

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOM COTTAGES PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Ferryhill, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113992

Head teacher: Karen Summerbell

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell
1405

Dates of inspection: 28th - 30th April 2003

Inspection number: 252271

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:	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils:	11 - 14 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Broom Road, Ferryhill, County Durham
Postcode:	DL17 8AN
Telephone number:	01740 656040
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of responsible officer	Lynne Gregory - Head of service
Date of previous inspection:	September 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1405	Michael McDowell	Registered inspector	Science, art, history, religious education, vocational studies, special educational needs	What sort of unit is it? How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the unit led and managed? What could it do to improve further?
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	How well does the unit care for its pupils? How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?
23549	Helen Eadington	Team inspector	English, information and communications technology, design and technology, physical education, citizenship, English as an additional language	
20055	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, modern foreign language, music, personal, social and health education	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Broom Cottages PRU, is a pupil referral unit that provides temporary, full-time, education for up to 36 pupils aged 11 to 14, who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. It also makes provision for six pupils who are referred by their mainstream schools because they are thought to be in danger of permanent exclusion. These pupils attend part-time or full-time for a period of 6 to 8 weeks. There are presently 25 pupils on roll, 19 boys who attend only at the unit and a further 3 boys who attend the unit and a mainstream school. There are 2 girls who attend the unit full-time and another who attends part-time. Thirteen of the pupils on roll at the unit are dual-registered. Eight pupils have special educational needs, (SEN), 2 have statements of SEN for emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning difficulties. All the pupils are white, from the United Kingdom and speak English as their first language. On entry, with very few exceptions, their attainment is below, or well below, average.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The unit is very effective; pupils who come to the unit as a preventative measure are generally successful when they return to their mainstream schools, and those who have been excluded significantly improve their attitudes to learning and their attainments while they attend the unit. The quality of teaching is good and the unit is very well led and managed by its head teacher. It has improved significantly since it was last inspected and it gives good value for money.

What the unit does well

- Teaching is good and there is a high proportion of very good lessons; this enables pupils to improve their learning skills, make gains and begin to catch up lost ground.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good.
- Relationships between the adults and the pupils are excellent.
- The unit provides good quality learning experiences that strongly support personal development and that build up and improve pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects taught.
- Pupils express positive opinions about the unit and believe that it is helping them to improve. They respond positively to the opportunity they are given to improve their work and to achieve the social and behavioural targets that are set for them.
- The head teacher leads the unit very well. Her management is very effective and as a result the unit has maintained educational momentum in the face of the challenges posed by new organisational requirements and significant staff turnover.
- The deputy head and staff members with specific responsibilities provide very good support; together, the staff is an effective team.

What could be improved

- Pupils' progress in literacy and in English lessons is not as good as their progress in other subjects

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

The unit was last inspected in September 1998. It has improved well. The specific issues raised by the last report have been resolved. The unit now monitors its performance rigorously, identifies the areas of its work that need improvement and plans, sensibly, to bring about change where this is needed. There is now a good system for appraising the performance of staff and for ensuring that appropriate opportunities for professional development are given. The shortcomings in the behaviour management system have been eliminated. Pupils' individual plans now have clear, measurable, achievable targets. The head teacher has a much lower teaching commitment than formerly and this helps her to carry out her management duties more effectively. There have been improvements in the quality of marking, the information given to parents and procedures for checking pupils' progress. A significant improvement has taken place in the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Pupils achieve well; in most areas of the curriculum their progress is good. When they first come to the unit their standards are well below average for their age. However, most swiftly begin to make progress. By the time they leave the unit they have made significant gains and have renewed confidence that they can succeed. Within their lessons, and over time, pupils make satisfactory progress in English overall; however pupils in Year 9, who are taking the National Assessment Tests, (SATs), are not expected to reach the prescribed level. Pupils make good, consistent progress in reading. They use a range of cues for tackling unknown words and understand the main events in the texts they read. When lessons are sufficiently challenging, they are attentive, listen well and speak clearly and coherently. Pupils spell common words correctly and make good attempts at spelling words with which they are unfamiliar. They are familiar with the use of dictionaries. Progress in writing is, however, slower than progress in speaking, listening and reading. A significant minority is reluctant to write. Pupils' standards in mathematics, on entry, are well below the national averages for their age. Few pupils are likely to reach the prescribed standard in mathematics in the National Assessment Tests taken in Year 9. They make good progress, however, and achieve well because of consistently effective teaching that makes sensible use of the National Numeracy Strategy. A substantial proportion of pupils make rapid gains, making as much progress in two terms as might, normally, be expected to be made in two years. By the time pupils leave the unit after one or two terms, most are much more confident in mathematics and their work is much more consistent and accurate. Pupils achieve well in science. Most make good progress across the broad range of the subject. Pupils achieve or exceed the progress targets set for them following an initial assessment. Few, however, are predicted to reach the national standard in the end of Year 9 SATs tests. Achievement is very good in art, physical education and personal, social and health education, which includes citizenship. It is good in design and technology, history and information and communication technology. Pupils make satisfactory progress in geography. Pupils, including those with statements of special educational need, make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Very good: Pupils express positive opinions about the unit and believe that it is helping them to improve. Only rarely does the unit find it necessary to temporarily exclude pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: Both within lessons and during the planned activities at break and lunch times pupils behave very well. There are few exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Pupils form good relationships with each other and are mutually helpful and

	supportive.
Attendance	Good: Overall, attendance is good; a majority of those pupils who attend the unit in order to lessen the chance of their being permanently excluded from their own school have 100 per cent attendance records.

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.

In about half of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good and in a quarter it was good. In the remainder the standard was satisfactory. Planning is a consistent strength of the teaching. In lessons that were good or very good a variety of methods was used and resources, either purchased or prepared by the staff, were used effectively and creatively. In most lessons, time was used to the full. In all cases teachers had sufficient knowledge of the subjects that they taught and of the capabilities and needs of their pupils to ensure that the work set was sufficiently challenging. Teachers have positive relationships with their pupils and expect them to succeed. They manage their classrooms and pupils' behaviour very well in most cases. The learning support assistants make an invaluable contribution to the quality of teaching by encouraging pupils and ensuring that they understand their tasks. Because of these strengths in teaching pupils feel secure and come to believe that they can succeed in learning and that learning can be fun. At the end of some sessions pupils expressed regret because an enjoyable experience was ending. In other lessons, in, for example, physical education, pupils who were challenged to do their best made great efforts to improve on their previous attainments. Teachers, in most instances, have an accurate idea of what their pupils know, understand and can do and work is carefully marked. In some subjects, the good practice of clearly informing pupils of the steps they must take, if they are to improve, is followed. Homework is given regularly. In that minority of lessons that were satisfactory rather than very good or good, the delivery of the lessons lacked the spark and vitality of the best teaching. While an attempt was made to meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils by providing extra support, work was not always as closely matched to the capabilities of pupils as it should have been, in particular, higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged. Pupils, in these circumstances, sometimes became distracted and this, on rare occasions created problems. These weaknesses were found, particularly, in the teaching of English. Overall, however, this was satisfactory with a small proportion of good lessons. The development of literacy is, however, promoted well, with attention to key vocabulary and spelling being a feature of lessons in other subjects. The teaching of reading in the daily reading sessions in each tutor group is also effective. Teaching in mathematics is good with some very good lessons. It is particularly effective in building up pupils' confidence that they can succeed as learners of mathematics. The teaching of science is very good. Lessons are brisk and make full use of the opportunities provided by the well equipped science room. There is very good teaching in art, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. In design and technology, information and communication technology and history the teaching is good. In geography teaching is satisfactory. The unit meets the needs of all its pupils very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well; sufficient time is given to work in literacy, numeracy and science. There is a strong emphasis on the improvement of pupils' social and learning skills. Pupils have good opportunities for physical and creative activity.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: Pupils' learning needs are well known. They are given tasks that are sufficiently challenging and sufficient support to ensure that they succeed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: Personal development is supported well through lessons in personal, social and health education, the contribution of visitors, visits to sites of cultural interest and the daily organisation and routines of the unit. Pupils are encouraged to think about their own beliefs and values and those of others. They respond and are helped to improve their work and to achieve the social and behavioural targets that are set for them.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Good: There are very good procedures for child protection and all staff are trained and fully aware of their responsibilities. The unit ensures the welfare and safety of its pupils very well. There are very good procedures for encouraging pupils to come to school and for checking their attendance. The unit is very effective in ensuring that its pupils behave well. The special educational needs of pupils with statements are met. Procedures to check what pupils know, understand and can do, within each subject, are satisfactory.

The unit's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are pleased with the work that the unit does with their children. They are given clear and accurate information about the progress their children make. Partly because many live far away from the unit, parents rarely visit it. They are, however, responsive to telephone contact and most attend the meetings called to review their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good: The unit is very well led by its head teacher with clear purpose and great assurance. Her management is very effective and, as a result, the unit has maintained educational momentum in the face of the challenges posed by new organisational requirements and significant staff turnover. The deputy head and staff members with specific responsibilities provide very good support and, together, the staff form an effective team.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	Good: The local education authority meets the requirements of current legislation in the provision it makes for pupils educated out of school. There is a management committee that is, primarily, advisory; it receives the reports of the head teacher but it has no executive powers. It has a broad professional membership. However, parents are not represented on this body.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Very good: The unit has made very good use of its own resources and those provided by the county advisory service to monitor key aspects of its work and to put in place measures to improve performance where shortcomings have been identified.
The strategic use of resources	Good: The unit makes effective use of the very good accommodation and good learning resources at its disposal to provide good education for its pupils. There are sufficient, experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum.

Because the unit is effective in returning pupils to school based education and enabling them to make educational gains it gives good value for money. It strives to ensure that, by challenging itself to improve,

comparing its present results with its past performance and consulting with users about how the service it offers might develop and change, it gives the best value possible. The LEA has started to compare the outcomes achieved by the provision it makes, and its cost, with the outcomes achieved by similar provision in like authorities but has not yet completed this process. The LEA retains all but a small proportion of the budget for the unit and there is no procedure to carry over unspent funds from one year to the next. This limits opportunities for the unit to develop aspects of its work accommodation and resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel that the unit is responsive to them and easy to approach and that it is well led and managed • They are pleased with the out of classroom activities that the unit provides and they feel that it has high expectations that their children will succeed • They are pleased that their children enjoy attending the unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority would like to see more work given for their children to do at home • A minority believe that the unit should work with them more closely

The inspectors' findings fully support the positive views of the parents. The inspectors disagree with the view expressed by some parents that insufficient homework is given. Homework, termed "bonus work" in the unit is provided with sufficient regularity. The inspectors found that the unit did as much as possible, in the face of many obstacles, including distance, to work in partnership with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the short time in which they attend Broom Cottages, pupils achieve well. When they first come to the unit, in almost all cases, the standard of their work is below, or well below, the average for their age. However, by the end of their time at the unit, while pupils might not have caught up entirely with the standards expected for their age, they are making gains, have renewed confidence that they can succeed and are well placed to benefit from their remaining time in education. In mathematics and science, in particular, regular assessment shows that pupils of all levels of ability rapidly begin to make up lost ground. This is in part because the groups in which they learn are small; pupils receive more adult attention at the unit than they usually did in their mainstream schools. When pupils are assigned to classes at the unit, therefore, their teachers have a good opportunity to discover in detail what has been remembered from previous learning, and come to know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses as learners.
2. Both within their lessons and over time pupils make satisfactory progress in English from a low starting point. However, it is not expected that any of the pupils in Year 9, who are taking the National Assessment Tests, (SATs), will reach the prescribed level. This finding is not markedly different, overall, from that of the last inspection but there is now more consistent progress in reading than was formerly the case. When English lessons were conducted at a brisk pace and the teacher conveyed an expectation that pupils could succeed if they tried their best, they were attentive and listened well. They then expressed their own views, coherently, and listened, carefully, to the ideas and comments of others. During a good lesson on the poetry of war, for example, pupils were appreciative of the work of their classmates. They listened carefully to their teacher and with respect when younger pupils read aloud their own brief poems. Pupils' verses showed that they had learned well by the fact that several included a particular poetic device, the repetition of short phrases for poetic effect, to which attention had been especially drawn.
3. In some lessons, however, the model of speech provided by the teacher was less good and expectations that there would be good listening were less obvious. In these cases pupils did not achieve as well.
4. When pupils were given good models for reading aloud they were able to read expressively and fluently. Records show that pupils of all levels of ability make good progress in reading. They use a range of cues for tackling unknown words. They understand the main events in the texts they read and identify features of the main characters such as Macbeth and Banquo in Shakespeare's play Macbeth. Most spell common words correctly and make phonically plausible attempts at spelling words they are unsure of. When reminded, they make good use of dictionaries and thesauri to refine their vocabulary choices. Progress in writing is slower than progress in speaking, listening and reading. A significant minority is reluctant to write although these pupils are given opportunities to use a range of writing styles, including narrative, descriptive, instructional and letters. Pupils make good attempts at writing poetry. Tasks given in lessons are not always best matched to pupils' abilities and therefore higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged to develop their writing. On some occasions, also, lower attaining pupils are given a very high level of support and this limits the development of their independence as learners. Pupils' presentation of work improves over their time in

the unit but there are wide variations in its standard. The use of information and communication technology is developing and is helping improve presentation overall.

5. Most pupils entering the unit have standards in mathematics that are well below the national averages for their age. However during their time in the unit they make good progress and achieve well. This is an improvement since the last inspection where progress was found to be satisfactory but unbalanced, with good progress in number work but too little on the handling of data.
6. Pupils now at the unit, benefit from lessons that are well structured and from effective teaching which makes sensible use of the National Numeracy Strategy. Few, if any, pupils are likely to reach the prescribed standard in mathematics in the National Assessment Tests taken in Year 9, but records show rapid gains including, in some instances, where pupils have made as much progress in two terms as is normally made in two years. By the time pupils leave the unit after two terms, most of them know how to represent data in a variety of ways, solve simple equations with one unknown, and understand line and rotational symmetry. They recognise two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and know the properties of these. The development of basic numeracy skills continues to be emphasised and pupils are confident and accurate in their calculations. Information and communication technology is used well by pupils for displaying data.
7. Pupils have patchy and incomplete scientific knowledge when they first come to Broom Cottages. In many cases their behaviour at mainstream schools has led to their being excluded from practical science lessons and, as a result, their skills in planning and carrying out practical investigations have not developed. They respond to the high quality of teaching they are given at the unit and achieve well. Testing of what pupils know, understand and can do shows that most are making good progress across the broad range of the subject and that this is true for both higher and lower attaining pupils. Most achieve or exceed the progress targets set for them following initial assessment in the subject. Few however are predicted to reach the national standard in the end of Year 9 SATs tests. Pupils in Year 9 have good recall of the names of elements and of compounds that can be formed from these. They are familiar with separation processes such as filtration, evaporation and distillation and of the effects of chemical reaction, for example heat generation, precipitation or weight loss. They have used indicator papers to test for acids and bases and know that acids may be neutralised by the addition of alkalis. They are familiar with word equations such as $\text{Metal} + \text{Acid} = \text{Salt}$, and they know that adding a metal carbonate to an acid results in the formation of a metal salt, carbon dioxide and water. In a current series of lessons on changing energy pupils successfully set up a practical investigation into the generation of electricity through chemical reaction. They accurately drew the conclusion that the sour taste of citrus fruit is linked to the concentration of acid within its juice and they recalled, from previous learning, that current is generated across plates of dissimilar metals when these are immersed in an acid solution. They understood from this that a current would be generated if plates of dissimilar metals were placed in a piece of fruit. They made relevant predictions about what might occur if the metal of the plates or the fruit used were changed. They carried out their investigation well and recorded their findings accurately. Progress in science is better than it was at the last inspection.
8. Pupils make especially good progress in art. The teaching they receive is effective in enabling them to develop the acuity with which they look at their environment and the objects within it. They enrich their visual discrimination by looking carefully both at their own work and that of others, including established artists. They also go on field trips to sites rich in artistic interest such as Durham cathedral. Pupils develop a proper

descriptive terminology that allows them to comment meaningfully on what they see. The standard of work produced in drawing, painting, collage and three dimensions is still, generally, a little below that encountered in mainstream schools but individual pupils are making notable progress and put great effort into what they do.

9. The progress made in design and technology is good. Pupils learn to select appropriate materials and tools and use equipment such as sewing machines, chisels and soldering irons, safely. Through careful planning and recording of their own work they begin to understand the importance of design criteria. They follow written or diagrammatic instructions with great care.
10. Pupils make satisfactory progress in geography. They follow a topic that is unlikely to have been covered in their mainstream schools, tourism in the local area. This has developed their map skills and contributes, in a small way, to their understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment. They are, for example, able to locate places on an ordnance survey map and understand the factors that influence the location of settlement.
11. Pupils make good progress in history. In their work on England in the late middle ages they have worked hard to understand the underlying rivalries between King and Church that led to the murder of Thomas a' Becket. They are aware of certain of the similarities and differences between the social life and customs of the England of Henry II and those of the present day.
12. In information and communication technology, pupils achieve well and make good progress. They build effectively on the, often, limited skills they have on entry. They competently use word processing skills, highlight text, copy and paste extracts, alter the font style and size and add graphics and colour to improve the clarity and presentation of their work. Many use the Internet to find information. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology support their work in other subjects well.
13. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in physical education. They build very effectively on their games skills, including throwing, catching, dodging and shooting in basketball. Pupils enthusiastically make use of the opportunities provided to monitor and extend their own fitness.
14. In personal, social and health education, which includes citizenship, pupils make very good progress in response to very good teaching. This is a great improvement since the last inspection. Pupils gain personal benefit from work on managing anger and are lively participants in the work that focuses on the rights and responsibilities of individuals.
15. Pupils make good progress towards the educational, social and behavioural targets that are set for them when they first come to Broom Cottages. Most achieve these within the time predicted and further targets are then set. Pupils who attend the PRU while remaining on the roll of their secondary school return to their schools after six to eight weeks. They have made sufficient educational, social and behavioural ground to successfully take advantage of mainstream education. Almost all other pupils, who attend the PRU because they have been permanently excluded, move on successfully to school based education at the end of two terms. Rarely, when it is impossible to find a suitable school, pupils are placed on a programme for alternative education that involves some attendance at college with some extended work experience and supervised social and leisure activities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of most of the pupils are very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged as sound.
17. Within the majority of lessons, where management is good and the content is stimulating, behaviour is invariably very good. In only a very few instances, and all within lessons that lacked the crispness and sparkle of the majority, did individual pupils misbehave. Even in these cases, the misbehaviour was readily and swiftly dealt with and the learning of others did not suffer. The majority of the pupils enjoys coming to the unit and takes a great interest in what they are being taught. During a lesson in design and technology, for example, in which they were making circuits to set off sound effects, the pupils were delighted at what they achieved by following the instructions carefully. In and around the building pupils are respectful of their surroundings. No vandalism or graffiti was witnessed during the inspection. There have been four short-term exclusions within the twelve months preceding this inspection and this is significantly less than at the time of the last inspection.
18. The majority of the pupils are well aware that they have to work and learn together and usually respect each other's views. They realise that their actions against others usually have repercussions and no specific bullying, sexism or racism was seen during the inspection. The pupils understand that not everyone has the same beliefs and values and they are keen to learn about the customs and beliefs of other people.
19. The pupils are given responsibilities to which they react very well. A volunteer school council operates very efficiently. It is allocated an annual budget and has recently used it to decorate the common room. The unit has also been allocated an allotment, which the pupils are energetically clearing for cultivation. The views of pupils about their own needs are fully taken into account at review meetings. The positive involvement of pupils in decision making is recognised in the status of Investor in Children achieved by the unit.
20. Relationships within the unit are excellent and are definitely its major strength. Pupils get on together very well and staff and pupils do so excellently. The pupils like the staff and this is reciprocated. The pupils look up to the staff and realise what they are trying to do for them.
21. Attendance at the unit is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The majority of the pupils come to the unit on time and most lessons commence promptly. Because numbers in attendance are small, the absence of one or two pupils who may have moved from the area without notice, or who are being detained because of crime, has an exaggerated effect on the percentage figure for unauthorised absence.
22. A high proportion of pupils attains 100 per cent attendance within each term.
23. Overall, the very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils plus their good attendance contribute very considerably towards the success of their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching is good overall. In just under half of the lessons observed the quality of teaching was very good and in about a quarter it was good. In the remainder, the standard was satisfactory.
25. Planning is a consistent strength of the teaching. Teachers are clear about the aims and purposes of their lessons and these are shared with the pupils so that they understand what they are expected to achieve. Frequently, the time to be allocated to each part of the lesson is planned, in advance and in detail, and this helps teachers to maintain a brisk pace and keep their lessons on track.
26. In lessons that were good or very good the pupils' interest was stimulated and maintained by the use of a variety of methods. Pupils might, perhaps, work initially as a whole group listening to the teacher's introduction and responding to questions. The effectiveness of this introduction was sometimes enhanced by good use of information technology, for example an interactive whiteboard. The usefulness of the whiteboard in getting lessons off to a good start was well demonstrated in a science lesson for Year 9 pupils. Through its use it was possible for the teacher to summarise graphically and very efficiently what pupils had learned previously and to highlight the key questions arising from this on which the lesson was to focus. Pupils were apt to pay attention to the screen and this helped to increase their recall of their past learning. The opportunity was taken by the teacher to entrust the operation of the whiteboard to a pupil and by this means ensure his full involvement in the lesson.
27. Effective use was also widely made of resources prepared by teachers themselves, such as time lines and summary charts, to focus learning and stimulate recall.
28. After the introductory phase of lessons pupils were usually set to work individually or in pairs on tasks that, in most subjects, were at a suitable level of difficulty. However, in English lessons, from time to time, the tasks assigned were insufficiently challenging.
29. Lessons generally closed with a plenary session to summarise what had been learned. Where these sessions were conducted effectively a valuable opportunity was afforded for the teacher, through questioning, to assess what had been learned. Additionally, by answering the teacher's questions, pupils improved their chances of remembering the lesson.
30. Time is well used in most cases. On occasions, however, the pupils require more time to complete their individual tasks than the plan allows for and when this happens the plenary session at the end of the lesson tends to be rushed and therefore less effective. In English lessons time is sometimes lost because instructions are not clearly delivered and have to be repeated.
31. In all cases teachers have sufficient knowledge of the subjects that they teach and of the capabilities and needs of their pupils to produce effective lessons.
32. Teachers have positive relationships with their pupils and expect them to succeed. They manage their classrooms and pupils' behaviour very well in most cases. Occasionally, however, the teacher is less confident in managing the class than should be the case and is diffident in giving instructions. Pupils find this lack of authority difficult to cope with and where it occurs they sometimes become less cooperative and disinclined to work productively.

33. The learning support assistants make an invaluable contribution to the quality of teaching by encouraging pupils and ensuring that they understand their tasks. They are skilful in reading the children's moods, anticipating possible difficulties and heading these off.
34. Because of these strengths in teaching pupils feel secure and come to believe that they can succeed in learning and that learning can be fun. At the end of lessons pupils were sometimes heard to express regret because an enjoyable experience was ending. In other sessions pupils who were challenged to do their best made great efforts to improve on their previous attainments.
35. Assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do is accurate and work is, in most cases, carefully marked. In some subjects pupils are clearly informed of the steps they must take if they are to improve. Homework is given regularly in accordance with the policy of the unit.
36. In lessons that were satisfactory rather than good, the teaching sometimes lacked spark and vitality. Where it would have been desirable to have matched the work to the capabilities of pupils this was not always done. In these cases the teacher failed to fully engage the pupils, capture their attention and interest and move their learning forward at an optimum rate. Instructions sometimes were delivered without confidence and lacked clarity. Pupils in these circumstances became more distracted. This in turn posed, on occasions, problems in class management.
37. The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and a good range of resources is available. Elements of the literacy strategy are being introduced but are not yet fully in place. In the better lessons, the teachers' questions are stimulating and challenging and the pace is brisk; pupils, then, express their views clearly and usually listen to the views of others. In these cases they work hard and make good progress. This was, for example, the case in a team-taught lesson on war poetry that engaged the pupils fully and resulted in them producing good work. However, in more than half of the lessons observed, the teacher failed to sustain this high standard and lessons were more pedestrian. Instructions were not as clear as they should have been and as a result pupils' attention wandered and they became more difficult to manage. Higher attaining pupils in particular could do more than they were asked to on such occasions. It is a good feature that pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and this process, well handled, could be powerfully motivating.
38. In mathematics teaching is good and leads to pupils making notable gains and achieving well. The teacher has good, up to date knowledge of the subject and knows the pupils very well. Relationships between teacher and pupils are very good. Teaching is underpinned by very good long term planning and the particularly effective work of the support assistants. The national numeracy strategy has been implemented well. As a result of this pupils behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to the subject. The teacher has a secure process for checking the pupils' learning and has accurate knowledge of what each knows, understands and can do.
39. The quality of teaching in science is very good and leads to pupils learning very well and making up ground previously lost. Pupils evidently enjoy their science lessons, especially the practical and investigative sessions. The teacher's subject knowledge is very good and the selection of learning experiences is very well judged. Relationships within the classroom are very positive and there is good team work between the teacher and the learning support assistants that ensures that all pupils get the help that they need. The best use is made of the resources provided for science. Through a variety of assessment procedures the teacher has a very accurate understanding of the capabilities and attainments of each pupil.

40. The quality of teaching is very good in art, physical education and personal, health and social education. In art a strong feature is the manner in which pupils are challenged to look critically and very carefully at the world about them and to evaluate their own work and that of others. Teaching in art strongly promotes the cultural and spiritual development of pupils. In physical education lessons the consistently high standard of teaching results in pupils trying their best and challenging themselves to improve their own performance. It makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. There has been significant improvement in the teaching and provision for personal social and health education since the last inspection. The subject now includes citizenship and lessons are taught with flair and confidence.
41. In design and technology, history and information and communication technology teaching is good. In both design and technology and history the teacher's knowledge of the subject is good. This leads to interesting and well prepared lessons. There are high expectations of the pupils in these subjects, especially in design and technology. These are repaid by the safe behaviour of the pupils when they use potentially dangerous tools in the kitchen or the workshop. The teaching in both history and design and technology is carefully planned to make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.
42. The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory; pupils are enabled to develop their knowledge of the local environment and improve their competence as map readers. Lessons are soundly taught but, partly because the planned programme of work is quite limited, they lack sparkle and learning is without sufficient sense of purpose.

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

43. The unit provides a suitable curriculum that meets legal requirements for pupil referral units and reflects the National Curriculum requirements and Key Stage 3 strategy. There are good learning opportunities provided for pupils across the ability range. Pupils with additional language needs or from minority ethnic groups rarely attend the unit because few live within its catchment area. Nevertheless, the curriculum planned takes account of the obligation to meet the learning needs of such pupils should they be placed at Broom Cottages.
44. The curriculum emphasises English, mathematics and science and personal, health and social education. It also makes provision for learning in the humanities, creative and practical work and physical activity. No provision is made for religious education, music or a foreign language. The well-structured activities at breaks and lunchtimes form an integral part of the curriculum and make a significant impact on pupils' personal and social development. This is most important in preparing pupils for their return to mainstream education.
45. There is a recently updated policy for each subject. Detailed plans of what is to be taught and how it is resourced are used to guide teachers' lesson preparation. The unit has adopted effective strategies for the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. A programme to further promote these cross-curricular skills is currently being developed. Sex education and education about the misuse of drugs and alcohol is provided. Outside professionals from the health service and the police contribute to this. All pupils have equal opportunity to gain access to the curriculum. There is good provision for education beyond the

classroom. Pupils make planned visits to centres of cultural and historic interest and there are opportunities for them to take part in residential visits.

46. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development is good. Provision for spiritual and moral development is good and has improved well since the previous inspection. For social and cultural development provision is very good and has improved very well.
47. The unit provides many opportunities for pupils to develop awareness of their own feelings and those of others. Their efforts and achievements are celebrated in lessons and assemblies, and a motivating system of rewards promotes the development of self-esteem and confidence. Pupils know they are valued. They benefit from opportunities to discuss their problems with a counsellor, and begin to empathise with the difficulties of others through moments of reflection, for instance, on the devastating effects of war. There are planned moments of excitement as was seen in a design and technology lesson when the circuit boards constructed by the pupils emitted the predicted range of sounds, including a police car siren and the tick of a grandfather clock.
48. Provision for moral development is good and enables pupils to have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong behaviour. The unit's rules are prominently displayed in classrooms and corridors, and adults are very good models of fair courteous behaviour. The school actively encourages pupils to regulate their own actions through ongoing consideration of their progress towards their personal targets. When they do not achieve their goals, pupils understand where they have gone wrong, and are given clear guidance and support to improve. They also deepen their moral awareness when they discuss major issues such as the rights and responsibilities of members of a community and the effects of drug abuse on individual and family life.
49. Provision for social development is very good and makes a significant contribution to helping pupils modify their own behaviour. This is very good preparation for their return to mainstream school. Sharing, turn-taking and listening to others are promoted throughout the day. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their social skills through working in small groups in lessons and during recreation times. They are encouraged to make choices and to take responsibility. This can be seen in their work with the School Council and in areas outside the unit such as the allotment, helping in a church lunch club and a special school, and in collecting for a wide range of charities. Visits to the local area and the visitors they meet in the unit also provide many opportunities for them to show that they can behave appropriately. Because pupils are at the unit for a relatively brief time, specific careers teaching and guidance is not provided. However, through the extensive opportunities that the unit provides for social development, including citizenship lessons, pupils make a good start in developing those traits and characteristics that will help them in choosing career paths or in being reliable employees.
50. Provision for cultural development is very good. Through lessons in literature, art, history and food technology pupils develop a very good awareness of their own culture and those of other places and times. This is well supported through the unit's contacts with members of local ethnic minority groups, and the many visits pupils make to regional sites of interest including the National Glass Centre, Durham Cathedral and Blackhall Rocks,
51. The unit ensures that, after their time at the PRU, its pupils integrate very successfully within local secondary schools. Schools are very pleased with the efficient two-way partnership that has been formed between their staff and those of the unit. At one school, six out of eight pupils re-integrated recently were achieving very well, while the others showed significant improvement. One boy, in particular, on return to school was ahead of

his contemporaries in certain aspects of English. However, because the unit does not receive pupils' previous attendance records it is difficult for them to report any improvement in attendance whilst pupils are attending the unit.

52. The unit has very good links with its community. These have improved since the previous inspection when they were described as limited. Now they contribute a lot towards the pupils' learning. Some pupils enjoy helping the nearby church with senior citizens' lunches whilst the local trades and commerce partnership provide tickets for all the nearby professional soccer games. The police contribute to work in citizenship. The pupils raise money to support various charities – for example, the local hospice and a boy with leukaemia. Recently the unit has become a member of the Town Council Allotment Society.
53. Links with other schools are good. The unit has good relationships with several local secondary schools within which, its pupils eventually become integrated. Pupils from the unit often willingly help out at a nearby special school. The local university provides trainee teachers and nursery nurses who visit the unit as part of their course, whilst local sixth form students come in for work experience towards their National Vocational Qualifications in Child Care.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. This area of the unit's work has improved since the last report. The unit has very good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The head teacher is the named and trained person and she has ensured that all staff are fully aware of their responsibilities. She also takes responsibility for 'Looked After Children'. Very good liaison is maintained with the local authority. All incidents are recorded and the confidentiality of sensitive material is carefully safeguarded.
55. The head teacher has received relevant health and safety training. She regularly completes risk assessments on the building and also for each pupil in the unit and she ensures that the unit complies with its detailed health and safety policy. All fire, portable electrical and physical educational equipment are properly tested for safety. Emergency exercises are held every term and escape routes are accessible and well marked. Accident and medical procedures are well understood and efficient. There are several trained first aid personnel. Very good use is made of outside professional help, behaviour support personnel and the educational psychologist. The unit has a written Internet policy to make sure that pupils using it are not at risk.
56. The unit has very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Registers are well maintained, parents are made very well aware of their responsibility and very good use is made of the educational welfare officer. There is a clear routine for following up non-attenders. Awards for good and improved attendance are given at assemblies.
57. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Rewards and sanctions are offered according to clear criteria and pupils understand the system. Groups of pupils are trained in a Peer Support Programme to help their contemporaries deal with their difficulties. This helps to further their sense of responsibility. The good lessons in personal, social and health education, some of which are targeted at getting pupils to recognise and control feelings, such as anger, also very well support personal development. Assemblies and personal, social education are used to discuss bullying

and pupils are encouraged to report any incident to an adult. All staff are experienced at identifying and eliminating potentially threatening situations.

58. The personal progress made by pupils is recorded in personal files and parents are regularly verbally informed about this. There are also regular six monthly reports that are sent home.
59. Overall, the unit provides a very safe and caring environment, which adds considerably to the success of the pupils' learning. The safety of pupils using the Internet is carefully ensured.
60. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is satisfactory but overall assessment procedures need to be standardised. There is some good practice in subjects, notably in mathematics and science but lack of clear assessment criteria and procedures in some longer-term plans leads to a failure to use assessment for future learning. The unit is aware of this deficiency, and has almost completed a new policy and system of assessment to be introduced at the start of the next school year. This should lead to a uniformity of approach across and within subject areas to enable staff to have a better profile of pupils' attainment and progress. The new arrangements should provide a sound basis to inform future planning.
61. The school has a clear commitment to both recognising and celebrating pupils' achievements through a comprehensive system of rewards. Achievements are rewarded in assemblies.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Parents believe that this is a good unit. In particular, they say that they feel comfortable about approaching the staff with questions or a problem. They further add that the unit is well led and managed, that their child likes coming to the unit and is expected to work hard and give of their best. They think that the teaching is good and the unit provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. A small minority denied that the unit works closely with parents or provides their child with the right amount of homework. Inspectors agree with parents about the strengths of the unit. However, they disagree with the negative views expressed. The inspectors found that the unit provides sufficient 'Bonus Work' as homework and continuously does its utmost to work as closely as possible with its parents.
63. The quality of information that the school provides for its parents is good and has improved since the previous inspection when it was a weakness. The school brochures are regularly updated and the head teacher frequently writes her own personal newsletter to all parents. Pupil reports are provided every six months and are clear and unambiguous. There is frequent contact with parents by telephone to resolve queries and problems and the unit has an "open door" policy. Because most parents live a long way from the unit transport to pupil reviews and interviews is provided for them and this encourages very good parental attendance.
64. Because many of the families live far from the unit, it is not easy for them to play a large part in their child's education. However, most are keen to do so wherever possible by attending and taking part in open days and presentations. Parents make good use of telephone contact with the unit. The use of Bonus Work at home has been surveyed by the unit and is seen to be 85 per cent successful.

65. Overall, the unit has satisfactory links with its parents and this compares well with the judgement of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

66. The head teacher leads the unit very well. She has built upon the strengths in leadership that were identified at the last inspection and leadership and management have improved well since then. The constraints that then limited her effectiveness, for example the need, that then prevailed, for her to take on a full teaching commitment because of staff shortages, or the shortcomings in the management structure that left the unit without a substantive post of deputy head, have been resolved. She now leads the unit with clear purpose and great assurance. She articulates, clearly and has a strong conviction that the pupils who come to the unit have a right to the best education that can be provided. She thinks that it is the task of all those who work there to try as hard as possible to give these pupils a taste of educational success so that their chances in life will improve. Her management is very effective and, as a result, the unit has maintained educational momentum in the face of the challenges posed by new organisational requirements and significant staff turnover. The deputy head makes an especially significant contribution both to the development and organisation of the curriculum and towards the maintenance of high morale and team spirit among the staff. Teachers, and other staff members who have specific responsibilities, carry these out conscientiously and, in most cases, effectively. This makes it possible for the head teacher to plan securely for future developments and improvements and provides her with very good support. Together, the staff is an effective team.
67. The unit has made very good use of its own resources and those provided by the county advisory service to monitor key aspects of its work and to put in place measures to improve performance where shortcomings have been identified. The policy for improving the performance of educational provision that is managed centrally by the local education authority (LEA) is well used by the unit. The head teacher and her deputy have performance targets set for them under the auspices of the management committee for the PRU. Teachers within the unit, in their turn, also agree targets.
68. Because pupils are on roll at the unit for no more than two terms, it is impracticable to set teachers targets that are based on the pupils' performance in national, end of stage, assessment tests (SATs). It is important, however, to the continuing development of the unit's effectiveness, that, wherever possible, targets set for the unit and all involved with it concern improvements in what pupils know, understand and can do.
69. There is a good development plan for the unit that identifies a number of sensible priorities for improvement. Presently, however, targets tend to be couched in terms of what individual teachers, or the unit as a whole, will provide or do, rather than in terms of measurable improvements to the outcomes of the pupils' learning. For a shift in the emphasis within target setting to come about, a very accurate analysis of pupils' attainments will need to be made when they enter the unit and consistent, reliable assessment made of their developing attainments, especially in literacy and numeracy, throughout their time there. In an example of successful development planning, the unit, because it recognises the paramount importance of accurately measuring and recording pupils' progress, has almost completed the production of a set of rigorous procedures for checking pupils' progress. These procedures and the data that they will produce, will serve the unit well in measuring its own performance.

70. The local education authority meets the requirements of current legislation in relation to the provision it makes for pupils educated out of school. There is a management committee for the unit that has a broad professional membership. However, parents are not represented on this body and thus the opportunity to learn from this important viewpoint is missed. The function of the management committee is primarily advisory; it receives the reports of the head teacher but it has no executive powers. The LEA retains all but a small proportion of the budget for the unit and there is no procedure to carry over unspent funds from one year to the next. Because of this the unit is not able to link its spending decisions to anything other than very short-term educational purposes. This limits opportunities for the unit to take the responsibility of developing, in a gradual, planned way, aspects of its work, accommodation and resources, because the LEA has not empowered the unit to acquire resources from the vendors offering the most cost-effective deals, in the way, for example, that schools now do, it is not making the best use of the resources it allocates to the PRU. The LEA has not yet compared the outcomes achieved by the provision it makes, and its cost, with the outcomes achieved by similar provision in like authorities. By the local authority's own figures, the average cost to the authority to educate a child, otherwise than in school, is £12,705. In 2002/2003 the total cost of making 40 places available at the unit was £503,006. This makes the cost per place £12,575. However, because the unit is very effective and returns the great majority of its pupils to school based education within two terms, and because it enables many of them to make much more effective use of schooling and to make educational gains it gives good value for money.
71. There are an adequate number of full-time and part-time teachers to deliver the curriculum offered. With the exception of English, subject co-ordinators have specialist qualifications in the areas they lead. Learning support assistants work very effectively with teachers. They make an invaluable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging pupils and ensuring that they understand the tasks they are given.
72. Performance management procedures are in place for all staff to whom they apply. The head teacher agrees her targets with a member of the school's management committee. An induction and supervision programme effectively supports staff new to the school, and temporary staff are given clear guidance on the unit's day-to-day and longer term procedures, including behaviour management. Relevant staff development for teachers and learning support assistants is planned annually in line with the school's development plan, and to meet individual needs. The administrative, maintenance, domestic and catering staff make a very good contribution to the life of the school and feel valued for their efforts.
73. The accommodation is very good and has improved well since the previous inspection. The school has benefited from a recent refurbishment and extension programme. Classrooms are well furnished and equipped. There are sufficient computers and software. The specialist facilities for science, information and communication technology, art and food technology are well used to promote pupils' learning. The sports hall is small, but adequate for the number of pupils currently on roll. Pupils have a purpose built dining room, and a large recreation room with a good range of activities which support their personal development and social skills. A grassed area and a hard surfaced yard are well used for physical activities. The premises are very clean and well maintained, and pupils' work is attractively displayed in classrooms and corridors. This supports the positive ethos of the unit. The accommodation is accessible to disabled users and recent refurbishment has brought it into line with the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, (2001).

74. Resources, including those produced by the staff, are good and have been improved well since the previous inspection. They are used effectively to promote pupils' learning. Good use is also made of the local environment as a resource, particularly in art, geography, history and physical education. Information and communication technology is now used in all subject areas and is being further extended through a systematic development programme.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to improve further, the head teacher and those staff members with management responsibility for English and the development of literacy, should:

- (1) Take immediate steps to ensure that pupils make greater progress in literacy, especially writing, and consistently achieve well in English lessons. (Paragraph numbers 3, 4, 36, and 37).

In addition to this issue, the LEA, should consider the following important but less immediate matters when drawing up its action plan in response to this inspection report.

- (2) The LEA should ensure that the outcomes of the unit are compared to those of similar units elsewhere to help determine that resources are being used most productively. (Paragraph number 70).
- (3) The LEA should consider removing the constraints that prevent the unit from making sensible medium and long term financial plans. (Paragraph number 70)

PART C: SCHOOL 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	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	9	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	42	37	21	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	25

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	8

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	5

Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	11

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

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the unit during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the unit during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	25
Number of questionnaires returned	10

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	0	10	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	20	10	0	30
Behaviour in the school is good.	10	60	10	0	20
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	30	10	10	30
The teaching is good.	40	40	0	0	20
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	60	10	0	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	30	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	50	0	0	10
The school works closely with parents.	20	60	10	10	0
The school is well led and managed.	40	50	0	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	30	0	10	20

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

40	50	0	0	10
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