

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**FLETTON STUDENT SUPPORT CENTRE  
(PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT)**

Peterborough

LEA area: Peterborough

Unique reference number: 110601

Headteacher: Paul Copping

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger  
23587

Dates of inspection: 4-6 February 2002

Inspection number: 230070

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils:	11-14 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	The Old Court House Fletton High Street Peterborough
Postcode:	PE2 8EW
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Bobby Evans
Date of previous inspection:	14/02/2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Art Modern foreign language Music Religious education	What sort of school is it? The units results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the unit led and managed?
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector		How well does the unit care for its pupils? How well does the unit work in partnership with parents and carers?
20466	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography History Physical education	Pupils attitudes, values and personal development How good are learning opportunities?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

This is a small unit for up to 24 boys and girls in years 7, 8 and 9 who are either at risk of being, or have been, permanently excluded from schools in the Peterborough area. Placements are intended to be for short periods with the aim of returning pupils to school. Pupils are referred at any time in the school year. Five currently have Statements of Special Educational Need and three are in the care of the local authority. All pupils speak English as their main language; two are of Pakistani origin. There is only one girl pupil. The unit forms part of the local education authority behaviour support service in which the teacher in charge plays a significant role. Many pupils have been underachieving prior to their admission, usually on account of the interrupted pattern of their education.

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

This is a very good unit with several excellent features and no major weaknesses. It has the capacity to be excellent overall once its few minor weaknesses have been addressed. Pupils are making very good progress because there is a high degree of strong teaching. The teacher in charge is an exceptionally able leader. In a type of provision that is notoriously expensive, the unit is achieving very good results at a very realistic cost and providing very good value for money.

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

- Teaching is particularly strong. None of that observed during the inspection was less than good and most of it was very good.
- Pupils respond very well, they work hard and achieve very high standards, academically and in terms of their personal development.
- Procedures for assessing, monitoring and promoting pupils' progress and personal development are very good.
- The leadership and management of the teacher in charge and key staff is of the highest quality.
- The unit continually strives to improve to provide better opportunities for pupils.

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

- The unit has only minor weaknesses relating to part-time provision, monitoring homework, not operating to capacity, the accommodation and the non-attendance of a small minority of pupils.

*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**

There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in February 2000. At that time there was a serious weakness in leadership and management, specifically in relation to the local education authority's role as the appropriate authority. The main criticism of the unit itself was its provision for promoting pupil's spiritual, social and cultural development. These weaknesses have been very successfully addressed in a relatively short space of time. Teaching, pupils' attitudes and values and the curriculum have also improved.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets.

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

There is a very strong emphasis on improving the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Pupils improve rapidly with the extra help they receive in small groups. They do this because work is carefully matched to their ability. In this way every pupil makes fast progress, irrespective of their special needs. Speaking and listening improves because pupils learn the vocabulary to express themselves more clearly and learn the skill of listening very carefully to other peoples' views or advice. Writing improves through the high presentation demands of teachers and pupils' growing confidence to write at greater length. Reading improves because pupils are taught the necessary skills and encouraged to read at every opportunity. In mathematics, pupils gain great pleasure from quickly building up a large body of work where successive exercises get increasingly hard. Their ability to calculate improves, mentally, on paper and with calculators. They also make very good progress in other areas of mathematics, such as exploring shape and drawing graphs and charts. Progress in science has been slower over the past year, hindered by the lack of suitable facilities, but since the start of the current term it has been good, with pupils benefiting from access to a science laboratory in a local college. Individual targets are precise, demanding and reviewed weekly. Pupils are meeting their targets with a high degree of success. What prevents achievement being even better is the limited time that pupils spend in the unit each week. This restricts progress in a broader range of subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Very good. Most have previously had bad experiences of school, but they respond very well to the strong culture of learning in the unit. As a result, their enthusiasm to learn increases. In lessons they quickly settle down and concentrate hard, becoming more interested and involved as they achieve success.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Given that every pupil has previously demonstrated poor, or very poor, behaviour in their former schools, this represents excellent progress. There are virtually no serious incidents on record and no pupils have ever been excluded. There is little evidence of bullying, sexism or racism. Property is treated with care.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils respond well to the increasing trust they are given. Many make their own way to school. They listen carefully to instructions to be able to help themselves instead of remaining reliant on adults. In response to the respect with which they are treated by staff, nearly all form very good relationships and many show good humour in their conversation.
Attendance	Although it does not meet the standard set for all schools, nearly all pupils make very good progress in improving their attendance. So far this term, one quarter of pupils have achieved 100 per cent attendance. This is a very good achievement. Most absence is accounted for by the persistent non-attendance of a very small number of pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Quality of teaching	Very 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 was never graded less than good throughout the inspection and over four out of five lessons were very well taught. The very good teaching was shared equally between all three teachers. This is an exceptional achievement. English, mathematics and personal, social and health education are very well taught. Science is not taught by unit staff. Many lessons often incorporate essential elements of numeracy and literacy that are also very well taught. The great strength of teaching is the use of assessment to ensure that each pupil is presented with work that is within their ability yet challenges them fully. Teachers are quick to offer help when it is genuinely needed, but are firm in their resolve to get pupils to do as much as possible for themselves. As a result, pupils have to work hard to achieve success, but experience the satisfaction that this brings. Praise is given when merited and, as a result, pupils gain a very good, fair opinion of what they are achieving. This motivates them and encourages them to work harder and behave better. Any misbehaviour is promptly dealt with without fuss and without interrupting the flow of lessons thus ensuring that the best possible use is made of time.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a strong focus on English and mathematics and provision for science has recently been improved. Nearly all pupils also have access to physical, practical and aesthetic experiences. These add breadth to the curriculum and ensure that it matches the local education authority curriculum policy for pupil referral units. The part- time nature of pupils' attendance restricts the provision of an even broader curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The strength of assessment procedures ensures that pupils' special needs are accurately identified and appropriate measures taken to meet these needs. Regular reviews are held to keep all interested parties well informed. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need are receiving a very good education, but not the fulltime one with access to the full National Curriculum to which they are entitled.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All pupils speak English. The unit has provision for the use of interpreters if required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are many visits to theatres and galleries. These give pupils access to a broad range of cultural and often multicultural, influences. They also give pupils opportunities to practise their social skills, which are further honed through tutorial sessions. The consistency of teachers' management of behaviour helps pupils to build up a good understanding of right and wrong. For many pupils, time spent in the unit is a rewarding experience and one in which they gain respect for themselves and others.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good. Child protection and health and safety procedures are correctly followed. Assessment procedures and their use in planning the curriculum and setting individual targets are very strong. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour and personal development are very effective.

Parents receive very good quality information about the progress their children are making. They support their children's learning by attending reviews whenever possible and contributing to the setting of targets.

## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The teacher in charge demonstrates a particularly strong understanding of the role and function of the unit within the broader service that he also manages. He is widely admired by his staff and respected by his line managers. Under his leadership and management the unit has thrived and achieved very high standards. All staff and particularly the acting deputy, have responsibilities that they carry out with an exceptional degree of professionalism.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Over the past year the management committee has grown in strength and number. It is rapidly assuming a composition in line with government recommendations to be representative of the broader community. It meets regularly and is providing much appreciated support to the teacher in charge. It is well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the unit and has closely monitored progress against issues identified by the previous inspection.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Teaching is systematically monitored and evaluated by the teacher in charge. Performance management has been introduced and threshold assessments completed successfully. Where weaknesses have been identified, a good programme of staff development has helped to remedy them. Good quality information is fed to the management committee to enable them to be involved in the evaluation of the unit's performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The unit budget has only recently been devolved. The teacher in charge has an excellent grasp of its finances. Grants are carefully spent on the purpose for which they are intended. There is careful monitoring of expenditure. With a clear view of unit costs and the implications of proposed changes, the teacher in charge is in a good position to make comparisons in pursuit of best value. An inefficiency is evident in the fact that the unit is not currently operating to capacity and teachers get generous non-contact time.

The very good staff team demonstrates all the skills needed to help pupils. The accommodation is old and from the outside it is somewhat depressing. However, it is fit for its current purpose and engenders fierce loyalty from the staff who love it and operate very effectively within it. Learning resources are good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

Four parents or carers attended a meeting prior to the inspection and four returned questionnaires. They are broadly supportive of the unit and feel that it is helping their children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils achieve very well; an improvement since the last inspection. They do so because teaching is very good and pupils develop the personal skills to benefit from it. Most pupils have been underachieving, often for long periods, prior to their referral. As a consequence, their attainment on entry is usually much lower than would be expected, especially as few have significant learning difficulties other than a reluctance to behave and poor attitudes to learning. These pupils are being helped to overcome many of their difficulties and to make the best of whatever ability they have. This progress is most evident in the high frequency with which they meet the challenging targets they are set to improve their learning and attitudes. Where possible, Year 9 pupils complete statutory tests in their own schools. No results are directly attributable to the unit, but the fact that pupils take the tests often is
2. The part-time nature of provision is the main factor slowing progress. This was highlighted by the previous inspection and has not been fully addressed. However, the unit management is ready to meet the challenge when it becomes a statutory requirement in September this year. In the meantime, progress is, understandably, better for those pupils who are given greatest access. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls, pupils of different race or of differing ability, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need. This is because lessons are very well planned to ensure that each individual's needs are being met by the setting of work well matched to their ability. A tiny minority of pupils does not attend often enough to make progress.
3. Achievement is very good in English. Pupils enjoy expressing their opinions because these are valued by teachers and respected by other pupils. With consistent encouragement, subtle advice and careful correction from teachers, pupils use a wider range of vocabulary to express their ideas or point of view. They pay attention to each other's views and this helps them to improve, for instance, their descriptions of what they like and do not like. Pupils form very good links between discussion and writing accounts. For example, when discussing favourite foods, such as pizzas, they pool possible descriptive words such as 'sticky' and 'stringy' before using the best of them in their own writing. When giving examples of direct and indirect speech, pupils explain clearly how they will record their views and this helps them to be accurate in their writing.
4. Pupils often take part in class reading of plays. These provide a good means of projecting themselves into a part and speaking with feeling. When they read 'Our Day Out' by Willie Russell, the teacher ensured that pupils recognised new words so that they could read phrases such as 'passing trade', with understanding. With success comes a very positive attitude to reading, where pupils accept the need to practise regularly. A consistent approach across the unit ensures that pupils gain skills in reading as they read texts in most subjects. Weaker readers learn to recognise sounds such as 'sh' and 'ck', then find them in words such as 'shock'. They then progress to tackle new words containing the same sounds with less support.
5. Pupils often produce a significant amount of written work in a lesson. They learn the correct spellings for words often used in conversation and repeat them confidently and accurately in their writing. With a strong emphasis upon promoting pupils' literacy

in other subjects, pupils have responded very well in writing accounts of visits to the theatre or their experiences in creating sculptures with a local artist. Work on display includes their own sensitive poetry about the war in Afghanistan in which they demonstrate very good use of punctuation and careful spelling. Computers are frequently used to draft, correct and present work to a high standard.

6. Achievement is very good in mathematics. All pupils build up a very good body of work that clearly shows exercises getting successively harder and pupils getting better marks. Pupils develop a very good understanding of the four rules of number and the importance of place value in larger numbers. What is very clear is that the individual exercises that pupils complete are very closely matched to their ability. This is best seen in the increasing complexity of number sequences that pupils can continue. These vary from even and odd numbers, to more difficult examples that have more complicated rules that govern them. There is very good variety in pupils' work. Pupils have used tape measures accurately to measure large distances when they have surveyed the unit site, then used their results to calculate the number of fencing posts that will be needed to fence it. Most pupils easily recognise line symmetry and many develop their understanding to include translation and rotational symmetry.
7. Achievement is satisfactory in science. It is lower than either English or mathematics because a lot less is taught and, until recently, pupils have had no access to a laboratory. The previous inspection had identified this as a weakness that has recently been remedied through a good link with a local college that has made a laboratory and specialist teaching available to pupils at the unit. This enables pupils to participate in experimental work and this is greatly aiding achievement. It is helping to make lessons more interesting by involving pupils in the handling of simple apparatus, such as when they demonstrate how candles need air to burn. Pupils have also discovered that air presses against everything and thus generates a force that can be used; for example, to drive windmills.
8. Pupils achieve very well in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They regularly discuss their ideas and emotions in class. For instance, they willingly share their highest hopes and worst fears in terms of dreams and nightmares. Issues that they raise, such as concern in case they become unemployed, provide very good opportunities for them to rationalise a positive attitude to their future studies. Pupils watch videos and read articles during English and media studies lessons that challenge them to comment on social and personal issues. In a video about exclusion, they were very willing to give an evaluation of other people's actions, concluding that a fictitious pupil who mistakenly listened to advice from other pupils should have avoided trouble by making her own decision and not misbehaving and pleasing 'the crowd'. Pupils in Year 9 have combined careers and PHSE lessons in which they consider their personal strengths and qualities. They make very good progress in understanding the responsibilities that they hold when each expresses private thoughts, agreeing that it is wrong to make fun of peoples' ideas for future jobs since it may hurt their feelings.

9. Pupils achieve very well in the humanities (geography, history and religious education). In a topical study of volcanoes they have related the power of the flow of lava to the recent, dramatic volcanic activity in the Congo. In history they have developed their concept of chronological order through arranging famous people and events of the twentieth century in order. When studying significant and important events such as the Second World War pupils make very good progress because they pay attention and develop a very good understanding of major figures and events in the conflict, as well as its causes and outcomes. Complementing their studies in history, pupils often discuss and write about famous figures, such as Martin Luther King; this often broaches moral and religious issues and helps to promote a wider understanding of the world.
10. Pupils achieve very well using computers. They make very good progress in learning word-processing skills, which they use in writing and redrafting their work. They show increasing skill in using computers to help them with number, such as to collate data from a survey of preferences for breakfast or to draw the resulting graphs. Pupils consolidate their skills very well in discrete lessons that prepare them very well for future accreditation.
11. Pupils achieve well within a narrow range of practical activities, many of which are closely linked to art. For instance, they have modelled very good sculptures with a local artist and have made mirror and thread pictures, utilising weaving and threading techniques in an activity at a local museum. Pupils achieve very well in food technology. They make simple everyday food such as pizzas and this improves their skills of chopping and mixing. As pupils often choose what they will cook, this provides good opportunities for them to make their own changes, such as designing their own pizza. Many of the skills pupils are learning in food technology will be a great help to them when they leave home and have to care for themselves.
12. Achievement in art is very good and the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural understanding. In a visit to a museum, pupils studied the patterns in Indian rugs, noticing how they vary from region to region. On an African theme they have also created recognisable carvings, in stone, of heads and fish. There is limited work in sketchbooks, but there are very good examples of paintings that pupils have executed in the style of famous artists such as Paul Klee and Vincent Van Gogh. Achievement in aesthetic subjects is weakened by the absence of opportunities for pupils to participate in and study music, but they have visited the theatre to see the musical 'Phantom of the Opera' and written perceptive reviews describing its tunes as 'catchy' and comparing it with another popular musical, 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show'.
13. Pupils enjoy a rich range of physical and adventure activities. Many develop a strong interest in these experiences. They improve their swimming techniques and hope not to have to use them when they are learning how to sail dinghies. Pupils develop better balance when they go ice-skating and in dance workshops at a local studio they recount how they have learnt to improvise shapes. Here they work with partners to hold good balancing positions; these build up to a whole-group performance and this provides a good opportunity for them to co-operate in a larger group. Progress in dance is weakened by the number of pupils who opt out because they do not enjoy the subject.

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

14. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the previous inspection. They show interest in their work and try very hard in most lessons. This willingness to participate is evident from the moment pupils first enter the unit for assessment. They respond excellently to the high expectations for them to co-operate and improve. The way that pupils settle in so quickly has a very positive effect on the progress they make. In discussion, pupils say that they value the support they receive and feel it is helping them to get back to school. Pupils sustain their efforts throughout lessons and there is little 'clock watching'. This is a good indicator that they are enjoying learning and want to achieve to the best of their ability. Pupils answer questions sensibly and take turns at reading, showing patience with others who are less able than themselves.
15. Behaviour is very good; an improvement since the previous inspection. Newly admitted pupils quickly learn that there are very high expectations for behaviour and they respond accordingly. Very good behaviour in nearly all lessons allows teachers to concentrate on promoting learning. Pupils nearly always concentrate well. When reminded about behaviour, such as talking when they should be listening, they respond very well. Pupils respond well to sharing responsibility for improving behaviour. They discuss future targets for improvement and review these sensibly after each lesson.
16. Pupils work well in groups as well as individually. They develop increasing independence in learning and this helps to convince them that they can succeed. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good, with pupils showing due respect for confident and assured teachers. Pupils talk to each other sensibly and address staff politely. They ask perceptive questions and recognise that others consider their views to be important. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting personal responsibility. It is a remarkable achievement that so many pupils successfully make their own way to the unit on public transport. This serves to extend the trust between staff and pupils.
17. Attendance is broadly similar to that reported at the last inspection. Last term it was 84 per cent, well below the standard set for all schools, but representing good achievement for many pupils who have previous histories of poor or non-existent attendance at their mainstream schools. This term, over one quarter of pupils have attended every session. Amongst the latest induction group (the newest arrivals) there has been 100 per cent attendance. Authorised absence is high, but some of this is due to pupils being required to attend -daytime meetings and sessions organised by outside agencies. Unauthorised absence, at 4.4 per cent last term, remains high. Over one half of pupils have recorded an unauthorised absence over the past term. Most pupils are punctual for their sessions, although they are occasionally delayed by problems with taxis. Lessons start promptly so very little time is wasted once pupils are in the unit.

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

18. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. The main improvement has been in the way that teachers are now making lessons more relevant and interesting and relying much less on worksheets and textbooks. Teaching is very consistent, very good teaching being shared almost equally by each member of the small team. This benefits pupils' progress because it creates a strong atmosphere for learning. Pupils know exactly where they stand and what is expected of them whichever class they are in and whatever subject is being taught. Importantly, the very high quality of work in pupils' books and folders provides ample evidence to

support the view that the teaching observed during the inspection was typical of that over the past year.

19. Underpinning this teaching is the meticulous attention teachers pay to each pupil's needs and abilities. They can do this because classes are very small and assessment procedures very strong. All ongoing work is carefully marked and helpful comments are often added to let pupils know what they are getting right or where they are going wrong. There are frequent exhortations to pupils to work a little harder or faster and this demonstrates the very high expectations that teachers carry for each pupil.
20. Independence is encouraged by teachers only offering pupils help when they deem it absolutely necessary. Many newer pupils seek more help than they need, but teachers are firm in their resolve to drag every bit of effort out of them. This is doing them a great favour and preparing them well for a possible return to school when they will be in bigger classes and receiving less attention.
21. All teachers show great assurance and confidence in the management of pupils' behaviour. They never take the easy option of ignoring or excusing unacceptable behaviour, but neither do they nag about trivial misdemeanours. As a result, pupils quickly learn when enough is enough and lessons are rarely disrupted. This allows themselves and everyone else to get on with their work and minimises the number of interruptions to lessons, meaning that more time is available for learning. The inspection team found that teachers regularly set homework, but that pupils tend to mislay their homework diaries so that it is difficult for parents to check on what work should be done at home. Teachers do not sufficiently follow this up.
22. The teaching of English is very good. Work is interesting and stimulates pupils' imagination. Lessons have a high level of challenge. New pupils write creatively about recent experiences leading to their referral and achieve very well because the teacher provides very good encouragement and motivates them well. This sets the scene very well for pupils to accept the teacher's comments about their work. There is rigorous, informative marking and pupils comply very well with advice, with the result that their work improves rapidly. Reading materials are carefully selected to ensure that they interest pupils and are well matched to their assessed reading level. The reassurance teachers offer pupils boosts their confidence to participate. This worked very well when they read parts in a play and the pupils followed the teacher's excellent example of providing a weak reader with plenty of time to complete their part.
23. The teaching of mathematics is very good. Typical of this is the way in which teachers give every pupil their fair share of attention and seek pupils' support in helping to solve each other's problems. For instance, when a more able pupil had difficulty in calculating the area and perimeter of a complex shape, each of the other pupils was involved in a small way, with less able pupils performing simple subtractions to determine dimensions and more able ones helping to combine these calculations to solve the problem. The attention paid to maximising the use of time was very well demonstrated by the teacher who insisted on a pupil describing how he had calculated a dimension; the pupil wanted just to point at the board, but was coerced into using correct vocabulary to describe how he had subtracted a smaller dimension from a larger one. This made a great contribution to the pupil's speaking skills.

24. The teaching of personal social and health education is very good. Teachers plan very effectively to promote pupils' personal and social development in every lesson throughout the day. This is most effectively seen in tutorial periods when pupils reflect upon past behaviour and set new targets for the week. Lessons in Year 9 often incorporate elements of careers education. The strength of teaching in these lessons is the setting of clear ground rules for pupils to follow with encouragement to repeat this in other settings. The teacher's example of how to treat each pupil's answer with respect soon transfers to pupils. As pupils begin to give their ideas, the teacher asks skilful questions, challenging pupils to expand and fully express themselves. For instance, one pupil explained the hesitance of expressing aspirations for future careers to the way that people reacted to the character who wanted to be a ballet dancer in the film 'Billy Elliot'.
25. The teaching of skills in using computers is very good. Word-processing is very well taught with teachers demonstrating high expectations in requiring precision when pupils write accounts of their work or to make a good copy for display. This promotes learning in using computers, written language and also boosts pupils' self-esteem when they see their work on display. Occasionally, teachers provide good opportunities for research, such as finding out information about earthquakes using a CD-ROM. Teaching in the discrete lessons to promote skills for accreditation is very good and is helping to prepare pupils for future accreditation in the subject.
26. The teaching of geography and history is very good. Pupils recognise that teachers know what they are talking about and this encourages them to ask questions to clarify their understanding or satisfy their curiosity. The topics chosen provide a high level of interest for pupils and promote learning very well about the past and the world around them. Teachers seize opportunities very well to encourage pupils to read about the subject and write accounts, such as a report of earthquakes.
27. Nearly all the teaching involved in physical activities is by instructors in the various centres used. Unit teachers work effectively in these situations, because they understand the individual needs of pupils very well and can offer timely support, encouragement or intervention when necessary. The same is true of science.

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

28. The curriculum is good overall. It has improved since the previous inspection and it now closely matches the local education authority's curriculum policy for pupil referral units. Whilst the curriculum provides well for pupils' overall, several permanently excluded pupils only have access to this curriculum for a part of the week and this limits their achievement in subjects other than English, mathematics and personal, social and health education.
29. There is a strong emphasis upon promoting literacy and numeracy. This means that pupils spend a good proportion of time learning skills that will help them to make up ground lost whilst out of school. Wherever possible, pupils who are also attending their schools, follow subjects that they are missing. Although the unit does not have to provide religious education, there are good elements within other lessons, such as history, where pupils learn about beliefs in other times or the religious aspects of racial tension in America.
30. The successful implementation the National Literacy Strategy ensures that lessons promote skills such as spelling and reading effectively. There is a good balance

between the promotion of speaking and listening, reading and writing. This includes planning for pupils to examine words more closely, learning how they are built up and beginning to develop strategies that will help them to spell words they have previously found difficult.

31. Since the beginning of term, many pupils have had the opportunity to use a laboratory in the local college. This has greatly improved the science curriculum as it means that pupils can now conduct experiments for themselves in a safe environment. This is a big improvement since the previous inspection. In the unit, pupils have good access to computers and often use them to re-draft work for other subjects. Discrete lessons provide well for pupils to learn skills such as completing databases for accreditation.
32. Strong assessment procedures ensure that special educational needs are quickly identified. Targets are then set and frequent reviews ensure that needs are being successfully addressed. In this way the unit ensures that pupils with additional special educational needs are able to make equal progress with others. All current pupils speak English, but there are good arrangements to provide additional support through interpreters if required by either pupils or their parents. Equal opportunities are protected through good variation in work to ensure that all pupils are presented with tasks well suited to their individual needs. Girls are always in a minority and there is only one on roll at the moment, but in every respect they share the same opportunities as boys.
33. There is very good provision to promote pupils' personal and social development through lessons timetabled as such and also as an important part of many other lessons; the learning of social issues in English being a good example. Pupils also learn much in subjects such as history, when they consider aspects such as prejudice when studying the life and times of Martin Luther King in America. Careers' education is very good, linking well to the outside support that pupils become entitled to at a later age. There is a good link here with personal, social and health education lessons in which pupils learn techniques of discussion that are beneficial in interviews. There is a good programme of sex and drugs education. It ensures that pupils leave the unit well informed about issues relating to both. Frequent visits to sporting facilities such as for sailing, ice-skating and swimming provide good opportunities for pupils to socialise and compensate in a small way for the lack of opportunities to socialise at the unit, where there are no informal moments such as breaks or lunchtimes.
34. There is very good provision for the promotion of moral development. Staff set an excellent example to pupils in how to behave and show respect. Consistent encouragement reminds pupils to respect each other's efforts, such as not to mock if someone stumbles when reading. Pupils are left in no doubt when their behaviour slips and this promotes good behaviour. Regular discussion of pupils' behaviour helps to reinforce what is acceptable and what it is about bad behaviour that is unacceptable. An increasingly clear view of right and wrong is evident in the ever more demanding targets pupils negotiate at weekly tutorials.
35. There has been an excellent improvement in the promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development. There are now numerous opportunities for pupils to take part in drama and dance, visit theatres and experience art and music; all of which make a very strong contribution to their personal development. Pupils often record written responses to such visits and events and these frequently illustrate the profound effect that this provision has on them. One pupil, for instance, was worried about attending an opera since his only previous experience of the theatre had been a pantomime that

he had not enjoyed. After the event, however, he concluded that he was now looking forward to his next visit, to see a play. The broad range of visiting musicians, sculptors and dancers is outstanding and has ensured that pupils have many rich experiences of local and world cultures.

36. There are very strong links with the community. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have extensive opportunities to go outside the unit and take part in experiences that enrich many aspects of their academic and personal development. Staff use these opportunities very well to extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The community police officer has recently become involved in several aspects of pupils' personal, social and health education and has used his expertise in helping young people excluded from mainstream society in talks to pupils about the work of the police. He also plays a valuable role by being a member of the unit's management committee and helping it to deal with the problems of safety in the road outside the building. The recent addition of an elected member of the council, further strengthens links with the community and helps to ensure that the unit does not become isolated or insular. There is very good liaison with agencies that work with young people who have difficulties. For example, the youth offending team is very pleased with the unit's involvement in a new project for young people in custody. The educational psychology service values the provision offered by the unit and occasionally runs training for staff.
37. Links with other schools and colleges are also very good. There is a close relationship with local secondary schools. Staff from these schools express satisfaction and often gratitude for the service provided by the unit. Most significantly, they praise the ease and speed with which they are able to arrange, discuss and review placements. They also much appreciate the help that they are given when a pupil is returned to their schools. Very good use is made of information received from schools to draw up a programme and set targets for the pupil. Schools with dual-registered pupils are sent the same weekly reports on pupils' progress that parents receive; they find these very useful. A good link with a local college provides invaluable access to specialist science teaching and facilities. Imminent reorganisation within the behaviour support service makes very good provision for developing the link between the unit and the local special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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

38. The unit continues to provide effective care for its pupils. Child protection and health and safety procedures are followed correctly. Staff are highly vigilant and experienced in issues of child protection and are currently seeking to update their training to keep abreast of developments in the three years since their previous training. There is very close liaison with the local authority service responsible for 'looked after' children. This is vital, as many pupils are from this sector. Speedy attention is paid to health and safety matters on a day-to-day basis. Good improvements have been made to the unit's toilets, which were criticised by the last inspection. Frequent and effective risk assessments and checks are made of equipment and premises.
39. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. They are based on the establishment of a secure, well-managed and positive learning environment. This encourages most pupils to come to the unit and improves their chances of resuming their education in school. Parents are contacted straight away if their child does not arrive on time. The register is completed satisfactorily and the school has improved its recording of weekly attendance. There are good plans for computerising the

register to enable staff to focus more clearly on tracking, monitoring and comparing attendance. Previous attendance records are not always collected from schools and, as a result, the unit has difficulty in demonstrating the progress that each pupil is making. Valuable use is made of the educational welfare service, both as part of the induction process and also when problems of non-attendance arise.

40. Procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour are very good. Expectations that all pupils will concentrate hard on their work in the short time that they are in the unit are very high. Staff make it very clear that behaviour such as rudeness will not be tolerated. In lessons, teachers deflect any attention-seeking behaviour by insisting, in a firm and friendly manner, that pupils focus on the task in front of them. Good pace in lessons, suitable materials, close knowledge of pupils and praise, rather than elaborate reward systems motivate pupils to behave well. Simple rules are displayed around the unit and discussed in personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are reminded of the need to treat everyone with respect and most of them readily comply because adults return the compliment. Records are kept of the isolated incidents that take place. One member of staff is a trained counsellor and uses her expertise very skilfully to help pupils to explore the reasons behind their emotional and behavioural difficulties.
41. There are very effective arrangements for assessing pupils' academic progress. Ability in literacy and numeracy is measured as soon as pupils enter the unit. This provides a benchmark for checking how well they improve. Teachers regularly monitor how well pupils are learning and this helps them to plan future work. It also facilitates the setting of different work for individuals according to the progress that they are making. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils agree weekly targets with teachers, such as to concentrate more on their work. Teachers record how well pupils achieve in relation to these targets in each lesson. At the end of each week this is then shared with parents. There is very effective planning for pupils to transfer back to school.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS (including carers)?**

42. The unit continues to have good links with parents. Four attended a meeting prior to the inspection and two returned questionnaires. They are broadly supportive of the unit and feel that it is helping their children. They consider that teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard. Parents like the range of activities outside lessons, although not all sufficiently insist on their children attending these. They believe that the unit is well led and managed, but have concerns that not enough homework is set.
43. The partnership between the unit and parents starts very effectively when the educational welfare officer visits the family at home to prepare the pupil for his or her transfer to the unit. The family then visits for an interview with the teacher in charge. At this stage, parents and carers are involved in the setting of targets and their views are noted and recorded. The handbook for parents and carers, which serves as a prospectus, provides most of the required information in an easy-to-read style and places a suitable emphasis on the unit's expectations of behaviour and attendance.
44. Parents and carers receive weekly reports on their child's progress in each session attended and the targets set following their child's tutorial session. This is very good practice, especially as the reports are also seen by pupils and their mainstream schools. Termly reports are provided for pupils who stay that long. These provide

good information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses in each subject studied as well as a useful check on their organisation, behaviour, effort and classwork. National Curriculum Levels and pupils' achievements in examinations are reported well in mathematics. In literacy, reading and writing are reported well, but not oral skills or National Curriculum Levels.

45. The school operates a very effective policy whereby parents are encouraged to telephone at any time about any concern. Many take up this opportunity and appreciate the ease with which they can approach and speak to the people whom they want. They are also encouraged to return the reply slips at the bottom of the weekly reports, which several do. A significant number of parents support their child's education by showing interest in what their child is doing, attending reviews and reporting when things are going wrong in their child's life outside the unit. Parents receive their children's timetable, but a few would like more information about what is being taught so that they can help more at home. Overall, parents' involvement with the work of the unit has a positive effect on the very good progress that pupils make.

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

46. Facilitated by his dual role, which combines teacher in charge of the unit with a senior position within the behaviour support service, the teacher in charge has an exceptionally clear view of how the unit fits into the authority's provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Because of this and with his deep understanding of the national issues relating to units such as this, he has been able to steer the unit carefully to fulfilling its purpose very well. That staff perform well and demonstrate high standards of professionalism is in no small way the result of their high morale and desire to improve provision for pupils. They are totally supportive of the teacher in charge and all staff speak as one in their praise for him. Duties within the authority often mean that he is away from the unit. The acting deputy relishes the additional responsibility this places on her and with strong support from the rest of the staff, the unit continues to operate very smoothly.
47. It took a while, following the previous inspection, for the management committee to start to fulfil the role expected of it, but for the past six months it has grown in numbers and strength. The main improvements have come about following the broadening of the members' expertise and experience to move the composition of the committee away from being just an extension of the local education authority. In regular meetings, members follow a clear agenda and remain well focused on the big issues facing the unit. They can do this because they are kept well informed by reports from the teacher in charge. Due attention is paid to monitoring progress against the key issues for improvement identified by the previous inspection and especially in pursuit of better accommodation.
48. There is a good mix of formal and informal monitoring of teaching. The close working relationship of teachers is a major factor in the success of this because monitoring is seen to be helpful and mutually beneficial. By establishing strengths and weaknesses in teaching, appropriate targets have been set for the performance management process.
49. Although the teacher in charge has a significant degree of control over the budget, it has not until very recently been fully devolved and, as with nearly all units such as this, there is no facility for money saved one year to be carried forward to the next or for savings made in one area, such as staffing, to be used in another, such as resources. Nevertheless, that part of the budget, including grants, which has

traditionally been managed by the unit, has been well spent and accounted for in providing new resources and training. Careful monitoring of costs by the teacher in charge enables him to make very good comparisons in the unit cost of the provision with different permutations of staff and pupil numbers. An inefficiency in the unit is created by the need to use facilities outside its own building, such as for physical education and science. Whilst this leads to an inevitable loss of teaching time the arrangements are very well managed to minimise this. The main inefficiency, however, is that the unit rarely operates to capacity thus increasing the unit cost significantly.

50. There are sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers. This keeps class groups very small and allows all pupils to be given copious attention and support; this is a significant factor in the very good progress that pupils make in lessons. Staff development through training and self-evaluation is very good and has led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. This has been particularly so in numeracy and literacy.
51. Accommodation is satisfactory. There is a good range of classrooms suitable for small groups of pupils, but they would be cramped if the unit was operating to capacity. There is a lack of specialist accommodation for crafts in design and technology, no science room or facilities for play or physical education. However, the unit makes very effective use of sports facilities in the community and arranges for pupils to study science at a local college. Resources for learning are good overall. Teachers prepare many of their own resources and they match pupils' needs very well. The arrival of new computers is imminent; they are much needed.

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

52. The unit has only minor weaknesses. Whilst there is no requirement for it to present a formal action plan to address these, it would nevertheless be good practice for it to do so by incorporating them into its improvement plan. Minor weaknesses are:

- Part-time provision for permanently excluded pupils restricting access to the curriculum (paragraph 2);
- teachers not sufficiently checking why homework has not been done (paragraph 21);
- the non-attendance of a small minority of pupils (paragraph 17);
- the unit not operating to capacity (paragraph 49);
- the restrictions caused by limited accommodation (paragraph 51).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	13	3	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0	81	19	0	0	0	0

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

### 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	24

<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	24

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	83.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	4.4

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	22
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: Y7 – Y9**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher (FTE)	4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y9**

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

### ***Financial information***

The unit has not until very recently managed a devolved budget.

Financial year	N/A
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	£
Total income	N/A
Total expenditure	N/A
Expenditure per pupil	N/A
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A
Balance carried forward to next year	N/A

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



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

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

24

Number of questionnaires returned

4

#### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Parents are mainly supportive of the unit and feel that it is doing a good job.