

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ST DAVID'S PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

Hereford

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 130991

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Matthews

Reporting inspector: Dr. Eric Peagam  
14943

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> –25<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 215475

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of unit:	LEA Maintained
Unit category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	14-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Symonds Street Hereford
Postcode:	HR1 2HA
Telephone number:	01432 274485
Fax number:	01432 267827
Appropriate authority:	Herefordshire LEA
Name of responsible officer	Mrs. L. Houghton
Date of previous inspection:	None

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Eric Peagam	Registered inspector	Mathematics French Information technology Music Religious education	The unit's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the unit do to improve further?
Daphne Johnston	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the unit care for its pupils? How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?
Keith Tottman	Team inspector	English Art Geography History	How well is the unit led and managed? Special educational needs
Jennifer Hall	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Integration

The inspection contractor was:

Cranmere Consultancies  
Cranmere Bank House  
Stableford  
Bridgnorth  
Shropshire  
WV15 5LP

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

St. David's is a pupil referral unit for pupils with a wide range of difficulties. It provides for up to 36 Key Stage 4 pupils, although only 16 can be accommodated on site at any one time. It forms part of the provision of Herefordshire's Medical and Behavioural Support Service (MBSS) drawing pupils mainly from the south of the County, complementing a similar provision in Leominster. There have been significant changes to its character and population in the last 2-3 years and further changes are planned to enable it to provide for up to 50 full-time pupils by 2002. The pupil group includes those who are permanently excluded in Key Stage 4, pupils with medical, including psychiatric, difficulties and pregnant schoolgirls. There is also provision to support pupils from high schools on a 'respite' basis and pupils on fixed-term exclusions over 15 days.

There are currently 37 pupils on roll, evenly distributed between year groups and between boys and girls. At present 22 pupils are 'dual registered', although effectively the unit provides their only access to educational facilities. Pupils attend part-time for up to 18 hours a week, with an average offer of 14.5 hours. They arrive with a broad range of prior attainment, but this is generally below average as a result of their previous experiences. An increasing number have statements of special educational needs, of which there are 6 at present. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The unit aims to create an environment that enables the pupils to manage their own behaviour, reach their academic potential, improve their feelings of self-worth and learn to socialise appropriately with their peers and with the staff. In order to improve its ability to do so, it has adopted a relevant range of priorities for development.

### **HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS**

The unit is very effective in enabling a group of pupils with significant adjustment difficulties to achieve success in their academic, social and emotional development. Within the very severe constraints imposed by the inadequate premises and the limited resources, good teaching supports a range of accreditation which pupils would otherwise not have the opportunity to achieve. The clear educational direction, the effective management and the very good ethos promoted by a united staff with a coherent and unified vision all contribute well to the overall effectiveness. In terms of what it is able to offer, the unit provides satisfactory value for money in spite of the severe constraints on its work and the limited attendance of a significant number of pupils.

#### **What the unit does well**

- It addresses its core objectives well and enables the pupils to become confident successful learners.
- Good teaching largely compensates for poor facilities and inadequate resources.
- Consistently good relationships with a good balance between empathy and challenge promote learning well.
- Teachers' detailed knowledge of individual pupils' needs and circumstances enables them to support pupils through their emotional and social difficulties.
- Very good resources for information and communications technology are very effectively used.
- The unit has made good progress in developing an alternative vocational curriculum for some of its pupils.
- Very good links with other services are well used to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils.
- The unit has established very good links with parents that contribute significantly to pupils' achievement.

#### **What could be improved**

- Accommodation is poor; it is inadequate and inappropriate for the curriculum needs of the pupils.
- Resources in most subjects are inadequate to support the full range of National Curriculum requirements.
- Procedures for identifying and assessing special educational needs are under-developed, especially where needs arise from medical or psychiatric problems.
- Pupils who could make use of full-time education with a broader curriculum do not have this opportunity.
- There is insufficient attention to individual planning linked to individualised learning objectives in lessons.
- Provision for pupils' physical development is inadequate.

*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 unit has not previously been inspected

## 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	B	very good A
mathematics	C	good B
science	B	satisfactory C
personal, social and health education	A	unsatisfactory D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	poor E

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

Although pupils receive part-time education only, they make satisfactory and, in most subjects offered, good progress. They arrive often with attainment depressed by their inability to make use of mainstream school provision and for some this is marked. About a half gained GCSE passes in one or more subjects last year with a total of 50 passes, averaging 3.5 passes each, mainly in the range from grade D to G. In addition to these, a significant number of pupils obtain the Certificate of Educational Achievement (CoEA), usually with merit or distinction. More general achievement is recorded through the Youth Award (bronze level) and Basic Skills Scheme where, last year, seven pupils obtained nine passes including one distinction and one merit. In general, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress within the limited curriculum but, for those with statements, progress is unsatisfactory, as they do not receive the provision specified in their statements.

Good progress is made in English and science; many pupils enter with attainments well below expected levels but make sufficient progress to achieve GCSE. There is also good progress in information and communications technology (ICT), which pupils use effectively in other subjects. Striking progress is made in PSHE and the knowledge pupils acquire is applied well in gaining accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme (ASDAN).

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Pupils who attend the unit are keen to do their best and apply themselves well. They value what the unit offers and demonstrate a compliant commitment to their work. They speak positively of what it has helped them to achieve. They show a responsible, independent attitude to their studies.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times, mature and often thoughtful. Pupils show sensitivity and respect towards others. They treat visitors, including each other's parents, with appropriate respect.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils attending the unit demonstrate confidence and increasing self-belief. They form very good relationships with their peers and the staff, and this makes a significant impact on standards of achievement
Attendance	The attendance rate is very low, consistent with the problems associated with these pupils, and a number of pupils are persistently absent. Nearly all absence is authorised

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
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 is good overall; it is at least good in five out of six lessons and very good in one sixth. This quality is achieved in spite of the poor accommodation, which severely limits what teachers can offer and the unsatisfactory resources for most subjects. Teachers know the pupils very well and demonstrate a very good balance between empathy for their personal difficulties and a determination to present challenging targets for achievement. They consistently and successfully pursue good relationships, which provide a secure basis for pupils with a wide range of difficulties to come to terms with and, in many cases, make progress towards overcoming these difficulties. The consistent and sympathetic management of pupils through high expectations of work and behaviour ensures that lessons take place in an orderly and supportive atmosphere. In a number of subjects, the knowledge and understanding teachers bring to bear is secure and sufficient to support pupils to GCSE level. In those subjects where they are less secure, the ethos which is created in lessons enables satisfactory learning to take place, with pupils taking a significant level of responsibility for their own learning. At times, the pace of lessons is reduced and, overall, there is insufficient planning to address individual targets. In spite of this, the high quality of the rest of the lesson ensures that teaching is always at least satisfactory.

For most pupils who attend, teaching supports progress towards GCSE and other accreditation; for those pupils with basic literacy and numeracy needs, additional support is satisfactory. The unit meets the needs of most pupils well, but for those with statements of SEN, there is inadequate provision to meet that specified in statements.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall and largely meets the requirements for pupil referral units. It is significantly enhanced by very good quality PSHE and effective provision for careers and vocational education. It is least effective in providing regular opportunities for physical development, as arrangements are unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The curriculum for many pupils with SEN arising from medical or psychiatric difficulties is unsatisfactory because their needs are not properly assessed in order that appropriate curricular, including National Curriculum provision, can be made. Pupils with statements of SEN do not receive the provision specified, as the unit is unable to make it.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The cultivation of pupils' personal development is very effective, especially in the promotion of their spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory and within the curriculum it is good.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	The unit provides very good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils and monitors well pupils' academic achievement and personal development. Generally pupils are cared for well, but the accommodation hinders adherence to all health and safety regulations.

The unit works very well in partnership with parents. Parents receive very good information about the organisation of the unit and are kept closely informed about their children's development. These links make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement.



## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The LEA and the teacher-in-charge have a clear view of the future of the unit and the unit meets well most of its aims.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	There is no management committee. The LEA meets all the legal responsibilities relating to pupil referral units except with regard to accommodation and facilities.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	The manager of the service has close and frequent contact with the unit but there are no formal evaluative mechanisms in place. Appraisal does not involve the direct observation of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The unit uses the accommodation, staff and resources available to it very well. The spending of funds for training and initiatives, for example in information technology, has been planned well.

Teachers and assistant staff are sufficient for the current demands made by low numbers and a restricted curriculum. The accommodation is poor; it lacks sufficient space in every aspect and many facilities, for example a staff room and separate lavatories for pupils and staff, do not exist. Resources for learning are insufficient in many subjects and unsatisfactory overall, although very good in information technology. The leadership and day-to-day management of the teacher-in-charge are good; there is a widespread commitment to high standards and good attention to administrative detail. The unit is careful to obtain the best value it can from its limited spending opportunities.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The knowledge teachers have of their children's needs.</li> <li>• The supportive environment and level of caring.</li> <li>• The success that pupils have in examinations.</li> <li>• The way pupils are prepared for the next stage of life</li> <li>• The way staff listen to their concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for full-time provision in the unit.</li> <li>• The accommodation and facilities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agreed with parents that the unit makes very good supportive provision for their children. The accommodation and facilities were found to be woefully inadequate. Inspectors shared the view of some parents that their children should have access to a fuller curriculum and more teaching time in this setting, and that it is unsatisfactory that pupils who could make use of full-time education are not receiving it.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The unit's results and achievements**

1. The characteristics of pupils at this unit make it inappropriate to report their attainment in comparison with national norms. This report will therefore focus on the progress pupils make in relation to their prior attainment, as well as giving examples of what they know, understand and can do.
2. Although pupils are receiving part-time education only, nevertheless they make satisfactory and, in most subjects offered, good progress. They arrive often with attainment depressed by their inability to make use of mainstream school provision and for some this is marked. However, many pupils successfully follow GCSE courses and 14 pupils gained passes in one or more subjects last year. This represented a total of 50 passes, with an average of between three and four passes per pupil entered. This pattern is consistently maintained from year to year. From time to time a pupil will achieve five or more passes at grades A\* to C but the majority achieve passes in the range from D to G. Pupils generally perform consistently across the subjects for which they are entered. In addition to these, a significant number of pupils obtain the Certificate of Educational Achievement (CoEA), usually with merit or distinction. More general achievement is recorded through the Youth Award (bronze level) and Basic Skills Scheme where, last year, seven pupils obtained nine passes including one distinction and one merit. Where pupils leave without accreditation, this is usually either because they do not finish the course, or have special educational needs allied to low motivation, which prevent them from making the progress necessary to achieve accreditation.
3. The progress that pupils make is underpinned by the high quality of teaching which compensates to a significant extent for the poor quality of the accommodation and the inadequate resources available to the unit. Parents recognise and applaud pupils' progress, but a significant number contend that their children would make better progress if they were offered full-time appropriate education. However, the view of most parents is that whatever pupils achieve is much more than they would have without the unit and for many it provides a good stepping-stone to further education.
4. In English, progress toward a wide range of achievement is good. In Year 11, some pupils achieve middle range grades in GCSE; others achieve at different levels in the CoEA across a range of work from devising questionnaires to writing 'fact' files on Macbeth. Pupils attend well to what is being said and progress in listening is promoted effectively by dictation exercises and listening to stories, for example 'Of Mice and Men'. Most are fluent readers, although a few have significant deficits, and many have made very good progress in imaginative writing and critical analysis. Careful and neat presentation of work, with good regard for accurate punctuation, is a marked feature of the writing of many, particularly at Year 11. Progress over the final stages of preparation for examinations is good because teaching is carefully geared to that end and pupils have very good attitudes and apply themselves well.
5. In mathematics, most pupils make good progress from a range of prior attainment levels. Many have achieved level 4 or below in their Year 9 SATs. They successfully follow a modular commercial scheme. Where appropriate, or where time is short, pupils are entered for a non-modular examination, and achieve passes within the normal range. Overall, there is a wide range of attainment; higher attainers reach GCSE grade C, but most passes are in the range from D-G. A small number of pupils follow the same scheme to achieve the CoEA in numeracy, representing National Curriculum levels 1-3. This group includes some pupils with previously identified special educational needs, who enter the unit having attained below level 3 in the SATs. at the end of Key Stage 3.
6. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in science during their time in the unit because they respond well to good teaching. Regular attenders gain GCSE single science accreditation or achieve the CoEA in science. However, there is insufficient curriculum time in the unit for pupils to catch up on the science missed at mainstream school. Poor science accommodation and unsatisfactory science resources also severely limit the opportunities for pupils to develop the full range of scientific investigative skills. Higher attainers do, however, plan an investigation and obtain, record and find patterns in the results. A few pupils achieve higher GCSE science grades. Their results are best in biology and chemistry because there is greater coverage of these subjects than there is of physics. Pupils with learning difficulties and with poor motivation on entry to the unit make good progress because they follow individual science programmes which are well matched to their learning needs and interests; fish and crystal formation are just two topics which have, for example, sustained pupils' interest over several weeks.
7. Pupils successfully develop a range of information and communications technology (ICT) skills, mainly accredited via Worklink or Key Skills. They use a range of applications to create, modify and combine text and

graphics to produce very effectively presented work. They explore design in information technology, reviewing and revising what they produce to increase its impact and effectiveness, comparing outcomes with their intentions. They use a digital camera and upload, edit and use the pictures in records of achievement and other documents. They use data handling programmes to support work in mathematics. They show an awareness of the uses of technology in recording their dramatic work, including editing a video.

8. GCSE history is being taken by two pupils who are making very good progress toward expected C grades. Both have a good grasp of the factors influencing developments in history and how they interact. Progress is enhanced by good relationships, realistic levels of challenge from the teacher, frequent constructive marking of homework and the mature efforts of the two pupils involved.
9. In art in Year 10, pupils show high levels of independence, choosing their own materials and identifying the resources they need. Pupils make good use of information technology in their portfolios of work and take care over layout and style, although they lack experience and skills in colour mixing and progress is constrained at times by inadequate resources, for example for the drawing of circles. Records of the recent 'Circus Day Experience' indicate good progress in art in the use of photography, information technology and the making of 'props'.
10. The unit regards the provision of PSHE as one of its major tasks and does this very successfully. Pupils make good and often very good progress in knowledge and understanding of their own physical and emotional development and explore a range of strategies for dealing with difficult situations they might encounter. While many remain diffident in discussion, they show a good and growing awareness of the dangers they face and the support structures that exist in the world outside school. As a result of the thoughtful and reflective ethos promoted by teachers, supported by expertise from outside, pupils develop an increasing insight into their own and other people's characters and behaviour. This level of self-knowledge is significant in enabling them to achieve good progress in developing self-confidence and improving their self-esteem. This progress is also significantly enhanced by the successes achieved in ASDAN and the experiences and learning that occur in the alternative curriculum.
11. There is no provision for design and technology in the curriculum. However, as part of ASDAN, pupils have access to learning how to prepare recipes from across the world. There is no regular provision for physical education and there are no specialist facilities for physical education on site. Although the unit makes occasional use of recreational facilities in the locality, the overall provision for pupils' physical development is unsatisfactory and an area for improvement.
12. Pupils with statements of special educational needs, of whom there are a significant number, make unsatisfactory progress as the unit is unable to provide the curriculum specified in their statements. However, where appropriate, they are offered support in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. Other pupils make good progress towards academic and personal targets set for them.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

13. Pupils are very positive about what the unit offers and demonstrate a serious commitment to their studies. They have developed responsible working habits and try hard to achieve, taking care with presentation. They settle to work quickly, apply themselves well to the task and remain engaged in their activities throughout lessons. Pupils particularly enjoy the 'Worklink' curriculum because of the element of choice it offers and are highly motivated to learn. Pupils are keen to take responsibility for their own learning and keep records of progress and achievements. They make good use of their personal organisers, which contain all the information they need to help them to be self-reliant in the unit. Pupils show initiative and independence in lessons; for example in art, they identify and choose the most effective resources and in mathematics they select appropriate equipment to support their learning. Some pupils are reluctant to talk in class but, with encouragement from teachers, their participation improves as the lesson progresses.
14. Pupils are well mannered and their behaviour is very good in and out of lessons. They interact in a mature way and are kind to one another. Pupils are involved in the management of their own conduct as soon as they enter the unit and take seriously reviews of their behaviour. Given the significant difficulties pupils have when they join the unit, it is clear that many have made considerable improvements in behaviour and attitude. Parents feel, some strongly, that behaviour is good. Records indicate that very few serious incidents of misbehaviour occur. There have been no exclusions from the unit or transfers to other provision.
15. Relationships throughout the unit are very good. Pupils greet staff in a friendly manner and there is a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils, particularly in Year 11, identify with their class group and work well together, often with good humour. They show respect for each other and listen to each other's point of view, as in PSHE lessons when pupils are thoughtful and considerate in their responses. During the inspection, older pupils were preparing to leave and had made 'goodbye cards' to remember their friends and life at St. David's. They talked openly about their experiences and demonstrated a mature understanding of the difficulties that had occurred in relationships in the past. At the formal presentation of the National Records of Achievement, two

pupils felt confident enough to read their personal statements to the assembled group of pupils and staff, and others allowed their statements to be read. Striking features of these statements were pupils' honest evaluation of their personal qualities and their optimistic outlook. Pupils reflected on their achievement in the unit and expressed pride in the progress they had made, particularly with self-confidence.

16. Although the overall rate of attendance is very low, most pupils attend reasonably well in light of their difficulties. A number of pupils are persistently absent, but most absence is authorised and results from illness.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

17. Because of the timing of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were largely engaged in preparation for external examinations, so that teachers had limited scope for displaying the full range of their skills. In spite of this, teaching was good overall; it was at least good in five out of six lessons and very good in one in six. It was never unsatisfactory. This quality is achieved in spite of the poor accommodation, which severely limits what they can offer and the unsatisfactory resources for most subjects. Teachers know the pupils very well and demonstrate a very good balance between empathy for their personal difficulties and a determination to present challenging targets for achievement. They consistently and successfully pursue good relationships, which provide a secure basis for pupils with a wide range of difficulties, to come to terms with and, in many cases, make progress towards overcoming these difficulties. The consistent and sympathetic management of pupils through high expectations of work and behaviour ensures that lessons take place in an orderly and supportive atmosphere. In a number of subjects, the knowledge and understanding teachers bring to bear is secure and sufficient to support pupils to GCSE level. In those subjects where they are less secure, the ethos which is created in lessons enables satisfactory learning to take place, with pupils increasingly taking a significant level of responsibility for their own learning.
18. Consistently good or very good teaching in English reflects a secure understanding of the subject and the examination syllabus requirements. In lessons, it is calm, methodical and orderly and, when a mixed age group are being taught, planning and delivery ensure that all pupils are enabled to work at an appropriate level, making good progress. Although at this stage of pupils' careers much of the work is individual, the teacher manages plenary discussions well and uses them effectively as a bridge to paired oral and written work. Basic literacy skills are well supported by planning in other subjects, and specifically taught in the 'form time' sessions.
19. Teaching in mathematics is consistently good. Good subject knowledge and confidence in applying the chosen commercial scheme ensure that work is always well matched to pupils' needs and attainment levels. Marking and assessment are consistent and well used to enable pupils to identify future learning targets and to ensure an appropriate level of productivity. Numeracy skills are effectively promoted.
20. The quality of teaching in science is good and pupils respond positively to the sensitive one-to-one guidance provided in lessons. Careful attention to examination requirements, very thorough and knowledgeable preparation of resources, and imaginative planning all contribute well to pupils' achievement. The science development plan has good vision but the supporting action plan is weak. There is good attention to the promotion of literacy and numeracy in science lessons; the use of information and communications technology is especially effective in motivating pupils to research scientific topics and to present their investigations.
21. ICT is not taught as a discrete subject but is well supported in Worklink and Key Skills lessons. Teachers demonstrate sufficient skills in supporting its use in other subjects to enable pupils to develop effective techniques. They offer a good example to pupils through their own use of ICT and encourage pupils to explore ICT-based solutions to problems and especially to create effective presentations. In this they are well supported by access to very good resources and the work of the ICT specialist on the staff who engenders confidence in staff and pupils in attempting to extend their use of a range of hardware and software resources.
22. Teaching in PSHE lessons is always at least good and is at times very good. Effective use is made of the skills of outside specialists. Lessons are very well structured to address the individual needs of pupils, which are well known to the teachers. When PSHE is being promoted in 'form time' the well-planned lessons and excellent relationships between the pupils and with the teacher enable sensitive issues to be explored successfully in an atmosphere of mutual trust, which is well promoted by the teacher. This teaching is also very effective in promoting pupils' knowledge and awareness of their own needs and those of society, including the social patterns within the unit.
23. Overall, there is a good pace to lessons and time is well used. However, at times, lessons lose their momentum, especially where pupils are setting the pace. The planning of individual learning objectives as part of the written lesson plan, and regular recording of progress towards meeting these targets, are insufficiently developed. These factors have the effect of reducing the standard in some lessons where teaching, nevertheless, remains at least satisfactory.
24. Teachers have a consistent approach to the setting of homework. Overall, the emphasis is on enabling pupils to increasingly take responsibility for their own learning, and extending their learning at home is seen as a part of

this process. The nature and the amount of homework provided is based on teachers' secure knowledge of individual pupils' capabilities.

25. The overall effect of the high quality of teaching is that pupils learn effectively at a rate that reflects their ability and prior attainment in a purposeful atmosphere and come to regard themselves as successful learners. A particular strength, which arises from this, is the very good awareness pupils display of their own learning and development, both academic and social.

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

26. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and largely meets the curricular requirements for pupil referral units. Within the constraints of the part-time attendance, the unit is successful in providing a good breadth of study that combines academic and vocational subjects and a very effective range of activities to promote pupils' personal and social development. There is effective focus on the core subjects and a selection of other National Curriculum subjects, all of which can be studied to GCSE standard. Following a thorough programme of baseline assessments on entry, the unit successfully teaches literacy skills; and through the mathematics syllabus also provides effectively for the development of numeracy skills. ASDAN adds successfully to the breadth of the curriculum, providing a good range of alternative activities that re-engage the interest and motivation of pupils disaffected by learning in mainstream schools. A wide range of challenges not only promotes the key skills of communication and information and communications technology but also helps pupils to improve their personal and social skills. The overall provision for personal, social and health education is very effective, supported by well established links with external agencies, including the school nurse, counselling services and local advisory support. Through a very well targeted and planned series of lessons in 'form time', pupils have ample opportunity to discuss and learn about themselves through topics on health, sex and drugs education, for example. These lessons also make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
27. Well-established links with the careers service and good provision for work experience help pupils to plan for the next stage in their lives. In practice, very few pupils integrate back into mainstream secondary schools after referral to the unit and the support they receive is geared well to further education and training opportunities. The provision of vocational courses at a local further education college suffered setbacks over funding arrangements but these links are now improving. There is highly successful provision at another local college providing experience of land-based industries. Lessons are not only effective in promoting pupils' knowledge of stockmanship, for example, but the methods used are excellent for the development of team work and the promotion of personal confidence and self-esteem. Good use is made of the local community through Youth Award Scheme challenges, which are presented during work link lessons. A creative project on the theme of circus is very effective in helping pupils from the unit to understand the needs of children with learning difficulties from a local primary school.
28. The 'Worklink' curriculum (Youth Award Scheme) has been successfully developed as part of the Alternative Curriculum and now offers pupils the opportunity to gain Bronze, Silver and Gold Award levels. These awards recognise and credit achievements in Key Skills and personal achievements through the demands of organising, planning and reviewing activities. Pupils are involved in assessing their own learning and compiling a portfolio of evidence. There is a good scheme of work for careers education that is planned and monitored well with effective use of initial assessment of pupils' interests and basic skills. The careers service officer enhances the provision significantly with his support in careers lessons and the offer of individual interviews. A good choice of work experience placements is available to all pupils. Employers and pupils set targets to achieve during the placement and these are assessed by both on completion. Pupils are encouraged to be independent through the use of personal files. Work experience is well organised with the efficient help of a learning support assistant, who undertakes the administration and visits pupils at their placements. Through the work-related curriculum pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their lives.
29. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The programme is thoughtfully considered, taking account of pupils' different needs and circumstances, and clearly identifying values to be fostered. Various teaching methods are employed and good use is made of external advice and outside agencies where appropriate. The school nurse enhances the provision by delivering elements of health and sex education and advising staff.
30. It is in the provision for pupils with special educational needs where the curriculum is least effective. The significant number of pupils with statements of special educational need do not receive the provision specified. The statements are out of date; they do not refer to placement at the unit, and frequently specify full National Curriculum provision, which is not available at the unit. The great majority of pupils referred to the unit have never been excluded from mainstream school; it is their medical or psychiatric difficulties which are preventing them from successfully accessing mainstream education. They have not been given the opportunity to which they are entitled under the Code of Practice procedures, to have their learning needs assessed, and there is no clear

basis for their continuing to be denied access to the full curriculum to which they are entitled. There is insufficient liaison between the unit and mainstream schools to plan full-time provision for non-excluded pupils for whom a full-time curriculum is appropriate, nor to support pupils who are heading towards exclusion.

31. A significant gap in the curriculum is the ineffective provision for pupils' physical development. Occasional use is made of local leisure facilities but a more imaginative and regular programme of physical activities is required. Insufficient use is made of specialists in the local community to compensate for the lack of qualified staff and poor specialist physical education facilities and resources on site. Occasionally activities are planned to extend the part-time curriculum but there is no tradition of regular extra-curricular visits to theatres, museums, art galleries or recreational and residential experiences. Subject development planning is at an early stage of development, especially in science and information and communications technology.
32. The curriculum is very effective in promoting pupils' personal and social development. Especially effective is the provision for spiritual development, the result of good quality training for staff, and subsequent policy development and lesson planning for this area of the curriculum. Through 'form time' and the challenges of ASDAN pupils are effectively encouraged to work together, understand their own behaviours, and develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Provision within the planned curriculum to extend pupils' knowledge of their own and other cultures is good. Pupils study poetry and literature, they study the work of famous artists, they cook recipes from around the world, and some learn of other cultural traditions in history, for example. Year 10 pupils also have experience of drama. There is, however, limited provision for experiencing the music of different cultures; and promotion of cultural development through extra-curricular activities is very limited.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33. The unit cares well for its pupils and provides very good educational and personal support, enabling many pupils to gain in confidence and self-esteem. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' personal qualities and their particular needs. They have a consistent, encouraging and sensitive approach to pupils, and work hard to promote their best interests. Pupils are closely supervised in a secure and largely safe environment, but the accommodation hinders adherence to all health and safety regulations. Parents appreciate the supportive environment and level of caring that enable their children to develop well.
34. Child protection procedures are in place and staff have attended training sessions for guidance on the issues. Teachers work well in partnership with external services to support pupils' welfare and promote their development. Representatives from support agencies praise the work of the unit and comment that teachers value the services they offer and use them considerably. PSHE plays an important and very successful part in helping pupils become increasingly independent, self-confident and knowledgeable about healthy and safe living. Good use is made of outside agencies such as the Drugs Advisory Service, and especially the school nurse who makes valued contributions to the teaching, advises staff and offers a weekly surgery for pupils. Last term staff were pleased to have the assistance of two counsellors who held sessions with groups of pupils to build self-confidence.
35. The unit has very effective and consistent measures for promoting good behaviour. From the start pupils are actively involved in the management and assessment of their conduct. Clear targets for improvement, agreed with the pupil, are assessed daily, reviewed weekly and recorded in pupils' personal organisers. Pupils are pleased to add certificates for excellent work and behaviour to their records of achievement. They also enjoy group privileges, although the accommodation places constraints on social activities. These strategies are all the more effective for being implemented unobtrusively. Staff deal sensitively with disturbed behaviour to minimise disruption. Policies on behaviour and bullying are clear and incidents are recorded. Good attendance forms part of the reward system and is effective for some pupils but for others, who have severe psychological illness or difficult home circumstances, it inevitably has little impact. However, absence is recorded, analysed and closely monitored in collaboration with the education welfare officer.
36. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and achievements are good and effectively based on the criteria set out by the examining boards. Pupils have good access to accredited courses well matched to their learning needs through GCSE accreditation, the CoEA, ASDAN, the Record of Achievement procedures and key skills accreditation, for example in information and communications technology and in communication skills. There is a good range of baseline assessments made on entry to the unit in order to place pupils on suitably challenging courses. Teachers use their assessments well to prepare pupils for examinations. Thorough assessment of well-planned homework is very effective in preparing pupils on home tuition for examination entry. Procedures to record and monitor progress are being continually refined and the latest developments have the potential to track progress effectively through individual development and education plans and through subject reviews on a termly basis. There is also daily monitoring and weekly review of progress towards meeting behaviour targets. The involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress is good. Guidelines on the criteria used to mark work and assess personal qualities are good but the marking policy has not been shared with pupils.
37. Least effective of the various procedures for monitoring progress are the termly and annual subject reports. These

provide very little subject information on the progress and achievements gained in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills since the previous subject report. The use of the A to E grading system to record achievements in subjects is ineffective because the grades are not linked to any criteria, nor are they linked to any recognised accreditation systems, for example GCSE or National Curriculum attainment levels. The assessment of pupils' special educational needs prior to referral is unsatisfactory. The inadequacy of the assessment of pupils' special educational needs is a significant weakness.

38. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Pupils' immediate needs are clearly identified on entry and used to prepare individual plans. Realistic targets for improvement are set and assessed daily with pupils to ensure they are aware of their achievement and how they might improve. Teachers skilfully help pupils to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and evaluate their own performance. Pupils' personal development is supported well during 'form time' and monitored closely both through informal discussion and during staff meetings. Each term teachers involve parents very well in the reviews of their children's progress and the promotion of positive attitudes to learning.
39. Careers education and work experience offered to pupils in both years provide valuable guidance and opportunities for pupils to broaden their understanding of the world of work. Pupils are encouraged to organise themselves with the use of personal files and to develop skills for independence. The unit has a very good relationship with the careers officer, who supports careers lessons, holds individual interviews, makes home visits and accompanies pupils on team building sessions. Pupils are unlikely to return to mainstream schooling, so the focus is on integration into post-16 provision and this is well developed through links with Holme Lacy College. Parents are very pleased with the way the unit prepares their children for the next stage of life.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

40. The unit fosters close home/school links and has established successful ways of involving parents with their children's learning. Staff work very well in partnership with parents, who feel the unit offers very good provision.
41. Parents are very supportive of all aspects of the unit's work. A high proportion of questionnaires was returned with an overwhelming majority of positive responses. In particular, parents appreciate the ease with which they can approach the staff with any concerns and feel the unit works very closely with them. Parents like the caring environment and the extent to which teachers understand their children's needs. They are pleased with achievement in examinations and the way pupils are prepared for the next stage in their lives. Parents are critical of the amount of time offered to pupils, and of the accommodation and facilities. The unit is currently working with the local education authority in these regards. The inspection team agrees with the view of parents that the unit makes very good supportive provision for their children.
42. The quality of information provided for parents in the prospectus is very good, including details about the curriculum. The unit regards discussion about the home/school agreement and the code of conduct at the induction meeting with the pupil and parents as a very important first step. Parents are kept very well informed about progress in their children's development, being fully involved from the outset in decisions about strategies and targets for learning. Each term parents are invited to an Assessment Review of their child's progress, when they have the opportunity to exchange information and discuss how they can help. Staff regularly contact parents informally and encourage them to express their concerns at any time. Annual written reports give a clear indication of pupils' personal and social achievement, but less clear information about levels of attainment in subjects. However, parents feel very well informed and they have an opportunity to discuss the report and any issues concerning preparation for examinations. Every year the unit holds an open day for parents and associate colleagues when work is on display. Parents give excellent support to this event and to review meetings, making a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?**

43. The leadership and management of the unit are good overall. The LEA and the teacher-in-charge have a clear view of the future of the unit which involves re-location to better premises, increasing the numbers of pupils and the hours they attend, greater financial delegation, the establishment of a management committee and the appointment of a headteacher. These major priorities, and others like greater integration into the workplace and improved target setting, are entirely appropriate.
44. The unit has a clear position within the pattern of LEA provision for pupils with similar difficulties and, in the absence of a management committee, LEA officers have close and regular contact with its on-site management. The unit's aims, in terms of pupils managing their behaviour, improving feelings of self-worth and socialising well, are addressed successfully. The aim of enabling pupils to reach their full academic potential is only partially realised because the unit inevitably offers a restricted curriculum and pupils do not attend elsewhere. Plans to re-locate and develop alternative curricula promise to improve this situation.

45. The LEA has a strong and supportive role in the management of the unit and fulfils its statutory responsibilities except with regard to the accommodation and facilities, provision for special education needs and the need for the unit to report annually on its operation to the LEA. The unit's strategy for appraisal and performance management is unsatisfactory in that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is mostly informal, the structures for anything more rigorous are not in place and there is no formal or direct observation of classroom teaching. Nonetheless, there is a widespread commitment to improve; the unit is actively seeking to extend its role and monitors its activities well through daily briefing meetings and purposeful whole-staff meetings each week.
46. The unit has very limited opportunities to determine its own spending or plan its budget in support of its ambitions because very little is delegated. Where opportunities exist, as with the purchase of new technology recently, the unit buys wisely with good regard for securing best value. Funds for professional development are allocated responsibly. The unit uses the new technologies well; the administration uses computers for word-processing and data management at a sufficient level; the use of the recently acquired ICT equipment across the curriculum is very good.
47. There are adequate numbers of staff for the present demands of the curriculum and the hours that the pupils attend. Teachers' subject experience is satisfactory overall and good in some respects, in science and history for example. Resources for learning have improved of late but are unsatisfactory in general. Although very good provision is made in information technology, and English is adequately resourced, many other subjects (science, physical education, art, and design and technology for example) lack the provision necessary for Key Stage 4 and study for external examinations. Accommodation, which is basically only two general classrooms, is poor. It offers no specialist teaching areas, no staffroom, no separate lavatories for pupils and staff, and no separate room for confidential discussion or meetings. Car parking is inadequate and difficult.
48. The unit makes excellent use of the accommodation it has and has utilised every part of it to the maximum and sensibly; it is therefore small, crowded and inadequate but manages to be a welcoming and well-cared-for learning environment. Staff are deployed efficiently and good use is made of the improving learning resources. There is good clerical support and files are maintained very well. Bearing in mind the levels of attendance, the range of the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils, the unit gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

49. In order to improve the quality of education offered and extend pupils' achievements, the LEA, the teacher-in-charge and the staff should take the following action :
50. The LEA should:
  - ensure the urgent implementation of plans to provide accommodation of a suitable standard that provides facilities that are appropriate for the curriculum and personal needs of the pupils (para.6, 11, 31, 47 ).
  - improve resources for those subjects where they are inadequate to enable the unit to support the full range of the subjects offered ( para.6, 47, ).
  - improve procedures for identifying and assessing special educational needs, especially where needs arise from medical or psychiatric problems, to ensure that pupils do not lose their educational entitlement as a result of disabling conditions (para.12, 30, ).
  - implement planning to make full-time provision available to all pupils who are able to make use of it, including those for whom an alternative vocational curriculum is not appropriate (para. 30 ).
51. The teacher-in-charge and staff should:
  - improve the opportunities for pupils' physical development (para. 31 ).
  - improve the quality of individual planning including individualised learning objectives for lessons (para. 23 ).
52. In addition to these, the unit should address the less important issues below:
  - ensure that procedures for appraisal and performance management are extended to include systematic monitoring of teaching (para. 45 ).
  - ensure that pupils' actual levels of attainment are reported, particularly in core subjects, rather than non-referenced A-E judgements (para.37, 42 ).
  - improve extra-curricular provision, including a wider range of opportunities for cultural development (para. 32 ).



## PART C: UNIT DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	15	70	15	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the unit's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the unit's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	38

<b>Special educational needs</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	-

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	None

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>		<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	
	%		%
Unit data	27.2	Unit data	6.7

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds

**. Exclusions in the last school year**

There were no exclusions in the last school year

**Teachers and classes****Financial information****Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.***Education support staff: Y10–Y11**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	35

Financial year	[ ]
	£
Total income	115,786
Total expenditure	115,786
Expenditure per pupil (FTE)	5,350
Balance brought forward from previous year	-
Balance carried forward to next year	-

**Results of the survey of parents and carers****Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	37
Number of questionnaires returned	18

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes the unit.	28	50	11	6	6
My child is making good progress in the unit.	56	28	6	6	6
Behaviour in the unit is good.	50	33	-	-	17
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	39	11	-	33
The teaching is good.	56	33	-	-	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	22	-	-	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the unit with questions or a problem.	78	22	-	-	-
The unit expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	33	-	-	6
The unit works closely with parents.	72	22	-	-	6
The unit is well led and managed.	56	33	-	-	11
The unit is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	17	6	6	6
The unit provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	33	6	6	39

