

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NORTHBROOK PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

Burnham, Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 131243

Headteacher: Mrs K Bolton

Reporting inspector: Mr M G Whitehead  
21061

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 215517

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	14 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	112 Burnham Lane Burnham Slough
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Appropriate authority:	Slough Borough Council
Name of responsible officer:	Mr Chris Spencer

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
M Whitehead	Registered inspector	Mathematics, art, design technology, life skills.	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key issues for action
E Jay	Lay inspector	Equality of opportunity	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Partnership with parents and carers.
			Links with the community.
			Attendance
K Halifax	Team inspector	English, geography and history.	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
J Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs. Science, information technology, French and physical education	Pupils' welfare, health and safety

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

Northbrook is a pupil referral unit for boys and girls of secondary age. At present, it caters for pupils of Key Stage 4 only, namely those in years 10 and 11. Northbrook offers short-term education for pupils who are out of school or at risk of being out of school. There are 19 pupils on roll, 13 boys and 6 girls. One pupil is of black heritage; the remaining 18 are white. The attainment of pupils on entry to the unit is generally well below the national average. All pupils have special educational needs, most of the pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties or are disaffected and many have additional specific learning difficulties. Five pupils have statements of special educational needs. Currently, there are no pupils on roll for whom English is an additional language.

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

The unit is very successful as it works with the pupils in meeting their educational and emotional needs. The quality of teaching is exceptionally high and the pupils benefit greatly from this. All pupils make very good progress as they work through the unit, usually on short-term placements. They make very good progress as they acquire the appropriate literacy and numeracy skills as well as making very good progress in technology and art. Pupils work towards nationally accredited examinations and the unit has raised targets for all pupils to help them pass at least one GCSE examination before they leave.

The unit enjoys very strong leadership from the headteacher and a very effective steering group. Together, the headteacher and the steering group monitor the unit's performance closely and act upon their findings. The headteacher and steering group are strong in their monitoring of the professional development of all staff and ensure that in-service-training is effective and appropriate to the individual needs of the staff. This strong leadership ensures that the school is effective in meeting its educational objectives set out in its policies and unit development plan.

Taking into account the very high quality of teaching, the very good management and leadership of the headteacher and key staff, and the very good progress that is made by all pupils who attend, the unit provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher leads the unit very effectively with great strength, energy and enthusiasm.
- The quality of teaching is very high and the learning support assistant is extremely efficient and effective
- Pupils learn well and make very good progress.
- The Unit has developed a very effective sports programme.
- The designated teacher project, which is managed by the headteacher, is very effective in linking with mainstream schools.
- The unit offers very effective careers education and guidance and has strong links with the community.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very effective.

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

- Efforts must be made to continue to improve the poor attendance.
- There is no science taught in the unit and whilst this is not a statutory requirement, this would increase the breadth of the curriculum if this subject were taught.
- The individual education plans for some pupils are not yet clear. They do not provide teachers with information for effective curriculum planning and preparation for teaching.
- The unit is not making effective arrangements for informing parents in writing, about the academic progress of their children.

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

#### **Other minor issues:**

Formal induction procedures for staff are not yet in place. This omission needs to be addressed.

## HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first inspection of the unit.

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

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

The standard of pupils' written work is good. Pupils take care with presentation. Pupils are justifiably proud of their work, especially art, and this is very well displayed around the classrooms and the entrance to the unit. It was possible to observe only 12 lessons, however, a great deal of information was gathered through the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with teachers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Pupils who are present show attitudes that are good and enjoy their work, although there is sometimes a reluctance to begin tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is good. They show respect for the building and the materials and equipment that they use. The school is free from graffiti and litter.
Personal development and relationships	Despite the behavioural difficulties that some pupils show, the relationships between pupils are good. Pupils are acquiring greater self confidence and self esteem increases as they take responsibility and learn to behave in a more mature manner.
Attendance	The attendance overall is poor. However, the attendance of individual pupils varies considerably. A few maintain good levels of attendance and all pupils attend for some of the time. The school is aware of this crucial issue and is working very well to try to address the difficulty.

The relationships between pupils and staff are good. This is due to the high levels of commitment and professional skills of the staff. If pupils are absent regularly, this affects progress in all subjects and their attitudes and other aspects of personal development.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
12 lessons seen overall	The quality of teaching is very good. It is strength of the unit. The high quality learning support is a very significant contributory factor to the high quality of teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge.

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

The quality of teaching in English is good. Teachers choose work that is interesting for the pupils who respond well by using their speaking and listening skills effectively. They make good progress and their reading and spelling improves. Although their levels of attainment are well below the national average, pupils make good progress. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. The teaching is confident as there is good subject knowledge and lessons are well prepared. The teacher uses resources well and makes frequent assessment of the progress that pupils are making. Work is challenging and helps pupils to have a clearer understanding, for example, when studying gradients.

Teaching in personal, social and health education is good. The teacher is skilful in overcoming the reluctance of the pupils towards work. The teacher has very good skills in the management of behaviour. Pupils are following a course about citizenship and consider the requirements for independent living. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught across the curriculum. Every lesson is used as a means to develop their speaking and listening skills. Great care is taken in considering the individual special needs of the pupils, particularly their anxieties as public examinations approach.

During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better and half the lessons were very good or better.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum offered to all pupils is very effective complies with the local authority curriculum statement but no science is taught. The education business partnership and the careers service work closely with the school and create an educational experience that is tailor made for each pupil.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The unit works very well in meeting the individual special needs of pupils and provides specialist support for pupils who have specific learning difficulties, for example, reading or writing. The unit also works hard to improve that attendance of the pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This provision is very good and is a strength of the unit. Curriculum plans identify opportunities for spiritual development particularly through art and English. The very good relationships that exist within the unit promote the social and moral development of pupils, who clearly understand the difference between right and wrong.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Staff take good care of the pupils and provide a safe environment. There is a framework of high expectations that are vigorously promoted by the headteacher.

The unit works well with parents and ensures that all pupils and their parents/carers visit the unit before their children are admitted. There is a great deal of discussion to ensure good understanding of what the



unit offers and what is expected of the pupils and the parents, as well as the part that the school will play in the education of the pupil. Parents are kept well informed about the progress of their children.

### HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She works very well with all staff and pupils to create a successful unit in which pupils make very good progress.
How well the steering group fulfils its responsibilities	The steering group is very effective in its management, monitoring and support role for the unit. The members of the steering group are closely in touch with the work of the unit and have a clear understanding of its aims.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	The unit has established clear criteria and procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance. Much of the responsibility is taken by the headteacher and her findings are shared with all staff.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are carefully and strategically used to develop the work of the unit. The headteacher uses resources well and ensures that staff and pupils benefit from the improving facilities

This is an effective and improving unit. There are sufficient staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. The staff of the unit work well in applying the principles of best value.

### 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 good leadership and management of the unit.</li> <li>They feel comfortable about approaching the unit with questions or a problem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents would like to see improved provision for activities outside of lessons.</li> <li>Parents would like their children to receive more homework.</li> </ul>

The team of inspectors agrees with the positive views expressed by the parents, and believe that improved written communication will enable parents to appreciate more fully, the wide range and extent of extra curricular activities. Parents play an important role in supporting their children. They share in the development of pupils' individual education plans following the annual review.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils took a suitable variety of accredited examination courses last year. The unit was not registered as an examinations centre at the time so pupils were entered through their own mainstream schools, thanks to the help and co-operation of the education welfare officer.
2. Thirty-three entries were made through the Associated Examining Board's programme in subjects, which included: basic science, communication skills, graphicacy, health, hygiene and safety and the world of work. Four pupils were successful in a GNVQ numeracy project organised and led by the Education Business Partnership. All candidates were awarded certificates.
3. Some pupils also took GCSE examinations in English, English literature, mathematics, art, French and physical education. In all they were awarded nine passes ranging from grade D to grade G.
4. This is a very positive achievement for these pupils and reflects the hard work of pupils and staff. These results are commendable when the previous experience and attitudes of pupils are taken into account. The change in attitude towards work and the willingness to try to succeed are very good.
5. In all lessons teachers use good strategies to develop and reinforce pupils' literacy skills. Strategies used to develop pupils' numeracy skills are very effective. Staff and pupils work together to meet the targets on pupils' individual education plans. Progress towards these targets is carefully monitored. The unit is very successful in enabling pupils to improve their behaviour.

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

6. The pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties have frequently led to long periods of absence from mainstream school, and the process of re-engaging them in education is a difficult and time-consuming one. The unit has a good policy of not excluding pupils. Pupils' attitudes vary from day-to-day, which influences their willingness to take part in the activities of the unit. On entry, pupils have low self-esteem which often has been reinforced by repeated failure. This makes learning difficult for them. Those pupils who are present, show enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their work, although there is sometimes a reluctance to begin tasks. This was seen, for example, in a good careers lesson when pupils were preparing for work experience interviews. Underlying this successful lesson, pupils frequently belittled their own achievements and assumed that they will fail in whatever they attempted. Teachers are successful in their work to enable pupils to overcome these negative attitudes and part of this process is the pupils' involvement in the review of their individual education plans. This is used very well to help them assess their own progress and set new targets for academic and social development.
7. All the staff have established very good relationships with the pupils, and through patience and commitment, work constantly to increase pupils' confidence. Staff do this by treating pupils with respect and courtesy, emphasising achievements and encouraging them. Despite their difficulties, relationships between pupils are good and some are able to co-operate with others. Staff choose to ignore poor behaviour unless this disrupts learning, in which case the offending pupil is removed from the group. Pupils discuss the rules of the unit. These are based on respect for each other and include specific reference to bullying. The practice of the unit is always to challenge unkind behaviour, including racist comments; incidents are discussed in the group, and never ignored. Pupils treat the buildings and grounds with care and there is no

graffiti or litter. The displays of pupils' work which celebrate their achievements are undamaged and a source of pride.

8. Pupils show confidence when taking part in sporting activities and they visit a local sports centre on a regular basis. When visiting the centre, they behave well and obey the rules of both the centre and the games they play. Pupils respond very well to the enthusiasm and skills of the sports coaches. The pupils have discussed and drawn up a set of rules for sport. These include obeying the rules of the games, no swearing at other pupils or staff, and 'no put downs'. The pupils' inclusion of this last rule is an indication of the staff's success in emphasising the importance of respecting and valuing each other. In a wider context, the unit increases awareness of and respect for other cultures by using opportunities such as a pupil's describing and demonstrating the wearing of her traditional Asian dress, and taking part in a project about African art.
9. Pupils' personal development is central to the unit's work. Pupils often are antagonistic to the educational process, and the unit has a very short time in which to modify this and prepare pupils for work. The great majority of pupils respond well to the very good programmes of careers education and work experience provided jointly by the unit, the specialist careers adviser and the educational business partnership. This plays a major part in pupils' increasing maturity and the development of personal responsibility. The preparation for work experience, includes projects in which pupils have to consider their strengths and weaknesses, and this helps them to acknowledge their own responsibility for their behaviour and actions and to raise their own expectations for their future. Individual pupils also show initiative and organisational skills: for example, one pupil organised a successful charity five a side football match and found sponsors for it. Pupils contribute to the community by helping to push wheelchairs for residents in a near-by home and take part in environmental projects such as tree planting. Northbrook pupils help the local police in a Junior Citizenship Project as part of their community service programme.
10. The attendance of individual pupils varies greatly. A few pupils manage to maintain a good attendance level of above 90 percent, but for the majority, attendance is unreliable and unpredictable. There is a similar problem with punctuality. Many of these pupils have been out of school for considerable periods of time before being admitted to the unit, and some were school refusers or school phobic. The unit reports that the attendance of pupils is better the shorter the gap between school and admission to the unit. Poor attendance has a negative impact on the continuity and effectiveness of the unit's provision. Nevertheless it should be emphasised that every pupil on roll attends the unit, though the levels of attendance are poor for pupils who do not have a mainstream link. There is not a single pupil who does not attend at all and the unit has been successful in re-engaging all the pupils in at least some part of its range of programmes. The improvement in attendance has been limited and, despite these efforts, the attendance rates are poor compared with mainstream schools. The unit is acutely aware of the importance of better attendance and is neither complacent nor accepts the current situation.
11. Transport arrangements were reviewed and as a result, pupils were provided with bus and train passes. The aim was to increase self-esteem, independence and flexibility to use additional centres for sports and community placements. This was successful in promoting independent travel, unfortunately the attendance rate has not improved greatly.

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

12. The quality of teaching at Northbrook PRU is very good and is a strength of the school. This is true across the whole curriculum, but is exceptionally good in creative and physical development through the art and the sports programmes.
13. The teaching of English is very good and is effective in raising the pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils read more fluently and study well for their GCSE examinations. The quality of teaching in English is good overall. Teachers choose work that is interesting for the pupils who respond by

using their speaking and listening skills well to complete the work that has been set. They make good progress and gain in their ability to read and spell words. Although their levels of attainment are well below the national average, pupils make good progress in overcoming their difficulties.

14. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and lessons are well prepared. Pupils gain in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics through the good teaching that they receive. The teacher uses resources well and regularly assesses the progress that pupils are making. Work is challenging and this enables pupils to improve their skills.
15. The facilities for information and communication technology are good. The commitment of the learning support assistant enables pupils to have access to computers to help in all aspects of their work. The learning support assistant is working towards a qualification in the subject in order to contribute to the teaching of the pupils even more successfully. The unit also enjoys the skills of the artist in residence, whose skills and enthusiasm enable pupils to succeed in creating pieces of work that are of exceptionally high quality. The success of the pupils is clearly visible as their work adorns walls and doors.
16. Teaching in personal, social and health education is good. The teacher is skilful in overcoming the reluctance of the pupils towards work. The teacher has very good skills in the management of behaviour. Pupils are following a course about citizenship and consider the requirements for independent living. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well across the curriculum. Every lesson is used to develop speaking and listening skills. Great care is taken in considering the individual special needs of the pupils, and particularly their anxieties as their public examinations approach.
17. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better and half the lessons were very good or better.

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

18. The links between the unit and the community are good and are a strength of the provision for these pupils. The unit has built up a network of contacts and provision to improve opportunities for these pupils, particularly in sport and in the transition to work. There is very good provision for sporting activities, using local facilities, through national sponsorship. The Educational Business Partnership, working closely with the careers teacher and specialist careers officer, plays a central role in opening up a wide and flexible range of opportunities for the unit's pupils. This rich provision enables each programme to be carefully matched to the stage of development and maturity of the pupils, whether it is a taster course in construction or electronics or taking part in an intensive three day course on 'Tune into work'. This scheme helps those with fewest skills with the process of finding jobs, interviews and with basic workplace skills. The links with the business community, the provision of sport facilities and youth services make a very substantial contribution to the pupils' development and future employment prospects.
19. The unit has close and very productive links with neighbouring schools; good liaison is maintained about the progress of individual pupils. The headteacher also manages the 'designated teacher scheme', whereby specialist teachers from local schools teach in the unit as part of offering pupils a wider curriculum. The teachers gain experience of teaching pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is a very important contribution to raising standards for pupils in the unit and supporting the policy of social inclusion in mainstream schools.

20. Slough Borough Council as the appropriate authority has a clear curriculum policy for pupils educated other than at school. Overall the unit complies with the requirements of the policy and provides pupils with a good range of relevant subjects. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics and the expectation that all pupils work towards nationally recognised qualifications and they will achieve at General Certificate of Education standard in at least one subject. Whilst suitable emphasis is placed on academic subjects, there is a very good balance of creative and recreational activities. Staff ensure that pupils, who are also on the register of another school, receive suitable work in the unit and meet the requirements for coursework. Science is not taught within the unit.
21. Suitable policies have been written for all subjects and aspects of the curriculum, and teachers base their planning on relevant National Curriculum documents. There is a firm commitment to ensuring that all pupils receive a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs. The lessons are planned to ensure that targets on pupils' individual education plans are addressed effectively. Boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds have suitable access to all subjects. The requirements of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice are met. Lesson plans are detailed and take careful account of pupil's individual academic and behavioural needs.
22. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. High priority is placed on careers education and guidance, and on lifeskills. Pupils are encouraged to consider what they would like to do at the end of their school career and the steps they might have to take to achieve their aims. There are good opportunities for pupils to undertake community service and to experience the world of work. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. A recent peer education project has been successful in highlighting the dangers of drug misuse.
23. Good alternative curriculum provision has been carefully developed to provide an alternative curriculum for pupils for whom the traditional curriculum is not appropriate. Work related learning through the Education Business Partnership and access to vocational courses such as bricklaying and carpentry at East Berkshire College have been successful in helping pupils to make a successful transition to the world of work. The Unit provides very good opportunities to enrich the curriculum through sport and through contacts with initiatives such as Slough Young Peoples' Centre. These arrangements have also encouraged pupils to complete their GCSE examination courses.
24. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the Unit. Curriculum planning clearly identifies very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. In subjects such as art, pupils are encouraged to consider the beauty of natural form in still life and when handling historical material to consider the form, age and origin of the object. In English, pupils reflect on the deeper meaning of the text. For example, when studying "Of Mice and Men", pupils discuss George and Lennie's dream of owning their own ranch, with one pupil commenting, "Lennie sees it as being heaven because they wouldn't have to run away all the time." Pupils are encouraged to "seize the moment" and to grasp opportunities for personal development or to help others. To this end one pupil used his word-processing skills to improve the presentation of a list for the whole group. Respect for the beliefs of others is fostered through discussion.
25. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Parents expressed their appreciation of the aims and values promoted by the Unit. Pupils are taught to recognise the difference between right and wrong very effectively and the importance of truthfulness and honesty is emphasised. Any incidents that occur are used as teaching points. For example, following an incident of inappropriate behaviour, staff and pupils discuss the dangers of the action, the damage caused and the possible consequences. As a result, inappropriate behaviour is declining. Pupils are encouraged to be environmentally aware, and staff set a good example as when recycling old wood in design and technology. Through sporting activities, pupils are encouraged to play by the rules and most develop an understanding of fair play. All staff provide very good examples of how to conduct themselves. Staff involved in sporting links, including Asian and Afro-Caribbean

cricket and football coaches, are particularly inspirational to the pupils. The discussions between all staff and pupils in drawing up the anti-bullying code proved particularly effective in extending pupils' moral development.

26. Provision for pupils' social and personal development is very good and underpins the work of the unit. This provision also includes sex education and attention to drug misuse. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils are valued and their successes are celebrated. Targets to help individual pupils improve their behaviour are carefully drawn up by staff, in consultation with pupils, and success enables pupils to grow in confidence. Social skills are taught well, pupils relate well with others and become valued members of the unit and the wider community. Pupils gain a good insight into citizenship through discussing current news items and working on community projects. Staff encourage pupils to consider those who are less fortunate. Pupils take part in a charity football match in aid of under-privileged children.
27. Pupils are presented with good opportunities for their cultural development. Work undertaken in English introduces pupils to the works of Shakespeare and poets such as Ted Hughes. A very good knowledge of African art and culture has been fostered through the "Out of Africa" project with the artist in residence. The millennium art project, based on the start of civilisation, not only enabled pupils to produce high quality art work, for example, the stunning images of Adam and Eve, but also gave them very good opportunities to work together and respect the ideas of others. Whilst there are useful opportunities for pupils to appreciate some forms of music such as Caribbean music, overall this area is not as strong as other aspects of cultural development.

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

28. Staff take good care of the pupils by providing a safe environment. Each pupil has access to a good quality, individually planned curriculum which includes very good opportunities for the promotion of pupils' academic, personal, social and physical development, the latter through an innovative and highly successful sports programme. The outreach work of the unit, the very effective links with mainstream schools, the very good support for pupils from organisations in the community and the successful careers education and guidance programmes, all contribute to the success of the unit in caring for the pupils and have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of exclusions from mainstream schools.
29. High quality of care is set within a clear framework of rules and high expectations that are vigorously promoted by the headteacher. A firm, fair and non-confrontational approach by staff is effective in promoting high standards of behaviour and a very positive learning ethos in the unit and during off-site activities. Where appropriate, individual behaviour support plans are in place. They are monitored and regularly reviewed. There is no separate incident book, although comprehensive records of pupils' behaviour are kept on their files. The expectation that pupils will travel independently to the unit, is good for their personal and social development. The unit has very good procedures for tracking and improving attendance.
30. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is good, especially in mathematics. Pupils have individual learning targets that are well written and which meet their learning needs very well. Whilst the highest attainers work towards top GCSE grades, the targets for lower attainers are appropriately pitched towards developing competency in basic mathematical skills. Assessment in information and communications technology is satisfactory but there is a need for more specific individual targets and more accurate records. There is no external accreditation offered in this subject. There is insufficient recording of participation and achievement of pupils in physical education. Records of achievement are completed prior to pupils' leaving the unit. However, contents of these records of achievement are not being used sufficiently when planning personal support and guidance.
31. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are strongly and effectively linked to the requirements of the many externally accredited courses now on offer at the unit. GCSE

entry is an expectation but accreditation is also available for pupils who have not reached GCSE standard. Staff know each pupil very well, informed by a well constructed database of academic and personal information, compiled prior to entry, so individual programmes can be planned effectively. Where necessary baseline testing on entry, of literacy and numeracy skills, helps in assigning pupils to the most appropriate courses. There is no formal monitoring of performance by gender or ethnicity.

32. On an informal basis, good quality relationships between staff and pupils give pupils the confidence to discuss their work, the impact of their actions on others and any personal concerns they bring in to the unit. Support provided by the learning support assistant is especially effective in information and communications technology and the sports programme. The formal arrangements for the annual review of statements of special educational need are very securely in place. All pupils, with or without a statement of special educational needs, have individual education plans to support and monitor their educational and personal and social development. These plans are reviewed regularly and updated. Some targets are very specific, enabling progress to be monitored effectively. Other targets are too general and not effective. Occasionally a learning need is identified at review but not expressed as a target on the subsequent individual education plan.
33. The support, guidance and provision for pupils' welfare are of a high standard. The unit has a designated person for child protection who has been trained. This topic has formed part of in-service training for staff in the unit and other staff, such as sports coaches. The local education authority procedures are known and followed. There is sound awareness of the importance of this for these vulnerable pupils. There is a designated person for health and safety matters, which are discussed at each steering committee meeting. The staff are very aware of the welfare needs of the pupils. There is great care and concern shown for all of them. Much informal support and guidance is given as part of the lessons, for example one boy was blaming a headteacher for being responsible for his exclusion. By quiet questioning, the teacher succeeded in helping the pupil to acknowledge his own responsibility for being excluded. The unit has a wide network of contacts with local organisations that can offer support in such matters as drug and alcohol abuse as well as general advice about jobs and skills training. The unit rightly encourages contacts with these local services, this support can continue after pupils leave. On a more formal basis, there is a strong support system of professional people, such as the child and family social worker, the educational welfare officer and staff from the adolescent unit, whose skills are available to the pupils.
34. The attendance, overall, is poor. However, the attendance of individual pupils varies considerably. A few maintain good levels of attendance and all pupils attend for some of the time. The school is aware of this and working very well to try to address the difficulty. The unit places a high priority on monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality and the procedures for doing this are very good. The attendance record of each pupil is discussed at every review, held at least each half term, and targets are set with the pupil. Certificates are presented to pupils who achieve their targets and parents are contacted to reinforce the achievement. The learning support assistant plays a key role in the monitoring of attendance and punctuality: she keeps a diary of all problems relating to attendance, and the reasons for lateness. She plays a very positive role in improving attendance by telephoning some pupils each morning to wake them up and to remind them that they should be in the unit and also telephones families early in the day if a pupil is absent. Care and incentives are combined in a very practical way by offering a cup of tea to pupils who arrive before nine o'clock. Occasionally a pupil is brought into school by the education welfare service. When these strategies are not successful, however, the educational welfare service rightly takes firm action in warning and then prosecuting parents if pupils' attendance is very poor.

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

35. The information from parents is very limited, despite the open invitation to telephone or visit the inspectors during the inspection. The five parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and

the four parents who returned the questionnaire have positive attitudes to the unit. They appreciate the improved behaviour and attendance of their children and the opportunities that are offered in continuing their children's education and establishing links with local colleges. This gives them more choices. One parent spoke with appreciation of her son's opportunity to join an electronics course which could continue in the following year. Perhaps the most significant comment was that the unit gives the pupils confidence, not a sense of failure. Parents said that staff in the unit are approachable and that they always feel welcome if they wish to visit. The only concern expressed was about their feelings that insufficient homework is given. The unit has tried to set homework, but has found that few pupils complete it. Therefore staff allow pupils to remain in the unit to complete work for as long as they are actively engaged on it.

36. When a pupil is first referred to the unit, parents and the pupil meet staff and discuss the code of conduct and attendance requirements of the unit. The informative brochure gives a clear picture about the purpose of the unit and how it works. The home school agreement is discussed and both parents and pupil must agree to this before the pupil is admitted. The unit sends out newsletters each term, which keep parents informed about events. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress after each review, which take place at least each half term. The unit often holds these reviews when parents are in the unit, for example for a careers day, in order to maximise contact. However, the reporting of progress after reviews and the setting of targets is sometimes done by telephone. It is not followed up by a written report or home visit. This practice needs to be reconsidered. The unit is very effective in contacting parents to tell them about the achievements of their children and many parents attend a presentation ceremony where pupils are awarded certificates and records of achievement.

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

37. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and very clear direction for the unit. She has a clear vision for the future of the unit and has demonstrated high levels of professional skill in management and sets high standards for others to meet. The headteacher ensures that staff are appropriately deployed to ensure that they are able to work to their full potential and that pupils are able to benefit from the special skills of the teachers.
38. The head-teacher of the unit provides in-service training in mainstream schools on the management of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems who are in danger of being excluded. This is a part of the unit's outreach programme that is very highly valued by the receiving schools.
39. Good quality financial planning by the headteacher, informed by thorough consultation with the staff, ensures that educational priorities are implemented effectively. The headteacher is fully conversant with the best value principles of consultation, competition, comparison and challenge. As a consequence, very effective use is made of all the resources available to the unit, including specific grants for the development of information and communications technology training and resources, museum and library loan facilities, sports facilities and sports coaches in the local community. The use of mainstream teachers as part of the 'designated teacher project' is highly effective, in the provision made for a course on citizenship. Good use is made of information and communications technology to record and analyse baseline assessment made on entry, and systems are in place to continue using this technology to track progress in subjects and attendance. An administrative assistant is responsible for effective day-to-day control of the budget and careful hand written records are kept. However, the unit does not keep a formal inventory of its resources. This is an area that needs to be addressed.
40. The unit is well staffed by sufficient, suitably qualified specialist teachers. High expectations are set and this results in pupils making good gains in their learning. However, the lack of a specialist teacher for science has a limiting effect upon the breadth of the curriculum. The system of "designated teachers" from local secondary schools working at the unit makes a



significant contribution to the professional development of the unit staff. Visiting teachers are having a positive impact on standards, for example, in French. Staff and pupils are well supported by the learning support assistant who uses her skills effectively to help pupils to develop their computer skills and to counsel pupils, thus improving their self-esteem.

41. The induction programme for the recently appointed headteacher has proved effective. However, there is no induction programme for teachers and staff who are new to the unit. This is recognised as an area for development. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. All staff benefit from opportunities to discuss their development both informally and in a formal interview with the headteacher. Since the appointment of the headteacher all staff have taken part in a wide range of appropriate training which is well matched to the needs of the Unit. For example, teachers have received training in managing pupils' behaviour, in information technology and in design and technology. This has resulted in improved standards teaching and improved standards of work from the pupils.
42. Although there are no specialist facilities for teaching science, the accommodation is good. Staff and pupils have worked hard to refurbish the unit. Pupils are particularly proud to discuss their decorating and DIY contributions to the new technology room. The Unit is warm and welcoming, there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti and pupils discuss the high quality displays with enthusiasm. Good use is made of two small rooms, one is used as a quiet room and another as a careers library. Staff make good use of the extensive grounds and shared facilities such as the all-weather sports pitch. These facilities enhance the physical education curriculum and provide good opportunities for environmental work.
43. Except for science, there is a good range of learning resources, these help to keep pupils well motivated and ensure that they are able to study the subjects effectively. New computers are used particularly well in most subjects, for word processing work, for research purposes and when using the Internet when revising for their examinations.

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

44. In order to improve the quality of education at Northbrook PRU even further and make it more effective, the headteacher, steering group and local education authority should:
  - (1) strive to improve the levels of attendance. (Paragraph 10)
  - (2) improve the quality of individual education plans to include clear targets set for improvement that will give guidance to the teachers and be clear indicators of progress for the pupils. (Paragraph 32)
  - (3) send better quality report, more frequently, to parents concerning the progress that their children are making, and ensure that the parents have a clear understanding of the unit's policy and practices concerning homework. (Paragraphs 35 & 36)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	12
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

The inspection team was made up of the registered inspector, two team inspectors and one lay inspector. The inspection took place over three days. Few lessons (12) were observed and there were discussions with pupils, staff and other adults. Five parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and four out of nineteen questionnaires were returned. The following table of information is the result of a very small sample of responses and does not necessarily reflect the overall views of parents.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
25	25	16.6	33.3	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

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	19

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	19

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	25

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	7

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	18
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5(3)
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y10 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	57,200
Total expenditure	57,200
Expenditure per pupil	3,011
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	19
Number of questionnaires returned	4

**As the number of questionnaires returned are below ten, parents' views are listed below.**

- Parents feel comfortable about approaching the unit with questions or problems;
- Most parents believe that their children are making progress and that teaching is good;
- Most parents believe the unit is well managed;
- Parents would like their children to receive more homework;
- Parents would like to see improved provision for activities outside of lessons.