

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **MALDEN OAKS PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

Kingston upon Thames

LEA area: Royal Kingston

Unique reference number: 102562

Headteacher: Janet Howell

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger  
23587

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> –29<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249518

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:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	The Dukes Centre Dukes Avenue Kingston upon Thames Surrey
Postcode:	KT2 5QY
Telephone number:	0208 547 6660
Fax number:	0208 547 6665
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Jill Roucroft
Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Art Design and technology Music Religious education Physical education	The characteristics of the unit and its effectiveness  The unit's results and pupils achievements Teaching and learning How well the unit is led and managed
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety  Partnership with parents and carers
30243	Anne Heakin	Team inspector	English Geography History Information and communication technology Modern foreign language Citizenship Special educational needs	Quality and range of learning opportunities  Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

This is a small unit for pupils who have been experiencing difficulty in fully benefiting from mainstream education on account of their behavioural emotional or social needs. There are currently ten pupils, each attending about half time, the other half being spent in their schools. There are places for twice this number but the unit has recently relocated and numbers are running low to accommodate this change. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. No pupils have statements of special educational need. Two pupils are of ethnic minority heritage but neither has English as an additional language. Most pupils are in Years 10 and 11 but occasionally younger pupils are admitted and there are currently two from Year 9. Both of these have been attending for less than a fortnight. Many pupils receive support from other agencies, particularly the child and mental health service. Most pupils have previously attended their schools intermittently. As a result their attainment on entry is well below what could be expected. Pupils are referred at any time of the year and return to school at whatever time is considered appropriate. Over the course of last year about 20 different pupils attended the unit. The average length of stay is just over one year. The unit is one of two in the borough; the headteacher manages both and several staff share duties in both. The headteacher is also a local education authority manager.

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

This is an excellent unit. Pupils achieve far more than predicted to at the time of referral and exceed most of their personal targets. They are particularly well taught by staff who demonstrate great skill in balancing academic progress and personal development. This particularly high performing team is led and managed exceptionally well by an inspired headteacher. Educating pupils in a unit such as this is costly but the money is being very well spent in ensuring that pupils' needs are addressed. It gives very good value for money.

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

- Teaching is excellent; teachers show an exceptional understanding of pupils needs and how to help them learn most effectively.
- The headteacher provides exemplary leadership and management.
- The care of pupils is excellent; the unit is a safe and happy place and assessment is particularly strong.
- It cultivates extremely strong links with schools, other professional agencies and parents.
- It makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.

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

- There are few, very minor, weaknesses. All of them have already been identified and are being addressed through the unit improvement plan.

*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**

From an already high standard the unit has continued to improve. It sets itself very high standards and always wants to do better. In addition to addressing weaknesses identified in the last inspection, in February 1998, it has relentlessly pursued improvement in other areas.

## 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 the time they leave	Key	
English	A	excellent	A*
Mathematics	A	very good	A
Science	A*	good	B
personal, social and health education	A*	satisfactory	C
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A*	unsatisfactory	D

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

Pupils are achieving very well in almost everything they do. High points are exceptional achievement in science, which is greatly helped by a strong focus on practical work; and in personal, social and health education. Achievement in English and mathematics is very good, greatly supported by the many opportunities pupils have to develop literacy and numeracy in other subjects. All pupils make great strides in using computers. As a result of their achievements, many pupils who stay to the end of year 11 are gaining much better passes in examinations, including GCSE, than their schools were predicting prior to referral. Most younger pupils achieve sufficiently well to allow them to return to school within a year. Academic achievement is slightly lower than the quality of teaching would suggest because it is not the sole focus of the unit. It has to be combined with personal development to a greater extent than usual because that is the main reason for pupils' referral.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	<b>Excellent.</b> Pupils arrive with smiles on their faces intending to work hard. They respond very well to the high expectations of staff. They put a lot of thought and effort into their work and take great care in presentation.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Very good.</b> There are no exclusions and the unit is very settled. There is occasional mischief but nothing of a threatening nature.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Excellent.</b> Pupils join in and mix comfortably with each other and with staff. Many have been totally unable to do this in the past. They often show great pride in their achievements and organise their work very carefully in files. Being able to work together in a small group often represents excellent progress.
Attendance	<b>Good.</b> This represents excellent progress for most pupils who have previously found it almost impossible to attend school at all. Every pupil improved their attendance over the course of the past year, about a half of them by over 80%



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Excellent

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

Teaching is extremely consistent and invariably very good or better. About a quarter of that observed was excellent. Every teacher brings life and enthusiasm to helping pupils learn. English, mathematics and information and communication technology are very well taught. Science teaching and that for personal, social and health education, including citizenship shines out as excellent. A notable strength is the way that teachers finely balance pupils' academic learning with their personal development which is the main reason for their referral. In this way, pupils' individual needs are being particularly well met. The process is helped by strong planning and careful adjustments to teaching to ensure that each individual can benefit equally. No opportunity is missed to promote literacy and numeracy in any lesson. Learning closely matches the quality of teaching because pupils show interest and try hard; encouraged by the fact that their work is quickly and sensitively marked with useful comments to help them understand how they could make improvements.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Very good.</b> The curriculum is particularly well suited to helping pupils to address their needs. Personal, health and social education is strongly promoted, as are English, mathematics and science. A small range of other subjects adds invaluable variety. Many opportunities are created to make learning more interesting by inviting guests into school and taking pupils on trips. Excellent links ensure that work done in the unit complements that done in school and does not lead to unnecessary repetition.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	<b>Very good.</b> Copious individual attention helps to ensure that any possible hindrance to learning is quickly identified and special support given. In this way, pupils with additional needs are successfully included in all the opportunities to learn.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good.</b> Particularly strong is the provision for promoting pupils' social and moral development. Spiritual development is very well promoted, largely by getting pupils to realise that they are valued and helping them to make sense of their lives.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	<b>Excellent.</b> The unit provides care of the highest quality. This is underpinned by detailed procedures to ensure that good behaviour is rigorously promoted and attendance maximised. Assessment procedures are exceptionally thorough and their findings are put to excellent use in promoting pupils' learning and personal development.

The unit works very well with parents to help pupils gain the maximum benefit from their time there. Parents are given excellent, clear information about what goes on in the unit and how well their children are progressing.

## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Excellent.</b> An extraordinarily effective headteacher provides leadership of the highest quality, combining crystal clear vision with the ability to realise her aspirations. Her management is equally strong, especially monitoring and evaluating the performance of staff and pupils. Every teacher makes a huge contribution to providing the best possible education for children by assuming responsibility for the development of different areas of the curriculum.
How well the management committee* fulfils its responsibilities  *including the LEA as appropriate authority	<b>Very good.</b> The management committee played a particularly strong role in the relocation of the unit. It knows about what goes on in the unit because it receives excellent reports from the headteacher and staff. Its effectiveness is slightly weakened by the fact that too many members do not attend meetings regularly.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	<b>Excellent.</b> Teaching is rigorously monitored and the unit carefully monitors its contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Performance management is an integral part of unit life. Procedures and outcomes are excellent
The strategic use of resources	<b>Very good.</b> Staff are carefully deployed to make best use of their skills. The accommodation is put to good use to enhance opportunities for learning and personal development. Teachers use high quality resources very effectively to make lessons interesting. The headteacher and staff are careful not to waste money and seek best value whenever they are spending.

The staff team is excellent. It is very well suited to meeting the needs of pupils. The new accommodation is rapidly being improved and is very good. Arrangements to use additional, specialist accommodation in other schools are well advanced. There are many very good resources, especially computers.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

Parents are very supportive of the unit, feeling that their children are taught and looked after particularly well. The inspection team agrees with parents' views.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Excellent teaching and care results in pupils achieving very well, as they did at the time of the last inspection. As a result, most pupils are fulfilling their potential and gaining passes in examinations, including GCSE, by the end of Year 11. Many younger pupils successfully return to school within a year because they have caught up with lost work and have developed the confidence to attend more frequently. Individual targets are frequently met ahead of schedule. This is because pupils and parents, as well as centre and mainstream teachers are fully involved in target setting, thus ensuring that targets are realistic and achievable. Staff give a huge amount of individual attention to pupils to ensure that each gives of his or her best. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils other than those who do not attend enough to benefit from provision. Comparisons with national averages are not appropriate. The small number of pupils means that examination results above or below those expected can be hugely influenced by the performance of a single pupil.

2. Very high achievement in English results in many pupils gaining passes in GCSE in line with national expectations for Year 11. Pupils gain increasing confidence in speaking and listening as they take advantage of the regular opportunities to discuss their work in all subjects and to plan for future employment or further education. Written work shows pupils progressing very well and using correct punctuation. Pupils use their improving literacy skills effectively when, for example, they plan a school trip as part of Entry Level English. They research the costs of venues and refreshments as well as travel and this helps to develop numeracy. Computer skills are developed very effectively, as when pupils record their findings and design posters to promote the venue. Pupils read prose, comparing, for instance, the characters, style and setting of Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and the more recent *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier. They write critically and persuasively and compare the headlines, advertisements, content and purpose of national daily papers and the local newspaper.

3. Very good achievement in mathematics results from high quality teaching that ensures that pupils are producing significant amounts of work to be proud of. By the time they leave, all Year 11 pupils gain passes in examinations including GCSE and Entry Level examinations. High achievement is spread across all areas of mathematics. Pupils gather information from a wide range of sources and draw accurate graphs. They develop an understanding of algebra, writing expressions for the calculation of perimeters of triangles and rectangles and solving simultaneous equations. Mathematical vocabulary broadens considerably; in statistics, for instance, pupils talk confidently about relative frequency, events and probability. In number work, they compare fractions, decimals and percentages and calculate with care. Pupils read gauges and scales accurately. They measure precisely, for instance to produce a scale drawing of the unit.

4. Pupils enjoy science and the unit benefits from having a fully equipped, very well resourced laboratory and an exceptional science teacher. As a result, achievement is of the highest standard. Notably, this achievement is spread across all areas of national curriculum programmes of study, including the development of investigative and practical skills. In physics, pupils quickly move on from describing the appearance of metals to investigating their properties. One group was fascinated by a simple experiment which demonstrated that different metals conduct heat to different degrees. Pupils have made electro-magnets, using existing knowledge of electrical circuits and have added words such as attract and repel to

their rapidly expanding scientific vocabulary. In biology, pupils recognise the seven key characteristics of living things and have used microscopes to examine tissues and make comparisons between plant and animal cells. In chemistry, pupils separate mixtures confidently, using techniques as varied as filtration, chromatography, and distillation. They understand the difference between elements, compounds and mixtures. Pupils often contribute to the design of experiments, a good example being their commendable efforts to design apparatus for separating ink from water. Science also strongly supports achievement in other subjects. In addition to its contribution to literacy, pupils draw graphs and solve equations involving algebra. They also use computers well to aid in the presentation of work and the organisation of data.

5. Pupils successfully work towards national accreditation in geography. They use literacy and numeracy very well when for example they devise holiday questionnaires, and plot graphs or pie charts to represent research on holiday patterns. Sources such as illustrations and statistical information are well used to make deductions about lifestyles in different parts of the world. Pupils consider the changing industrial and agricultural trends in countries such as Brazil and the negative effects of tourism in Kenya. In learning about population distribution pupils appreciate the impact of climate, land resources and industry as they compare features of the Amazon rainforest, Sahara desert and Western Europe.

6. Pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology. The unit is well supplied with computers and Internet access. As a result, pupils use the computers whenever necessary. Information and communication technology is not taught as a discrete subject but underpins every subject. In this way pupils use it as a tool to help them learn. Analysis of work shows that pupils regularly word process their written work – both imaginative and factual- and use spreadsheets appropriately to improve their investigative skills in science, geography and numeracy.

7. Citizenship is an essential factor in the excellent provision for personal development. Within the theme of *Human Rights* pupils use their literacy skills to summarise and make a personal response to the issues raised in *Anne Frank's Diary*, they carefully consider both sides of the argument about the death penalty and research the work of *Amnesty International*. The moral issues around Euthanasia are discussed, as is the problem of child slavery. This work not only allows pupils to listen and talk but also to follow logical arguments and respect other peoples' values and beliefs. The story of *Diogenes* is read not just as a story but as inspiration for pupils to write about freedom and what it means to them. Stories from the New Testament and from Sikh culture are used to stimulate lively discussion and help pupils to become aware of the significance of religious stories to the followers of those faiths.

8. Achievement in art is satisfactory. There are examples of very good achievement in individual lessons, such as when pupils use clay to create an Art Nouveau container, or when they create wall displays using leaf prints and swirls of colour. Pupils have also explored how to create different effects when pencil sketching and have drawn accurately from life-studies of plants and flowers. The main reason that achievement is lower than in other subjects is that not enough art is being done for pupils to build up comprehensive portfolios of work. This is a temporary situation which is being addressed through the appointment of a new teacher. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in physical activities. They pursue personal programmes of fitness at a local gymnasium and have recently become more involved in team games. Adventure activities have helped pupils to develop skills such as rope climbing.

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

9. Pupils' excellent, very positive attitudes greatly enhance their learning. Many pupils have previously had an unhappy time at school and have not worked to the best of their ability. Within a short time at the PRU they overcome their previous reluctance to work hard and very quickly show a desire to learn more independently, often continuing research or coursework in their own time. Pupils enjoy coming to the unit and respond well to its sensitive and purposeful atmosphere. Considerable pride is shown in the presentation of work, with pupils arranging and displaying their work very well. Pupils respond extremely well when they listen carefully to others and offer their own ideas after careful thought.

10. Pupils respond very well to the very high expectations of good behaviour and keenly pursue individual targets for improvement. In lessons they settle down to work quickly and behave very well, showing great respect for property and equipment such as computers, science apparatus and books. Pupils are courteous and respectful to visitors and are happy to show and discuss examples of their work. There is no evidence of intimidation or aggression.

11. Pupils' personal development forms the foundation for the excellent work being done in the unit. Pupils overcome previous difficulties and express more confidence in their own self-worth. Pupils learn to take decisions and evaluate their own work. National Records of Achievement show how pupils learn to value their own progress and increasingly see themselves as able to contribute to society. Very good relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual respect and underpin the excellent attitudes pupils develop to their education.

12. Pupils make exceptional progress in improving their attendance. Over the past year every single pupil has shown an improvement and one half of pupils have almost doubled their attendance. This is one of the most obvious reasons why their learning and achievement is so good. Developing a more reliable pattern of attendance is also preparing pupils particularly well for a return to school or for college or employment. The poor attendance of just two pupils over the past year accounts for a significant amount of the recorded absence.

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

13. It is rare to see teaching of such high quality. Very few lessons could be observed but the quality of pupils' work, the authoritative way in which teachers discuss their practice and the excellent quality of their planning and record keeping provide clear evidence that teaching is excellent. Underpinning all teaching is teachers' desire to get the best out of every pupil. Their expectations are exceptionally high and they pay great attention to encouraging pupils to meet their individual targets. Teachers often refer to these before and throughout lessons. They also very clearly state what they expect pupils to have learned by the end of each lesson. As a result, pupils feel fully involved and can readily identify the progress they are making in each lesson. Success builds upon success and pupils quickly build up a collection of work which demonstrates their determination to succeed. Pride is shown in the way pupils organise and present their work in their files and their interest and confidence grows as they recognise their own success. Occasionally, absence slows down pupils' learning. In a couple of extreme cases it creates problems through the need for teachers to repeat work which individual pupils have missed or forgotten since their last lesson.

14. Each teacher has built up considerable expertise, often through extensive in-service training. Teachers show a deep understanding of their own subjects and also of the opportunities available to promote the basic skills of numeracy and literacy in all of their teaching. They also understand their pupils particularly well, helping them to overcome their anxieties and develop the essential personal skills they will need to succeed in life after school or on their return to mainstream. Computers are frequently used, enabling pupils to utilise them for research as well as presentation. Planning is meticulous, paying very close attention to individual needs and the demands of examination syllabuses. This ensures that teaching is methodical, resources are always to hand and support is effectively directed to meet need. Work is carefully and perceptively marked and invariably carries comments to encourage pupils and help them to improve.

15. In English, very good teaching results in pupils learning very well. Planning is of exceptionally high quality; it focuses on individual pupils' needs, extends their existing skills and gives pupils the confidence to review their own learning and work towards their literacy targets. Marking is of high quality, encouraging pupils to reflect on their achievements and make progress. A strength of the teaching is the close collaboration between teachers so they all promote literacy across the curriculum.

16. In mathematics, particular strength is shown when teachers work with individual pupils. This requires great skill and was well demonstrated in a lesson where the teacher chose a wide variety of activities to reduce the intensity of one-to-one teaching. Mental arithmetic exercises were skilfully interspersed with work on a computer, exercises in estimating and discussion with the pupil about previous work and achievement. Rather than sitting next to the pupil all the time the teacher moved around to present a constantly changing classroom environment. The quality of pupils' work suggests that the teacher is equally skilled in teaching small groups of pupils. Mathematics teaching is strengthened through the constant checking of what pupils have learned and what they remember from previous lessons. This keeps pupils on their toes and helps them to recognise the importance of each task they attempt. Specialist words, such as *triple*, *intercept* and *parallel* are carefully reinforced, helping pupils to describe what they have learned and adding to their growing vocabulary. Computers are used very effectively to help pupils learn. Numeracy lessons are particularly well structured, paying close attention to the national strategy.

17. Science teaching is delightful. Lessons are comprehensively planned to promote systematic learning, set at exactly the right level to interest individual pupils and keep them working hard. The confidence and perception of the teacher helps her to present practical work to pupils in a safe and sensible manner. Simple experiments feature in nearly every lesson. They give pupils the opportunity to learn how to handle apparatus and create learning opportunities that are visually, as well as mentally stimulating. The very high quality of work when pupils separated the dyes in felt tip pen ink, using simple chromatography, testifies to the effectiveness of this approach. No opportunity is missed to promote discussion or the learning of specialist vocabulary and pupils are taught how writing up experiments requires different skills to writing stories. Modern technology is used extensively. Examples are data-logging and the use of a microscope attachment for a computer which has allowed pupils to view cells and print images of what they have viewed.

18. Very good geography teaching is typified by very high expectations that pupils will participate in discussion and present their written work neatly, with correct spelling and punctuation. The very good relationships between adults and pupils mean that individual pupils are encouraged to work with increasing independence as they learn about the reasons and factors such as climate and employment that affect migration of populations worldwide. Another feature of the very good teaching is the evaluation at the end of the lesson, when the

pupils review their new learning and are, for example, motivated to use the Internet to research population growth.

19. In information technology the very good initial assessments of pupils, easy access to computers and the strategy of using computer technology as an integral part of teaching means that pupils become very well motivated. Teachers use the *Success Maker* programme effectively in reinforcing basic skills. Pupils value opportunities for Internet research and the chance to use word-processing to present their redrafted work. The development plan shows that the co-ordinator has appropriate training planned to ensure staff keep up to date with new developments in using information and communication technology as a tool for teaching.

20. The teaching of citizenship is excellent. During the inspection the very good planning, well-prepared resources and relevant topics interested pupils and they participated with enthusiasm. The teacher maintained a very good pace, keeping the lesson enjoyable and allowing pupils the time to explain their feelings about *The Little Rock Nine* and to empathise with the people caught in that conflict. This was an excellent opportunity for pupils to recognise bravery and acknowledge the natural instinct of fearing someone who is different. Pupils were able to respond to the demands of the lesson with maturity and sensitivity.

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

21. The strength of the curriculum lies in its appropriateness. Everything is planned to move pupils on, whether this is a return to mainstream, transfer to special school or a move on to college or employment. The curriculum succeeds because it is designed to address the needs that brought pupils out of regular education in the first place. It ensures that skills in numeracy and literacy are promoted as a priority alongside developing pupils' personal, social and health education.

22. Adding strength to the curriculum are science, art, citizenship and geography for all pupils and physical activities for most. Practical opportunities are fewer but are due to be improved through links with a local school. French is to be introduced next term. Additional curricular needs are very well met, often with the support of outside expertise. For instance, although history is not taught to everyone, a specialist teacher has been employed in the past to ensure that a pupil was able to complete her course and gain a respectable pass at GCSE. Drama is similarly promoted by employing specialists to teach it. This has the added advantage of occasionally linking pupils to drama clubs, thus contributing to their personal development.

23. Especially important is the recognition that pupils receive only part of their education in the unit and the rest of it in school or college. The timetable for each pupil is carefully monitored, with unit staff taking responsibility to ensure that all pupils are taught as wide a range of subjects as possible. Close liaison with schools allows unit staff to extend much of the work done by pupils in school and ensures that they do not miss out on important learning opportunities.

24. Staff maintain an exceptionally thorough overview of all learning opportunities that could be beneficial to pupils. This often involves other professional agencies and also many sectors of the community. Work with local colleges ensures that pupils gain access to courses that will help them to find work and succeed in it; these have included hairdressing, motor mechanics, carpentry and catering. This link is particularly important because it gives pupils an initial introduction to further education that they would otherwise probably miss. The practical nature of many of these courses also compensates for the limited practical

experiences pupils get in the centre. Various employers in the locality offer very good opportunities for pupils to find out what work is really like and how it is different from school. Recently, pupils have worked successfully in an office, school nursery and garage. Work experience is accredited through Entry Level English and the Youth Award Scheme and, as a result, pupils see it as an important area of the curriculum.

25. There is a constructive link with a youth service project known as XL5. This successfully encourages pupils to use youth clubs and take part in physical and practical activities after school and at weekends. Very good use is made of lunch and breaktimes to encourage pupils to socialise with staff and each other. Whenever pupils express interest in an activity, staff from the unit help them to find information and make introductions. Recent successes have included a drama group and a cadet corps. All of these opportunities greatly help broaden the curriculum beyond the classroom.

26. A strong focus is rightly placed on careers education. Teachers lend invaluable support in lessons where, for example, pupils learn to analyse their own strengths and decide which key skills will be needed for jobs they may be interested in. Close links have been developed with the link careers officer. All pupils from Year 9 onwards have guidance interviews and frequent discussions with the officer. This supportive relationship often continues well after the pupils have left the unit and assists in the final transition between the unit and the world of work or further education.

27. A very effective focus is placed on pupils' personal development. Required elements, such as sex education, drug awareness and citizenship are all taught. Visitors such as the local police liaison officer, the school nurse and occasional theatre groups greatly contribute to the strong programme for supporting pupils' personal development and promoting an awareness of social issues.

28. Teachers are perceptive to the needs of pupils and work with great effectiveness to help them develop personal skills and awareness of other people. Subjects such as geography and citizenship are used very effectively to make pupils aware of different lifestyles and cultures and to appreciate the importance of religion to different groups of people. In citizenship lessons, pupils are successfully encouraged to think about ethics, reflect on moral issues and examine their own beliefs. In art lessons, pupils are taught about different schools of art such as *Art Nouveau* and the importance of respecting different cultural traditions. Staff provide excellent role models in their relationships with each other and pupils. By encouraging conversation and through their involvement with pupils at break and lunchtimes; such as when they play pool or board games, they lose no opportunity to promote social skills. Adults clearly respect pupils and this results in a very positive response from them in taking responsibility for their work and becoming independent. The high value placed on preparation for work experience helps pupils learn to relate to adults in the workplace.

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

29. The unit continues to provide the excellent quality of care reported at the last inspection. Parents agree that it is a safe and happy place where staff understand their children and encourage them to attend as much as possible. Pupils receive excellent support and guidance, both educational and personal. This helps them to gain confidence in themselves and their learning and, for many, to reintegrate successfully back into mainstream school or move on to college or vocational placements.

30. Staff are sensitive to the difficulties faced by pupils and their families. There is excellent provision for pupils' welfare, including procedures for child protection and supporting



pupils who are in public care. The unit is able to support all pupils' individual needs because it has strong links with professional health, support and advice agencies such as the school nursing and child and adolescent mental health services. Since its move to the new building, health and safety procedures have been successfully reviewed. Staff are very aware of the need to provide a safe, secure and clean environment.

31. Excellent procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance mean that pupils' commitment to education and thus attendance greatly improve. There are strong and effective links with mainstream schools to monitor and improve attendance, even when pupils are not in the unit. Excellent use is made of the educational welfare service to follow up absences and impress upon pupils and their families the importance of regular attendance.

32. A calm and positive atmosphere, coupled with high expectations, helps pupils to significantly improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. The assessment of these improvements forms a fundamental part of the unit's record keeping and assessment. Pupils' records, including notes of liaison with support agencies, schools and families, are meticulously kept and used very effectively to monitor and support all areas of pupils' academic performance and personal development.

33. There are excellent procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Staff recognise the importance of maintaining a cycle of assessment, teaching and learning to improve the way they work as well as monitoring pupils' progress. Before pupils join, there is close liaison between unit and mainstream schools to determine how an individual can be best helped. On arrival, staff carefully assess pupils' literacy and numeracy and also their scientific knowledge. This information, combined with data available from schools attended previously is used very effectively to plan for pupils. Good quality individual educational plans include clear personal and academic targets. These are rigorously reviewed every half term when progress is evaluated and new targets are set.

34. The excellent use of assessment in planning lessons to meet pupils' learning and emotional needs has a significant impact on their achievement. As part of the review process pupils assess their own skills and are fully involved with their parents in setting themselves targets. Assessment information is very well shared with the careers officer, enabling realistic advice to be given to pupils about future employment or further education prospects. During lessons teachers are very sensitive to pupils' needs; they constantly assess levels of understanding and alter their teaching accordingly. The marking of work is positive and encouraging, directing pupils carefully to further improvement.

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

35. Parents are very supportive of the unit and are very pleased with the progress that their children make. They feel that the unit works closely with them and keeps them well informed, particularly through regular, informative phone calls and reviews. Parents report that they feel much more involved here than elsewhere. The unit considers its partnership with parents and families to be of the utmost importance. Following criticism by the previous inspection, it has successfully improved this partnership.

36. Communication with parents is excellent. Parents of new pupils are given detailed written information and are fully involved in discussions when work is being planned for their children. A few parents questioned the frequency of written reports. Inspectors found the unit was meticulous in providing end of year and end of placement reports which clearly indicate how well pupils have achieved, academically and personally, and the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. Regular telephone communication is an important everyday aspect of strong liaison between home and school and is used to celebrate positive

achievements and success as well as to relay concerns. Parents are strongly encouraged to take an active role in reviews and respond very positively to requests for regular, frequent, meetings. The reverse is also true, with staff responding very quickly to requests or concerns from parents.

37. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. They attend reviews and meetings with outside agencies to discuss their children's progress. They contribute constructively to their children's individual education plans and support strategies to improve attendance and agree targets. Many parents have not shown a great deal of support in attending meetings with other parents to discuss shared concerns or interests. The presence of two parents on the management committee, however, demonstrates parental commitment and support for the unit and its work.

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

38. The exceptional headteacher thinks deeply about ways in which the unit could be improved. Her involvement with a group of other professionals, including Her Majesty's Inspectors, has helped her to gain a very thorough understanding of the future for pupil referral units. Through rigorous consultation with staff and many other agencies she comes up with solutions and initiatives to ensure that every individual who attends will benefit by having their needs met. The centre co-ordinator provides invaluable, strong, support, especially when the headteacher is engaged in her many other duties. The excellent school improvement plan sensibly focuses on a few major targets, each very closely linked to improving pupil progress. Over the next three years, for instance, the targets are to improve teaching and learning; to ensure management supports pupil progress and to promote social inclusion. Improvement planning works because every member of staff is involved in it, producing equally good subject improvement plans, which clearly show how each subject can contribute to fulfilling these aims.

39. The work of all teachers is frequently monitored, always with a clear focus. The unit carefully monitors its contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. The information thus gained helps to inform future improvement planning and is also exceptionally thoroughly analysed and presented to the management committee. Also given to the management committee are perceptive evaluations of projects in which pupils have been involved, such as XL5 – a project focussing on the development of self esteem and key skills. Assessment data is exceptionally well monitored to establish the gains pupils have made against the expectation when they joined. Performance management is an integral part of unit life. Procedures and outcomes are excellent.

40. Individuals on the management committee have worked well to secure the new accommodation but only about half of the committee regularly attend meetings. These are frequently those members who are also local education authority employees. As a result, the management committee is not actively representative of the broader community. Those members who do attend have expressed concern about absenteeism amongst colleagues and are actively seeking to improve representation from mainstream schools and parent groups.

41. The unit manages a very small amount of money for resources and petty cash. Expenditure is very carefully monitored. Grants for staff training and school improvement are correctly used and accounted for. Overall responsibility for finance and budgeting rests with the local education authority, which keeps a close eye on moderating costs and has a very clear view of overall expenditure. Wherever possible, best value is sought through comparing the costs of different options and exercising common sense.

42. There is an excellent staff team. The experience and expertise of staff is very well matched to the demands of the curriculum and the care of pupils and they have very high expectations. This is reflected in the quality of teaching and care throughout the unit. An excellent range of training has comprehensively covered all aspects of the work of the unit. English and mathematics teachers have been involved in literacy and numeracy training. Performance management is an integral part of the functioning of the unit and the impact is evident in the professionalism of the staff in their work. New staff are introduced into the team very carefully and are given very good guidance. For instance, the newly appointed modern foreign language teacher is visiting the unit occasionally to get to know pupils and the way staff work before taking up the post next term.

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

43. There is no significant area of weakness in this unit. The school improvement plan already gives staff all the guidance they need to continue maintaining excellence.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	7
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
29	71	0	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Caution should be taken when interpreting these figures, as each lesson represents almost 15 percentage points.

### Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	10

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	10

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	4

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
8	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7- Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.34
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3*

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*\*in the week of the inspection*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	14

### ***Financial information\****

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

\* the unit does not have a devolved budget and has no facility to carry money forward from one year to the next



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

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

10

Number of questionnaires returned

8

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

No parents expressed any concern about the unit but a couple would like to see more work being sent home. Inspectors felt that this concern was unnecessary.