

INSPECTION REPORT

HOUNSLOW PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Isleworth, Middlesex

LEA area: London Borough of Hounslow

Unique reference number: 131201

Headteacher: Anne Harrison

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger
23587

Dates of inspection: 6th-9th May 2003

Inspection number: 249541

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Pupil referral unit
School category:	Special
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	24 Wood Lane Isleworth Middlesex
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Appropriate authority:	London Borough of Hounslow
Name of responsible officer	Ms. J. Clarke
Date of previous inspection:	13/10/1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Registered inspector	Science Art and design Modern foreign language Music Physical education Religious education	Information about the unit The unit's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
31754	Charlotte Roberson	Lay inspector		How well does the unit care for its pupils? How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?
28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education Special educational needs	How good is the curriculum?
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English Design and technology Geography History Citizenship	How well is the unit led and managed? Pupils' attitudes values and personal development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

The unit forms a part of the Hounslow Pupil Referral Service. Many staff, including the headteacher, also work in other parts of the service. There are places for up to 50 full-time pupils. Numbers fluctuate over the course of the year but there are currently 48 on roll, aged 12-16 years. Typically, over half the pupils are in Year 11. Most pupils have been permanently excluded from previous schools. Boys outnumber girls by about 5:1, a ratio often found in similar units. About a quarter of pupils are of an ethnic minority background but all speak English as their main language. All pupils have special educational needs and about a third have statements reflecting the severity of their emotional and behavioural difficulty. A few pupils also have a significant degree of learning difficulty. A combination of these difficulties has often resulted in pupils not achieving to their potential prior to their admission. There are currently no Year 7 pupils attending. The inspection coincided with the start of study leave for many Year 11 pupils and statutory tests for Year 9 pupils.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

This is a good unit. Pupils are well taught. Most learn well and make good progress academically and very good progress in their personal development. The unit is well led and managed. This is achieved at a realistic cost and, as a consequence, the unit is giving good value for money.

What the unit does well

- Teaching is good; pupils learn well and make good academic progress.
- Pupils make very good progress in their personal, social and health education, especially in the way they relate to other people.
- There is a good curriculum; links with the community and local schools and colleges are strong.
- Pupils are very well cared for.
- The unit is well led and managed; there is a strong commitment to improvement.

What could be improved

- The admissions policy does not ensure that all pupils are appropriately placed and many pupils with statements of educational need remain on roll for too long.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in science.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about and appreciate cultures other than their own.

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 satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in October 1998. Most of the issues for improvement identified then have been successfully addressed. There is also now, a wide range of accreditation and the unit meets with growing success in returning pupils to mainstream schools. Multicultural provision remains a weakness.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 9	by Year 11	Key	
English	B	B	very good	A
mathematics	B	B	good	B
science	D	D	satisfactory	C
personal, social and health education (PSHE)	A	A	unsatisfactory	D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	poor	E

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

Pupils achieve well. A good balance is maintained between promoting academic achievement and personal development. Pupils are set suitably ambitious targets for classwork and conduct and are regularly meeting most of these with a good degree of success. There is no difference in the achievements of any significant group of pupils other than the small group who do not attend with sufficient frequency to make progress. Achievement in English and mathematics is good, helped by the widespread promotion of literacy and numeracy in other subjects. Achievement in science is unsatisfactory because not enough is taught. Achievement is very good overall in art and design, physical education, PSHE and food technology. It is good in all other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to the unit and recognise that staff are there to help them achieve success. Pupils make a positive contribution to lessons by entering into discussion and working hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils' poor behaviour in the past has led to most of them being excluded from previous schools. At the unit they behave well in most situations. Occasional problems arise, often the result of things that are unconnected with the unit. On a few occasions it has been necessary to exclude pupils for short periods.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils grow in confidence as they meet with success in a wide range of activities. They learn how to trust adults and relate to them. Most pupils improve their ability to work with increasing independence.
Attendance	Although it does not match the level desired in all schools nationally, most pupils attend the unit more frequently and more willingly than they did their previous schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	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.

Art and design, food technology and PSHE are very well taught. All other subjects are well taught. Individual pupils' needs are met by work that is closely matched to their ability. English teaching is good and well supported by the attention all teachers pay to improving pupils' reading and writing skills. Mathematics teaching is good. The observed science teaching was good but pupils have been taught very little over the past year and as a result progress has been slow.

Teachers demonstrate a particularly good understanding of the subjects they teach. They recognise the importance of relating well to pupils, understanding their problems and preparing lessons that interest and involve previously reluctant learners. There is usually a good focus on encouraging pupils to work with growing independence and on recognising and capitalising on links to other subjects. Pupils know how effectively they are learning because teachers frequently check what they have learned by questioning and testing them. Opportunities are occasionally missed to use computers or other means of enlivening lessons, a few teachers tend to over-support pupils and opportunities are missed to make more effective use of homework.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A suitable range of subjects is taught and there is a good focus on English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. There has been good attention to developing strategies to improve pupils' reading, writing and number work. Not enough science is taught and there is a narrow range of practical activities for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. There are many close and productive links with organisations in the community and with local schools and colleges. These open up many opportunities for pupils to succeed in a wide range of activities. A suitable curriculum, often linked to work and recreational activity, is offered to pupils who cannot attend full-time.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The unit carefully checks pupils' progress and ensures that they are set work at the right level for them to make progress. Too many pupils with statements of special educational need remain on roll for long periods of time.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop and practice their social skills. They are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong and how to become better citizens. Pupils discover a sense of self-worth through having their views listened to. They are helped to understand why they, and others, can have conflicting feelings. Cultural

	development is well supported by studies in art, geography and literature but not enough is done to capitalise on the rich, multicultural locality and the wide ethnic population of the unit.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good. Many very good procedures ensure that pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress is carefully monitored.

There are good links with parents. Nearly all parents appreciate the work of the unit in trying to help their children. The unit keeps in close contact with them, sharing good as well as bad news on a regular basis.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Throughout considerable reorganisation, staff morale has been maintained and pupils have continued to make good progress. The headteacher has a very clear view of the unit's strengths and weaknesses, and has successfully steered the unit through uncertain times. The clearly defined management roles of staff are executed with a high degree of professionalism.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The management committee has been very supportive of the headteacher in establishing the working practice of the unit. The LEA, in its role as the appropriate authority, has been very supportive in helping to improve the resources available but has not sufficiently addressed admissions and leaving procedures. As a result a few pupils are misplaced.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is good monitoring of teaching. Self-evaluation is effective; staff share a strong desire to look critically at every aspect of their work. As a consequence, there are clearly defined areas which the unit plans to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The unit controls only a small part of its overall budget and does this well. Money is carefully directed towards the areas that need it most. Day to day administration of finance is very good. Best value is sought in major spending decisions.

There is a good staff team. Although the accommodation is good, the lack of a workshop limits the range of practical activities offered. Teachers have access to a good range of resources to promote learning and many facilities in the community are well used to enhance those on site.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

Few parents took the opportunity to express their views about the unit to inspectors. Those who did were overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the unit. They feel that staff are helpful and approachable. A few parents would like to see their children being set more homework. The inspection team feels that parents' positive views are well founded and that it would benefit many pupils if more homework were set, particularly for Year 11 pupils who are studying for examinations.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and pupils' achievements

1. There have been improvements in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well, enabling many in Years 8 and 9 to return successfully to mainstream schools without having fallen behind in their work. Older pupils achieve well, spurred on by the realisation that if they work hard they will gain qualifications that should give them a broader range of options when they start looking for work. Improvement in achievement is reflected in increasing success in examinations in each of the last three years. Pupils are also using their previous learning well in a suitable range of college courses and work experience placements.
2. There is no evidence of any group of pupils, including boys, girls, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs, achieving either better or worse than any other. However, those pupils who do not establish a pattern of regular attendance jeopardise their chances of having their true ability reflected in examination results because they miss out on a lot of assessed coursework. The problem is particularly acute in English and art where there is the greatest demand for this.
3. A small group of pupils have difficulties of such an extreme nature that they are unable to attend the unit. Individual Provision Plans are created for these. Pupils achieve well over a narrower range of subjects and experiences and all are making good progress in meeting their targets. Several are fast approaching accessing full time education. Records show that nearly all of these pupils are achieving well in English and mathematics.
4. Achievement in English is good, an improvement since the previous inspection. Records show that many pupils have weak literacy skills when they arrive but individual needs are being well met through extra literacy lessons which focus on basic skills of reading and writing. Speaking and listening skills become very well developed, helped by a strong emphasis in many lessons on discussion. Reading improves and most pupils read aloud confidently and fluently. Good summarising skills are developed, with pupils picking out key words and ideas from texts. Handwriting has improved and is now more readable. The requirements of the National Literacy Strategy have been successfully incorporated into the English timetable and by Year 11 most pupils are gaining passes in GCSE examinations, mainly with grades of D to F. Examination coursework is good. Pupils, for instance, answering questions about the meaning of well-recognised poems and identifying and interpreting the messages they contain. All pupils show a sufficient understanding of the plot and main characters of stories they study.
5. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils follow individual programmes based on the results of tests on entry. These are well supplemented by the use of a computer based learning system. Good implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is helping pupils to study the same topics in the same way as those in mainstream schools. For instance, pupils in Years 8 and 9 are using letters and symbols to represent unknown numbers in a development of their algebra skills. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work towards individual

targets as they follow examination courses including GCSE. Last year, 14 pupils achieved passes in the range of E to G.

6. Achievement in science is unsatisfactory. There has been no improvement since the previous inspection. Very few pupils in Years 10 and 11 study science and not enough is taught to younger pupils. Teaching is heavily biased towards biology. Most pupils in Years 8 and 9 have correctly identified the main organs of the human body and how blood circulates around them. When studying nutrition, pupils have extracted information about proteins, carbohydrates and fats from charts. This has provided a good link with mathematics. Pupils have been helped to improve their writing skills by recognising the importance of copying information carefully, labelling diagrams clearly and looking through an index to identify chosen words. Very little has been achieved in learning about physical processes or materials and their properties. Very few experiments are conducted; so, although pupils learn a little about scientific theory, they are not improving their practical skills.
7. Achievement in art is very good. It is at its exemplary best in Year 11, where many pupils successfully cover a two-year GCSE examination course in a single year. For each of the past three years, results have been improving and this year, nine pupils are expected to gain passes, a few in the A to C range. Pupils express themselves very well through an extensive range of media and use their rapidly developing skills to create works that demonstrate great imagination and expression. In a strong link with a local art gallery, ten pupils have designed and made household objects, such as lamps, mirrors and candlesticks, inspired by visits to a design museum and the Tate Modern. Their work with wood, metal, plastic and fabric has made a strong contribution to the development of practical skills in Years 10 and 11. These include an amazing sculpture of a dog, created with the help of a visiting artist, which now has pride of place in the grounds. Pupils have developed the use of colour to convey emotion, one commenting “the topcoat is like an electric field, I used strong reds for the body to symbolise danger and rage.” Pupils learn about the art of many other cultures and have produced work of great imagination inspired by Aboriginal art. Computers and digital cameras are frequently used to record work in progress and adapting images scanned into the computer. Pupils recognise the importance of strong lines, bold colours and distorted focus to aid expression, referring to the work of famous artists such as Munch and El Greco.
8. Pupils achieve very well in food technology but in Years 8 and 9 they have insufficient opportunities to develop skills in other practical activities through working with wood, metal and plastics. Pupils enjoy making a wide range of dishes. When making cakes they pay attention to who they are being made for; for instance, designing them to appeal to younger children. Pupils explain why certain methods of preparing foods are healthier than others. In a good link to mathematics they carefully measure ingredients. Equipment is used safely and hygienically. In Years 10 and 11, many pupils develop engineering skills at the local college, measuring, filing and cutting metal to produce usable objects of good quality.
9. Geography is the main focus of pupils’ work in humanities and pupils achieve well. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In Years 8 and 9, pupils locate the main cities and physical features of the British Isles on maps and interpret features which determine the climate of different areas. In Years 10 and 11 they make detailed observations about the effect of the interests of multi-national companies on the environment. For instance, the felling of tropical rain forests. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have achieved well in history; they demonstrate a growing understanding of the passage of time by correctly placing different monarchs on a

time line. They recognise how different sources of evidence support historical enquiry. In a recent topic they wrote briefly but correctly about characters and events from Tudor times.

10. Achievement is good in information and communication technology. Year 8 and 9 pupils achieve well in a wide and varied range of activities including the development and use of spreadsheets and graphics. Pupils are using their computer skills well, for instance to produce menus in food technology by entering text, moving it around and changing the appearance of it by changing fonts and adding images from commercial programmes. Pupils also design posters and other advertising materials demonstrating good skills in adding borders, frames, scanned images and colour to their work to make it visually captivating. Pupils develop good skills in using computers to search for information about topics they are studying. In Years 10 and 11 pupils successfully add to their skills, editing text carefully, moving margins and editing sound files. They use CD ROMs to search for information, using simple search tools.
11. Pupils achieve well in physical activities. Many of these activities also make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their social and emotional well being. In a strong link with the local association football club, pupils develop team and individual skills to improve their football. Their fitness improves through regular exercise at the local leisure centre. In what is known as the 'Wilderness Experience' pupils participate in mountain biking, wall climbing, orienteering and archery. One pupil commented 'I've not done much climbing before but I've learned how to put the harness on and do a figure of eight knot. I did three sessions and made progress in rock climbing'; another pupil has described his pleasure in getting bulls eyes in archery. In another good link, pupils develop good skills in water sports including sailing and canoeing.
12. Pupils achieve very well in PSHE. This represents a big improvement since the previous inspection. The subject is taught in discrete lessons but huge value is added by the close attention that all staff pay to promoting personal and social skills in all areas of the unit. Pupils' ability to form and keep relationships improves as they learn to recognise constructive and destructive features of some of their own relationships. They learn about the common features of close relationships as opposed to casual ones. Pupils develop a very good understanding of the changes their bodies undergo at puberty and about the importance of contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancy and to protect against disease. By learning to distinguish facts and myths about drugs, pupils are helped to reduce the risk of mishaps. Improvements in their behaviour are supported by a growing ability to recognise the triggers of anger and the development of strategies to control it. Pupils learn how to become better citizens as they come to understand that as well as rights they also have responsibilities. They also develop a better understanding of the benefits of democracy as they are introduced to the workings of parliament and councils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils express positive views about the unit. Most enjoy attending and appreciate that staff are helping them to succeed. Respect for the unit is shown in the good condition of the surroundings, the absence of vandalism and the care taken with equipment in practical activities. Many pupils arrive early each day to join in with the breakfast club, where they chat amicably with staff and each other. They use breaks and lunchtimes productively, chatting and participating in games with good humour and behaving sensibly. In classrooms, pupils settle quickly and appreciate the need to

work hard to achieve success. For example, six Year 11 pupils, on realising they had forgotten the meaning of square, cubed and prime numbers put in extra work to revise these topics.

14. Behaviour in and out of classrooms is usually good. It is particularly good in practical activities such as food technology and art where pupils can be trusted to use equipment safely and sensibly. It is also very good in lessons such as PSHE which are often taught by visiting speakers. College tutors report that pupils behave very well out of the centre and respond appropriately to directions. There are occasions when behaviour is unacceptable but these are often linked to pupils experiencing crises in their personal lives rather than an expression of dissatisfaction with the unit. Often the pupils involved will sit and listen sensibly to staff as they try to resolve these issues but occasionally, usually when staff or other pupils have been threatened, it has been necessary to exclude pupils for short periods.
15. Most pupils treat staff and other pupils with respect and many form very good relationships as they develop a better understanding of other peoples' feelings and more respect for their different views. Pupils understand the need to address their behaviour targets and appreciate the reward for achieving them. There are many instances of pupils demonstrating an increasing ability to work independently, without fear or humiliation. Most pupils are grateful for any support but are not over-demanding when tasks are within their capability. In a science lesson for instance, Year 9 pupils chose to describe what they had done in their own words rather than copy it from a worksheet.
16. Attendance has improved slightly since the previous inspection and is satisfactory. It remains below national expectations but nearly all pupils improve on their attendance in previous schools. Achievement in English and art is depressed by absence because both these subjects require a substantial amount of coursework to be completed as part of GCSE courses.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good. The amount of very good teaching observed during inspection has almost doubled since the previous inspection from about one in five lessons to one in three. The quality of teaching is very similar for all age groups. The teaching of pupils on Individual Provision Plans was not observed but, on the evidence of records, discussion and pupils' progress, it is on a par with that seen in the unit.
18. Through the very good assessment of pupils' needs on arrival and the regular testing of pupils' progress in class, teachers build up a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs. Using their very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, teachers provide pupils with work that challenges them without daunting them. This is seen to particularly good effect when pupils are starting a new unit of study, for instance 'The Island' in English. Here, the teacher's knowledge and understanding enabled every pupil to be quickly involved in a wide variety of tasks well matched to individual ability.
19. Teachers quickly form strong, understanding relationships with pupils, taking into account personal as well as academic circumstances. These relationships are especially beneficial when the need to calm pupils down or get them to contribute more to the lesson is encountered. In a Year 10 English lesson, for instance, the teacher treated a pupil, bent upon using his mobile phone, sympathetically yet firmly and ensured that his attention quickly returned to the task in hand. There are few instances of bad behaviour in class because teachers are presenting work that

usually interests pupils and involves them in learning. As a result most pupils work hard, concentrate well and develop the confidence to learn with increasing independence.

20. By sharing test results, involving pupils in discussion about what they have learned in previous and current lessons, and marking pupils' work promptly and sensitively, teachers ensure that pupils have a very good understanding of the progress they are making and how to improve it further. This was seen to good effect in a class of Year 11 pupils doing their final revision before their mathematics examination. They were heartened and encouraged as they looked back through past work.
21. All teachers show a good awareness of the ways in which their teaching can contribute to learning in other subjects, especially in numeracy and literacy; also as to how it can contribute to pupils' personal development. In a Year 10 art lesson for instance, when preparing for a project to improve the unit garden, pupils measured dimensions and carefully considered width and length of proposed buildings, they annotated their plans carefully and considered how they could contribute to improving the lives of others by improving a small part of the unit's accommodation.
22. Too many teachers miss opportunities to use computers to aid teaching and learning thus missing out on using resources that often interest and motivate pupils. There is no homework policy and homework is not set as a matter of course, though pupils occasionally take work home to finish or revise. Past experience suggests that it is unlikely that much homework would be completed or returned but, nevertheless, this is still a lost learning opportunity, especially for Year 11 pupils studying for examinations.
23. English teaching is good. Planning is particularly strong and teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Lessons have clear objectives, related to previous work and well matched to pupils' varying abilities. All teachers share a clear understanding of the teaching of literacy. Lessons are well structured with high expectations of work and behaviour. Teachers are constantly checking pupils' progress to identify main areas for development which are thus incorporated into individual education plans and referred to in lesson plans. Computers are not being used sufficiently to help pupils draft or present work, nor as a means to help them with improving their spelling and grammar.
24. Mathematics teaching is good. Pupils are well supported but when it is recognised that they are capable of doing work on their own they are encouraged to do so. Teachers set pupils realistic targets and work is usually well matched to individual ability and need. Work is well marked with added comments to help pupils know what they have achieved and how to improve their work. Praise and encouragement are used well and expectations of good behaviour are high. On occasion, especially in basic skills lessons, pupils are given work that is too easy for them when more effective use of additional support would enable pupils to achieve more.
25. Insufficient science teaching was seen to inform secure judgements but the one lesson that was observed was well taught. The lesson interested pupils and involved them in simple practical work, testing the strength of an eggshell. All pupils were involved well and behaviour was well managed. The small amounts of work produced by pupils in the past suggest that when the subject has been taught the quality of teaching has been good.

26. Art is very well taught. Much of the Year 11 teaching is excellent. Planning is exceptionally good, stating explicitly what each pupil is expected to learn and linking this with total clarity to opportunities to contribute to pupils' personal development and cultural understanding as well as learning about art and artists. Teachers demonstrate huge enthusiasm and a deep understanding of the subject. Pupils recognise this and respond particularly well by showing interest and working hard. Teachers' dedication to making work interesting is very evident in the development of very close links with local galleries, invitations to visiting artists and many visits to support teaching and learning. Great skill is demonstrated in being able to help pupils without doing their work for them. This gives pupils full ownership of their work and further promotes the pride they have in their achievements.
27. Food technology is very well taught. A friendly, yet firm approach, based on strong teacher-pupil relationships ensures that lessons are rarely interrupted by bad behaviour. There are high expectations that pupils enter the room sensibly, settle quickly to work and work safely. These are based on the teacher's insistence that pupils follow routines closely. The teacher's very good subject knowledge is clearly evident in the organisation of the classroom and the comprehensive range of tasks that pupils are set.
28. Geography is well taught. Activities are well planned and a good range of methods is used to make lessons interesting. Teaching often incorporates useful elements of numeracy and literacy, the latter, for instance by teaching good comprehension skills. There is careful checking of what pupils have remembered from previous lessons before moving on to new topics. Expectations of what pupils will learn in each lesson are clearly written on the board and reviewed at the end of lessons so that pupils can see what they have achieved. A high level of discussion is successfully encouraged in lessons but it is not always matched by similar expectations of written work. History was not being taught during the inspection.
29. The teaching of information and communication technology in discrete lessons is good. Planning is strong and good records of pupils' progress are kept. Expectations are high and pupils respond well to individual teaching and the very good subject knowledge of teachers and support assistants in discrete lessons. Teaching is weakened by the reluctance of teachers of other subjects, with the notable exception of art, to use computers and other technology more frequently and imaginatively to promote learning.
30. Most physical activities are taught by coaches and trainers not employed by the unit. The progress pupils make, and their enthusiasm for the wide range of activities provided, points to this coaching and training being strong. The contribution of unit staff is very good. A much wider range of activities is provided than is usually found in such units, organisation is meticulous and includes careful risk assessment of activities.
31. PSHE and citizenship are very well taught. Extensive use is made of very well chosen visiting speakers to complement the work of staff. Pupils respond very well to this, recognising that PHSE is not just another subject but that what they are learning is about having a better life. Lessons are interesting because speakers are able to make use of their own experiences to illustrate what they are talking about. Centre staff support these lessons very well, for instance by helping to manage pupils' behaviour and showing that they too are learning from the experience.

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

32. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. More subjects are taught and work is usually well matched to individual needs and interests. English and mathematics are covered well and national strategies to raise standards have been effectively implemented. Access to the humanities is gained mainly through geography, but with a little history for Years 8 and 9 pupils. There is a very strong art curriculum but no music. Practical experiences are provided through a very good food technology course and the contribution of craft elements within art and design. In Years 10 and 11 pupils extend their practical activities through college courses and work experience. There is a very good range of physical activities including boating, climbing, football and "wilderness activities". A strong PSHE programme includes citizenship. Not enough science is taught; much of the very good planning for the subject is not covered.
33. Full-time education is offered to every pupil but a small group does not take advantage of the opportunity. Several such pupils have recently been excluded from residential schools for pupils with extreme emotional and behavioural difficulties, most for violent or criminal incidents. The remainder often have extenuating personal circumstances, including the involvement of mental health services. None of these pupils is appropriately placed and it would be unrealistic for them to access full-time education in the unit. They are, instead, provided with individual provision plans (IPP's) which incorporate English and mathematics teaching; movement to full-time provision is sought by the addition of sport, work and practically based activities. All programmes are exceptionally thoroughly planned, monitored and evaluated and very good progress is seen in every child increasing their involvement and moving closer to full-time provision.
34. Of the 15 pupils with statements of special educational need, six have been on roll for over a year and another two for 10 months. Many of the pupils not attending full time have statements recognising the need for special school provision. These pupils are receiving a suitable education but the statutory requirements of their statements are not being met as the unit does not teach all subjects of the National Curriculum.
35. There is a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. They include the breakfast club and opportunities to visit galleries and museums in support of their studies. The "Wilderness Experience" strongly supports the physical education curriculum, giving pupils opportunities to develop skills in mountain biking, wall climbing and archery.
36. Pupils are given good help to increase their chances of finding jobs and preparing themselves for the workplace. In Years 9 to 11 they have careers lessons and the unit also runs a good work skills programme where pupils look at different jobs and practise interview techniques. The programme includes good opportunities to visit places of work such as large catering establishments. Good use is made of the Connexions careers service, with fortnightly visits from an advisor. All Year 11 pupils are provided with the minimum of a two-week work placement. All prepare detailed Record of Achievement folders to help them in their job applications.
37. There are many, well-established and beneficial links with the community. Art is greatly enhanced by visits to galleries in the area and strong sporting links have been made with local schools and leisure centres. The local police are involved in creating opportunities for pupils to be involved in community programmes. Links with local

schools provide opportunities for staff to train and greatly enhance the realistic return of pupils to mainstream education. Strong links with the education welfare service and health professionals help the unit to meet the needs of pupils who are reluctant or unable to attend.

38. There has been considerable improvement in provision for pupils' personal development. The positive and optimistic atmosphere in the unit helps pupils to learn to respect themselves and help others. They are encouraged to develop a sense of pride, and show it when they want to change into their football kit to show it off to other pupils in the unit. Pupils are helped to explore their feelings and emotions, for example in art where they produce work of great expression. Pupils do not, however, have sufficient opportunities to explore religious values and beliefs of different cultures.
39. Moral development is well promoted by the unit's clear expectations of high moral values. The physical education curriculum, for instance, effectively promotes sportsmanship and honesty. In PSHE lessons, pupils are encouraged to consider personal rights and responsibilities. In English they discuss and write about their responsibilities to their families and the need to improve their own behaviour for the benefit of their families.
40. Social development is very well provided for. Breakfast club and break and lunchtimes are very civilised occasions, and termly trips are organised by class tutors to encourage pupils to socialise out of the unit as well as in it. A strong sense of community is encouraged through the very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils' social development is very well reflected in the success of Year 11 pupils in their college placements and in the workplace.
41. Cultural provision is satisfactory. It is well supported through studies in art, geography and English. In links with a local art gallery, pupils have worked with several visiting artists. However, not enough is done to capitalise on the area's rich ethnic mix to promote better understanding of life in a multi cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils are very well cared for. Sensible, clear and detailed policies underpin much of the work of the unit. They are closely followed by all staff to ensure that pupils are safe and well protected. Regular meetings and briefings ensure that emerging issues that may be giving pupils concern are brought to the attention of all staff. Detailed assessment takes place immediately a pupil is admitted and regular monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress contribute very strongly to the unit's success. Very good use of money from the Excellence in Cities initiative has allowed the funding of a learning mentor to help support pupils unable to attend.
43. Absence is very closely monitored and this is resulting in improving attendance. Registration procedures are closely followed, allowing the reporting and evaluation of attendance to be precise. Immediate contact is made with parents if their children do not arrive on time. Attendance of pupils on work experience or in college is monitored just as closely as in the unit, instilling in pupils the importance of punctuality and reliability.
44. Behaviour is very closely monitored. The effectiveness of the very good promotion of better behaviour is seen in the quick improvements of many pupils' behaviour. Pupils

are set clear targets for improvement and are suitably rewarded when they meet them. Misbehaviour is quickly and effectively dealt with and carefully recorded. Parents receive detailed information about their children's conduct to help celebrate improvement and help reduce bad behaviour.

45. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils' reading, writing and number skills are tested on admission so that individual targets for improvement can be set and appropriate work planned by teachers. By using test results very well, teachers ensure that no time is wasted going over things that pupils have already done. This greatly helps to speed up progress. Teachers frequently check the progress pupils are making, checking and amending targets appropriately. Results are always shared with pupils, giving them a very good knowledge of the progress they are making and encouraging them to keep working hard.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. As at the time of the previous inspection the unit works effectively with parents. Parents' positive views about the effectiveness of the unit are well founded. Parents particularly like the welcome they are given whenever they contact or visit the unit. There is very regular contact, usually by telephone and occasionally in writing. This helps to overcome the fact that many parents live a significant distance away from the unit. Communication is two-way, with many parents telephoning the unit to share concerns or ask for advice or support to help their children. All queries are thoroughly followed through to the satisfaction of parents. Additional information is provided by the good prospectus, which gives parents useful information about the unit and helps them to understand its working practices. End of term reports about pupils' progress are detailed and informative. Weekly achievements relating to pupils' targets are celebrated with families.
47. Parents are always invited to and encouraged to attend frequent meetings where the progress of their children is discussed. Parents' views are always sought when preparing pupils for return to school. Many home visits are made when this is deemed the best way to work with children and their families. This helps to overcome the occasional reluctance of parents to communicate and work with the unit. Family co-operation often results in good improvements in attendance and thus pupils' progress. A small core of parents remains very difficult to engage, reducing the contribution they can make to their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

48. As at the time of the previous inspection, the unit is well led and managed. Organisational and accommodation problems identified in the previous report have been successfully addressed, leading to many improvements. The head and deputy headteachers' collective vision has helped mould the unit into an effective form of education for pupils who have been excluded from their previous schools. Problems relating to inappropriately placed pupils have been imaginatively and successfully addressed.
49. Close involvement with mainstream schools and the LEA has greatly improved opportunities for pupils to achieve success in returning to schools, gaining qualifications and transferring to colleges and work. The unit is thus meeting its aims well and staff morale is high. Subjects are well managed. Each has a comprehensive scheme of work and is driven by clear policy. Science provision, however, has been allowed to slip because there is currently no manager.

50. A good improvement plan identifies priorities including further development of the curriculum through links with secondary schools and the need to raise awareness of the full range of support that can be given to pupils.
51. The management committee meets regularly and has been very supportive of the headteacher in negotiations with the LEA to try to resolve the issue of inappropriately placed pupils. It gains a good picture of what goes on in the unit because it is kept well informed by the headteacher. However, it does not currently play sufficient part in monitoring standards for itself.
52. The LEA, in its role as the appropriate authority, has been very supportive in helping to improve facilities and in providing advice to improve teaching and learning. It has not, however, sufficiently addressed admission and exit procedures with the result that several pupils are misplaced and too many pupils with statements of special educational need remain on roll for long periods. In this respect, and by not providing an LEA curriculum policy for the unit, it is not sufficiently setting the context for the operation of the unit.
53. Frequent and effective monitoring of teaching and the curriculum by the headteacher and LEA advisors has led to good improvements. Individual reviews and development targets for each curriculum subject reflect a thoughtful and effective approach to raising standards and extending learning opportunities. A regular pattern of meetings, and whole staff debriefings at the start and end of each day, reinforce the ethos, style of work and standards of the unit and provide a very good opportunity for staff to evaluate and review their practices. Performance management procedures are fully implemented. Teacher development is also greatly supported by close links with mainstream schools.
54. The unit manages only a small part of its total budget, the LEA being the budget holder. Funding comes from the budget for the whole service. Financial procedures ensure that the budget remains stable and there is an improved capacity to support improvement planning because, for the first time, this year, the unit has been allowed to carry forward funding for new building developments. Money from grants is effectively spent, especially through the provision of a learning mentor, funded through the Excellence in Cities initiative. The principles of best value are observed as closely as possible.
55. Staffing is good, with sufficient, experienced teachers to ensure that individual pupils' needs are being met in small class groups. The appointment of a specialist teacher for science is a priority for improvement. Classroom assistants provide good support to teachers and pupils. Day to day administration is very good. Accommodation is good but the compact, well-resourced science room is underused and the lack of a workshop limits the range of practical activities on offer. The building is kept in good repair and is welcoming and clean. Resources are good and are well enhanced by the use of facilities in the community.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to bring about further improvement the headteacher, managers and the local education authority should now;

- (1) Revise the admission policy to include leaving arrangements for pupils and a clear timescale for length of stay for all pupils, especially those with statements of special educational need. Ensure that the admissions policy also makes clear which pupils will not be admitted on the grounds that they are unable to access full time education without much more specialist support and provision. (*paragraphs 3, 33, 34,52*)
- (2) Increase opportunities for pupils to learn about science, giving time for a wider range of study and an increased expectation of pupils gaining qualifications. (*paragraphs 6, 25, 32, 55*)
- (3) Improve pupils' awareness of the lives of people from cultures other than their own. (*paragraphs 38, 41*)

PART C: UNIT DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	15	2	0	0	0
Percentage	4	26	62	8	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 four 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	48

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	47

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	16.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	36	12	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	2	1	0
Black or Black British - African	0	0	0
Black or Black British - any other Black background	1	1	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	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: Y7-11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE contribution to provision in the unit)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5

(FTE means full-time equivalent.)

Education support staff: Y7-11

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	162.5

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

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the unit during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the unit during the last two years	0.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	48
Number of questionnaires returned	6

Few parents took the opportunity to express their views to inspectors but those who did were very supportive of the unit and grateful for the way in which it was helping their children