

INSPECTION REPORT

OLD WARREN HOUSE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Lowestoft

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124526

Headteacher: Elizabeth Rodgers

Reporting inspector: Hilary Gannaway
21527

Dates of inspection: 6th – 8th May 2003

Inspection number: 255103

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	14 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Warren Road Lowestoft Suffolk
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	John Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Team inspector	English	Quality and range of learning opportunities
21529	Greg Sorrell	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Educational Inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Old Warren House is a referral unit for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. It caters for pupils in Years 10 and 11 from up to 10 secondary schools in North Suffolk. Pupils are referred because they have been excluded from school, refused to attend or are at high risk of exclusion. Most pupils have low self-esteem and poor records of behaviour and attendance. Some pupils also have a range of medical conditions. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds, show challenging behaviour, and are involved with the criminal justice system. There are 27 pupils on roll, all with English as a first language. There are eleven girls and only two pupils are of ethnic minority heritage. Seven pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs, mainly for emotional and behavioural difficulties although several have additional moderate learning difficulties. Four pupils are dual registered and attend a local mainstream school as well as the unit. Pupils arrive with big deficits in basic skills, mainly due to gaps in their education. As a result, on entry their attainment is below that expected for their age.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

This is an effective unit with some very good features. Pupils achieve well overall and sometimes very well. They are very well prepared for further education and work, due to consistently good teaching supported by the exceptionally good teamwork of all staff. There are a variety of initiatives to help pupils learn including a range of awards and certificates relevant to their individual needs. This has a positive effect on their self-esteem and learning. Leadership and management continue to be very effective. There is a constant emphasis on the unit as a learning environment and as a result it provides good value for money.

What the unit does well

- Leadership and management are very good and all staff ensure pupils gain the best from their education.
- Learning opportunities for pupils are very good and flexible enough to successfully meet their individual needs and equip them for further education or work.
- The comprehensive support and care provided by the unit contribute very well to pupils' achievement and personal development.
- The good, and sometimes very good, teaching, is exceptionally well supported by the highly skilled teaching assistants who are deployed effectively
- The unit has excellent links with parents and carers.

What could be improved

- There is lack of information from schools about some pupils when they enter the unit.
- Some pupils have out of date Statements of Special Educational Needs.
- The learning targets in the individual education plans for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs do not always contain measurable outcomes.

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

Improvement since the unit was last inspected in June 1998 is good. The few issues have been addressed and there have been further significant improvements. There is now a higher percentage of very good teaching. A wider range of carefully thought out teaching groups and a curriculum that is flexible enough to cater for all pupils' needs has led to better achievement. The development of teaching assistants' skills and the use the unit has made of other professionals and the community has greatly benefited pupils' academic, personal and social skills.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

Progress in:	by Year 11	Key
English	A	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

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

All pupils, including the minority of girls and the few pupils of ethnic minority heritage, achieve well and, at times, very well compared to their previous low attainment. This is due to consistently good teaching, effective behaviour management and the emphasis that is put on the unit being flexible enough to meet pupils' changing needs. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs achieve well because they have appropriate one to one support. However, initial progress for some pupils is slowed by the lack of information from their previous schools. Pupils' achievement is very good in English where it is taught by a very experienced teacher. It is good in mathematics. In both subjects work is organised so that pupils make up gaps in their basic skills. In English, by the end of Year 11, this means most pupils are confident enough to complete course work, mostly independently. In mathematics, by the time pupils leave, they have covered all aspects of the work needed for Entry Level. Pupils' achievement is very good in personal, social and health education (PSHE) where they understand they are acquiring skills that will support them in the community. Pupils' achievement in science is good due to the emphasis on practical work which they enjoy. Pupils use an increasing variety of information and communication and technology (ICT) to support work in a range of subjects. As a result, they progress to the stage where they leave with a good range of external awards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Good overall. In fact, attitudes in lessons improve the longer pupils are in the unit. Pupils are eager to learn, enthusiastic and show good perseverance with tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Despite long histories of behavioural difficulties, most pupils behave sensibly and rarely disrupt lessons. Behaviour at lunch times and while out on visits is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils gain in maturity and self-esteem. They trust staff and respond well to their high expectations.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory in overall percentage terms. However, these pupils have often not attended school for long periods of time. They make good improvement often achieving high levels of attendance by the time they leave.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 10 – 11
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

Teaching is good overall and this has a positive effect on helping pupils make up lost time. It meets the needs of all pupils well because, despite some inconsistency in lesson planning, work meets individual needs and supports personal development. Teaching is very good in English, all aspects of PSHE, including citizenship and life skills, and for pupils completing ASDAN work. This is because teachers are very experienced in working with these pupils and help them become independent learners. Teaching is good in mathematics and science where good subject knowledge ensures pupils acquire an effective range of skills. Literacy is taught very effectively and numeracy well. This is due to the use of individual programmes where pupils work hard to gain relevant basic skills which they then use to support work in other subjects. Staff are beginning to use ICT more confidently, although not always consistently, across the curriculum as an aid to learning. Teamwork with the teaching assistants, who often support pupils with additional learning needs, ensures all pupils progress at a suitable rate. At all times staff work hard to organise lessons and manage behaviour so that pupils are motivated and keen to work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. There is a strong focus on English and mathematics and pupils are very well supported by the PSHE programme. Many opportunities are created to make learning more motivating by providing a broad range of subjects which match interests and needs and through community links and visitors.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The unit makes sure all pupils with additional needs have very effective support. This is despite the fact that not all Statements of Special Educational Needs are up to date and some individual education plans do not have measurable outcomes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils' social and moral development. Staff serve as very good role models, helping pupils to gain self-esteem and confidence. Provision for cultural development is good and for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good. There are very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare. Individual support for pupils' personal development is very well aided by links with other providers and external agencies. All members of staff know pupils very well and have their best interests and well-being in mind at all times. The assessment of progress is very good.

Links with parents are excellent and parents are regularly informed about how their children are getting on.

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is very successful in providing a clear educational direction for the work of the unit. The high level of teamwork and commitment by staff is aided by the significant degree to which all staff have clearly delegated responsibilities.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The management committee has a good understanding of the unit. This is because there are regular meetings, high quality reports from the headteacher and monitoring visits by local education authority (LEA) officers.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is regular monitoring of all aspects of the unit by the headteacher and LEA. Unit targets are set and evaluated well, despite their large number.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Through prudent financial planning, resources are managed exceptionally well to ensure pupils receive the best possible education. The unit obtains resources at a competitive price, often consults parents, pupils and the community and is beginning to make comparisons with other units.

The unit makes very good use of all its staff to meet the needs of pupils very well. Learning resources are good and those for ICT very good. Staff make very imaginative use of the satisfactory accommodation to support pupils' learning.

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 are very well informed about progress; their children are happy and making progress.• The unit is well led and managed.• They feel that there are high levels of commitment by staff and teaching is good.• Staff are approachable and work closely with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an inadequate amount of homework.• There could be more extra curricular activities.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' very positive views. Given the pupils' needs, inspectors judge the use of homework to be appropriate. Where homework is set it is to consolidate classroom learning and to encourage the development of independent learning. Extra curricular activities are difficult to organise for these pupils but the unit does provide high quality residential activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and achievements

1. Pupils enter the unit with low attainment due to their recent history of behaviour difficulties, gaps in their learning and poor school attendance. However, by the time they leave, their achievement is good and at times very good. It has improved recently because teaching is now consistently good and pupils are being more carefully grouped according to their needs. Pupils settle quickly into the unit where they begin to make up time previously lost. This is aided by the emphasis placed on the unit as a learning environment where pupils attend as regularly as possible, concentrate and build up a work routine. They are also supported by high levels of care that are aimed at ensuring nothing comes between pupils and their learning.

2. Careful grouping ensures that pupils have the best opportunities to progress. For example, in Year 10, there is a core group, who spend most of their time in the unit, and a dual registered group who spend a short amount of time per week in the unit and the rest in their own school, before returning to their mainstream school full time before Year 11. In Year 11, there is a core group and a tutor group. The latter pupils are out of the unit on other relevant activities more than the former. The unit also has a Year 11 'link and learn' group who find being in a school situation very difficult and are taught by staff and outside instructors at Breakout, which is a vocational facility, and through community links. Within every group there is also flexibility to tailor activities to individual needs. As a result, all pupils, including the minority of girls and the few ethnic minority pupils have access to a wide range of relevant activities, progress well against prior attainment and have the same chances to succeed. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs receive highly appropriate individual support which aids their progress well. As they move through the unit, the combination of all this support makes a very effective contribution to the good, and sometimes very good, achievement of pupils who often received little continuous education before entering the unit. This helps them to gain a range of external awards and certificates before going on to college or work.

3. While the LEA promptly sends appropriate information they hold about pupils, not all schools do. The unit can wait up to six months for pupils' files. This lack of information sometimes slows down the unit's planning for all aspects of the emotional, social and academic needs of pupils who have very little time left for compulsory schooling. However, pupils quickly make progress as a result of baseline testing and once staff get to know them Test results are used well to assess needs and set targets in English and mathematics, so staff know where pupils are starting from and can measure progress.

4. In English, where pupils' achievement is very good, retesting shows that pupils improve their reading, writing and comprehension skills at nearly twice the average rate over a short period of time. Considering their various difficulties, this is very good achievement. Pupils in Year 10 listen very carefully while a chapter from a book is read and thoughtfully discuss what has happened. They begin to write fluently with higher attaining pupils able to describe feelings well. They improve their reading with one to one support. They work with an increased amount of independence on lengthy tasks drafting and redrafting pieces, such as that on work experience. By the end of Year 11, pupils often work individually and succeed in completing course work that reflects their ability. Some complete imaginative pieces of writing and all achieve external awards such as Entry Level and, from this year, GCSE.

5. Good achievement in mathematics results in all pupils gaining passes in Entry Level awards by the end of Year 11. The pupils make good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They know about aspects of mathematics which include probability, fractions and percentages with and without a calculator. They use appropriate vocabulary to identify three-dimensional shapes, such as cylinders and cuboids. Data handling skills are used to plot graphs of how staff and pupils travel to Old Warren House. There are some examples of achievement being supported by practical investigations, for example, a tessellation exercise which requires the pupils to place 11 hexagons onto a template and ensure that all numbers written on the sides of each hexagon add up to 5 where sides join. Pupils have access to computer spreadsheet and database programs but there are too few opportunities for them to develop their skills using specific mathematics programs.

6. The very good achievement of pupils in literacy is very well reinforced by the practice of including speaking and listening, reading and writing in all curriculum areas. The frequent use of discussion and reasoned argument in English and PSHE, and the use of drafting and redrafting of work in science and ASDAN, reinforce pupils' confidence when using these important skills. Good achievement in numeracy leads to pupils applying their learning well in different contexts. For example, they construct diagrams and temperature graphs in geography, in craft they measure carefully when making objects out of wood such as bird boxes and clocks, and in science they accurately measure small amounts of water.

7. Pupils achieve well in science because they maintain interest due to the practical nature of most work. By the end of Year 11, pupils use correct experiment techniques and have a good understanding of prediction and a fair test. They understand about a balanced diet, and complete work on electrical circuits. They take a pride in work producing neat diagrams of the heart and other organs. Higher attaining pupils used their recall of previous work to finish tasks independently.

8. In geography, pupils achieve well, and sometimes very well, due to the very relevant and clearly planned work. They talk about migration, write about the problems tourism can cause and complete maps accurately and neatly. Work on the environment includes modules on Brazil and National Parks as well as local work based around Lowestoft, for which pupils complete written and photographic tasks. Activities cover a wide range of skills through tasks aimed at achieving Entry Level.

9. Information and communication technology is rarely taught as a separate subject. While pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory, they achieve well in aspects to which they have regular access. For example, they word-process work in support of many subjects including English and ASDAN projects and often include 'clip art' to illustrate the theme. Many pupils are also confident in their use of the Internet to support research. Pupils know when the use of a digital camera or scanner is appropriate, although their practical opportunities are limited. They use search engines correctly and understand the importance of key words. Topics which include using a presentation program such as PowerPoint, and data handling using spreadsheets and databases, have been introduced but are less well developed. In science, pupils benefit from access to an electronic microscope, which encourages them to appreciate the wider uses of ICT.

10. Pupils achieve very well in physical education and experience a wide range of activities and team games. The staff are justifiably proud of their swimming programme which promotes fitness and social development. In view of the unit's closeness to both the sea and inland water, swimming lessons also add much to the pupils' knowledge of water safety. The annual Outward Bound trip to places such as the Lake District, where the pupils sail and climb, also makes an excellent contribution to their physical, social and cultural development.

11. There is a very well planned programme of PSHE primarily taught through citizenship, life skills, tutorial and talk time but is also supported in other subjects. Pupils achieve very well in all aspects of PSHE. This is due to the relevance of the material to their lives and the many opportunities also provided during the day to gain and reinforce appropriate skills. They learn to discuss sensitive topics in sex education, or while talking about issues such as 'nagging', and ask relevant questions in a mature way.

12. Pupils achieve well in a range of other subjects such as craft, where pupils make objects out of wood, and in ASDAN course work which covers a range of subjects. For some pupils there is the opportunity to succeed in vocational subjects taught by instructors and an increasing emphasis on art through, for example, visits to the local gallery where pupils choose and discuss paintings.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to the unit and to their work are good and make a significant contribution to the progress they make and preparation for adult life. The majority of parents say that their children like the unit and discussions with pupils confirm that for the first time in their lives they are enthusiastic about their development programmes. In many lessons attitudes are very good, improving the longer pupils stay in the unit. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are eager to learn, enthusiastic about their studies and show good perseverance, often becoming engrossed in their activities. They show pride in their achievements and genuine appreciation for the efforts and achievements of others. The pupils attending regularly enjoy their work and are happy at the unit. They make the point that they can confidently seek help and support from staff should the need arise.

14. Behaviour in the unit is good. No unsatisfactory or oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils respect the behaviour expectations and respond very positively to the individualised care and support packages agreed with them. The unit is an orderly environment where pupils are encouraged to work hard and succeed. Pupils interact in a polite manner with staff and visitors and show increasing levels of confidence and social skills during their time at the unit. Pupils show a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and respect for the feelings and views of peers. There are examples of pupils sharing equipment, taking turns amicably, such as during discussions or when playing games, and being helpful and supportive to each other. Around the unit and at breaks and lunchtimes behaviour is often very good. At lunch time pupils line up, collect their food and sit quietly chatting with friends or staff as they eat. In a PSHE lesson reviewing the recent Outward Bound residential visit with the sponsors, pupils played the role of hosts to the visitors in a socially mature way and were delighted to relate their experiences and those of others in an understanding and positive manner. Records show there are occasional incidents of poor behaviour, usually when pupils are particularly troubled by external events. Exclusion is very rarely used.

15. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the unit and make a significant contribution to pupils' education. These strong relationships are often exemplified by the positive use of humour. Pupils trust staff and have no inhibitions in turning to them with problems or concerns. Pupils' personal development is good. They demonstrate an increasing understanding of the wider world and improving self-esteem and self confidence. Pupils benefit from individual programmes which incorporate small tuition groups, extended work experience, college courses, a good range of outings and residential visits and support from the community. This helps pupils feel confident to follow their own interests

independently and begin to take more responsibility for aspects of their own learning and development.

16. In overall percentage terms, attendance at the unit is unsatisfactory. These figures do not reveal that the vast majority of pupils arrive at Old Warren disillusioned with school and education and with extremely poor records of attendance at their mainstream schools. Individual pupil attendance records show that most pupils improve their attendance over time at the unit and that many achieve high levels of attendance by the time they leave. In the last full term almost two thirds of pupils were present for more than ninety percent of the time and almost a quarter of pupils had no absence at all. Punctuality to the unit and throughout the day is good. The pattern of improving attendance and good punctuality has a positive impact on the progress pupils make and contribute significantly to their preparation for life after the unit.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good overall with nearly nine in ten lessons being at least good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Overall, there has been a steady improvement in the amount of very good teaching since the last inspection. Much of this is because every effort has been put in to making sure that teaching is very well focused on individual needs. Although formal lesson planning is inconsistent, teachers know their pupils very well and do plan effectively for their needs. This ensures that teaching meets the needs of all pupils, including the minority of girls and the few pupils from an ethnic minority heritage. As a result, it has a positive effect on pupils' learning, their self esteem, and ability to gain accreditation so they leave the unit equipped for college or work.

18. Very good teaching takes place in English, PSHE, and in some ASDAN work. This is because tasks are clearly explained and pupils feel motivated to tackle them and work towards awards and certificates. The quality of teaching in physical education is also very good and staff are well versed in providing good physical activities. Teaching is good and improving in mathematics, science, geography and craft, where teaching is mainly by staff new to the school who are very well supported by more experienced staff. It is satisfactory in ICT where it has recently been adversely affected by the loss of a key member of staff.

19. In English, teaching supports pupils' work very well as it is carefully chosen to meet needs and aptitudes. At all times there is an underlying drive to improve basic language skills. This aids pupils in filling the gaps in their learning and gives them confidence to tackle work across the curriculum. Sessions are prepared very well with careful explanations so pupils know how to organise their work and have an understanding of what tasks they need to complete.

20. In mathematics, work is closely linked to the pupils' examinations needs. Teachers carefully select work to cater for different abilities and examinations, so all can learn well. The quality of pupils' work and the pride they take in it indicates that the teachers have appropriate expectations. In most cases pupils' work is fully marked and some comments indicate how the work could be improved next time, although most written remarks are purely motivational like, "Well done!" Most work is individualised and worksheets are used extensively. Consequently, pupils lack some access to practical activities, including computer programs, which would reinforce and extend learning.

21. Literacy is very well taught and the teacher is very knowledgeable about suitable methods and materials to make the subject appealing to the pupils and ensure work is reinforced across the curriculum. Numeracy is well taught within mathematics although, as yet, not all opportunities are taken in other subjects to build on this work.

22. The emphasis on practical work keeps pupils concentrating and enthusiastic during science lessons. Competent individual planning allows pupils to complete experiments at levels appropriate to their needs. There is a good balance between practical activities and writing up afterwards, so pupils see the relevance of what they are doing. Specialist accommodation is limited but along with resources is used very effectively so pupils experience the full range of science needed to gain external awards.

23. Most staff have completed ICT training under the New Opportunities Fund initiative and confidence has increased as a result. There are some good examples of the use of ICT in English and the ASDAN award scheme and as teachers become more confident they are integrating it into a wider range of subjects.

24. Teaching in PSHE and linked subjects is very effective because they cover a wide area of issues relevant to pupils' needs as young adults in the community. Stimulating and sensitive teaching gives pupils the means to discuss issues of relevance to them. Pupils appreciate this, asking appropriate questions and listening very well in lessons.

25. A strength of the teaching overall is the consistently good subject knowledge. In English and PSHE and often in mathematics and science it is very good. This, along with a commitment to accredited learning, ensures all pupils want to do well and gain a wide variety of relevant skills. Although written lesson planning varies, staff know exactly what pupils need to do to progress. Teamwork between teachers and the talented teaching assistants is very good because the latter are skilled in supporting and challenging pupils, particularly those with Statements of Special Educational Needs. For example, in an ASDAN lesson for pupils in Year 11, the teaching assistant intervened to support a pupil with learning difficulties. This was successful because she clearly knew what was planned and was skilled in dealing with the pupil's special needs. As a result, the pupil made significant gains. This means that, whatever the need, pupils learn at an appropriate rate and pace.

26. Lessons are well organised and managed. They often consist of a variety of different tasks, which are effectively coordinated so all pupils work throughout the lesson. A good work ethic is built up over time due to the high expectations. Effective behaviour management means occasional lapses in behaviour are dealt with calmly and firmly. This is important for pupils whose previous lack of attendance means that they often enter the unit with limited concentration and confidence in their abilities. All staff carefully build up very good relationships and use praise well to enthuse and motivate. More experienced teachers manage lessons very well and try to ensure pupils gain a degree of independence. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson well established routines meant pupils knew what they needed to do and most worked independently to finish their Entry Level course work.

27. Staff ensure there are good introductions and clear explanations at each stage so pupils know what needs to be achieved during the lesson. For example, in a swimming lesson for a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils, clear instructions for pupils on their individual aims led to them being eager to do well and progress towards their own swimming awards. Questioning is used well to assess what pupils know and need to know so that the next steps in learning can be planned.

28. Because different teaching groups are formed to meet pupils' main academic, social and emotional needs this helps them settle and begin to gain self-esteem. Within these groups, staff are very flexible in their approach, so pupils who have been away can easily access any work missed. Resources and time are used very well. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson resources were to hand to ensure a pupil could quickly catch up with an experiment that had been missed. Resources are also used imaginatively in rooms used for more than one subject. In a craft lesson, mobile equipment and resources, which had to be locked away, were swiftly retrieved for the lesson and no teaching time was lost. Strategies used by staff take into account individual work, whether in subjects or basic skills, as well as collaboration and discussion, where pupils are given opportunities to put forward their own ideas and suggestions. As a result pupils effectively gain a wide range of skills which they know they will need when they leave.

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

29. The curriculum is very good because it has become increasingly flexible. It provides pupils with a broad range of subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. It enables pupils to receive recognised accreditation for their work, preparing them very well for life after school. Activities are carefully organised so that they support pupils' personal development and assist them towards success. In summary, the curriculum is well-rounded with all components inter-related, supporting and reinforcing learning.

30. The curriculum fully meets the LEA's requirements for pupil referral units. A suitable emphasis is given to the core areas of English, mathematics, science and ICT. Pupils are also given substantial experience in other curriculum areas such as: the humanities, through projects such as *The Rain Forest*; creative subjects such as art and craft; and physical activities, for example through swimming and badminton. The different areas of the curriculum are all inter-linked to contribute to modules of accredited courses. This effectively helps pupils see the value of taking part in these activities, and learning from them.

31. All staff at the unit are very clear that its prime purpose is a place of learning. They support this by ensuring that personal development is central to the unit's work. The staff believe that pupils must experience success, respect and appropriate support in order to go on and succeed on their own. Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves and their work, and learn to manage their own behaviour and relate better to their peers. In general, these were areas of difficulty in their previous schools. The PSHE programme is wide-ranging, very comprehensive, and supports pupils' personal development very well. It does this through both a formal taught and accredited programme, and through the unit's supportive ethos. Particularly useful aspects of PSHE include the life skills programme and work on the dangers of drugs and tobacco misuse. A sensitive approach to relationships, for example, through sessions such as the one about looking after babies called '*Baby think it over*', gives very good support to pupils' personal development.

32. Staff are also acutely aware of the need to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good overall, and also successfully contributes to overall personal development. Pupils consequently leave the unit much more able to accept the challenges and opportunities offered by working or by attending a college of further education. Provision for social and moral development is very good. The staff provide very good role models for pupils. For example, all are treated with respect, even when relationships and behaviour are occasionally challenging. Lunch time is an opportunity where staff engage pupils in conversation or pupils enjoy a game of pool and appreciate time away from lessons. The curriculum is rich with numerous opportunities to develop social skills - such as the Outward Bound trip, swimming sessions, discussion with mentors, access to 'drop in' sessions and

to the many visitors. Pupils attending the Breakout facility work alongside other adults and pupils in an environment that is less like a school, but one rich in learning nevertheless. Projects such as those that re-cycle hand tools for the third world and citizenship lessons also give pupils an insight into economic issues and moral values. The high value placed on preparation for work experience helps pupils learn to relate to adults in the workplace. These aspects are also well developed in tutorials and lessons such as humanities where different lifestyles, cultures and religions are discussed. In addition to high levels of artistic expertise on the staff, visiting actors and trips to art galleries, churches and museums add much to the good cultural development of pupils while spirituality is increasingly developed through giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of their time in the unit.

33. Pupils are given very good careers and vocational education support both in the unit and through "Pre-16" college courses. Much of the preparation for this is successfully carried out by a teaching assistant. Work experience is central to this area of the curriculum. It is properly set up and monitored, in keeping with LEA directives. Preparation for the placement, and reviews after it, are thorough and contribute to pupils' accredited English course and the Progress File, which was previously the National Record of Achievement. The unit has just begun a mini-enterprise module to supplement this area of work. Pupils in Year 11 complete mock job applications and practice interviews with outside agencies. An attractive, well-resourced area of a classroom, including a computer linked to the Internet, gives pupils easily digestible information about a range of careers and college courses they might like to pursue.

34. A wide range of accreditation is offered to the pupils. This means that all can succeed at the level that is most appropriate to them, which very effectively boosts their self-esteem and desire to improve. Accreditation is carefully considered and new courses are introduced when necessary. For example, an accredited course in PSHE has been introduced this year, as well as GCSE English. Although only catering for two year groups, the unit takes full account of the different needs and developing skills of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. This is reflected in the balance of time spent on activities and subjects, and the amount and type of work given in each year group. For example, ICT is taught as a subject in Year 10 and through other subjects in Year 11; work experience is generally a two week block for pupils in Year 10, but one day a week for the whole of Year 11. English work develops over the two years from simple story writing for pupils in Year 10 to the study of Macbeth in Year 11.

35. The unit's practice of devising educational packages to suit the needs of all individuals, including those with additional special educational needs, is very successful. Initial English and mathematics testing gives staff good information about the degree of challenge and support they need to give to pupils in these subjects. This is helpful as there is a lack of rigour in individual education plans (IEPs) for those with additional needs.

36. Pupils spend varying amounts of time in the unit, on work experience and at college to suit their requirements. Local facilities such as the sports centre are used very well to provide pupils with physical and leisure activities such as badminton and swimming. Some pupils who find the formal side of education particularly difficult have an adapted curriculum with vocational opportunities such as silver, wood or metal working. These educational packages are carefully worked out and monitored by staff and other professionals, such as the Connexions adviser who supports careers work, together with the pupil and his/her parents. The community contributes very well to pupils' learning, and questionnaire returns indicate that the unit is highly regarded and links are valued.

37. The unit's strategy for developing pupils' literacy skills is very effective and that for numeracy is good. The practical uses of literacy are well-threaded throughout the work of the unit and those for numeracy are practised in a range of subjects.

38. The provision of regular activities outside of school hours is difficult for this group of pupils. However, the unit offers very good residential experiences – for example to Ullswater and Wales - which give great support to pupils' personal development. The everyday curriculum is also very well enriched in several ways. Pupils visit places relevant to their curriculum topics, such as galleries, and visitors inspire them. For example, a visiting artist and musician encouraged pupils to play unusual musical instruments and to create pieces of high quality artwork. Photographs of these activities, and pieces of work such as self-portraits and African-style masks, contribute to the rich and interesting wall displays which also indicate the staff's respect for the pupils' achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and support are very effective, consistently applied and have a very positive impact on pupils' progress. All members of staff know pupils very well and have their best interests and well being in mind at all times. Pupils themselves say they feel able to approach staff freely. A significant improvement since the last inspection, aimed at all-round support of pupils, is that they now discuss concerns with community specialists. For example, the school nurse is on hand to discuss issues, there are 'drop in' sessions organised by a range of organisations for advice and counselling and the unit has mentors from the local community who come in regularly to support individual pupils. The procedures for dealing with child protection issues are very good and fully meet statutory requirements. The unit is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. Collaboration with the full range of external agencies very effectively supports the individual care packages developed for each pupil.

40. Health and safety procedures are very good and all staff conscientiously ensure that pupils know and adhere to safe practice. There are good procedures to ensure parents are quickly informed of any illness or injury. In all lessons observed during the inspection care was taken to ensure that pupils followed safe procedures and practices.

41. The procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Registers are taken accurately at the start of sessions and unaccounted absence is followed up straight away on the telephone. Unit staff monitor attendance effectively and are quick to identify patterns of absence for individual pupils. Support given to the unit by the LEA with transport arrangements for some pupils ensures they arrive on time and ready for work. Flexible strategies are used effectively to encourage attendance and to help pupils experiencing difficulties to develop a greater interest in school and their learning programmes. The close monitoring of absence and the use of imaginative strategies to encourage attendance, along with the tailored, and thus more motivational curriculum, have been instrumental in the significant improvement seen in the attendance of the vast majority of pupils. These have aided the improved interest that pupils show in their own work and development.

42. The unit's good procedures for monitoring behaviour and the very good monitoring of personal development contribute significantly to the level of care and support provided for pupils. Constant observation and daily reviews of performance ensure that any pupil experiencing difficulties is quickly identified and that suitable strategies are used. All staff are consistent in their use of praise to recognise achievement and effort and in their constant efforts to raise confidence and self esteem. Pupils' personal and social skill development is successfully supported through the day-to-day routines in the unit and is extended very effectively through the positive interaction with the local community and community organisations.

43. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is a high priority at the unit and the procedures are very good. Extensive records are kept about pupils' progress in relation to all their accredited studies and also in relation to their behaviour. This information is well used to inform teachers and the pupils themselves about the most appropriate next stage of learning. Assessment is treated seriously, for example, initial meetings are held with every pupil before they start to attend the unit. On arrival, tests are carried out to check prior attainment in literacy and numeracy. Further testing and monitoring at regular intervals shows that pupils achieve well in relation to their previous work. These tests are supplemented by information from referring schools, although the quality and quantity of this information is variable, and not always speedily available. A wide range of assessment is used to ensure pupils get as much accreditation as possible through the ASDAN award. For example, physical education activities serve the sport, leisure and health elements of the course very well. Work experience is valued by staff and pupils and is very well recorded by a bright and informative "Work Experience Diary". This is a good example of the pupils being given opportunities for self-assessment. During lessons all staff provide helpful verbal feedback. Written feedback is also useful, especially when indicators for improvement are included alongside encouraging words of praise. This wealth of assessment data is currently shared to good effect with other professional agencies, such as the careers service and college of further education which prepare the pupils well for life after school.

44. Provision for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs is very good because all work is matched to pupils' individual needs and assessed to ensure progress. Staff feel that pupils presently at the unit are appropriately placed. The unit holds very effective annual reviews with appropriate recommendations. However, not all pupils who are staying in the unit to the end of Year 11 have up to date statements which specifically name the unit and appropriate resources. For a small unit, the number of pupils with statements is large at a quarter of the roll.

45. Individual education plans for those with learning needs do not contain measurable outcomes to show the small steps in progress such pupils often make. Although progress is well assessed through individual subjects, staff would benefit from better IEP information to support this.

46. The arrangements for the dual registered pupils in Year 10 are very good. There is close communication between the unit and the school they are presently working with, which appreciates the provision. It considers it gives pupils a good chance to build up their self-esteem, learn to control their behaviour and achieve some academic success before returning to mainstream full time.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Old Warren House enjoys very good support from parents and carers. The partnership with the great majority of parents contributes positively to pupils' learning and personal development. Responses to the questionnaire and comments at the meeting reveal very positive views of the unit and confirm parents' pleasure at the progress that their children are making. There is almost universal agreement that children are enjoying education for the first time in their lives. Parents are particularly pleased with the leadership and management of the headteacher, the dedication and commitment of classroom staff and the way in which they work closely with parents. The only area of concern raised by a couple of parents is homework. In the context of the unit, inspectors judge the use of homework to be appropriate and applaud the unit's flexible and sensitive approach. Where homework is set it is suitable to consolidate classroom learning and to encourage the development of independent learning.

48. The unit has developed excellent links with parents and carers since the last inspection. These ensure parental involvement and support for pupils' education and personal development programmes. The work on developing the parent partnership is excellent and owes much to the very effective and enthusiastic work of the trained facilitators who ensure regular communication with homes and provide easily accessible support on many issues. Parents are kept exceptionally well informed on all aspects of pupil progress and are involved at an early stage if there are any concerns or difficulties. Parents say they are particularly pleased with the frequency of contact and the genuine interest shown and support given by staff at the unit. The success of the partnership programme is evidenced by the number of parents attending special themed evenings and giving up their time to attend an eight week parenting support course. The parent partnership programme effectively ensures an increased level of interest in pupils' development programmes and encourages parents to support attendance and reinforce the expectations of the unit at home.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

49. Although the headteacher and deputy headteacher have only been recently appointed to their posts, leadership remains very good, as it was at the last inspection. The reasons for this include the fact that the previous headteacher provided strong and effective leadership. The high level of experience gained by the present headteacher, as his deputy, has supported a seamless and successful changeover. The understanding of the unit, routines, pupils and staff that this has given the new headteacher has ensured the unit continues to make good progress. There has been no pause in developments aimed at ensuring pupils consistently achieve well. This has led to sustained improvements in pupils' achievement and teaching as well as a curriculum increasingly designed to meet individual needs. While continuing many of the very good existing practices, the headteacher has her own clear vision of the educational direction the unit needs to take which includes more dual registered pupils, outreach work with mainstream schools and further opportunities for accreditation. This vision is shared by the highly committed staff who always put pupils' needs first.

50. Daily meetings between the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure the smooth daily running of the unit. Their close partnership has been particularly helpful as this small unit has recently seen a large turnover of teaching staff. The effects of this have been mitigated by the way all staff work exceptionally well as a team. Staff are also involved in daily meetings so they can exchange information and know what is going on. All support staff feel included, valued and enjoy their work. This is because significant responsibilities have been very effectively delegated to all staff. The unit has been particularly pro-active in widening and using the expertise of others to support the small teaching base. For example, teaching assistants have major responsibilities such as arranging work experience placements, liaising with other providers, establishing mentoring partnerships, overseeing the library and successfully using lifesaving skills in swimming lessons. One teaching assistant, along with the administrative assistant, runs the excellent parental links. The administrative assistant also runs the basic food hygiene course. This helps to take some pressure off teachers who, in a small unit, have a variety of roles, and thus many more learning opportunities can be planned for pupils.

51. All developments have been supported by very good management procedures that include clear routines, and policy documents that everyone understands. The unit does not have a staff handbook, but the induction programme is good with new staff having a mentor and their own action plan. As a result, new staff are quickly effective with pupils. Staff development is a priority and the unit has gained Investors in People status. There is a great array of professional development on offer which is carefully monitored by the headteacher and deputy headteacher to ensure courses are relevant to needs. Appropriate performance management helps teachers to reflect on their work. Skills have been developed for support

staff who have gained, or are presently gaining, awards such as National Vocational Qualifications Level 3 and attended courses in first aid and lifeguard rescue.

52. There is a suitable improvement plan to which all staff contribute. It is reviewed every half term so staff know what targets have been completed and what still needs to be done. It provides a good range of priorities. These support change and focus on pupil progress, including working effectively with parents. The plan is carefully costed to fit within with the budget. As a result, the unit makes very good use of its resources to support pupils' education. Review systems are good, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are constantly in lessons and this gives them a good overview of where future improvements should be. The unit has been pro-active and ambitious in setting very specific unit targets in a number of areas, which pupil referral units are not required to do. This is highly commendable and has aided the headteacher and staff to understand how to improve attendance and achievement, as well as successfully quantifying improvements in many areas. However, there are a large number of targets, but nothing to show which are the most important ones.

53. Although pupil referral units do not have to have a delegated budget, this unit manages most of its money. It ensures it is spent wisely to meet pupils' needs. Day-to-day administration and finances are also carefully managed by the administrative assistant, who assists with budget planning. A particular strength is the way that the unit consults with pupils over issues such as plans for the new garden, with parents through the excellent links, and informally with the community.

54. Members of the management committee have a good overview of the unit and work successfully with the headteacher to make sure pupils receive an appropriate education. The chair works particularly closely with the unit, monitoring it through frequent visits which include visiting lessons. There are frequent committee meetings in which members monitor finance and review the improvement plan. The LEA has, as the appropriate authority, a good understanding of the unit because it constantly monitors progress through visits by officers and advisors, and termly meetings with the headteacher to review school targets.

55. Although there has been a significant staff turnover, most teachers, and all teaching assistants, are very experienced and the expertise, especially in English and PSHE, is well matched to the curriculum. A strength of the unit is the lengths to which the leadership has gone, despite a small staff, to ensure a wide variety of learning opportunities. This has been done by carefully utilising teaching assistants in a number of ways besides the classroom. It has also been achieved by using other providers off site, such as college, Breakout and work experience, and utilising a range of other professionals on site to add their expertise in lessons, for example the school nurse for sex education and the drugs awareness team for PSHE.

56. Accommodation is used very creatively and staff make the best of what they have. For example one classroom/dining room doubles as a craft room. This room is transformed quickly because the unit has invested in high quality resources such as mobile specialist tables, has a range of appropriate light electrical equipment and hand tools which are easily to hand, but housed safely in cupboards. The unit also uses other sites successfully for lessons with very disaffected pupils. Learning resources are good, particularly those for ICT and are used well to support learning. The quality of display is very good and has a positive effect on pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. The LEA needs to:

- Ensure mainstream schools understand the importance of providing all the relevant information required for every pupil entering the unit.
(Paragraphs: 3,43)
- Review all Statements of Special Educational Needs of pupils in the unit and those who are referred so that:
 - 1) It is clear the placement is the correct one and that this is stated, particularly for Year 11 pupils who are unlikely to return to mainstream schools;
 - 2) Provision is clearly detailed and can be met by the unit;
 - 3) They remain a small minority of the unit's roll
 (Paragraph: 44)

The headteacher of the unit and management committee need to:

- improve the quality of learning targets in IEPs by:
 - 1) including small measurable outcomes which will be clear indicators of small progress steps for pupils;
 - 2) ensuring all staff are aware of the targets.
 (Paragraphs: 35,45)

The following measures should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan for improvement:

- Continue, as a priority, with proposed developments related to ICT;
(Paragraphs: 9,18,20)
- Review the way lessons are planned to ensure there is consistency throughout the unit;
(Paragraphs: 17,25)
- Review the large number of school targets set and prioritise them so that it is clear where the most important improvements in pupils' achievement and attendance need to be.
(Paragraph: 52)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	8	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	33	54	13	0	0	0

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

Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	27

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	27

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

* including dual registered

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	15

Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	8.44

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	25	2	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y10 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	3
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Financial year	2002 /3
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	£
Total income	239,702
Total expenditure	241,413
Expenditure per pupil	8,941
Balance brought forward from previous year	32,577

Total aggregate hours worked per week	96.25
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Balance carried forward to next year	30,865
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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	27
Number of questionnaires returned	11

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	64	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	73	27	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	50	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	22	22	22	22
The teaching is good.	82	18	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	100	0	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	36	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	91	09	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	20	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	50	0	10	20