

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKFIELD PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Formby, Liverpool

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104850

Head of Centre: Roy Malkin

Behaviour Service Manager and Acting Head of
Centre at the time of inspection:

Bernice Harvey

Reporting inspector: Adrian Simm
21138

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th April 2003

Inspection number: 251642

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	11 – 14 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Gores Lane Formby Liverpool
Postcode:	L37 3NY
Telephone number:	01704 395945/8/9
Fax number:	01704 395947
Appropriate authority:	Sefton Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Bernice Harvey
Date of previous inspection:	This is the first inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21138	Adrian Simm	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Religious education Humanities Music Education inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9348	Mary Le Mage	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Food studies Physical education Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

The Oakfield Centre is working towards providing full time education for pupils between Years 7 and 9. The maximum number of full time pupils is set at 24. Currently, there are 14 boys and 3 girls on roll. All but two of these pupils are in Year 9. Pupils attend the unit from across the borough of Sefton. Ninety-four per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. They may start at and leave the unit at any time during the year. The centre has no data on the ethnic background of the pupils. No pupils have English as an additional language. The centre is for pupils who are not attending school because they have been permanently excluded. Pupils' attainment on entry is below that expected for their age. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN) although all pupils are identified as needing extra SEN support. The centre opened in September 2002 under the leadership of an acting head of centre. In the seven months since then it has been affected by the long-term absence of two teaching staff. Although a head of centre was appointed from January 2003, because of his absence, the original acting head was again leading the unit during the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

In the time the unit has been open and with the uncertainties in staffing and leadership, the unit is doing as well as can be expected. Satisfactory teaching and learning ensure that for those pupils who attend regularly, achievement is acceptable. The unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils hinders their own and other's progress and personal development. However, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are improving. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Whilst the attendance of some pupils has improved and pupils' absence without a good reason is reducing, pupils' attendance as a whole is below expectations. The unit works on income that is typical and as a result, provides satisfactory value for money.

What the unit does well

- Teaching and learning of pupils in art and design. These are very good;
- Staff make very good use of the community as a resource to motivate pupils' learning and to provide well for their social development;
- Staff are clear about the main areas that need to be developed;
- Staff strive tirelessly to provide effectively for all pupils. Team spirit is strong.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to understand the cultural diversity of the society in which they are growing up.

What could be improved

- The way the unit collects and uses information to evaluate and improve how well it is doing. This includes individual educational and behavioural planning for pupils;
- What staff do to improve pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development;
- Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT).

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

This is the first inspection of the unit since it opened in September 2002 following re-organisation of the local education authority's provision for pupils educated other than in school.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By Year 9	Key
English	C	very good A
Mathematics	C	good B
Science	C	satisfactory C
personal, social and health education	*	unsatisfactory D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	**	poor E

(*) The subject was only introduced shortly before the inspection. (**) IEPs are individual education plans for the pupils. These are not in place.

Pupils' attainment on entry is varied but for a few it can be up to five years behind that expected for their ages. Since the unit opened in September 2002, overall boys' and girls' achievement has been satisfactory. This is both for those who work in the unit for a period of time before starting placements at mainstream schools with a view to returning and for those who stay on longer. Since September 2002, three pupils have been on part-time placements in secondary schools and two more placements are being negotiated. This is a sound picture and involves around a third of pupils. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. It is very good in art and design and good in food studies. Achievement in knowledge, skills and understanding in ICT is unsatisfactory. The subject has not been taught because of poor computer equipment. However, as new equipment is introduced to the unit, pupils are using it well in a range of subjects. Achievement in humanities is unsatisfactory because the subject was only introduced fully in the last two months. Also, humanities is not brought alive by the imaginative use of artefacts, music or personal research and more than half of pupils absent themselves from these lessons. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are being developed satisfactorily through a range of subjects. Numeracy skills are used particularly well in science. Achievement of around 30 per cent of pupils is hindered by unsatisfactory attendance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Whilst pupils' attitudes to work are unsatisfactory, they have improved since the unit opened. However, some pupils challenge teachers' requests regularly. Pupils concentrate and work appropriately when they want to. This varies with the interest level of the lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory. Obscene language is frequent. Some of this is ignored by staff who appear, on occasions, not to challenge pupils' abusive culture. The number of days in which pupils were excluded from the centre for short periods increased between January and March 2003 in comparison with the period between September and December 2002.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of pupils is unsatisfactory. On occasions, pupils socialise appropriately with each other, such as in the breakfast club. However, for much of the time, they tolerate each other at best. Pupils' rarely show remorse for their actions. They show little initiative with their learning.
Attendance	Whilst attendance is unsatisfactory, absenteeism without a good reason

	is reducing.
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The overall unsatisfactory attendance hides the progress that the unit makes in improving a small number of pupils' attendance quite dramatically. The lack of access to good quality ICT provision until recently and to the Internet has hindered opportunities for independent investigation of a range of sources for information. Pupils take little responsibility for their learning. Pupils behave well and join in enthusiastically when lessons interest them or when pupils are keen on the activity.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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.

In all lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory or better. Teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, humanities and PSHE were satisfactory. In art and design, teaching and learning were very good. They were good in food studies. Overall, staff set out to meet the needs of all pupils. This is improving satisfactorily although individual programmes set to help pupils achieve better are not set out in individual education plans nor are strategies to improve individual pupils' behaviour set out clearly. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught soundly across a broad range of subjects although this is not yet the case for ICT. Whilst computers have begun to be used now in all subjects taught in the unit, teaching and learning in skills and understanding in ICT are not yet underway. Teachers plan well together within a framework for each subject. This helps towards building pupils' learning opportunities. Staff have good knowledge of some subjects such as science, art and design and food studies. Also, of how pupils are likely to respond to different situations. They are self-critical and review their work informally together to see how they could teach better. However, different staff have different styles of pupil-management, which result in different levels of success in ensuring the majority of pupils learn. There is a lack of consistency in approach, which means that in some lessons, pupils gain maximum points in their behaviour point system, even though their behaviour has been unsatisfactory. In general, staff do not challenge pupils to behave well and even wait in telling them their behaviour-points totals from lessons until the following day in case it creates more problems. Where teaching is linked to day-to-day or practical experiences, it is effective in motivating some pupils. This is done well in art and design, food studies and science. Good staffing levels contribute to the success that is achieved in lessons. However, the support assistants' roles in knowing pupils' behaviour targets and the teachers' knowledge of lesson objectives do not always gel effectively. Strides forward have been made in staff development for the teaching of English and mathematics. Staff with little experience in these subjects last September have worked hard to update their own training. They have become proficient in the short time since the unit opened.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Learning opportunities are satisfactory and improving. Very good use is made of community facilities to enliven the curriculum, particularly in science, leisure pursuits and activities to reward good behaviour.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported satisfactorily mainly because of the good staffing levels and staff's sound knowledge of pupils' personal and social needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	The unit's provision is satisfactory and improving. This is because staff are good role models for the pupils. Staff attempt to encourage pupils' social and moral development through its behaviour points system. However, changes in leadership in the short time the unit has been open

development	have got in the way of a consistent and effective approach. Provision for understanding the ethnic diversity of everyday life is good.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	All staff want do their best for the pupils and know how they will react to different situations. However, the consistency and effectiveness in dealing with, monitoring and improving pupils' personal and academic development is unsatisfactory. Individual education or behaviour plans are not in place.

No risk assessments have been carried out in relation to use of the premises or pupils' activities. Pupils use a playground that is covered in shards of glass. Training for staff to lead the unit's approach on child protection procedures has not been carried out sufficiently. The local education authority in its role as appropriate authority is well aware of the unit's curriculum policy. However, it has not yet produced a curriculum policy of its own to make clear what and how it expects pupils to learn.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head of centre and other key staff	These are satisfactory but have been affected detrimentally by the lack of consistency in staffing since soon after the unit opened. The unit is clear about the main areas for development. Action to improve the unit has had some beneficial effect particularly on pupils' behaviour and learning. More detailed ways of working out how to ensure greater success are not in place.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	The committee's contribution to the unit is satisfactory. It has improved steadily since September 2002. Committee members are clear about the centre's main strengths and the range of important areas for development. Details by which improvement can be measured are only just being put into place.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	This is unsatisfactory. Lack of IEPs, data about trends in pupils' attendance and exclusions and the amount of time pupils spend refusing to learn in lessons make successful self-evaluation difficult. Ways of deciding whether improvements come about as effectively as they might are not in place.
The strategic use of resources	Overall, this is satisfactory. The unit has little control over its funding. Much effort has been put into improving the internal accommodation by the local education authority, which is now satisfactory. Money has been well spent. The accommodation is used appropriately and flexibly to help meet pupils' needs. The consistency in approach between teaching and support staff in developing pupils' academic and behaviour needs is not yet effective because IEPs are not in place to focus teaching and learning.

The number of teaching and support staff is good. Whilst staffing problems in the last five months means that the pupils have not been able to settle into known routines, staff are keen to do their best for the pupils and morale is high. Resources for lessons are good overall, although limited for ICT, history and geography, which has hampered teaching and learning. Overall, in the short time since it opened, the unit applies the principles of best value appropriately. Staff and the management committee are clear about the main areas for development but have yet to build on this in the collection of more detailed data to know just how well they are doing and what else needs to be done.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

Eight parents and carers responded to the questionnaire for the inspection and a few came to the parents' meeting with the inspectors. From this very small sample, parents and carers were pleased with the quality of teaching and learning and the ease with which they can contact staff to find out how things are going. They were extremely pleased with the way staff let them know the positive aspects about their children's life at the unit as well as those areas of concern. Some wished to see pupils' behaviour improved and for pupils to progress better in their work. Overall, the inspection evidence confirms these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the unit is varied but for some, it is up to five years behind that expected for their ages. The majority of pupils are between two and three years behind. Because of satisfactory teaching overall, pupils achieve as expected. For some pupils, another measure of the unit's success is the number of pupils who return to mainstream schools. The current situation of three part-time placements in mainstream and two more being negotiated is a sound picture.
2. Pupils with special educational needs make acceptable progress in their subject learning because of the good staffing levels in the unit and the developing strengths of staff's subject expertise. Pupils are improving in their attitudes towards their work as a result of the teaching they receive. However, individual programmes set to help pupils achieve better are not set out in individual education plans nor are strategies to improve individual pupils' behaviour set out clearly.
3. In English, pupils' achievement is satisfactory because of the high expectations of teachers and the way they plan for pupils to improve their skills in other subjects. The unit has worked hard introducing the national literacy strategy for pupils. This is working well. Pupils are tested when they enter the unit to check for their levels of achievement in reading, writing, comprehension and spelling. This approach is so new that there has not been an opportunity yet to re-test pupils to measure progress. It is one of the unit's priorities to carry out re-testing. However, what is known is that on arrival, many pupils sequenced pictures into story lines and carried out simple comprehension exercises. During the inspection, pupils had improved their 'creative' writing, for example, by imagining they were the manager of a local football club giving their ideas and thoughts on the club's success. They wrote a 'match review'. Also, they have produced some good work on 'feelings'. How they would feel being 'grabbed' by the escaped convict in Charles Dickens 'Great Expectations'. They have produced pen portraits inspired by William Shakespeare's Macbeth. This is satisfactory progress in skills and knowledge in a relatively short period of time, given pupils' levels of attendance and behaviour difficulties.
4. At times, pupils are at ease chatting to staff and cope well with sight-reading when reading aloud in class. They have increased their reading skills and read daily papers well, extracting information they need with sound understanding. Pupils use ICT to word process information and produced during the inspection week, notices of their project on 'Smoke Jumping'. Another class used a video camera to record their work on 'Weather Forecasting'. Great fun was had when recording this work. Pupils took turns to be the announcer and the cameraman, insisting that staff took their turns at

being videoed, so that they also could be criticised on their performance. A good use of humour made these lessons fun, but worthwhile and productive.

5. In mathematics, when they join the unit, lower attaining pupils are aware of different types of triangles. Many know the names of shapes up to ten-sided ones and work out sums correctly using simple fractions. Higher attaining pupils are that next step on. They work out the area of triangles, know the links between addition and multiplication and put their knowledge to use in decimal sums, at times to two decimal points. They convert fractions to percentages. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory because by the time of the inspection, given their level of attendance, pupils had moved on to algebra. Lower attaining pupils worked successfully on converting $h+h+p+p+p$ into $2h + 3p$ whilst higher attainers had started using simple formulae with multiplication. They worked successfully on frequency and pie charts and were reasonably accurate with estimation using percentages although some lower attainers struggled with weight conversion from imperial to metric. Pupils are just beginning to use ICT in working out simple algebraic equations on a simple spreadsheet format.
6. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory across all areas of the national curriculum. In the short time since the unit opened, pupils who had a basic understanding of sound vibrations on entry to the unit moved onto using that knowledge to investigate hearing. They have built up an appropriate understanding of how fizzy drinks affect teeth and caffeine affects reaction time. Puberty and human reproduction have been studied appropriately. Higher and lower attaining pupils work on the same investigations. Higher attainers frequently set out their work well with appropriate punctuation, correct spellings and diagrams and charts to describe the experiments. Lower attainers are not as perceptive over the outcomes of experiments and have their work scribed for them at times by support assistants. However, only around 65 per cent attendance is achieved in lessons and in some of this, pupils only work for part of the time. Attitudes and behaviour affect overall achievement adversely and this is partly why achievement is satisfactory rather than good.
7. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught as a subject. Consequently pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' access to good quality computers has been severely restricted until recently. Information and communication technology is just beginning to be used effectively in lessons across the curriculum although new skills and knowledge have yet to be taught. In art and design, pupils used ICT effectively to draft ideas on shapes and colours before beginning their design work on Mondrain. Pupils also use ICT to label their work that is on display. Staff use the digital camera well to record pupils' work and educational visits and trips. Where these are dated and annotated in detail, they are useful evidence of pupils' achievements.
8. Achievement in art and design is very good. This is because enthusiastic and lively teaching builds pupils' interest in the subject. Pupils develop very good techniques. They show a good understanding of colour, composition and balance in their work. A good example of this is in their Mondrain work creating stained glass windows. They have studied Mondrain's 'Broadway Boogie Woogie 1942' and his 'Victory Boogie Woogie 1944'. They take their inspiration from his work, which is reflected in their completed pieces. The teacher constantly reminds pupils to evaluate what they are doing and why. This self-evaluation process increases the standard of work pupils' produce. Pupils have done well since the unit opened. Pupils frequently use ICT during their work when drafting out window designs and use this as a model when painting the glass windows.

9. Achievement in food studies is good. Pupils' interest is generated by practical tasks. They increase their skills and knowledge by showing a good understanding of the need for hygiene and safety in the food studies room. They quickly wash their hands and put on aprons ready to start work. They identify and name utensils and their use. They follow recipes and use their numeracy and literacy skills well to read and follow instructions and weigh out ingredients. Pupils use the ovens safely, setting the temperature required and timing carefully when they put in their cakes.
10. Pupils' achievement in humanities is unsatisfactory. The reason for this is that geography and history have only been taught in the last six weeks. Records show that pupils are frequently missing from lessons. In the time that history topics have covered the Magna Carta, The Great Revolt and the War of the Roses, on average, only 40 per cent of pupils have been present. The picture is similar for geography where lessons covered an introductory topic on Japan. Whilst some pupils, for example, build a satisfactory understanding of the monarchy in Medieval times and are extremely interested to find out how Roman numerals work and just how young many of the kings were when crowned, this level of interest was not the case for the majority. This has a detrimental affect on achievement.
11. Citizenship has not been introduced yet as a subject. Some lessons have been taught in religious education (RE) and very recently in personal social and health education (PSHE). No specific approach to how these three subjects will be combined to better effect has been planned. Pupils have improved their understanding of the diversity of culture in society today, of different religions and about topics such as the effects of smoking. However, insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement overall on RE and PSHE.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Whilst a significant number of pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes to their work at the unit, this is an improvement on when the unit opened. In September 2002, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development were poor, for example, staff frequently had to ensure pupils came down off the roof of the building, vandalism by pupils had to be curbed and invariably pupils left the grounds of the unit without permission. During the inspection, some pupils came into some lessons late, left part way through or did not attend at all even though they were present in the building. They showed little enthusiasm for learning when the activity was passive. Their attitudes improved when they were actively involved in lessons such as art and design and in some literacy lessons when they engaged in discussion and not simply recording learning on worksheets. At times some pupils are capable of very good levels of concentration and work very hard despite refusing to conform to social norms.
13. Standards of behaviour are unsatisfactory. Obscene language and unacceptable behaviour happen frequently and are often ignored by staff at the time they are happening. Although there is a system of behaviour points awarded for each pupil in each session, there was very little evidence of its consistent use. Fixed period exclusions are higher in the second term than in the first term of the unit's operation, both in terms of days excluded and also in the number of pupils involved. There have been no permanent exclusions since the unit opened. Increases in levels of exclusions that coincide with changes in leadership of the unit cannot be solely attributed to pupils' poorer behaviour.

14. The personal development of pupils in the unit is unsatisfactory. Pupils' social relationships with each other appear to be better than their relationships with adults in the unit. During the inspection, pupils were verbally abusive to staff and behaved unacceptably in lessons, for example, throwing equipment, putting their feet on the tables and walking in and out of the classrooms. This behaviour was not always dealt with effectively. In general, pupils show little or no remorse for their actions. Occasionally pupils removed themselves from verbally abusive situations with other pupils in order to manage their own behaviour. This is a good strategy. There were no incidents of bullying, sexism or racism observed during the inspection and the behaviour log kept in the unit shows such incidents to be infrequent. Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative and take responsibility are very limited, both in lessons and at other times. Pupils are given too few opportunities to make choices in their learning and there is very little evidence of pupils working together in a constructive manner. The relationships between pupils and adults are unsatisfactory with some pupils attempting, by verbal abuse, to get what they want in a variety of situations.
15. Levels of attendance at the unit are unsatisfactory. Attendance has improved very slightly over the two terms the unit has been open and the incidence of unauthorised attendance has almost halved. However, attendance at the unit does not mean attendance in lessons. A sample of lessons showed 30 per cent of pupils losing 50 per cent of teaching time due to absence or poor behaviour. In humanities lessons, this was worse and has a very detrimental affect on the achievements of these pupils and is disruptive to the learning of all in the group. Overall, although currently unsatisfactory, this is an improving situation brought about by the commitment of staff to developing positively all pupils' relationships.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning were always satisfactory or better. Teaching and learning were good or very good in around half of lessons. Over time, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and affected by the unsatisfactory attendance of pupils. If more pupils attended more often, then progress and achievement would improve. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is unsatisfactory sufficiently often for this to be a concern. Different staff have different approaches to managing pupils' behaviour. There is a lack of consistency and differing levels of effectiveness. This is compounded by the lack of IEPs or individual behaviour plans (IBPs) for pupils. Staff set out to ensure that the small number of girls is provided for as well as the boys. They are successful in this.
17. Very good teaching and learning takes place frequently in art. The teacher has very good subject knowledge linked to very good knowledge of the pupils and their individual special needs. As a result, pupils increase their technical skills and this is reflected in the high standard of their work. Skilled questioning draws out knowledge from the pupils. The teacher uses correct artistic terminology and this is reflected in the answers pupils give when evaluating and assessing their work. Relationships in class are generally good. Consequently pupils listen attentively and respond by showing great interest in their work and behaving well. There is good teamwork between the teacher and the learning support assistants who accompany the group. Because the same learning support assistants accompany pupils throughout the day as they move from subject to subject, they provide some stability for the pupils. They support pupils appropriately who find difficulty concentrating and persevering to complete their work. Work of famous artists is prominently displayed encouraging pupils to raise their standards. Very good use is made of display. All pupils work is

attractively displayed in the art room and throughout the unit. Work is used well to illustrate technique and how well pupils have achieved.

18. Examples of good teaching and learning were evident in some English, mathematics and science lessons although overall, they were satisfactory. Where they were good, enthusiastic and lively teaching and adult support for individual or pairs of pupils developed good relationships, which resulted in pupils concentrating well, persevering to complete their work and behaving well. When this happens, the good planning for lessons pays off and both higher and lower attaining pupils are supported well at their own levels so that they learn effectively.
19. Teaching and learning in food studies are good. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the lessons. They volunteer to carry out tasks such as wiping down tables, cleaning up and washing dishes. Pupils are keen to participate and this shows in their attitudes towards the subject and staff. Because pupils want to participate, they are polite and helpful in lessons. Pupils use their literacy skills to record work and self-evaluate their achievement.
20. Satisfactory teaching and learning, rather than good or better, happens frequently because there is a lack of consistency in dealing with pupil's attitudes and behaviour. For example, in science, some very good lessons are planned. These incorporate regular assessment of pupils' knowledge including at the beginning of units of work so that it is clear just how much they knew before they started. Experiments are very much the norm in giving pupils practical opportunities to predict what will happen and then test their hypotheses. Key words relevant to the units of work are learned and numeracy is included well. However, the impact of some of this is lost when pupils refuse to do what is asked of them, lose concentration because of others in the class who are misbehaving or walk out. This is why potentially good teaching and learning is frequently not as effective as it should be.
21. Physical education is not taught as a discrete subject but is used effectively to provide leisure activities where pupils are given a good range of opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge. Pupils attend the local sports centre where they play football, basketball and dance. When they are at the centre, they are coached by centre staff. Once a week, a professional football coach comes into the unit and pupils are taught by him. During these sessions, pupils respond well to outside staff and this improves their ability to control their behaviour and cope in different circumstances. They have opportunities for karting, ten-pin bowling, roller-skating, golf, climbing and swimming. During all these activities, there is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal and social development as well as improving their attitude and behaviour. For example, mixing with the public and behaving well when they are out of the unit. Pupils attend Crosby Hall Education Centre where they undertake 'team building'. This necessitates working together and supporting each other. Here, pupils are reported to rise to the occasion and perform well.
22. Whilst pupils' current ICT skills are now being used in a range of lessons in the centre, teaching and learning of skills and improving pupils' knowledge and understanding have not yet started. The computer suite is in the process of being re-equipped to complement the computers now installed in classrooms. Staff have not yet had training to ensure that their use of the new equipment is as effective as it should be. Teaching and learning in humanities have only happened in the last six weeks and have been severely curtailed by staff illness. Few artefacts or other resources are available to enliven the subject and many pupils have 'voted with their feet' and not taken part in lessons.

23. All staff subscribe to the need to create a safe secure environment where pupils may regain their sense of value and recover a zest for learning. Staff have worked hard to improve their skills and knowledge in teaching literacy and numeracy, which is paying off in good planning for these in all subjects taught. Major changes in staffing in the short time the unit has been open has got in the way of building consistent approaches to improving pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development through more effective teaching and learning. Also, even in lessons that go well for around the first half-hour, the final 15 minutes is frequently just too much for pupils' concentration to be maintained. Whilst many lessons prove too long, this is not the case for art and design where pupils use the time effectively because they are excited by the work.

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

24. The quality and range of learning opportunities are improving. Much of what is planned for in lessons and activities off-site is good or better. However, the lack of a consistent approach to improving pupils' understanding of the difference between right and wrong, in respecting others and in learning more consistently in the lessons offered, means that the impact of the curriculum is currently satisfactory. Also, the introduction of full-time education from September 2002 is still well short of the recommended 25 hours taught time. Although pupils are on the premises for 25 hours, break times, lunchtime and assemblies are not planned sufficiently with PSHE in mind for these to be considered fully as taught time.
25. The curriculum meets the legal requirements for pupil referral units and places appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science into which sex education is built well. This meets the expectations of the local education authority although these expectations are not set out in a written policy establishing pupils' entitlement. Staff have responded effectively to the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. This is making a positive contribution to raising standards in English and mathematics. Science lessons are well planned and include very good opportunities for pupils to raise their self-esteem by succeeding in nationally recognised awards. This programme is linked well to food studies where appropriate. History and geography topics are planned for although these do not 'grab the imagination' of the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to improve their creative development very well through art. Food studies offer an effective range of practical lessons whilst different approaches to religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are being tried including elements of citizenship and drugs awareness. These approaches are yet to be evaluated but are building satisfactorily.
26. The unit extends the curriculum by offering a range of other experiences including motivational activities to build pupils' self-esteem and confidence. For example, attending a local leisure centre for football, basketball and dance, an adventure-climbing wall for 'sheer excitement' and a ten-week course working with the local fire brigade. Boys and girls are offered equal opportunities and access to participate fully in the curriculum.
27. Information communication technology (ICT) is not taught as a discrete subject. Good quality computers introduced very recently into classrooms are beginning to be used effectively by pupils in a range of subjects. For example, in mathematics, pupils use a programme that illustrates algebraic equations and enhances their understanding. In

English, some pupils word-processed their research whilst others used a video camera to produce 'Weather Forecasts of Great Britain'. Pupils wrote the 'scripts' and took turns at being the announcer and the cameraman. Pupils had great fun making sure staff joined in the recording sessions so that their work could also be evaluated.

28. All pupils have special educational needs. Staff make sure that all pupils no matter what difficulties they have are included in all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils, who attend part-time at other schools, are well supported by a teacher who ensures the work done by pupils in mainstream is well recorded and passed back to staff at the unit. This two way process makes sure that relationships with the schools offering reintegration opportunities are good. Staff at the high school visited during the inspection spoke highly of the work of the unit in reintegrating pupils and congratulated those pupils on their progress in behaviour, attitude and academic work made during their part-time placements.
29. Links with the community are used very well. Pupils, as part of their developing citizenship course, visit a local special school to support children with complex learning difficulties. At the local leisure centre, pupils mix freely and effectively with members of the public. This improves pupils' attitudes and behaviour especially when mixing with young mothers and toddlers. Other opportunities have included visits to the local maritime museum, roller-skating, karting and 'team building' activities.
30. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory and improving through a programme of lessons as well as daily routines. The programme suitably includes drugs awareness and understanding of their misuse. The school nurse has a confidential 'drop in' session every week where individual pupils can approach her on any topic that is troubling them.
31. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and is reflected in pupils' improved attitude and behaviour since September 2002. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and is enhanced through opportunities to work with children with profound and complex learning difficulties. When pupils come back from their work in the school they feel they have achieved 'wonders' by communicating with these children and putting a little happiness into their lives. Photographic evidence shows both groups of pupils benefiting from these visits. All staff treat pupils with great respect and pupils' work is displayed well. As a consequence, many pupils take pride in the presentation of and content of their work. Lessons provide opportunities for reflection about their own lives and lives of others. Poetry is used well for pupils to express themselves. Some particularly moving poems have been written by the pupils currently not living with their parents. In art, pupils created very effective 'stained glass' windows and extended their work by discussing where examples of stained glass could be found such as in churches and cathedrals. One pupil had visited a very large house where he was surprised and interested to see such windows in the hallway.
32. The provision for moral development is satisfactory. Staff provide good examples of how to behave, demonstrating fairness consistency and care and valuing each other as individuals. The unit's rules are prominently displayed so pupils are well aware of the expected behaviour in all aspects of their daily activities. Although all staff act as good individual role models, there is some inconsistency between staff. As a result, pupils have different standards in different lessons because of the different levels of staff's tolerance. This sends inconsistent messages to pupils, particularly when stressing right from wrong. The unit has a weekly visit from an ex-professional

footballer, which impresses the pupils. He puts great stress on getting things right, team work, working together and supporting each other at all times.

33. Provision for pupils' social development is good and has helped to lift pupils' attitudes and behaviour from being poor when the unit opened. Whilst the breakfast club is important and a good initiative, opportunities are lost by not providing chances for pupils to eat at tables in a more formal way. Toast is served on a paper towel rather than with tables set out using tablecloths and cutlery. This is very important because lunchtime is only 15 minutes long and pupils eat sandwiches rather than a full hot cooked meal where tables could be set out properly. Part of assembly time is used to discuss with pupils their behaviour from the day before. Good behaviour and attitudes are rewarded and pupils freely applaud each other. The unit's motivational curriculum adds much to pupils' opportunities for social development. For example, whilst off the unit premises at the local leisure centre, pupils responded well to mixing with the general public.
34. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There is good evidence of much work done about the continents of Asia and Africa. Pupils visit the Maritime Museum looking at their own cultural history and particularly that of Liverpool and its links through the sea to counties all over the world. Many opportunities are created for pupils to participate in literature, arts, and crafts. All their work is valued and displayed. An 'artist in residence' created large sculptures, inspired by different cultures, which the pupils had great fun working on.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Although there is a culture of care in the unit and pupils are well known by members of staff, procedures to underpin welfare, health and safety are improving but not yet satisfactory. Child protection within the unit follows the local authority agreed procedures but in the time that the unit has been open, the designated teacher with overall responsibility for child protection has received insufficient training in this role. In addition, no other member of staff has received training in child protection. Although the management committee inspects the building at least annually to report any required maintenance, there is no comprehensive written risk analysis in place for the unit. Several potential safety hazards were drawn to the attention of the acting unit manager during the inspection, including glass on the playground and pupils not wearing seat belts on taxis to and from the unit.
36. The effectiveness of the unit's educational and personal support and guidance in raising pupils' achievements is unsatisfactory. Attendance is well monitored on a daily basis to ascertain reasons for absence. Parents and carers are contacted immediately if pupils do not arrive at the unit on time and there has been no message of explanation. Also, staff record attendance in lessons. However, there is very little analysis of attendance data or attendance in lessons to see if any trends are emerging. This is the case also with procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. Although there is a clear behaviour policy in the unit, its use is inconsistent and the data, which it produces, is not used to evaluate provision and support improvement. The procedures to eliminate oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. Whilst incidents of serious misbehaviour are recorded, this is in loose-leaf form and not in a bound incident book, which would be good practice.
37. The unit has worked hard since it opened to monitor and evaluate pupil's academic progress. However, due to changes in leadership of the unit and long-term staff absences, progress has not been as fast as it should have been. The importance of

establishing what pupils already know and can do on arrival at the unit has been recognised. Information about pupils' attitudes, relationships, behaviour patterns and academic progress prior to admission, vary considerably. Steps have been taken to give staff at the unit an obvious starting point for their teaching. In order to establish accurate information of pupils' knowledge and understanding, tests are administered to check pupils' reading ability, writing, spelling, comprehension and mathematical knowledge. Based on this information, staff, together with support from the educational psychologist and the behaviour support team, are presently working on the development of IEPs, including behaviour plans. These are overdue. Weekly behaviour targets are set and monitored by staff although no strategies are written into these plans to ensure consistency and success.

38. The assessment and recording of pupils' knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics are satisfactory and improving. Much effort has been put into checking in a variety of ways just how much pupils know before, during and after units of work in science. This is effective and records also, the level of attendance at lessons. In art, self-assessment by pupils is used particularly well. Pupils are continually asked to evaluate their work and say why it is as it is and how it could be improved.
39. Parents and carers are invited into the unit as part of open afternoons and have the opportunity to discuss children's progress at that time. However, a record of pupils' achievement containing information showing where pupils have improved most is not offered.
40. The unit links well with a 'reintegration' support teacher who, together with staff at the unit, identify pupils who are ready to reintegrate. Since September, three pupils have been working towards reintegration in two different schools, attending part time and supported by the reintegration teacher. Pupils take a range of lessons from English, mathematics, science, food technology, textiles, physical education and art. Two more pupils have been identified as possible candidates for reintegration. The unit is realistic when assessing the possibility of returning pupils to mainstream schools and will not put pressure on pupils by setting them up to fail.
41. The unit has only one pupil with a statement of special educational need. The statement has not been reviewed with parents or carers in the last 12 months. This is poor practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The few parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting are pleased with what the unit does for their children. They consider the unit to be good because it is beginning to achieve results, which they considered impossible for their children in other schools.
43. Because the unit has been open for less than 12 months, no reports on pupils' progress were available and no governors' annual report for parents has been issued. However, discounting this, the quality of information that is available to parents and carers, whilst improving, is unsatisfactory. There is no prospectus or any information to introduce parents and pupils to the working of the unit. There is a system, whereby parents and pupils visit the unit before attending. This is valued by parents and is often followed up by a home visit but this does not compensate for the lack of supporting documentation. The unit has developed an appropriate home/school agreement but there was little evidence of its effective use. The unit relies on

telephone communication for most contact with parents and regularly informs parents of positive news as well as unsatisfactory conduct. This positive feedback is really appreciated by parents. There was no evidence of regular reporting to parents about trends in behaviour or academic achievement and the lack of IEPs or the rigorous monitoring of behaviour and personal development make the reporting of 'small steps' in progress almost impossible.

44. The involvement of parents in pupil's learning is unsatisfactory. Parents are occasionally invited into the centre for coffee and were invited to join the unit for their Christmas celebration. However, there are no approaches in place to ensure consistency of practise between home and the unit to address particular difficulties.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

45. The leadership and management of the unit since it opened are satisfactory. Despite some staff illness and changes in leadership, the unit has moved on appropriately because of the support it has received from the local education authority and its behaviour service. Improvements have been made in important areas. For example
- the internal accommodation;
 - teaching resources;
 - the introduction of self-evaluation;
 - the beginnings of checking to see how effectively lessons are taught;
 - training for staff in teaching English and mathematics;
 - improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour although these are not yet satisfactory;
 - provision for pupils to return to mainstream if appropriate.

On balance, these improvements just outweigh other important issues for development since the unit opened particularly to do with how well staff track the progress being made by pupils in their work and behaviour and therefore, how they decide if pupils are progressing well enough. Individual education plans or behaviour plans are not in place although relevant training for introducing these by the local education authority has begun. Also, the unit has set out clearly in its development planning the need to achieve consistency in the way staff deal with pupils' attitudes and behaviour. This contributes appropriately to the way in which the unit meets the principles of best value.

46. The unit set out to achieve full-time education for its pupils from September 2002. This has been successful in part because,
- pupils are timetabled to be on the premises for 25 hours although taught time is less than that;
 - pupils' attendance in full time provision is holding up at around 70 per cent which is similar to the previous year when many pupils were only attending part-time;
 - whilst pupils' attendance at the unit is around 70 per cent, internal absence from lessons can be as high as 60 per cent such as in geography and history.

Appropriately, the unit has plans to review the effectiveness of its provision.

47. The acting head teacher has the support of a management committee that includes senior officers of the local education authority. The management committee is taking

steps to become more actively involved in the day-to-day life of the centre in areas such as

- admissions and ways of improving pupils' attendance;
- taking an active involvement in checking on the success of teaching and learning;
- visiting the unit whilst it is in session and viewing pupils' work.

48. Whilst the committee receives detailed reports from the acting headteacher, it is short of some important information to help it contribute more effectively to the centre's self-evaluation. For example,

- pupils' attendance figures reported in a way that allows trends to be analysed and comparisons to be drawn with other similar provision;
- information about how well pupils attitudes and behaviour are progressing including instances of exclusions;
- how effective has been the introduction of full time education;
- how well the centre is meeting the principles of best value;

The management committee is clear about the centre's obvious strengths and the major challenges faced. This is partly why the unit is meeting the principles of best value satisfactorily. However, it is knowledge of the detail behind this and the means of checking on improvements that are still in their infancy.

49. The strength of team spirit pervades the unit. This points to further improvement in provision providing that current staffing difficulties are overcome and leadership and management settles down into a consistent and effective pattern. Overall, staff who are responsible for leading subject areas and other development projects such as the Beacon Project linked with the local fire brigade do a sound job. For example, the subject leader of art and design is an art specialist whose enthusiasm is infectious. She has a clear vision for the development of the subject, which makes a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils at the centre. The science subject leader ensures that the content of the curriculum is good and varied and includes many practical opportunities to achieve. This includes joining in with national 'science week' events, visits out of the unit to places of interest and visitors into the unit such as the 'bug box man'. Teachers have attended training for teaching literacy and numeracy to build their skills in these subjects, which has been successful so far. Staff share the commitment to building pupils' self-belief and realistic aspirations within a caring and supportive environment. It is the consistency in methods to achieve this, which are currently missing.

50. There is a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum and pupils' needs. The ratio of teachers and support staff to the number of pupils is good. The accommodation is much improved since the unit opened. It is now satisfactory overall and provides pupils with specialist accommodation for art and design, science and food studies. There is suitable classroom space for the number of pupils on roll. Heating and ventilation problems in one classroom cause difficulties in both summer and winter and do not assist efforts in trying to maintain a routine approach and consistent environment for pupils. Resources are good generally and help teachers provide interest to the curriculum. Only in the lack of ICT and Internet facilities in classrooms and in geography and history does the unit have a significant weakness in resourcing. This limits the sources of evidence for pupils to research and restricts debate.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build on the improvements made since it opened, the unit should;

- (1) Put in place methods of checking how well it is doing that include;
 - tracking of pupils' progress from detailed and measurable IEP's;*
(Paragraphs 2 and 16)
 - the accurate monitoring of pupils' absences from school to target and improve attendance;
(Paragraphs 15,36 and 48)
 - the accurate monitoring of pupils' exclusions from school and absences from lessons to uncover any trends and improve learning opportunities;
(Paragraphs 12, 13, 15 and 46)
 - provide information readily and regularly to the management committee that allows checking on the effectiveness of the unit including improvement in meeting the principles of best value; *(Paragraphs 47 and 48)*
- (2) Ensure all teachers and support staff operate consistently agreed ways of improving pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development.*
(Paragraphs 13, 14, 16 and 36)
- (3) Improve pupils' achievement in ICT by ensuring staff are fully trained in using the new equipment recently installed.*(Paragraphs 7 and 22)*

In addition to the development points above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school action plan:

- Improve pupils' achievement in humanities (geography and history).
(Paragraph 10)
- Improve the effective use of time by reviewing the length of lessons and the extent of taught time in line with the unit's introduction of 25 hours full time education;
(Paragraphs 23, 24 and 27)
- Ensure staff are trained in line with local child protection procedures;*
(Paragraph 35)
- Put in place written risk assessments to support the health and safety of pupils both on and off the site;
(Paragraph 35)
- Ensure pupils' statements of special education need are reviewed at least annually.
(Paragraph 41)

* These points were already highlighted in the unit's plans for development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		3	6	8			
Percentage		18	35	47			

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 around six 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	17

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	17

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

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
Unit data	10.7	Unit data	21.6

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			
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	17		

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

* The unit opened in September 2002.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90

Financial year – (part-year: September to March)	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	216,362
Total expenditure	216,362
Expenditure per pupil (for 7 months)	9,015
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 since it opened in September 2002	0
Number of teachers appointed to the unit since it opened in September 2002.	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Eight parents and carers responded to the questionnaire for the inspection and a few came to the parents' meeting. From this very small sample, parents and carers were pleased with the quality of teaching and learning and the ease with which they can contact staff to find out how things are going. They were extremely pleased with the way staff let them know the positive aspects of their children's life at the unit as well as those areas of concern. Some wished to see pupils' behaviour improved and for pupils to progress better in their work. Overall, the inspection evidence confirms these views although it is less positive overall about the strengths of teaching and learning.