

INSPECTION REPORT

LINKS EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 130356

Head Teacher: Mrs Linda Dunn

Reporting inspector: Mrs Christine Marsh
2113

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708413

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown Copyright 1999

This Report is Crown Copyright. It may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the unit.

Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the appropriate authority must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. Every registered parent of a registered pupil at the unit should receive a free copy of the summary of the report within ten working days of receipt of the summary by the appropriate authority. A charge not exceeding the cost of supply may be made by the appropriate authority for any other copies of the report and/or its summary provided to any person who asks for one.

The appropriate authority should make a copy of the report and the summary available for inspection by members of the public at such times and at such a place as may be reasonable

Any enquiries about this legislation should be addressed to the OFSTED Compliance Helpline

Tel. 0171421 6567

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of unit: Pupil Referral Unit

Age range of pupils: 9 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Unit address: House No.2
Batchwood Site
Townsend Drive
St Albans
AL3 5RP

Telephone number: 01727 836102

Fax number: 01727 855002

Appropriate authority: Hertfordshire LEA

Name of LEA designated officer: Mr D. Ring

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs C. Marsh, RgI	Design Technology, Art Humanities, PSHE, Health, Hygiene and Safety, Equal Opportunities	Attainment and Progress Teaching
Mr T. Mastin, Lay Inspector		Attendance Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Partnership with Parents and the Community
Mrs E. Treacher	Mathematics Special Educational Needs	Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare Leadership and Management
Mr D. Bolton	English Information Technology	Curriculum and Assessment Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources The Efficiency of the Unit

The inspection contractor was:

Countrywide Education Consultancy Limited
Kingfisher House
68 Pattison Lane
Woolstone
Milton Keynes
MK15 0AY
01908 604432

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Paragraph
MAIN FINDINGS	<i>Pages 7-9</i>
What the unit does well	
Where the unit has weaknesses	
How the unit has improved since the last inspection	
Whether pupils are making enough progress	
Quality of teaching	
Other aspects of the unit	
The parents' views of the unit	
KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION	<i>Page 10</i>
INTRODUCTION	
Characteristics of the unit	1- 4
Key indicators	
PART A: ASPECTS OF THE UNIT	<i>Pages 13-24</i>
Educational standards achieved by pupils at the unit	
Attainment and progress	5 - 20
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development	21 - 26
Attendance	27 - 28
Quality of education provided	
Teaching	29 - 40
The curriculum and assessment	41 - 49
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	50 - 52
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	53 - 57
Partnership with parents and the community	58 - 61
The management and efficiency of the unit	
Leadership and management	62 - 69
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	70 - 75
The efficiency of the unit	76 - 79

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Pages 25-27

Summary of inspection evidence

80 - 84

Data and indicators

Pages 26-27

MAIN FINDINGS

What the unit does well

- Work is planned with an early return to school in mind. The unit is particularly successful in re-integrating excluded pupils into school, and in working with primary and secondary schools to reduce the rate of exclusions in the first place.
- The partnership between the unit and local schools is strong, and underlies the success of the unit’s work.
- Most pupils make good progress in the time available, and some make very good progress, in their work, particularly in English and mathematics. They make very good progress in their personal and social development and behaviour.
- Teaching is good overall, and a good deal of it is very good. All teachers are patient and make sure that pupils continue to learn. They are good at building pupils’ confidence and self-esteem.
- The good support and guidance that pupils receive from the staff help change their attitudes to learning and to authority.
- The unit is very well led and the staff work well together as a team. Relationships between teachers and pupils are based on mutual respect.
- Staff have made the unit an attractive learning environment, in spite of the shortage of space.

Where the unit has weaknesses

- I. The accommodation is not good enough. It is far too cramped and lacks specialist facilities. The lack of space is holding back developments and preventing the unit from functioning as efficiently as it might. There is no suitable accommodation to teach primary aged pupils.
- II. The curriculum does not include the core subject of science. Also, except for the older pupils who take part in the Youth Programme activities outside the unit, pupils do not have opportunity to take part in planned physical activities.
- III. Most pupils attend for only 10 hours a week. They have too few taught hours.
- IV. Teachers’ assessment and tracking of pupils’ attainment and progress in their work is not yet precise or rigorous enough in all subjects.
- V. In spite of the best efforts of the unit, for the older pupils currently attending the unit, the newly developed overall package (including the Youth Programmes activities outside the unit) is not yet working in an effective, coherent way.

The strengths far outweigh the weaknesses. This is a good pupil referral unit with some very good features. The Local Education Authority’s action plan will set out how the weaknesses are to be tackled. It will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the unit.

Whether pupils are making enough progress

Progress in:	By 11	By 14	By 16		
Targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B		K
English	B	B	B	<i>very good</i>	A
Mathematics	B	B	B	<i>good</i>	B
Science	-	-	-	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
Personal, social and health Education (PSHE)	B	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D

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

Given their prior attainment and previous educational history, most pupils make good progress, and some make very good progress. They make good progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics thanks to the current good teaching in these subjects. Within the limited time available, pupils make progress in all the subjects they are taught, but in information technology higher attaining pupils are not making as much progress as they should.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
9 – 11 years	Very Good	English, mathematics	
11 – 14 years	Good	English, mathematics	
14 – 16 years	Good	English, mathematics	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		
Personal, social and health education (PSHE)	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 100% of lessons; in 34% it was good, and in a further 35% it was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. ‘Satisfactory’ means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

• **Other aspects of the unit**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good at the time of the inspection, but records show that staff have to deal with some very challenging behaviour on occasions.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, and good for many pupils. But for a few pupils (usually in Key Stage 4), attendance has been patchy or poor. Some pupils arrive late. The unit works hard to improve attendance and has appropriate systems in place to help this happen.
Ethos*	Very good. A positive climate, committed to improving self-esteem, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Relationships are very good.
Leadership and management	Very good. Strong, purposeful leadership. Good team work. A shared goal of keeping pupils in school and of helping excluded pupils to make a fresh start and make up lost ground.
Curriculum	Planned with an early return to school in mind. This is a strength. The unit provides a suitable education – but most pupils have too few

Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	hours of teaching. Also, pupils are not taught science, and, except for older pupils on the Youth Programmes scheme, there is no opportunity for planned physical activity. Good, especially moral and social development. Teachers are good at helping pupils develop as people. Relatively few planned opportunities for pupils to broaden their knowledge and experience of other cultures however.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Enough suitably qualified staff. The unit is well equipped with books and teaching materials for the curriculum offered. Accommodation is far too cramped and lacks specialist facilities. The lack of space limits what can be done in the unit. It means that staff time cannot be used as efficiently as it should be, and some of the plans to develop the work of the unit further have had to be put on hold.
Value for money	The unit provides good value for money – and, in its outreach work, very good value.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

· **The parents' views of the unit**

What most parents like about the unit

VI. The help, advice and support they receive from the staff of the unit.

VII. The progress their children make.

What some parents are not happy about

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To build on the good work already achieved by the PRU, the LEA should:

- (i) Deal with the weaknesses in the accommodation, so that curriculum provision can be improved for pupils of all ages, the unit's resources can be used more efficiently, and the unit's planned developments can be carried forward.
(Paragraphs 73, 74, 78)

Working with the LEA, the head teacher and staff of the unit should:

- (ii) Introduce the core subject of science into the curriculum and provide pupils with opportunities for planned physical activity.
(Paragraphs 44, 47)
- (iii) Find ways of increasing the educational provision for pupils who at present only have ten hours per week.
(Paragraphs 45, 46, 78)
- (iv) Improve the way attainment is measured and progress is tracked and recorded in the subjects of the curriculum.
(Paragraphs 49, 54)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in the paragraphs shown.

- The teaching of IT should be extended to incorporate other aspects of the subject besides basic computer literacy. (Paragraphs 36, 15)
- The unit should continue to work on the attendance and punctuality problems of some pupils. (Paragraphs 26, 27)
- There should be more planned opportunities for cultural development. (Paragraph 52)
- The head teacher should put in place a programme of planned classroom observation. (This is already included in the unit's plans for development.) (Paragraph 63)
- Statutory teacher appraisal should be put in place. (Paragraph 72)
- For the Key Stage 4 pupils whose education is shared between the Youth Programmes Unit and the PRU, the LEA should improve the way the various components fit together, to prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives. (Paragraphs 47, 57)

· INTRODUCTION

· Characteristics of the unit

1. 1. The Links Secondary Support Centre, which is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), was set up in September 1996. It can take a maximum of 8 pupils in any one session, and caters for pupils aged 5-16. These pupils are drawn from schools in the local area of St Albans and Harpenden. All pupils have been, are in danger of being, excluded, or have been permanently excluded, from mainstream school, and have a range of emotional, behavioural and learning needs.
1. 2. The main focus of the work of the unit is to support schools in order to prevent exclusions. It operates an outreach team in primary and secondary schools. All teachers who teach in the unit have a significant preventative and support role in outreach work.
3. As from September 1999, responsibility for permanently excluded pupils in Key Stage 4 lies with the LEA's Youth Programmes Unit, which buys back the services of the PRU, at the rate of 10 hours per week per pupil. The remainder of the Key Stage 4 programme is managed by the Youth Programmes Unit.
4. The unit works to reintegrate excluded pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 into mainstream school, usually within a few weeks. At the time of the inspection, there was only one Key Stage 2 pupil, who was being taught for 5 hours a week off site, three Key Stage 3 pupils, one of whom had just started two-week preventative placement, and four Key Stage 4 pupils who were attending as part of a package managed by the LEA's Youth Programmes Unit.

Key Indicators

2. **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	Unit	27
	Absence	National comparative data	N/A
	Unauthorised	Unit	9
	Absence	National comparative data	N/A

2.

2. **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

2. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	35
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

2.

2.

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE UNIT

2.

Attainment and progress

5. The Links PRU is a good unit with some very good features. During their time at the unit, most pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and in their personal and social development. The unit is very successful in working with schools to prevent exclusions, and, where exclusions do occur, in helping excluded pupils to return to mainstream education as quickly as possible. It is successful in preparing pupils for reintegration. An important strand of that preparation is the unit's effectiveness in raising pupils' self esteem, which helps them to make progress in their work.

1

6. Because of the nature of its work, with its focus on short-term placements followed by re-integration, the unit has a constantly changing population. Accordingly, the profile of attainment on entry varies widely, but is generally below the national average. At the time of the inspection, attainment in lessons and work seen was well below average in Key Stage 2, close to, but a little below, average in Key Stage 3, and below average in Key Stage 4.

7. Given their prior attainment and their previous educational history, most pupils make good progress and some make very good progress. A key factor in this is the current good teaching in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Other significant factors include the unit's supportive ethos which build pupils' self-esteem, and the way its strong focus on personal, social and moral development permeates the curriculum. The close links with mainstream schools ensure that individual pupils' circumstances and needs are well known and that the support is tailored to suit each individual, so that they make progress and can successfully reintegrate into mainstream school.

8. All Key Stage 4 pupils follow courses which lead to accreditation. In 1999, three pupils were entered for GCSE examinations in English language, English literature, mathematics, geography and art. No candidates were ungraded, and one entry resulted in a B grade. In addition, pupils gained AEB certification in health hygiene and safety, and life skills, and Certificate of Achievement successes in mathematics and art. One pupil achieved an RSA CLAIT Stage 1 certificate in information technology. Four other pupils were successful in a similar range of subjects and examinations, having transferred to a local college course, which was negotiated for them by the headteacher of the unit.

9. A minority of pupils fail to make as much progress as they should. This is usually due to factors in their lives outside school, over which the unit has no control.

10. Attainment in **English** is below the standard found nationally in all key stages, but pupils make good progress in the subject during their time in the unit. In the lessons inspected, progress was often very good. Last year, of the three Year 11 pupils at the unit in the summer term, two gained a GCSE in English language (both pupils achieving grade E/D) and in English Literature (grade E).

11. Records show that, of the few primary pupils permanently excluded over the past year, most came onto the unit's roll with significant problems of literacy. In lessons and work inspected in Key Stage 2, although attainment was low, progress was very good for the limited tuition time, with improved oral confidence and advances in early reading skills. However, progress over time is held back in this key stage because the few hours' tuition are not backed up by any other form of educational provision.

12. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils improve their ability to read between the lines, to deduce meaning, and, in some cases, to recognise layers of meaning. Some continue to find it difficult to get beyond the story line, to see for themselves how language is used to create particular effects. Nevertheless, most of them gain a better understanding of how language is used for different purposes and how it is adapted to suit different audiences. They are helped to reflect on, and to analyse, what they read or hear, and to think about their personal response. They make particularly good progress in this respect in Key Stage 4 literature work, where they show increasing insight and maturity, as well as a developing confidence and a taste for the work. Thanks to effective teaching, pupils in both Key Stages 3 and 4 are learning to organise their thoughts and ideas and to make their own speech and writing more precise. Some pupils continue to have problems with spelling, basic punctuation and the correct use of capital letters, but work on their specific literacy targets is helping them to tackle these weaknesses.

13. In **mathematics**, in all Key Stages, while most pupils' attainment is below average for their age, a few pupils reach standards in line with what is expected nationally. In Key Stage 2, records show that of the few primary aged pupils in the unit, many have problems with the skills of basic numeracy. During their time in the unit these pupils make good progress, However, progress over time is inhibited in this Key Stage because of the too few hours' tuition.

14. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the higher attaining pupils are competent in basic number work, recognise fractions as parts of a whole item, can calculate simple frequencies, and can carry out simple investigations. The lowest attaining pupils have some difficulty with basic number skills, particularly in mental calculations. Pupils make progress and some make good progress during their time at the unit.

15. In **personal and social education**, teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils to ensure that each makes good and sometimes very good progress. These lessons make a positive contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and motivation and to consider their future. They are given the opportunity to explore who they are and what they stand for. Pupils are encouraged to show responsibility and recognise the need for tolerance. Elements of the personal and social development programme enable pupils to consider some fundamental questions about themselves and their lives and the world around them. These lessons make a positive contribution to the progress pupils make in the development of literacy skills, and to those of speaking and listening

16. During their stay in the unit, pupils make most use of **information technology** (IT) in communicating and handling information (mostly word-processing). They use IT to help with work in

other subjects (for example, English, humanities, design and technology). Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are competent in basic operations, such as using the keyboard and mouse. They can open and close applications, and are able to save and to print their work. They can enter and format text, and learn to present their work attractively. They learn to pay attention to detail and to improve their accuracy. However, because the work does not take enough account of what pupils already know and can do, higher attaining pupils in particular are not making as much progress as they should. The range of IT work is restricted. Pupils do not make enough progress in collecting, amending, interrogating and interpreting information. Older pupils have some practice in using spreadsheets and databases. For the most part, however, pupils do not have enough opportunity to make progress in important aspects of IT, for example in modeling, in controlling and measuring, and in learning about and exploring the impact of IT on life and society.

17. In **humanities** in Key Stage 3, the only Key Stage in which the subject is taught currently, pupils are helped to develop the essential skills of history and geography. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they can use maps to select basic information and are familiar with the interpretation of scale. In history, pupils learn how to use second-hand evidence such as videos to analyse, interpret and compare what life was like in the early part of this century with life in the present time.

18. In **design and technology** in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, attainment is generally below the national average in both designing and making. Pupils make best progress in developing graphical skills. Some use is made of IT and a few pupils are skilled at presenting their work using computer generated graphics. Opportunities to work with a range of materials are limited, although some pupils enjoy working with wood and food and are able to identify the basic skills needed to complete tasks in these materials successfully.

19. **Art** is an integral part of the curriculum. Overall, attainment for the majority of pupils is below the national average, although the progress pupils make is frequently good. Scrutiny of work shows that pupils have the opportunity to experiment with a range of different materials, including papier-mâché and clay for 3D work, and the use of paints on different surfaces. Pupils persevere with their work and some demonstrate skill in drawing. There is no evidence of the use of IT in art.

20. Pupils make good progress in **health, hygiene and safety**. They increase their knowledge and understanding of how the human body works, and learn about the functions of the skeleton and key organs. They know about the positive and negative effects of microbes, and are aware of the relevance of this knowledge when handling foods.

2 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

21. The unit is very successful in enabling pupils to develop a more positive attitude to learning, to reflect on their own behaviour and to take responsibility for the consequences of their own actions. This is a real strength of the unit's provision, to which pupils respond well. As a result of teachers' positive and encouraging feedback to pupils, and of the consistent respect shown to them, pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem. Through the daily interactions between staff and pupils, through the planned curriculum, and through the weekly tutorials, pupils receive a high quality of support for their personal development.

22. Pupils' behaviour in the unit during the inspection was consistently good and had a positive impact on their standard of work and on the progress they made in lessons. Pupils were willing to listen to their teachers' explanations, showed interest in their work and made a determined effort to learn and achieve. Thanks to skilful management by the teachers, even the most reluctant learners achieved

success.

23. Most pupils take their work seriously, and are helped to recognise that improvement is within their grasp. They are involved in a weekly review of their own progress. They accept responsibility for sharing in the assessment of their work and personal development, and for discussing with teachers their weekly targets for improvement. Pupils learn what is involved in taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They show an increasing readiness to consider how their own words and actions affect others. In a personal and social education lesson, for example, pupils took a mature approach to reviewing the unit's drugs policy, putting themselves in the position of others (both pupils and adults), careful to see that self-interest did not cloud their judgement.

24. It is clear from the unit's records that there are, from time to time, instances of very challenging behaviour. However, pupils worked well during the inspection, showing respect for teachers and for each other.

25. Pupils relate positively to staff and to one another. They show that they can work together co-operatively and show consideration for one another. Recently, for example, two pupils who had won a prize of a canal trip, had donated this to other pupils when they returned to mainstream schools.

26. The improvement in pupils' self-esteem, and the progress they make in managing their own behaviour, in forming positive relationships, and in developing positive attitudes to work are key factors helping to account for the success of the unit in reintegrating pupils into mainstream school.

2 Attendance

27. Attendance records show that, over the last year, attendance has been satisfactory for the majority of pupils, and in many cases, it has been good. For several pupils, attendance has improved during their stay at the unit. However, for a minority, attendance has been patchy or has tailed off, and in a few cases it has been poor. The worse cases of persistent poor attendance have been in Key Stage 4, and for these pupils the best efforts of the unit's staff and of the support services have not borne fruit. Again, these are a minority.

28. Although lessons always start on time, some pupils persistently arrive late. Staff of the unit work hard to encourage these pupils to improve their punctuality, but the problem persists.

2 QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

2 Teaching

29. All staff are committed to the care, welfare and academic development of the pupils. This characterises the teaching in the unit, which overall is good. In one third of lessons inspected it was good, and in a further third it was very good. It was never less than satisfactory. In the core subjects of English and mathematics and in personal and social education and humanities, teaching was of a high quality, as was the teaching of the pupil in Key Stage 2.

30. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and their understanding of examination requirements is thorough. The unit has identified, as part of their development planning, that expertise in information technology needs to be extended further. The majority of teaching is with one or two pupils at a time, but lessons are no less carefully planned and structured than they would be with a larger

class. Learning objectives are clear and are shared with the pupils. Tasks are varied and are designed to suit the objectives chosen. Teachers use a range of methods and materials to meet the needs of pupils and to see that their interest is maintained. Relationships with pupils are very good. They are founded on a clear expectation that pupils will respond positively and make progress, and teachers show patience and perseverance with even the most reticent pupils. Lessons are clearly introduced and pupils know what they are expected to do. Teachers are quick to spot when pupils need particular help, explanation or further clarification.

31. Where teaching is at its best, infectious enthusiasm combines with excellent relationships to help pupils tackle challenging tasks. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' needs and there are positive and stimulating discussions between pupils and teachers. In these lessons, informal assessment is used well to identify exactly what to focus on in order for pupils to reach higher standards, and the teaching is adjusted accordingly. Where teaching is less good, but nevertheless satisfactory, this is because tasks are less stimulating, understanding is not checked as rigorously, and pupils are not challenged soon enough to move on to the next step in their learning.

32. The teaching of **English** is good for pupils of all ages. In lessons inspected, it was always good, and often very good. It is underpinned by very good relationships.

33. In Key Stage 2, the teacher made good use of detailed knowledge of the pupil's strengths, weaknesses, interests and background to make sure that the English work targeted her specific needs and at the same time captured her interest. Lessons were well structured, moving through a sequence of small steps which built up the pupil's confidence, reinforcing the connections between sounds and symbols, extending the pupil's vocabulary, and helping her to express her own ideas.

34. In English lessons inspected in Key Stages 3 and 4, the teacher established a very good working climate. The teacher's enthusiasm made it clear that the pupils were expected to find the work interesting and challenging, and they responded accordingly. Explanations were clear, and the teacher was good at highlighting key teaching points, such as the relationship between text, audience and purpose. Materials were well prepared and made for an interesting variety of activities and methods (including matching, sequencing, starter sentences, structured prompts, discussion, video) suited to the purpose of the lesson. The teacher's questioning technique was good, encouraging pupils to think for themselves, to go beyond their initial impressions, and to think about the "how" and the "why". Pupils were given a clear framework, which helped them to reflect on, and to explore, their own reactions and views, to clarify, justify and extend their ideas, and to develop their arguments. In looking at character, setting and plot, there was a helpful emphasis on making detailed reference to the text and using appropriate quotations. A strength of much of the English teaching was the way the teacher adjusted the work to meet the different needs of individual pupils, identifying those aspects most likely to help them improve their performance.

35. In **mathematics**, the temporary replacement teacher has very good subject knowledge and she uses an appropriate range of teaching and learning styles. She is able to turn initial reluctance from some pupils into interest. Lessons are effectively and thoroughly planned for each individual pupil. Regular use of positive feedback, encouragement and praise motivates pupils and builds their confidence. Work is marked regularly, mostly sitting alongside pupils, so that they can be helped to understand questions, which initially caused difficulty.

36. The teaching of **personal, social and health education** is good. It helps pupils come to a better understanding of themselves and others, and to build a framework of attitudes and values within which they can better manage their behaviour and relationships. Teachers are good at involving pupils in discussion, challenging them to evaluate their own ideas and reactions and to see things from the point of view of other people. In one lesson, for example, pupils were given responsibility for

conducting their own discussion, within clearly established ground-rules; but the teacher intervened judiciously to move ideas forward, to help pupils make more subtle distinctions, and to draw together and summarise important points. The pupils' interest was engaged and time was used effectively.

37. In **information technology** lessons inspected, the teaching was satisfactory. The teacher gave clear instructions and handled pupils' errors sensitively. Pupils were given good opportunities to practise basic computing skills and were encouraged to improve their accuracy. However, not enough was done to challenge abler pupils and build on what they could already do, or to extend them in areas other than basic computer literacy.

38. In **design and technology**, the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. The teacher's subject knowledge is good and he has high expectations of the presentation of work. Pupils were given interesting tasks to carry out and they were encouraged to improve and extend their initial ideas. On some occasions however, the teaching failed to challenge the more able pupils.

39. It was only possible to see one lesson of **art** being taught during the time of the inspection. However, the observation of this lesson and the wider scrutiny of pupils' work shows the art curriculum to be effectively planned with tasks which offer pupils a wide range of art experiences. A number of pupils said that they enjoy art.

40. In **humanities**, and **health, hygiene and safety**, the quality of teaching is good. The ability of the teacher to create a "can do" climate and convince pupils that challenging work is interesting and worthwhile is a strength of the teaching. Lessons have good pace and activities are relevant to both the subject being studied and to the age and maturity of the pupils. The teacher uses a range of practical activities to engage pupils and is skilled at breaking down key teaching points into manageable steps so that pupils can learn successfully. Pupils were challenged to think things through, and the teacher was skilled at assessing pupils as an integral part of her teaching. This effective on-going assessment allowed the teacher to match work to what was known of pupils' prior attainment, with an appropriate focus on reinforcing and developing the underlying historical and geographical skills.

2 **The curriculum and assessment**

41. The curriculum is planned and taught with an early return to mainstream or special school clearly in mind. This is a strength of the PRU, and the unit is particularly successful in reintegrating pupils into school, usually within a few weeks. Staff of the unit work effectively with permanently excluded pupils, their parents and the receiving schools to prepare for reintegration. They also provide a good programme of support for pupils as they start back in school, working in the school with pupils and staff over the following weeks. Arrangements for follow-up and for monitoring the success of reintegration are very good.

42. The staff of the unit work not only with permanently excluded pupils, but also with pupils identified as being at risk of exclusion. Indeed, the main thrust of the work of the unit is in preventive outreach in both primary and secondary schools. This is very well planned and managed, providing advice as well as intensive support "packages" with structured follow-up. Figures show that this work has paid dividends. Working in close co-operation, the schools and the staff of the unit have together been successful in avoiding the need for exclusion in many cases. Headteachers of primary and secondary schools are positive about the benefits of this approach and the difference it has made to their schools. They value, too, the effective way in which exclusions are managed, when they do occur, and the way reintegration is handled. A key to the success of the unit's work is that it is carried out within a coherent framework, agreed with local schools, responding to their needs, with the clear aim of keeping

pupils in school.

43. For pupils taught in the unit, the curriculum includes English and mathematics, information technology, humanities, art, design and technology, and a very effective programme of personal and social education, including sex and drugs education. The time available is allocated appropriately so as to achieve a suitable balance between the subjects taught. Teachers take account of the requirements of the National Curriculum, of public examinations and of the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Work is planned in such a way that pupils can gain the necessary understanding, knowledge and personal skills and make enough progress to move back into mainstream schooling. Although they are taught in very small groups, pupils of secondary school age are taught as far as possible in ways that resemble those found in secondary schools, with specialist teaching, to help them keep in step with what is happening in mainstream.

44. In spite of these significant strengths, there are important weaknesses in the curriculum provided for pupils who attend the unit. The core subject of science is missing. The unit has no specialist facilities for science and no specialist science teacher. Also, except for the older pupils taking part in the Youth Programme activities outside the PRU, pupils do not have the opportunity to take part in planned physical activities. These gaps in provision run counter to the intention expressed in the LEA's curriculum policy for PRU's.

45. A further weakness is that pupils have too little taught time. Although the LEA's policy states that provision should be "for the greater part of a week", at present pupils have, at most, ten hours a week (except for pupils attending the Youth Programme whose provision is intended to be full time). This restricts what can be taught, and means that pupils attending the unit do not have equality of opportunity with those in mainstream school.

46. With the current restricted accommodation, it is not possible to have both primary and secondary pupils on site at the same time. Permanently excluded primary pupils are given individual tuition by staff from the unit. They are "hosted" for this tuition either in primary schools (usually those with a special unit) or in a Social Services family centre. At the time of the inspection, there was one permanently excluded pupil of primary age. She was being taught on a one-to-one basis for five hours a week in the library of a primary school. Whilst the quality of teaching was very good, the setting did not provide the necessary contact with other pupils to prepare her adequately for future integration with other children. Her move to a receiving school was awaiting the outcome of the formal assessment of her special needs. This pupil had been out of full-time education for too long.

47. Since the start of the current school year, the responsibility for the overall educational programme of the permanently excluded pupils in Key Stage 4 who attend the PRU lies with the LEA's Youth Programmes Unit. This is part of the LEA's strategy to move towards full-time alternative provision for older disaffected or excluded pupils. The Youth Programmes Unit "purchases" ten hours of tuition from the PRU as the pupils' formal education component. The Youth Programmes Unit is responsible for developing a programme of additional activities for the pupils concerned, and deals with their personal and social education and their careers education and guidance. It also gives pupils opportunities for planned physical activities, and for work leading to the ASDAN Youth Award. This additional provision is still at an early stage of development, and, for the Key Stage 4 pupils currently on the PRU's roll, the overall package (including the additional Youth Programmes provision) is not yet working in an effective, coherent way. As far as the component provided by the PRU is concerned, the curriculum is sensibly planned and effectively taught, although there is no opportunity to take science. It allows pupils to take a limited range of courses, which lead, to GCSE and Certificate of Achievement examinations. Within the PRU, teachers make good use of the limited time available.

48. Staff of the unit are good at regularly assessing, tracking and recording pupils' progress in

terms of their personal development and behaviour. Criteria for assessing the development of pupils' attitudes to learning, their relationships, their perseverance and their self-esteem are clear and are shared with pupils. Teachers use the information to identify suitable methods for helping pupils to improve in order to prepare them to move back into school or on to further training or work. Reports on pupils when they transfer back to mainstream or special schools are particularly helpful and informative in this respect, identifying not only what progress has been made but also which methods and approaches have worked best.

49. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in their work in the subjects they are taught are less effective. There has been a good deal of recent development in this area. However, taken overall, recording of academic attainment and progress (in terms of what pupils know, understand and can do) is still not precise and rigorous enough. The initial assessment of pupils' attainment is working best in English and mathematics, where teachers identify which aspects of work pupils need to focus on next in order to improve. In this way, pupils' individual needs are catered for in lessons. In English, specific literacy targets are set, against which progress can be measured. In other subjects, for example information technology and design and technology, not enough account is taken of what pupils already know and can do. As a result, some pupils are doing work which is not really moving them on in their learning.

2 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

50. The unit's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Indeed, a strength of the unit is the common concern of all staff to foster pupils' personal development both through the formal curriculum and through the ethos of the unit. In lessons in all subjects, with pupils of all ages, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour, as well as to confront social and moral issues. During their time in the unit, pupils are encouraged to accept a greater responsibility for their own actions, to understand the consequences of the choices they make, and to develop a more positive attitude towards themselves and their relationship with others. The good relationships between staff and pupils help set a climate in which this is possible. Staff are very good role models in the way they value and build on the contributions and achievements of pupils. They help to build their self-esteem, and show genuine respect, interest and tolerance, whilst conveying high expectations of co-operation, maturity and progress.

51. In a number of subjects, including PSHE, English and humanities (which includes a religious education element), pupils have an opportunity to think about some of the fundamental questions of life and to respond to them in the light of their own experience. Self-reflection is encouraged. Moral issues are tackled in many subjects and pupils are helped to develop their own framework of values. A prime concern of all teachers is to help pupils to develop an awareness of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the unit and in the wider community. At the start of each half-day session, discussions are held with pupils on general matters which allow them to explore feelings and values, and to think about the rights and responsibilities of the individual in society. Although teaching groups are often very small, pupils are encouraged to work together, and a strong emphasis on the importance of developing positive relationships runs throughout the work of the unit. The unit is very effective in promoting pupils' social and moral development.

52. Provision for pupils' cultural development is more limited. The unit has identified this as an issue to work on. Currently, work in English literature, art and humanities makes some contribution, but there are relatively few planned opportunities to widen pupils' knowledge and experience of their own culture, and, more particularly, to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures.

2 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

53. The unit provides very effective support for pupils' personal and academic development, which enables them to reintegrate successfully into mainstream school. Helped in many cases by previous contact with pupils through outreach work in schools, staff know individual pupils well, both their backgrounds and their needs. They are good at tackling these needs through a consistent, supportive approach to pupils, with a strong focus on promoting learning and raising attainment. This is instrumental in preparing pupils to reintegrate successfully into mainstream schools. Pupils appreciate the individual attention and support they receive.

54. Using the framework of the weekly tutorials, and the group time at the start of each half-day session, teachers draw on their in-depth knowledge of individual pupils to monitor their personal development effectively against the targets which have been agreed. At the same weekly tutorials, teachers also review pupils' progress in their work. Teachers know what work pupils have completed and how well they have completed it; however the monitoring of individual pupils' academic attainment and progress is less rigorous than the monitoring of their personal development, attendance and behaviour. This is recognised by the headteacher.

55. Good behaviour is consistently expected and promoted by staff. The unit's behaviour policy is consistently translated into practice in the daily life of the unit. Strategies for monitoring and following up pupils' absences are rigorous, with good support from the education welfare service.

56. Through the daily example of staff, through their concern for and knowledge of each pupil, and through effective liaison with a wide range of services, the well being of pupils is given a high priority. Child protection measures are appropriate and understood by staff, who have received appropriate training.

57. There is a constant focus on preparing pupils to move back into mainstream schools, and on providing support when they do make this transition. The unit is successful in preparing these pupils for the next step in their education. For pupils in Key Stage 4, for whom reintegration into a mainstream school is not a realistic option, the unit does not have the responsibility for careers education and guidance or work experience. These aspects are dealt with in the programme organised by the Youth Programmes Unit. The staff of the PRU nevertheless seek to reinforce skills and attitudes that pupils will need in order to prepare them for further education, training or work. However, in spite of the unit's best efforts, in the case of the Year 11 pupils currently on the unit's roll, the link between what is provided by the PRU, and what is provided elsewhere is not strong enough, in terms of preparation for the next stage in pupils' lives.

2 Partnership with parents and the community

58. Staff work hard to maintain a good partnership with parents, who are supportive of the work of the unit. The unit has an open door policy, which actively encourages parents to visit the unit. The headteacher encourages parents to meet with staff to discuss particular aspects of their child's education. The unit ensures that parents are informed of pupils' progress, both by telephone and in writing. Parents are properly involved when preparations are being made to re-integrate pupils into mainstream school. Staff recognise the value of offering support to parents as well as to pupils, so that a team approach can be fostered to resolving pupils' problems.

59. The effectiveness of the unit is based on the close partnership, which has been forged between the unit and the local schools it serves. The unit and its management committee take seriously their accountability not only to the LEA but also to the local schools. The approach to outreach and

preventive work and to managing exclusion is agreed with local headteachers and commands their support. It assumes that school and unit staff will work in close partnership, with the shared goal of reducing exclusion and supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. This shared understanding and commitment provides a good basis for negotiating re-integration placements. For example, as soon as a pupil is permanently excluded from a secondary school, the head teacher herself works with head teachers of mainstream schools, to identify an appropriate destination school. This is an important factor in assuring an early return to school.

60. The unit has close links with other support services and is keen to promote a co-ordinated approach to helping pupils and their families, for example when advising schools on setting up pastoral support programmes. Liaison is effective. Headteachers are positive about the unit's responsiveness and the value of the support it provides.

61. In view of the short periods for which most pupils attend the unit, there are relatively few opportunities to forge wider links with the community. Responsibility for work experience and links with the world of work lie with the Youth Programmes Unit for pupils at Key Stage 4 and not with the PRU. Pupils from the unit visit places outside the PRU (for example, places of worship) and visitors to the unit contribute to the PSHE programme.

2 THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE UNIT

2 Leadership and management

62. The head teacher provides strong, purposeful and effective leadership, which gives a clear educational direction for the work of the unit. She has created a strong team ethos, which is marked by a concern to meet the individual needs of pupils, and a commitment both to preventive work and to the successful reintegration of excluded pupils into mainstream schools. This unity of purpose has a positive impact on pupils' learning and on their personal development.

63. The head teacher maintains a clear overview of the work of the unit. This is accomplished through the weekly outreach meeting and through the planned, regular review interviews with the key stage managers and the head of primary outreach. In addition to these structured reviews of provision and of the outcomes of the unit's work, she has a regular presence in classrooms and is involved in ongoing discussions with all staff. The head teacher has a good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and of the curriculum provided. As yet, this is not backed up by a programme of planned, regular observations of teaching, as a basis for further staff development. The head teacher has already identified this in her plans for development.

64. The management committee has clear terms of reference and is well informed about the work of the unit. It works actively on behalf of the PRU and carries out its responsibilities effectively, in terms of planning, monitoring and supporting the work of the unit. With the head teacher, it also ensures that headteachers of schools in the local area are kept well informed about the unit's plans and work.

65. The LEA has established an appropriate framework for its PRU provision. Its delegation of responsibility to the management committee is clearly set out. It has put in place appropriate accountability structures.

66. The LEA has effective arrangements for monitoring the work of the unit. Data relating to

attendance and pupil numbers is systematically collected and analysed. The quality of provision is monitored formally through the annual review, through the visits of subject advisers and through the link adviser. Good support for the unit is provided by the link adviser and lead officer. While the LEA has in place appropriate structures to monitor the quality of provision in the unit itself, it is not well informed about the overall quality of support being provided outside the unit, to prepare permanently excluded pupils in Key Stage 4 to move confidently and successfully into their next stage in life.

67. The unit's plans for improvement are thorough and are shared with staff, the LEA, the management committee and local headteachers. Development planning processes are well under way. The head teacher has rightly identified the need to move now to a fuller involvement of the senior management team.

68. The unit's aim of enabling pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties to access their full entitlement to education informs the work of the unit and is borne out in its daily practice.

69. A positive and supportive ethos permeates the unit and reflects its core purpose of meeting pupils' individual needs, of promoting their self-esteem and of helping them to move successfully back into mainstream provision.

2 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

70. The team of staff based at the Links works not only with excluded pupils, but also with pupils at risk of exclusion. The main thrust of the team's work is in outreach in primary and secondary schools. This preventive and support work accounts for around 80% the unit's activity.

71. In line with national guidance, there are never fewer than two members of staff working with the excluded pupils who attend the PRU itself. Although the unit has gone through a period of staffing instability, which has slowed down some planned developments, there are enough teachers for the number of pupils on the roll of the PRU. Teachers have a very good level of expertise and experience in dealing with disaffected pupils. Subject expertise is limited, but is adequate for the curriculum currently offered. However, there is no specialist science teacher, and expertise in information technology needs to be extended. Time is properly allocated for liaison with schools, for reintegration support and for preventive outreach work, all of which are strengths of the unit, underlying its success in keeping pupils in school.

72. There is a well-planned approach to staff development, which helps teachers to keep up-to-date with what is happening in mainstream schools as well as to meet the range of needs in the pupils they support. All staff are offered individual professional development interviews with the head teacher. However, statutory teacher appraisal is not in place.

73. There are major weaknesses in accommodation. These are affecting what the unit can provide now, as well as restricting developments which the staff have planned for the future in order to extend the unit's preventive work even further. The LEA recognises these weaknesses and has plans in place either to extend and improve the current accommodation (with money already set aside) or to relocate the unit elsewhere.

74. At present, although the staff have done a good deal to make the environment as pleasant and stimulating as possible, the accommodation is too cramped. It can accommodate a maximum of eight pupils at any one time. The unit lacks specialist facilities for science. Facilities for design and technology and for art are inadequate for pupils of secondary age. There are two small teaching spaces,

but the open plan design means that sound travels too easily between the two areas. This is distracting and is particularly unsuitable for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Because of the lack of separate teaching rooms, it is not possible to accommodate Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils in the unit at the same time, even less to accommodate excluded primary pupils. This militates against the flexible and efficient use of the unit. The pupils have no social or recreational area. There are no small interview rooms or a “time out” room. The unit lacks a suitable reception or waiting area for visitors. There is no suitable base for the outreach teams. At present, the primary outreach team uses the kitchen. There is a shortage of storage space.

75. The unit is well resourced for the current curriculum, in terms of a suitable range of up-to-date books, materials and equipment appropriate to the ages of the pupils. Where gaps are identified, there are good arrangements for purchasing any necessary additional resources.

2 The efficiency of the unit

76. There is an effective framework for financial planning, linked to planning for improvement. The head teacher, working with the management committee, has responsibility for drawing up and managing the PRU’s budget, within the funding devolved by the LEA, including specific grants from the Standards Fund. This is handled effectively. The PRU is accountable both to the LEA and to the local schools it serves, each of which receives a copy of its annual report. Arrangements for financial monitoring and control are good.

77. The LEA is in process of developing a sensible approach to monitoring the cost-effectiveness of the PRU and of its wider outreach work. It already uses a range of performance indicators, including reintegration rates, exclusion trends and attendance. It has not yet fully disaggregated the PRU’s actual expenditure on excluded pupils, but is moving towards calculating the unit cost of this aspect of its work.

78. Resources are deployed wisely, in line with the wider purpose and aims of the unit, with a successful focus on reducing exclusion and keeping pupils in school. However, the weaknesses in accommodation prevent the unit from making the most efficient use of its resources. Records show that numbers of pupils actually attending the unit at any one time are small, and this is expensive of staffing, particularly if individual pupils fail to attend. Taking account of the average number on roll, the current staffing level might well allow for full-time provision (rather than the ten hours currently provided), were it not for the fact that the unit does not have accommodation for different age groups to attend the unit at the same time.

79. In spite of this, the unit is successful in helping pupils to make enough progress to move back into school. The quality of the education, support and guidance it provides is good. In view of the unit’s effectiveness in fulfilling its role, the PRU provides good value for money, and, in its wider outreach and preventive work, very good value for money.

2 PART C: INSPECTION DATA

2 SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

80. Four inspectors (including a lay inspector) spent the equivalent of 12 inspector days at the unit gathering first hand evidence upon which judgements were made. During the inspection, 26 lessons or part lessons were inspected. (this amounted to 18 hours) All teachers present in the unit were seen teaching. Other inspection activities included the observation of registration, the start and end of sessions, the movement and behaviour of pupils on the site, and out reach work with sending schools.

81. Planned discussions were held with the head teacher, teachers, headteachers of primary and secondary schools in which staff of the PRU work, representatives of all external agencies working with the PRU and LEA link and lead personnel.

82. Inspectors looked at all the available written work of pupils, and planned discussions were held with all pupils present.

83. An extensive range of the unit's documentation was analysed, both before and during the inspection.

84. The Registered Inspector held a meeting for parents prior to the inspection, one parent attended. A questionnaire was sent to parents prior to the inspection. No replies were received.

2 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

2 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of part- time pupils with mainstream placements	Number of part- time pupils at the PRU only	Number of pupils directly supported by the PRU but not on the roll
Unit	5 f.t.e.	0	10	178

2 **Teachers and classes**

2 **Qualified teachers (Y4 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	6.26
--	------

2 **Education support staff**

Total number of education support staff:	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	72
Average class size:	6.3

2 **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-99
	£
Total Income	232,528
Total Expenditure	207,703.23
Expenditure per pupil	N.A.
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,961.09
Balance carried forward to next year	34,785.86

2 **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 10

Number of questionnaires returned: 0

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the unit encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the unit	0	0	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the unit with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	0	0	0	0	0
The unit handles complaints from parents well	0	0	0	0	0
The unit gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	0	0	0	0	0
The unit keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	0	0	0	0	0
The unit enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	0	0	0	0	0
The unit encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	0	0	0	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	0	0	0	0	0
The unit's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	0	0	0	0	0
The unit achieves high standards of good behaviour	0	0	0	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) unit	0	0	0	0	0