupils at Simonside Lodge. Pupils' achievements when working in wood are satisfactory. The teacher is new to post and is just developing the subject. To date pupils have designed and produced a picture using the technique of 'pyrography', burning a picture in wood. This they have stained using dye and framed. Others have constructed a glider using balsa wood. The teacher is gradually building pupils' skills, for example, using craft knives safely. Whilst some pupils have begun isometric drawing, insufficient attention is given to the design and evaluation process. Pupils on this site are also taught food studies, working towards Certificate of Educational Achievement in food technology. Pupils grow foods such as varieties of green beans on site and plan and prepare a range of dishes. Most have a good understanding of food hygiene and the need to be safe in the kitchen.

15. Pupils' achievements in **general studies** are very good. By the age of sixteen, pupils are working towards GCSE and are making excellent gains in their knowledge and understanding of their locality through a carefully planned programme and very good teaching. They have a good knowledge of the 'Tyne Bards' and their work through their teacher reading selected works in situ. Much of the course takes place in the community

with pupils visiting, for example, the house of Stan Laurel and following a cultural trail. Studies such as the pedestrian tunnel under the River Tyne have given pupils a good understanding of the history of industry on Tyneside.

16. Pupils' achievements in **personal, social and health education** are very good for both age groups. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of citizenship and working as part of a community. They successfully develop a good understanding of the skills required for life and the world of work. Pupils in both age groups have a good understanding of the effects of smoking and substance abuse on the body. Pupils at the Bedewell Young Mothers' Unit understand the need to keep healthy for their own benefit and that of their unborn child.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Most pupils demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour, with some lapses by individuals at times. In two-thirds of lessons, behaviour was judged good or better; it is largely very good in Years 10 and 11. There is no significant difference in the behaviour of boys and girls or of pupils of different races. The Service has maintained and built on the high standards found at the time of the last inspection, with a much larger and more challenging population. Parents comment favourably on positive changes in attitudes and behaviour.

18. Pupils are often keen and eager to work; for example, Year 10 boys making a tower out of newspaper as part of a team building exercise took time to settle down but eventually showed great enthusiasm. Year 9 pupils in a science lesson made even more progress than expected due to their good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils also show great interest in the range of different activities offered, for example board games, football and musical performance. Year 11 pupils talking about their college experiences were enthusiastic and articulate; Year 9 in English used a game to reinforce spelling and their enthusiasm visibly grew with good teaching and work closely matched to their needs. Some pupils find concentration difficult and on occasion try to avoid work, but a surprising number show intense concentration once their interest is caught. Over three-quarters of parents report that their sons or daughters are happy to attend the units, including many who had been persistent non-attenders. A few individual pupils cause problems through isolated outbursts and a desire to disrupt lessons, mostly in Years 8 and 9, but they are managed well and begin to show an understanding of the impact of their actions. There were 48 exclusions last year but none were permanent. This is not unduly high considering the number of pupils and that over half have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. It is a great improvement on 141 exclusions the previous year.

19. Pupils listen with respect to the contributions of others and make sensible suggestions. Most work independently when required, for example year 10 and 11 pupils in physical education, participating in a variety of games and activities in the sports hall, demonstrated very good co-operation and collaborated well, learning to work together, accept the rules and lose without getting upset. Some individual pupils, however, find it hard to accept criticism or comment from their peers.

20. Pupils usually behave very well in and around the building. They hold doors open for visitors, chat and relax together in a pool session at morning break. Occasionally these activities are marred by bad language, or by deliberately disruptive behaviour, especially at Chuter Ede where the accommodation severely limits break and lunchtime activities and pupils are disturbed by those attending the adjoining pupil referral unit. Pupils show little oppressive behaviour. They work well at college, sometimes with other groups, and behave well on trips out of the centre. The close monitoring and support by staff quickly picks up and deals with any harassment or bullying. Those with special educational needs are fully integrated into the daily life of the Service.

21. Constructive relationships are a key feature of the Service. Staff and pupils are on first-name terms and show respect and friendliness to each other. Some good relationships and enthusiastic teaching in lessons create good learning which slowly wins over pupils who are reluctant to learn. Pupils are increasingly able to reflect on their own experiences and make sense of them. One former pupil confirmed the Service had helped him 'when things weren't good'. It is clear their experiences here have often helped to heal and reverse some of the emotionally and behaviourally damaging experiences they have encountered. Pupils show some initiative and are eager to take responsibility. For example, they take part in setting their own targets for work and behaviour, organise themselves and attend college and work experience placements independently, plan and carry out trips out of their base and consider how successful the planning was.

22. Attendance though less than desirable in all bases is satisfactory for a provision of this type and is showing improvement. The overall figure being 68 percent as against 54 percent last year. Absence rates vary between bases for example, Perth Green had an attendance rate of 64.5 percent with 15.5 percent authorised absence and 18.75 percent unauthorised; for Chuter Ede comparable figures are 71 percent attendance, 6 percent authorised and 23 percent unauthorised absence. However, these figures mask great variations in attendance with some individuals achieving 100 percent attendance and others, particularly at All Saints, never appearing. For many pupils this represents enormous positive progress, since they came into the Service with poor patterns of attendance and in some cases, prolonged periods of absence, for example two years. There is clear evidence of improvement in individual cases. Pupils are largely punctual to school and to lessons; for instance they return promptly after breaks. This creates a good basis for learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This is reflected in the quality of learning and in improved standards. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching in two lessons was unsatisfactory. Both these lessons were taught by the same person to pupils in the eleven to fourteen age group. Of the remaining 96 percent of lessons where teaching was satisfactory or better, almost one third of lessons were satisfactory, a further third of lessons were good and over one third were very good. The number of lessons where teaching was good or better has increased from almost a half to over two thirds. Teaching for pupils aged eleven to fourteen is good overall and for fourteen to sixteen year olds is very good. Staff are very skilful in adapting their teaching style to match the learning need of the pupils they are working with. In most groups pupils have very diverse needs. Nevertheless, all pupils, including those for example with emotional learning needs, those who have a fear of school, and those with moderate learning difficulties, all learn at a good rate because of the skill and sensitivity of staff.

24. Staff often have to work hard to gain the interest of pupils, especially when they come into school after problems at home or having slept out all night. Teachers plan activities which are designed to quickly capture pupils' interest, that are relevant to their lives and which make learning fun. For example, many mathematics lessons begin with a quick mental session where pupils compete against each other to get the highest score and to beat their previous best score or time. Lessons begin with a useful recap of prior learning to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and to 'set the scene' for those who may have been absent the previous lesson. Tasks are tailored to pupils' experiences and needs, for example one comprehension exercise tested pupils' reading ability and understanding of various forms of contraception. In another lesson, pupils were shocked when they used data to construct a graph showing the correlation of the number of cigarettes smoked and the premature death of young men. Staff use humour effectively to emphasise a point.

Pupils in Year 11 were amazed and amused when, during a lesson about recycling, they discovered that the seats on South Shields Pier, which they thought were metal, are made of re-cycled black plastic bags. Recognising that pupils find concentration difficult whilst listening to a set text being read, one of the teachers of English provides pupils with a puzzle to complete or a work sheet to colour. This successfully focuses their attention and when questioned after one such lesson, pupils had a remarkable recall of the development of the plot.

25. The way staff manage pupils' behaviour is a strength of the Service on all sites. Staff are fair in their management of pupils and, because they apply the behaviour policy consistently, pupils know exactly what is inappropriate behaviour. This mostly results in a calm working atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Bad language is not tolerated and outbursts of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with immediately allowing others in the group to continue with their work. On the occasions when pupils cannot be contained within a group, colleagues timetabled for such times take responsibility for the disturbed pupil. Staff recognise that some outbursts are because of frustrations and problems out of school and readily listen, though still taking the action which they feel addresses the severity of the incident. Adults show respect to each other and to pupils, so pupils in turn grow to respect themselves and others.

26. Teachers are knowledgeable about most subjects, though some lack confidence in using computers because money for training is not due until later in the year. Teachers have taken part in a wide range of training in the last eighteen months. This has made them more confident and contributed to improved standards. The issue of staff training identified by the last inspection has been overcome. Support staff have a wealth of experience, many having an in depth knowledge of pupils and their families through work out of school, for instance as youth workers. Teachers and support staff work extremely well together, complementing each other's skills. Lessons are discussed in advance to make best use of all adults available in order to keep groups small so pupils have more attention and learn at a faster rate. Where support staff have a particular enthusiasm, for example in conservation or local history, this is used effectively to engender pupils' interest. The very good support given by all staff is just enough to give pupils confidence and raise self-esteem whilst leaving them to solve problems thus furthering personal development. Pupils in turn relate well to adults and place their trust in them, admitting when they experience difficulty with a piece of work, and when they need help rather than throwing a tantrum and becoming abusive as many did on arrival at the Service. This allows effective learning to take place.

27. The teaching of numeracy and literacy is good because teachers recognise the need for pupils to be literate and numerate. Almost all lessons contain some element of reading and writing. Staff emphasise new vocabulary, writing it for all to see to help pupils' word recognition. However, most staff print their letters and their handwriting is not a good model for pupils. As a consequence, few pupils write using a cursive script and this puts them at a disadvantage when they are expected to hand write a letter of application for a job or for training. Teachers of science, history, geography and design and technology provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their mathematical knowledge through, for instance, working out co-ordinates and distances, and constructing graphs. Following the criticism of the last inspection regarding underdeveloped skills in speaking and listening, most lessons now have some discussion where pupils are expected to listen to others and make sensible contributions using appropriate language. Teachers plan to use computers in their lessons but, because the equipment is unreliable, have lost heart so the use of computer skills in other subjects is unsatisfactory. In order to address this staff have come to individual agreements, for instance with local businesses and colleges in order to have access to reliable machines for pupils to develop their skills.

28. All staff discuss work alongside pupils, giving them good feedback on their performance. This allows pupils to correct their mistakes and understand how to improve. Quiet times in lessons, for example, whilst pupils are concentrating on practical activities such as art and technology, are used well to listen to pupils' problems and help them come to terms with their difficulties. Staff are conscious of the imbalance of girls and boys in each group and so make sure girls take a full part in all activities and discussions, where necessary directing questions and suggestions to draw them into a conversation.

29. All lessons finish with a useful review of the learning that has taken place. This helps focus pupils' minds on what they have achieved, to be proud of their success and to recognise where they need to improve. On occasions pupils are genuinely surprised by the amount of work they have covered. For example, two pupils were reluctant to take part in a geography lesson yet, because of the cajoling and good management of the teacher, they completed a pie chart, two written exercises and some reading. Neither could resist a smile when reviewing what they had learned. Reviews of lessons include the completion of individual target sheets. Staff are very honest with pupils when they discuss the marks to be awarded for amongst other things, behaviour, effort and achievement. Pupils recognise and acknowledge teachers' honesty realising that they too have to be honest not least with themselves and so most strive to gain maximum marks.

30. In the two lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, insufficient thought had gone into what was being taught. The pace of the lesson was slow and information was given in a dull way. The pupils lost interest and so their quality of learning was unsatisfactory. Where teaching is satisfactory yet less effective, expectations of the work pupils will produce are not sufficiently high, and lessons lack sparkle. In lessons where teaching is very good, teachers inspire their pupils with the activities they provide; lessons are conducted with a sense of urgency and flair so pupils make very good gains in their knowledge and skills.

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

31. The curriculum is good overall with a suitable focus on English and mathematics. A wider range of subjects is offered than in many pupil referral units such as science geography, history, art, music and religious education. Strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been introduced successfully and are having an impact on standards. The provision is, however, adversely affected by the accommodation. This prevents some subjects being taught at some bases, provides too little room for the storage of resources and restricts practical activities, for example, in science, design and technology, physical education and art. The curriculum meets national guidelines for pupil referral units and the local authority's objectives, and is on course to offer the requirement of full time education by 2002.

32. The Service is very different from that seen during the previous inspection and now caters for pupils with a diversity of needs. Despite difficulties with the accommodation, efforts are made to ensure that the base pupils attend does not affect access to learning opportunities. At Simonside Lodge, where attendance for pupils is voluntary, staff have introduced a project based approach in an attempt to cover more of the National Curriculum. For instance, whilst creating a garden pupils' assist in making a pond and study pond life and plant growth as part of their work in science. They are taught how to cook the vegetables grown and collect mathematical data on the growth of the plants. Pupils at the Bedewell Young Mothers Unit suitably study a variety of modules based around personal, social and health education, including child development, life processes,

and contraception. Theoretically, additional work and work for examinations is set by feeder schools, but in practice the work is not always provided or is unsuitable.

33. Opportunities to take General Certificates in Secondary Education and to gain a wide range of other qualifications are good and have improved since the last inspection. There have been determined efforts to improve the range of opportunities. The Service now offers pupils a range of nationally recognised awards based on length of stay and ability. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is suitably based on the appropriate syllabus for the GCSE in up to six subjects, and Certificate of Achievement in all taught subjects. Additional nationally recognised courses include computer skills, communication skills, health education and child development. Off site access to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level 1 in Multi-Skills, motor vehicle and hairdressing complements the provision very well. The Service has developed its own courses wherever necessary and has had them recognised nationally. The Key Skills course has recently been introduced to pupils in Year 11 and is contributing to improved standards for example, in communication and problem solving.

34. The Service is committed to improving pupils' physical well being and providing them with an interest. However, opportunities for physical education are limited by the accommodation. Nevertheless, a wide range of physical activities is offered off site, ranging from team games such as basketball and football to competitive sports such as badminton. The 'Moving Forward' initiative in Years 10 and 11, offers pupils at Perth Green good opportunities to take part in outdoor adventure activities such as climbing and orienteering. Physical education is restricted at Chuter Ede because staff have to negotiate for the use of the shared sports hall. An innovative Performing Arts programme offers numerous opportunities for pupils to improve skills in music, drama and speaking and listening. The previous inspection identified opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills to be limited. This has been successfully remedied through the Performing Arts programme, GCSE and opportunities to discuss issues in other subjects. Modern foreign languages are not currently timetabled, but the Service has the facility to offer the subject if any pupil needs to complete a course.

35. The emphasis for pupils in Years 10 and 11 appropriately shifts to preparation for life after compulsory school age. The development of the work related curriculum has been an apt focus for development and provides an increasingly strong provision. Good links have been established with the careers service, the local Education Business Partnership, Colleges of Further Education and Connexions. The provision for careers education and guidance is good and takes suitable account of a multi-agency approach. Pupils are given clear messages of encouragement to understand that they need to begin preparing for the world of work by the time they reach Year 10. The Service uses a comprehensive programme designed by the newly appointed and enthusiastic Careers and Work Experience co-ordinator. All Year 11 pupils have Action Plan interviews with the Careers Officer from the local careers office. Opportunities to experience the world of work are good. Work placements are selected with care to suit pupils' specific skills and abilities. Many pupils undertake the experience close to home and some have been successful in acquiring full time employment as a result of the placement. Numerous placements are available for Year 11 pupils at for example at South Tyneside College and Newcastle College including Multi-Skills, motor vehicles, painting and decorating and hairdressing. Attending college has a considerable impact and is giving pupils confidence in themselves. Liaison and joint planning between the Service and staff at both colleges is very good, with close monitoring, assessment and regular communication.

36. The Service enjoys the support of a number of schools in its efforts to re-integrate pupils into the most suitable placement. The numbers of pupils returning to mainstream education is increasing significantly. However, some secondary headteachers are reluctant

to take pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools. This puts additional pressure on schools who work hard to re-integrate pupils leaving the Service and limits the options of some pupils to return to their neighbourhood school. Nevertheless, staff at the Service make considerable efforts to ensure continuity in what pupils learn in preparation for their return. Placement data is now being collected is to be used annually as a performance indicator. The Service is largely successful in meeting its aim of preparing pupils for re-integration into other appropriate provision. During the last 12 months 37 pupils returned to mainstream schools, 4 were placed at appropriate special schools and 25 went on to further education or training. This aspect of its work is valued highly by staff in mainstream schools, who increasingly draw upon the expertise of Service staff. The improved learning that takes place and the resultant increase in self-esteem assist attempts to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools. The good links that are maintained with other professionals ensure that all returns are handled well and are in the best interest of the pupil.

37. The Service pays suitable regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs. Although not required by pupil referral units, individual education plans are in place and are central to teachers' work. Group tutors monitor pupil progress towards individual targets carefully. This aids individualised subject support, to set targets, to raise expectations, and to address whatever might be blocking a pupil's progress. Well-trained and dedicated learning support assistants support pupils effectively across all areas of learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good at all bases.

38. Curriculum planning and development are well thought out. Since the last inspection, the Service has continued to develop what is on offer within each subject. The key issue 'to develop longer term planning' has now been addressed. Good use has been made of contributions by the literacy inspector, and there is some valuable liaison with mainstream subject specialists both in schools and colleges. Although curriculum provision and organisation are at least good in most subjects, the logistics of managing subjects across the Service remain problematic because of the distance between sites. Subject policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects and the assessment information is now used more systematically to inform what is taught next.

39. Provision for personal, social and health education though good is, at present, somewhat fragmented following the amalgamation of the separate units. It is timely that the co-ordinator is due to carry out an extensive review of the programme on all sites as part of an initiative. Valuable contributions to pupils' personal development are provided through visits and visitors, for instance the school nurse, local conservation groups and the Samaritan organisation. Sex education and substance misuse awareness are given a high profile and are taught successfully through science and personal and social education. All staff make a strong contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. An appropriate curriculum is in place for citizenship and life skills. The St John Ambulance first aid course is undertaken as part of the programme.

40. A range of visits add interest to the curriculum, for instance, pupils participate visit local businesses in addition to visits to museums, libraries and geography field trips. The Service has effective links with the community, which significantly enhance the curriculum and the quality of education that the pupils receive. These links are facilitated by the readiness with which staff invite outside agencies to visit and talk to pupils and by a willingness to take pupils out into the community for first-hand experiences. Pupils from All Saints improve their computer skills through the use of an information technology suite at Tyne Dock. The British School of Motoring provides experiences in driving for pupils. Local links with industry and commerce are good though mainly through the many work experience and college placements.

41. Staff make every effort to make sure that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities, but there are some inequalities, mostly as a result of the differences in accommodation and resources across the five bases. However, the most significant problem is the fragmented provision at Simonside Lodge where unplanned withdrawal of pupils for therapy results in disruption for both the pupils going out and those remaining, whose lesson has been disturbed. Since some pupils do not attend any other school and may have only two days in school, this affects a large part of their educational provision and the progress they make. Staff are conscious of the small number of girls and do all they can to make sure they have equal access to all learning experiences, to this end for example, girls take part in the motor vehicle course. Similarly boys who are interested have the chance to go to college for hairdressing and catering. However, the number and availability of limits the experiences of some pupils. For example, pupils at Bedewell rarely have the opportunity to study off site and the minibus, which was due to be shared with Galsworthy School, is seldom available for Chuter Ede pupils.

42. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted very well throughout the Service, preparing pupils to be good citizens. Promotion of cultural development is mostly good, but there is insufficient emphasis on preparing pupils to live in a multicultural society. There has been very good improvement against the key issue of providing more opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development identified by the last inspection.

43. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Pupils learn about a range of beliefs, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity, learning not just what, but why, people believe. They compare Biblical texts, for example, the birth stories in Matthew and Luke, as part of a very well planned scheme of work, for religious education. A mixed class of Year 10 and 11 pupils, responding to a hypothetical situation of an underage pregnant girl, were encouraged to take account of religious beliefs, rights and feelings of all the people involved, including the unborn child, and all the options available. As a result they gave their views and listened to the opinions of others with great sensitivity. Pupils' contributions in and out of lessons are valued, improving their self-esteem, and encouraging them to listen to, and respect the contributions of others. In the best lessons, pupils were amazed by new learning as a result of teachers' skill in creating moments of surprise and wonder. For example, in an English lesson studying the poem 'Blessing', the teacher successfully gained pupils' attention and realisation of the value of water as they sat mesmerised whilst he poured water into a tin beaker. Pupils are presented with very good opportunities to reflect on their learning and their behaviour at the end of each lesson when they discuss, very honestly, with staff points gained for performance in that lesson.

44. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Teachers and support staff provide very good examples of how to conduct themselves appropriately. Pupils are encouraged to develop the values of honesty and fairness. The very good relationships, the obvious commitment of staff to their pupils, and a clear message regarding acceptable behaviour make a significant contribution to moral development. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are followed by discussions with staff either individually or as part of a group, so pupils may consider the effect of their outburst and its impact on others. Pupils' understanding of the need for rules is reinforced in personal and social education lessons, for example in the modules 'Who needs rules?' and 'Pressures on young people' Videos are used imaginatively as a basis for discussion on bullying, equal opportunities, and rights and responsibilities. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of the implications of decisions made, as reported in the news, and in historical events, such as past world wars.

45. The excellent teamwork of teachers and support staff, in and out of the classroom, effectively demonstrates to pupils the value of working together, since they benefit in many ways from this collaboration. They learn the qualities of respect and commitment from the example set by staff. Pupils are encouraged to take initiative and accept responsibility, for

example, in the breakfast club at Perth Green, the Moving Forward project, and in college and work experience. During a speaking and listening exercise, pupils described how they organised their travel to college or work, what arrangements they made for lunch, and what was expected of them during the day. The employer's glowing report, in one girl's work experience diary, provided good evidence of her ability to function well in the workplace. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, and this was especially good in the Bedewell Unit. The performing arts programme provides an opportunity for working together in an atmosphere of trust and equality, in which pupils feel ownership, and therefore responsibility for the success of the session. Support staff make a significant contribution in the area of social development because they bring a wide range of qualifications, expertise and experience which expands pupils' knowledge of the variety of out of school options open to them.

46. Pupils are inspired to appreciate literature and poetry by some very good English teaching, which includes relating Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet to their own experience of fighting families, and to young love. Pupils in Year 9 studying myths recognise the Lampton Worm is a local myth. Year 11 pupils are fascinated by 'About his Person' by Simon Armitage, and moved by The Blessing by Imtiaz Dharker. They learn about local culture through the study of the Tyne Bards, and have collaborated in the making of a local history CD, a copy of which is in all the local churches. In art, pupils are encouraged to appreciate and work in the style of great artists such as Van Gogh, Monet, and Seurat, and to explore African art. There is evidence of the study of other cultures in the schemes of work, and pupils show some knowledge of world affairs. Whilst some work has been undertaken in preparing pupils for living in a multi-racial society, for example through 'racism in football' staff recognise this is an area for further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The Service is a close, caring community and has largely maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection, which parents fully recognise and appreciate. It has improved the approach and systems to assess and record pupils' achievements. The Service is good at monitoring pupils' personal development and overall good assessment and monitoring procedures are in place within subjects. Individual assessment is used well to plan what pupils need to learn next and is specific with clear indications of targets and achievements. The Service is successful in keeping most pupils in the education system, especially during their last few terms of compulsory education.

48. Every effort is made to secure information from previous schools to inform and guide the development of individual programmes. A major concern is that most pupils enter the service with variable, and often very poor information from previous schools on their attainment. On occasions no records exist. This is highly unsatisfactory as it means that valuable time is spent establishing pupils' knowledge and abilities. On entry, pupils are currently assessed using a variety of tests including past national test papers. The Service has plans to adopt a computerised system for assessment, but due to problems with equipment this initiative has not yet been introduced.

49. Assessment overall is good. A good range of suitable assessment procedures, based on the recently revised policy, is in place in most subjects. The key issue of using assessment information when planning further work has been remedied. Marking of pupils' work provides encouragement and generally gives pupils guidance on what to do to improve. Sensitive discussion in lessons, individual pupil records, and assessment geared to National Curriculum and GCSE criteria are used appropriately. Ongoing assessment in lessons and regular reviews are used well when planning further work. The record keeping required by the wide range of national awards offered are suitably combined with Service assessment practices and ensure that teachers recognise and assess work at different

levels of attainment. Where Year 11 pupils attend college staff receive regular updates on how pupils are progressing through shared assessment and effective communication.

50. The Service is successful in offering support and guidance to all its pupils. It is small enough to offer an individual approach and responds flexibly, for example, to behaviour and attendance plans tailored to particular needs. Procedures for setting individual targets for pupils with special educational needs are appropriate. Following the introduction of a computerised individual education plan writer, targets are becoming more precise and measurable and this is having a beneficial effect on individual pupil progress. However, there are still instances where educational objectives and targets in individual education plans are not specific or measurable, especially at Simonside Lodge. Every effort is made to offer pupils with special educational needs a good educational experience. Currently there are 39 pupils with statements of special educational need on roll. Suitable individual education plans are in place. All staff are involved in setting and reviewing targets. Pupils make their contribution through the self-assessment process that takes place at the end of each lesson. Specific targets ensure that pupils' progress can be tracked both in behaviour and in academic areas. The register of special educational need is kept up to date by the special needs co-ordinator who is ably assisted by the newly appointed special needs worker.

51. The Service is doing good work in monitoring, managing and significantly improving behaviour. A significant number of pupils are successfully re-integrated to other schools or go on to complete GCSE or college courses. A Code of Conduct is explained and reinforced. Rewards and sanctions vary between bases but are fully understood by all. For example, the 'No Smoking' rule is strictly enforced. All pupils have up to three work and behaviour targets to work on, and themselves take an active part in setting their own targets and assessing their progress each day. For example, after a humanities trip to look at the Tyne pedestrian tunnel, pupils were encouraged to think about how far they had met targets for preparation, being responsible and taking advice.

52. The strong and supportive relationships generated with the staff are a positive feature of the Service. No offensive behaviour or bullying is tolerated and pupils quickly understand this. This is reinforced in lessons and is transmitted informally through relationships with teachers, support staff and college tutors. The 'Breakfast Club' is an example of unobtrusive but caring support for pupils in an informal setting. The transition of pupils returning to mainstream and other educational establishments is made easy by the strong relationships and very good support from Service staff. Very good support is given to pupils on college placements and work experience with staff adopting a tough but compassionate approach with those who are apprehensive or reluctant to venture out of the bases.

53. The Service is very strong in pursuing pupils' attendance. Its importance is stressed at interview and in all subsequent communications with parents. Educational welfare officers visit all of the bases regularly and will do home visits where there are persistent non-attenders. Parents are contacted immediately in each case of unauthorised absence and attendance records are updated weekly. The regular reports to parents also show current attendance figures.

54. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. A newly-arrived teacher is the designated officer and has had recent training, with the aim to have a fully trained team in place within three months. The policy is full and detailed and all staff have a good understanding of procedures. A wide range of professionals visit the Service regularly, giving valuable support such as the careers service, school nurse and the midwife to Bedewell Young Mothers' Unit. However, support from educational psychologists is not always forthcoming. For example, the referral of one pupil who has been diagnosed as

having attention deficit disorder has not been followed up. The Service does all it can to support pupils who are in public care. Though the usual admission period is fifteen days, pupils in public care are admitted within five days, and on occasions less, in order to keep them in the education system. All such pupils have their own designated teacher to monitor their progress.

55. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are given a high profile. Staff have had first aid training, and medical information is kept in each pupil's file. Fire drills are carried out regularly. The buildings are reasonably secure and, because of the shared occupancy of several sites, all are aware of the importance of entry and exit routines. However, the accommodation severely hinders daily routines. Toilets and eating arrangements are often poor. At Chuter Ede, for example, there is only one toilet, with poor ventilation, and due to shared occupancy this is kept locked, pupils needing the facility have the indignity of having to ask for the key. Both here and at Perth Green the only dining areas are classrooms. There is virtually no suitable room for leisure activities or recreation.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The views of parents and carers towards the work of the Service are favourable. Most feel their sons or daughters enjoy coming to the Service and are making progress. Those attending the meeting prior to the inspection reported their sons are more willing to tackle schoolwork and 'have a go'. They think behaviour is good, and well managed by staff, and the Service is helping their child live alongside others and accept more responsibility. Parents and carers praise the teaching. They feel the staff have high expectations and are very approachable, as are the management who also gain high praise. Some parents still have concern about homework. A significant minority feels that their child does not get the right amount, though some recognise that homework has been a source of conflict when their child was at mainstream schools. The inspection found that homework is used sensibly to improve standards. Those who need or ask for it, for example those working towards GCSE examinations, are given a certain amount, and there is a regular homework club to help pupils to complete it. A small number of parents felt behaviour was sometimes poor at Chuter Ede and this was partially confirmed by inspection findings. Some parents felt that the Service was fragmented and it was difficult to view it as one provider. Inspection findings show this picture has greatly improved under current management and much has been done to meet the recommendations of the previous report to encourage parents to be more involved in their child's learning. Links with parents have strengthened and deepened since the last inspection; by and large parents are very relieved to hear that their children are learning and their behaviour is improving

57. Parents are generally kept well informed, often through meetings or telephone calls from tutors. There is no formal prospectus but there is a booklet and parents all have a face to face interview when their child is accepted into the Service. Staff, sometimes accompanied by an educational welfare officer, make home visits if necessary. Expectations about attendance and behaviour are made clear at this point through the home-school agreement and continuously reinforced. In the case of unauthorised absence, for example, staff will telephone home by 9.30 am. Staff have lots of informal telephone contact with parents and carers to discuss behaviour and progress, and they are invited in if necessary. It is the policy of the Service to have an 'open door'. Parents are increasingly able to talk to staff about their child and particular circumstances at home that may be affecting their progress. Parents' contribution to their child's learning is satisfactory. Though an increasing number of parents are involved in their children's individual education plans and target setting, some parents only contact staff at a time of crisis. Nevertheless, all parents receive regular reports from tutors, covering areas of study and attendance. Staff make a point of telling parents about positive achievements as well as negative ones. This

encourages parents to become more involved in their child's learning. The parents of pupils with Statements of Special educational Need are involved as far as possible in their children's education. If they do not attend reviews, for example, the Service will send out a copy of the report.

58. Links with parents are now good. The Service has recently spent much time and energy in developing strong links, as these are crucial for any pupil to succeed. For example, staff are beginning to monitor the frequency of contacts with parents for each pupil in their care. Parents' Open Days are held each term at all base and figures show the numbers attending are increasing. Parents of 24 pupils attended the Leavers' Ceremony at which awards and certificates are presented last year. The Service has particular expertise in liaison with a large variety of support services, allowing parents and pupils to get the help they need such as educational psychology, home visits from the teenage pregnancy service midwife or training opportunities. The practice of pupils having a 'key worker' at Simonside Lodge means that parents are brought into close contact with the staff there. The workers play an invaluable role in keeping the channels of communication open between parents, child and base, especially if there has been a temporary exclusion.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

59. The leadership and management of the Service have improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and manages the service well. In the relatively short time she has been in post much has been achieved which has resulted in more opportunities for pupils to gain nationally recognised qualifications and in achieving higher standards. Prior to her arrival many staff had worked in isolation with little educational guidance. Staff report that she has "turned the provision round", that they no longer feel isolated, and support systems are now in place for both staff and pupils. Despite the distance between bases, and having to incorporate two very diverse provisions shortly after her appointment, she has succeeded in engendering a sense of belonging and has created a team that is committed to improvement for all the young people and in raising standards.

60. The headteacher is well supported by two very able deputies. The deputy head of Service, who is also the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs, fulfils her role very effectively. The second deputy has been responsible for introducing the numeracy and literacy strategies which are contributing to improved standards. Both are extremely conscientious and a very good example to other teachers. The head of the Barnado's Unit, the headteacher and staff are working closely to improve learning opportunities for pupils at that base. The head of the unit recognises that whilst the provision is therapeutic, there is a need for improvement in the educational provision and is in discussion with the headteacher about ways in which this can be brought about. The senior management team, made up of teachers in charge of each base, is very strong and pledged to one unit. They have very definite ideas how to improve their own base and have the capacity to continue to improve the Service. The team, though large, is mostly female and does not reflect the gender balance of the staff. The headteacher has plans to remedy this.

61. The role of the management committee has improved significantly since it was identified as a key issue by the last inspection. The committee now works to clear guidelines and provides good support for the headteacher and the Service. Many members of the group hold senior positions in other professions, for example careers guidance and social services, and are able to use their expertise to help the Service. The acting secondary headteacher is hoping to use his position to influence some of his colleagues who are reluctant to take pupils who have been excluded from other schools to do so, thus giving pupils more choice and relieving the small backlog of pupils waiting to return. Conscious that non-teaching staff and parents were not represented on the committee, a

decision was recently made to invite a member of the support staff and a parent to join the group.

62. Many of the subject managers are new to post, most having taken responsibility at the start of the school year. Nevertheless, all have assessed staff training needs and resources and most are aware of the strengths and areas for development in their subject. Very few of the managers have had the chance to visit other sites to assess what is happening and observe teaching in their subject because of the cost of supply cover and the time taken to travel between bases. As a result there is some inconsistency in the way subjects are taught. A small number of subject managers have spent longer in post. The co-ordinator for English has proved inspirational to teachers in Years 10 and 11, establishing GCSE in English and introducing drama to address the key issue identified at the time of the previous inspection to improve standards in speaking and listening. Last year, the first year English GCSE was offered, all pupils who entered gained creditable grades. Very challenging targets have been set for the number of passes in the 2002 examinations. Plans are in hand to introduce GCSE in English literature in the very near future. The manager for mathematics has been in post for a much longer time, but has not been so successful. Though all pupils are entered for GCSE in mathematics, the co-ordinator is not monitoring what is happening with this age of pupils. The planning and recording for younger pupils' achievements are not very detailed.

63. The headteacher, along with senior managers and the management committee, is constantly monitoring the performance of the Service. Pupils' attendance, behaviour and results in national tests are carefully analysed in order to set new and more challenging targets, and to allow pupils to return to mainstream education or a more suitable placement as soon as is possible. As a result the number of pupils returning to appropriate provision has increased significantly since the last inspection.

64. The Service has experienced a number of difficulties over the past few years in its relationship with personnel within the Local Education Authority. This has reduced its effectiveness. A lack of communication between senior staff in different departments has led to unnecessary duplication of work and some misunderstandings. A number of pupils with very complex emotional and behavioural needs return to the authority when their out of Borough placements fail. Understandably the local authority is anxious to place these pupils as quickly as possible. However, all these pupils are placed with the Alternative Education Service, usually without suitable support and consideration for others in the receiving group. This results in personality clashes within groups and has a negative impact on all concerned. In order to address this issue, the headteacher has arranged individual tuition for one and a half hours twice each week for pupils returning to the Borough. Whilst this remedies short term needs, it does not address the legal requirement for all pupils to receive full time education by 2002. The Service is the only available placement for girls with emotional and behavioural needs. This is because all the local authority schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties cater solely for boys. As a result girls many girls remain with the Service long term even though this may not be the best provision for them.

65. The headteacher and senior managers have difficulties planning for the long term. Though they have clear ideas as how the Service needs to develop, only £11,000 of the budget is devolved to the headteacher and this limits what can be done. The headteacher is informed of other elements in March of the previous financial year. Previous assistant directors for special educational needs and for finance have been guarded about finance. The headteacher receives support and advice as to funding such as Standards Funds but has had to fight for what should have been allocated to the Service by right. The Service was overlooked when Neighbourhood Renewal funding was allocated. Though a high percentage of pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need, money attached to the

Statement is not transferred with these pupils. This affects the provision for such pupils. Financial accounts are only just being supported by new technology. The system has only recently been installed and is still being developed. The system has not been running efficiently for the past three weeks causing unnecessary work for staff.

66. The service is fortunate in the appointment of the new Director of Education for the Local Education Authority. She has already met with the headteacher to discuss the work of the Service in order to ascertain and strengthen its position within the local authority. She is in the process of consulting and producing a strategy for social inclusion that will encompass all professions dealing with pupils with special educational needs, and will streamline the provision.

67. There is an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Staff are deployed as well as can be expected, given the problems created by the widespread site. However, though some staff have begun to work on different sites, this is not always practical and makes the sharing of expertise difficult. Nevertheless, because of the commitment of staff, their willingness to participate in in-service training, often in their own time, and their considerable experience, pupils' needs are met effectively. Managers have experienced difficulties persuading capable, experienced staff to stay because there is no financial incentive by way of retention allowances. The support staff have a range of very appropriate qualifications, for example in youth work and outdoor pursuits, and the experience and expertise they bring to the Service makes a substantial difference to the attitudes and aspirations of previously disaffected pupils. The recent review of job descriptions has led to all staff having a clear understanding of their own roles and those of others. The key issue to extend staff liaison with their colleagues in mainstream education in order to improve expertise has been successfully met through the appointment of a part time member of staff to advance staff training. Work shadowing of lead teachers in mainstream schools has had a positive impact on curriculum planning and subject teaching. Planning for Performance Management is very good, and staff co-operate enthusiastically. In addition to providing training for staff employed by the Service, very useful training has been provided for staff in mainstream schools. 28 of the 40 learning mentors from schools in the local authority have spent time with Service staff and now use their knowledge well in helping pupils return to mainstream school and preventing further exclusions.

68. The accommodation overall is poor. Though the buildings at Simonside Lodge and Bedewell are good, these sites cater for a minority of pupils. Lack of specialist accommodation elsewhere restricts what is taught in science, physical education, design and technology and art. There are no changing rooms or showers. Art is taught in a room with no running water. Toilet provision is unsatisfactory overall, for staff and pupils, and poor at Chuter Ede. Lack of ventilation in toilet areas is an additional problem. There are no dining facilities in Chuter Ede and Perth Green, so pupils eat in the classroom. Shared use of the Perth Green site places restrictions on staff in terms of security of displays and resources. Staff on this site arrive regularly to find the building and equipment damaged by other users, yet have to pay for repairs out of their meagre budget. The premises have to be vacated very early evening thus preventing out of school activities and parents' evenings. Classroom accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils attending this early in the school year. However, if the numbers increase, as evidence of past years indicate that they will, then teaching space will be unsatisfactory on most sites. There are no staff rooms, or other areas where staff can go either to relax or prepare work during break or at lunch-time.

69. Resources are unsatisfactory for many subjects, and this is linked to the poor accommodation and lack of storage. There are insufficient up to date computers and printers in working order, and the range of software is inadequate to meet the requirements

of the curriculum. However, good use is made of outside facilities for information technology. Resources for science, religious education, physical education, art and design and technology are limited. Teachers work hard to compensate for the lack of resources, making or borrowing resources, and using the environment.

70. Day-to-day financial administration is satisfactory, but is hampered by the lack of support from the local authority. For example, due to lack of administrative support the Service is unable to operate the required separate accounts for petty cash so, staff using their own money for activities have to have to be reimbursed with a cheque. The headteacher has, of necessity, had to be creative in order to find additional funds to allow the Service to operate as effectively as it does. Consequently, because much of the funding is from sources other than the local authority, or joint funded for one to five years, this causes heavy budget monitoring and accounting at the end of each quarter. The hours allocated for administration are low overall and not all sites have clerical support. As a result the headteacher is operating as accounts clerk and, along with base managers, spending time completing large amounts of paperwork in their own time because their expertise is needed during the working day.

71. Grants for specific purposes are used well and are contributing to improved standards, for example, in numeracy and literacy. The service has not been so fortunate in money allocated for new technology. Despite numerous requests money for staff training has not been forthcoming, though it is planned for the near future, and bases are using dated equipment. Money for new equipment was allocated last year, but the systems were not installed so the money has been forfeited. This is affecting standards in information and communication technology. Staff are determined that pupils will not be deprived and to this end have established very useful links with the Port of Tyne Dock Authorities and the YMCA. Applications are made for other funding to a range of providers. For example, money from the Heritage Trust has allowed older pupils to be aware of their responsibility as citizens, taking part in conservation work and making a CD about local history to go on sale in local churches.

Integration

72. The Service is successful in meeting its aim to increase the number of pupils returning to mainstream education and other appropriate provision. Strong relationships and good teaching encourage pupils to face up to their problems and to take responsibility for their learning. All staff are consistent when applying school policies, for example the behaviour policy. As a result pupils make good improvement in their behaviour, they learn to control their frustrations and to abide by rules. Many make good improvement in their attendance because of the way absences are followed up. This prepares them well for their return. Phased entry to the receiving school and the support of staff and other professionals allow for successful transfer.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to improve standards and develop the provision further, South Tyneside Local Authority, as the appropriate authority should:

- improve the accommodation, making sure it is suitable for teaching all subjects and that it meets health and safety requirements;

(paragraphs 8,31,34,68)

- replace the current financial arrangements in order to allow the Service to function more efficiently, and to plan for the long term;

(paragraphs 65,70)

- ensure the Service has sufficient resources to teach all subjects on offer, with information and communication technology as a priority;

(paragraphs 7,27,65,71)

- plan and resource pupils with more complex behavioural needs appropriately when making emergency placements.

(paragraph 64)

The headteacher and staff should:

- improve educational provision for pupils at Simonside Lodge by
 - setting more precise educational objectives
 - planning therapy sessions for pupils which cause minimum disruption to lesson time.

(paragraphs 3,41,50)

- further improve subject management by
 - providing opportunities for staff to observe teaching and learning on other sites
 - providing appropriate staff training where necessary.

(paragraphs 38,62)

Managers had already identified the above issues as areas needing improvement.

In addition to the above key issues, the following minor issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan

An increase in administration time to allow the headteacher and senior staff to get on with their work of managing the bases. (paragraph 70)

Extending the provision for preparing pupils to live in a multi-racial society. (paragraph 46)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	17	13	14	2	0	0
Percentage	0	36	29	31	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	87

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	87

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

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
Unit data	10.75

Unauthorised absence	%
Unit data	20.97

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	88
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	48	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y3 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	285

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	355457
Total expenditure	355457
Expenditure per pupil	2521
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results in national tests for 11 year olds 2001

Of the two pupils entered, one was absent for the tests, the second achieved level 4 in English, science and mathematics.

Results in national tests for 14 year olds 2001 (10 pupils entered)

	Mathematics Teacher assessment	Test results	English Teacher assessment	Test result	Science Teacher assessment	Test result
Not scoring	0	1	0	6	0	2
Level 2	2	0	1	0	0	0
Level 3	2	2	2	0	3	2
Level 4	4	2	5	1	4	0
Level 5	2	2	1	1	0	0
Absent	0	2	0	2	0	1
Not assessed	0	1	1	0	3	5

GCSE results 2001

	Grade D	Grade E	Grade F	Grade G
Mathematics	1	1	2	4
English Language	1	1	1	0
English Speaking and Listening	1	2	0	0
Information Technology	0	1	0	0
Religious education	0	0	1	3
Science	3	0	0	1

Number of pupils achieving graded GCSE

5 pupils achieved 5 subjects
2 pupils achieved 4 subjects
2 pupils achieved 3 subjects
2 pupils achieved 2 subjects
2 pupils achieved 1 subject

Certificate of Educational Achievement

	3 subjects	2 subjects	1 subject
Pupils	2	4	16

Northern Partnership Records of Achievement - Units of Accreditation

	1 unit	2 units	3 units	4 units	5 units	6 units	7 units	8 units	9 units	10 units	11 units
Pupils	8	5	2	2	1	6	3	1	2	2	2

Key Skills

Entry level 3 pupils
Level 1 3 pupils

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	89
Number of questionnaires returned	17

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	47	18	0	6
My child is making good progress in school.	29	53	6	0	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	53	13	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	23	38	8	31
The teaching is good.	44	50	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	35	6	0	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	29	0	0	12
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	41	0	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	56	38	0	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	47	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	18	18	0	6