

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS'S CENTRE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Blackburn

LEA area: Blackburn

Unique reference number: 132128

Headteacher: Margaret Nowell

Lead inspector: Mrs C. Marsh

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th September 2003

Inspection number: 259109

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Medical/pregnant schoolgirls/schoolgirl mothers/excluded/self-excluded/chronic non-attenders
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	78
School address:	St Thomas's Centre Lambeth Street Blackburn
Postcode:	BB1 1NA
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Appropriate authority:	Blackburn with Darwen LEA
Responsible Officer:	Cath Hitchen
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNIT

This pupil referral unit (PRU) has been open three years. It was set up by the new unitary authority and the current head. The unit serves pupils who are out of school for whatever reason in the unitary authority of Blackburn with Darwen. The area is socially and economically deprived. The unit occupies one site, a converted school near the centre of Blackburn. In addition, there is hospital tuition five mornings a week. The PRU has one head and one deputy head who manage the whole unit, supported by "heads of provision" for each type of pupil, namely:

- Medical: pupils with medical needs – including the hospital class and home tuition (Years R-11);
- Pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers;
- Excluded pupils (Years 7-9);
- Excluded pupils (Years 10-11).

These groups of pupils are kept separate in different parts of the building.

At the time of the inspection, at the start of the academic year, there were 78 pupils on roll. Numbers are expected to rise during the year. The number of pupils on roll at the end of the last academic year was 158, of whom 41 had statements of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs, predominantly social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, but also including moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and physical disability. At present there are ten pupils with statements of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils for whom English was not their first language.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2113	Mrs C. Marsh	Lead inspector	Science; Art; Citizenship; Personal, Social and Health Education.
14070	Mrs J. Tasker	Lay inspector	
1204	Mr D. Bolton	Team inspector	English; Information and Communication Technology; Physical Education.
15764	Mrs E. Treacher	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs; Mathematics; History; Geography.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the unit is good. It provides good value for money. This is a good unit with some very good features. The unit is successful in its main task of keeping pupils, who are out of school for any reason, in education. Many pupils are helped to return to mainstream schools, but, in spite of the unit's best efforts, there are major problems in reintegrating pupils with statements of special educational needs. Pupils achieve well in their work overall, and they make very good progress in their personal development and in dealing with the barriers which have prevented them from learning. Teaching and learning are good. The ethos and quality of relationships are very good. The leadership and management of the unit are very good, with a commitment to seeking continual improvement. Parents and pupils value highly the work of the unit.

The unit's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The unit's flexibility, resourcefulness, and its success in catering for a wide range of different needs and circumstances;
- The amount that has been achieved since the unit was set up three years ago, thanks to inspirational leadership by the head and the ethos she has created;
- The quality of care and support and the difference this makes to pupils' achievement and personal development, bringing success where there was failure;
- The high quality of partnership with parents and the impact of this on pupils' progress;
- There are weaknesses in English. Standards are too low in Years 7-9 and pupils have been underachieving in the subject;
- Not enough is done to improve pupils' literacy in all subjects;
- Pupils with statements of special educational needs who are ready to move on stay in the unit for too long. This is blocking reintegration;
- Information about pupils' progress is not consistently well used by staff to plan lessons.

This new unit has not been inspected before.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Overall, achievement is good. In Years 7-9, taking account of pupils' starting points, achievement is good in all subjects, even though standards are below the national average – except in English, where standards are low and achievement is unsatisfactory. Again, in Years 10-11, achievement is good even though standards are below average. Achievement is very good for pupils taught in the hospital class. All pupils make good progress in achieving the targets set in their individual education plans (IEP's).

Pupils' personal development while at the unit, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' improvement in this respect is a strong point. They gain in confidence and self-esteem and learn to manage themselves better. Their attitudes to learning are good and, overall, their behaviour, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and show improvement – although for a few pupils, attendance and punctuality remain a problem.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the unit is good. Teaching and learning are good overall – except in English, where there is too much unsatisfactory teaching, particularly in Years 7-9; also, the teaching of literacy is not good enough. Teaching and learning are best in the hospital class, the young mothers' group and the Year 10-11 group of permanently excluded pupils. The best teaching and learning takes place in mathematics across the whole unit. Teaching is most effective when taught by subject specialists. Teachers are good at managing pupils' behaviour and getting them to realise that their work matters. In spite of some good practice, the recording and use of assessment is not consistent across the unit, with pupils needs being more precisely met in some subjects than in others.

The curriculum is good overall, except for a weakness in English, and there are very good opportunities for enrichment. The unit enjoys the support of pupils and parents. Very good links with parents, very good levels of care, together with good support and guidance help pupils to overcome the barriers which might otherwise stop them from learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the unit are very good. The leadership provided by the head and deputy is very good, and that provided by other staff is good. Management is very good – it aims for high achievement and is geared to making sure that all pupils are included and that their past history and present needs and circumstances do not prevent them from learning. Governance by the Local Education Authority (LEA) is satisfactory in the way it supports the unit and checks how things are going.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

Parents are very positive about the unit and feel it makes a real difference because:

- It is well led and managed;
- They like the way staff work closely with them and they feel comfortable approaching the unit;
- Their children are expected to work hard and are helped to become more mature and responsible;
- They believe teaching is good and their children make good progress;
- The staff know individual pupils and their needs very well.

Pupils like what the unit offers them because:

- They are certain that they are listened to;
- Every day is a new chance;
- Teachers know them well and have time for them;
- Getting qualifications is important.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the unit should do to improve are:

- improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in English, particularly in Years 7-9;
- improve the teaching of literacy across the curriculum;
- get a more consistent approach across the whole unit to tracking pupils' progress in their work and to recording and using this information.

The LEA should make sure that:

- pupils with statements of special educational needs who are ready to move on are not left for too long at the PRU.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' standards of attainment overall are below the national average at all ages – although they are low in English in Years 7-9. However, given their starting points, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. For pupils in Years 7-9 (excluded pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties), achievement is good in all subjects except English, where it is unsatisfactory. Achievement is good for pupils in Years 10-11. It is very good for pupils taught in the hospital class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The progress many pupils make from low starting points is good. They overcome significant barriers and achieve well, often against the odds, thanks to a climate of expectation of success;
- The achievement of pupils taught at the hospital is very good, thanks to very good teaching;
- Pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers achieve well and make good progress because of the high quality support and guidance given by the staff;
- Good quality teaching by subject specialists ensures that pupils in Years 7-9 make good progress, and some make very good progress, in the core subjects of mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE);
- Excluded pupils in Years 7-9 have not achieved enough in English because of weaknesses in provision caused by staffing difficulties;
- Pupils in Years 10-11 make good progress in the core subjects of PSHE, English, mathematics and science.

Commentary

1. Achievement is good, even though standards are below average for pupils of all ages. Most pupils come to the unit with levels of attainment that are well below average, and in some cases low, for their ages – often the result of disrupted schooling. All pupils have very significant physical, psychiatric, social, emotional or behavioural problems. When their starting point and circumstances are taken into account, pupils make good progress during their time in the unit and their achievement is good overall, both in Years 7-9 and in Years 10-11. Pupils' stay at the unit makes a real difference to them, in building their confidence and self-esteem. This is not, however, at the expense of their learning. Pupils of all ages and all abilities are helped to deal with the barriers that have been holding back their learning.

2. In Years 7-9 (mostly excluded pupils), although standards remain below average, pupils are successfully re-engaged with learning and move forward, catching up on lost ground. Their achievement is good in the core subjects of mathematics, ICT and science, helped by the impact of the National Strategies in these subjects, and in PSHE. Good teaching from subject specialists is a key factor. Standards in English are too low. Even taking account of the fact that many excluded pupils come into the unit with low levels of literacy and poor attitudes to writing, their progress and achievement in English have been unsatisfactory. Staffing problems, including the lack of a subject manager for English (until very recently) and a shortage of specialist expertise in the subject have affected this age group badly. Recent changes have improved things considerably, but there is still some way to catch up.

3. In Years 10-11, achievement is good for pupils in all groups. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and PSHE and satisfactory progress overall in ICT. They respond well to the "fresh start" they are given and their aspirations are raised. Even though standards are below average overall, many pupils achieve results in GCSE and Entry Level or other nationally

recognised qualifications that far exceed the expectations that they, their parents and others had of them when they were referred to the unit. The destinations of Year 11 pupils when they leave the unit, with many going on to further education or training, confirm this picture and show how they have overcome significant barriers to success – whether a previously negative experience of schooling, medical problems or the personal circumstances of schoolgirl mothers.

4. The “can-do” climate generated by the head and set by adults in the unit – “It is our expectation that pupils can succeed, no exceptions, no excuses” – is at the heart of what is achieved. Pupils are constantly encouraged and staff are resourceful in finding ways round problems, making repeated efforts to raise pupils’ sights. Adults take very good account of pupils’ circumstances, know their pupils well and use this to provide the high levels of all-round care and support they need, as for example in the case of the young mothers. This helps to create an environment in which good achievement is expected as the norm. Achievement is celebrated widely, for example in the achievement ceremony and in the local press.

5. There is a significant number of permanently excluded pupils with statements of special educational needs for whom special school provision is not available, even when they are ready to move on from the PRU. Although they are clearly benefiting from the time they get at the unit, the progress they are able to make across the whole curriculum is necessarily limited, as, in spite of the best efforts of staff, not all the specific requirements of their statements can be met in the unit.

6. Pupils have individual education plans (IEP’s) and most make good progress in achieving the targets set in them. Social and behavioural targets are identified. Some subject teachers (for example, in science for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and in mathematics for all pupils) are good at identifying academic targets and at systematically targeting identified learning needs. As a result, pupils of these teachers are making clear progress in overcoming their learning difficulties. But there is still work to be done by other teachers in order to bring the tracking of pupils’ academic progress and target-setting up to the same standard across the whole unit.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ attitudes to learning are good and, overall, their behaviour, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The unit has appropriately high expectations of pupils’ behaviour, their attitudes to learning and to other people, and works hard to achieve them. Pupils’ personal development while at the unit is good, including their moral, social and cultural development..

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilful management of behaviour by the staff of the unit;
- The improvement in pupils’ behaviour and in their attitude to authority figures;
- The improvement in pupils’ attitudes to learning;
- The good knowledge that staff have of individual pupils;
- The consistently high quality of relationships based on respect for the individual;
- The rigorous strategies for monitoring and improving attendance;
- The good support for pupils’ social, moral and cultural development;
- Unsatisfactory management of the youngest pupils’ behaviour by some adults who are not on the staff of the unit;
- A few pupils have very low attendance and some lack punctuality;
- Not enough planned support for pupils’ spiritual development.

Commentary

7. Most pupils significantly improve their attitude towards learning and their behaviour during their time in the unit. They make gains in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Many pupils, particularly those in the groups for excluded pupils, have had difficult experiences in mainstream schools and enter the unit with negative attitudes, both to learning and to authority

figures. The staff of the unit work hard, and with considerable success, at helping pupils to change these attitudes. What pupils particularly appreciate and see as a key difference from their mainstream experience is the way in which they feel valued and respected as individuals. Adults on the unit's staff are skilful managers of pupils' behaviour and in most lessons pupils behave well. This represents real progress for many pupils. While pupils' behaviour can be challenging, the staff of the unit are sensitive, skilful and successful in managing it. The strategy of excluding pupils for parts of a day as "cooling off " time works well. The consistency of high expectations, positive and supportive relationships within clearly established boundaries, and respect for each pupil, underpin the successful management of behaviour. This helps pupils improve their self-image and grow as people, well prepared to move on to their next stage in their lives. Other adults who teach in the unit, however, sometimes experience difficulty in managing challenging behaviour and, in some instances, do not share the same expectations as the staff of the unit as to what constitutes acceptable and appropriate behaviour.

8. The unit provides a safe and secure environment, where each member of the community is respected and valued, and is constantly given supportive and encouraging feedback. It is cultivating pupils' personal development well. Provision for their moral, social and cultural development is good, helped by the planned PHSE curriculum, the daily interactions with the staff and the role models they provide, and by the regular one-to-one review of each pupil's achievements and progress. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. While pupils learn to understand themselves and recognise the effect of their actions on others, there is less explicit and planned support for their spiritual development. With the exception of the medical group, the staff use social times constructively to engage with pupils and encourage their personal development and social skills. However, some of the most vulnerable children in the medical group continue to be lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem.

9. Attendance is below the national average but most pupils make good progress. Attendance levels for most pupils improve during their time in the unit, thanks to the effectiveness of the unit's rigorous procedures for monitoring and improving their attendance. Discussions with pupils show that they consider their attendance has improved since coming to the unit and parents share the same view. The unit's strategies for chasing up non-attendance are thorough – pupils are very well aware that if they are absent, the unit will swiftly contact their parents. There are however, a number of pupils who attend rarely or not at all. In spite of the unit's best efforts and the support it receives from the education welfare officer, there is little or no improvement with these pupils. While most pupils arrive on time at the unit, a few of them regularly arrive late, despite the inclusion of punctuality as a target on individual education plans – missing important parts of their work. In spite of the positive picture overall, the sporadic attendance and lateness of some pupils remain key factors undermining their achievement.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	15
National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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	145	60	
White – any other White background		7	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African	2		
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE UNIT

The quality of education provided by the unit is good. The unit is successful in its main task of helping to keep pupils in education. Teaching and learning are good overall, but the recording and use of assessment are not consistent enough across the whole unit. The curriculum is good, except for a weakness in English in Years 7-9 and in developing literacy across the curriculum. There are very good opportunities for enrichment. The unit enjoys the support of pupils and parents. Very good links with parents, very good levels of care, together with good support and guidance help pupils to overcome the barriers which might otherwise exclude them from learning. Nevertheless, pupils with statements of special educational needs who are ready to move on stay at the unit for too long.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall, and consequently learning is good. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are best in the hospital class, the young mothers' group and the Year 10-11 group of permanently excluded pupils;
- The best teaching and learning takes place in mathematics across the whole unit;
- Teaching is most effective when taught by subject specialists;
- There is too much unsatisfactory teaching in English;
- In spite of some good practice, assessment, its recording and the use of assessment information are not consistent across the unit.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	7 (15%)	22 (47%)	12 (25%)	5 (11%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

(Adults in very temporary positions or who were not on the staff of the unit taught three of the lessons which were unsatisfactory or poor.)

10. Teachers know pupils well and are warm, caring, encouraging but insistent. Pupils' difficult or reluctant behaviour undoubtedly presents a particular challenge to teachers, but it is not allowed to prevent learning. Teachers have high expectations of work, attitudes and behaviour. They are calm, firm and clear about what is expected of pupils, in terms of co-operation, attitude and effort. Pupils know and understand what is expected of them and try to respond positively to this, although some, particularly those in the medical group, sometimes find it difficult to take part orally. Routines and procedures are clear and consistently reinforced. Pupils' behaviour is usually very well managed and teachers anticipate and deal with frustrations and challenges before they escalate. Interactions are always positive, but, in the medical group, have a tendency to be over-formal. Teachers and support assistants are good at modifying work to overcome reluctance and difficulties. Teaching in all subjects makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

11. Specialist teachers, who have a good understanding of both the curriculum and the needs of individual pupils, teach most of the best lessons. Lessons have clear objectives, which are explained to pupils. Their work is well structured to ensure success, whilst making pupils think for themselves. Teachers value pupils' contributions and this encourages them to keep trying. They are also good at seeing where pupils have difficulties and at helping them to improve. A strength of the teaching is the teamwork between teachers and support assistants, backed up by the support they are given by the head and deputy. The standards pupils achieve and the progress pupils make are high profile for all staff. This has included monitoring the standards achieved by pupils in public care and those with statements of special educational needs.

12. Pupils work, their achievement in public examinations, and the unit's and LEA's monitoring of teaching, show that teaching is usually good and overall there here is very little unsatisfactory teaching by permanent staff. Where it happened, as for example in some English and "Literacy" lessons, there was not enough clarity about exactly what was to be learned and where things were leading, the activities did not engage pupils well enough, and as a result not enough was learned in the time available. In some lessons, where teaching and learning were satisfactory rather than good, pupils made just satisfactory progress, but the rate of work, concentration and involvement could have been higher and the lessons were not as productive as many of the others; more could have been achieved. In the schoolgirl mothers group, because there is only one carer for the babies, teachers are, on occasions, expected to look after a baby whilst teaching. Whilst they do this willingly, and work hard to prevent it affecting the quality of their teaching, it is an unsatisfactory situation overall.

13. Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory, although there have been particular weaknesses in English which are now being put right. In discussion, most staff are well aware of what pupils know, understand and can do. The recording and tracking of academic progress is satisfactory overall but varies between subjects and between teachers, from very good to satisfactory. It lacks consistency. Good use is made of baseline assessment information to determine pupils starting points in their learning. However, learning targets could and should be sharpened. In the best practice, the system of daily evaluation of lessons, which has a clear influence on subsequent curriculum planning, is a strong feature, and forms a good basis for devising learning targets. At the hospital school, in the girls' group and in the Year 10-11 group of excluded pupils, there is some good practice, with clear, well-focused learning targets. In the hospital school, where the average length of stay is 1.8 days, the teacher is very skilled at identifying what pupils need to do to make progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and at devising very short-term targets, translated into interesting activities, which pupils can complete during their stay in hospital.

The curriculum

The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good and the unit does well in meeting most pupils' needs. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Accommodation and resources are generally good, in spite of some shortcomings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The unit shows flexibility, resourcefulness and a commitment to inclusion in going out of its way to cater for individual pupils in their different circumstances;
- A good range of subjects and courses gives good access to examinations and accreditation, with a consistent emphasis on learning and achievement;
- There is a creative and imaginative approach to enriching the curriculum and providing a wide range of experiences from which vulnerable pupils might otherwise be excluded;
- There is a strong commitment to preparing pupils for reintegration wherever possible;
- However, for reasons beyond the unit's control, too many pupils with statements of special educational needs remain in the unit for too long when they should be moving on;
- Accommodation and facilities are of good quality, attractive, well managed and well used – creating a very good learning environment;
- In spite of this, the lack of some specialist facilities on site (a science laboratory and adequate outdoor play areas) limits what can be offered;
- There is a weakness – now being tackled – in provision for English in Years 7-9;
- Not enough is being done to encourage literacy across all subjects.

Commentary

14. The unit caters for an unusually wide range of different needs and circumstances. Although it is not normally advisable for pupils with medical needs to be taught in the same unit as pupils who have been permanently excluded from school because of emotional and behavioural difficulties, the accommodation is so arranged that the distinct forms of provision (excluded pupils; young people with medical needs; young mothers) have their own separate identity and separate bases within the building. The system works well and, with flexible timetabling and deployment of staff, allows all pupils access, for example, to the specialist facilities for ICT, art and cookery. The unified service, which also incorporates the hospital class and home tuition, allows for a smooth transition for pupils needing a period of home tuition on discharge from hospital, prior to a return to school – or, indeed, a period of small group tuition in the unit, offering a more rounded educational and social experience as a way back into school, where medical advice judges this to be necessary. The unified service allows for a swift response and good continuity and progression in pupils' work and development, as well as consistent liaison with pupils' mainstream schools. One pupil originally referred to the unit as an excluded pupil was transferred to the medical class when subsequent circumstances and diagnosis showed this to be appropriate. The move within the same unit proved to be more seamless and less traumatic than might otherwise have been the case.

15. The unit is resourceful in deploying staff to deal with individual cases who "do not fit" the normal pattern. Staff are committed to "finding a way". For example, pupils with acute behavioural problems may receive one-to-one tuition for part of their time, as part of a transitional programme to increase attendance, before being integrated, with support, into a teaching group. Catch-up sessions are held for pupils who have fallen behind, perhaps through absence. Discussion with a girl who was reluctant to take any part in physical education (PE) revealed that she enjoyed swimming; special arrangements were made for her to go swimming with a member of staff as a way of re-engaging with the subject. Where pupils are keen to follow an examination course they have taken at school in a subject not normally offered in the unit, staff go out of their way to arrange extra tuition so that this can happen.

16. Indeed, access to public examinations and other forms of accreditation is good. The range of courses continues to grow and even includes, unusually for a PRU, a GCSE course in PE. The flexible use of a range of courses offering different "entry points" (GCSEs, Entry Level, unit awards) ensures that older pupils have something to show for their time at the unit in terms of recognised qualifications, even where pupils' education has been seriously disrupted in the past. Staff show a strong determination that pupils' circumstances (be they medical conditions, hospitalisation, pregnancy, or exclusion from school) should not constitute a barrier or close doors to pupils' opportunities. Compared to many PRUs, pupils in this unit achieve well in terms of examination results – and the views of pupils and parents show that they achieve considerably more than had been expected of them before they came to the unit.

17. Staff have a creative and imaginative approach to enriching the curriculum, seizing and making opportunities, so that pupils do not miss out just because they do not currently attend a mainstream school. This is one of the features that makes this PRU stand out. Good use of strong partnerships extends the range and relevance of the curriculum – helped by the unit's readiness to innovate and then to review and change things in the light of its frank, "no-blame" approach to evaluation. The unit is not afraid to discontinue provision which no longer fits the bill and to try something new. This year, for example, following such a decision, a new link with the very well equipped e-learning centre of a technology college has enabled older pupils to start a media course. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a range of specially negotiated vocational courses at a local college of further education. Links with the youth service, university of the first age and a wide range of other organisations have added to the already rich programme of experiences beyond normal classroom lessons – from team-building and outdoor pursuits, to regular educational visits and residential. Unusually for a PRU, there is a good programme of extra-curricular activities, including sports coaching and GCSE preparation sessions, as well as leisure activities – with a good take-up by pupils, bringing evident benefit in terms of learning, personal development and motivation. One group of footballers went on a visit to Scotland for a football fixture. Work with the LEA music service led to pupils taking part in a one-day inter-school performance. Work with a visiting poet resulted in two poems developed with pupils being posted on the internet. To ensure that pupils in the medical group have access to appropriate opportunities for planned physical activity, Tai Chi lessons have been arranged. Photography sessions involving pupils from the young mothers' group fed into interesting and enterprising work in art. These are just a few of the many opportunities designed by staff to open up horizons for pupils – opportunities from which, given their recent history or present circumstances, they might otherwise be excluded.

18. Another strength is the good emphasis on preparing pupils for reintegration, wherever this is possible – a key purpose of the unit. The curriculum has been designed to mirror what goes on in mainstream schools to make the transition a realistic possibility. Pupils are taught in ways that prepare pupils for what will be expected of them on their return to school. For pupils who remain on the roll of their mainstream school, the unit makes every effort to keep up the link with school. Where this works best, the school has a designated contact who takes the initiative in supplying work and resources on a regular basis and in seeing that completed work is marked with a clear indication of what needs to be tackled next. Unfortunately, not all schools take their responsibilities as seriously as this. There is good encouragement from the unit for pupils to return to school (and support for them when they do so). However, some pupils are not reintegrated successfully. There is a particular blockage when it comes to pupils with statements of special educational needs, apparently linked to a shortage of special school places. For reasons beyond the unit's control, too many pupils with statements remain in the unit for too long when they should be moving on. This is inappropriate.

19. Before the unit was opened, the head attached great importance to creating an environment that was of good quality, attractive and could never be viewed as "second best" just because it was a PRU. The quality of the available accommodation is something that strikes the visitor; it is a real plus. The way pupils respect the fabric of the building, its furnishings and equipment pays tribute to what has been achieved. They see the unit as a "proper school" and a place most of them are proud of. This sense of ownership and involvement – even down to choosing the décor for the toilets, in the case of the young mothers' group – has made an important contribution to pupils' improved self-image and personal development. Discussions show that it has helped them feel valued and take learning seriously. In spite of this, the accommodation has its limitations. At present there is no science laboratory, very limited facilities for design and technology, and hardly any outdoor play space. Although the unit makes good use of off-site facilities, these shortcomings inevitably limit what can be offered on site.

20. There has been a particular weakness in the provision for English in Years 7-9, and this has been reflected in low standards and underachievement. The main reason has been a lack of staff expertise in the subject, difficulties of recruitment, and the fact that, until the very recent appointment of an acting subject manager, English has suffered from a lack of curriculum management. With no suitable scheme of work, pupils have not followed the National Curriculum in a properly planned way and have not benefited from the National Strategy. Recently, much has been done in a short time to

tackle the problem, but much remains to be done – and with temporary staffing in English, the situation remains fragile. At the same time, not enough has been done to promote literacy across the curriculum. Beyond the teaching of key words in each subject, too little is done, for example, to encourage sustained writing or to reinforce spelling strategies or to help pupils with their reading. This is a significant weakness given the low levels of literacy of many pupils when they start at the unit.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are good, informed by detailed knowledge of their circumstances. This support extends to families, and is part of the very good relationships the unit has with parents and carers. The unit's involvement of pupils in its work and development are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships with between staff and pupils are very good and pupils feel they are listened to and valued;
- Staff know pupils well and do all they can to encourage and help them to take part in unit life and in additional activities;
- The unit works hard to provide advice and to reintegrate pupils, within the constraints which exist in the authority;
- The monitoring of personal development is very good and staff give pupils a high level of personal support;
- The monitoring of academic progress and achievement, although satisfactory overall, is inconsistent.

Commentary

21. There is regular monitoring of pupils' progress. This is especially strong with respect to attitudes and behaviour, which are monitored in detail and regularly reviewed with each pupil. There is some very good practice in setting targets and assessing progress in personal development.

22. Regular specific as well as ongoing reviews are well used, with targets springing from the observations recorded and clearly followed through using individual education plans. Pupils are actively involved in monitoring their own behaviour and progress, for example, through the system of reward points, as well as through reference to specific behaviour frameworks and targets they have been set. Overall, the monitoring of personal development is very good with account being taken of pupils' views on the progress they make.

23. The way in which staff, both teachers and support assistants, work as a flexible team to promote positive attitudes is a strength of the unit. Practice as a whole is very good. Very skilful classroom management ensures that pupils have maximum opportunity to learn and provides strong motivation for appropriate or good behaviour. There is a strong, effective emphasis on positive behaviour management. The expectations of pupils taking responsibility for themselves are embedded into lessons, forming reference points for giving praise where it is due, and explaining exactly why behaviour is unacceptable or inappropriate should this arise. Staff challenge, negotiate, give pupils responsibility and manage challenging and withdrawn behaviour calmly but firmly. In the excluded pupils' groups, the hospital class and the young mothers' groups, there are good strategies for promoting teamwork, fair play, turn-taking and social skills through games and activities, and oppressive behaviour is not tolerated. In these groups, the very productive use of social times, such as breakfast clubs and break times, also makes a strong contribution to helping pupils develop as people. The medical group have fewer opportunities to develop social skills; the ethos that has been created is rather more formal and not enough is done to encourage pupils to interact with each other or with adults.

24. As has been mentioned elsewhere, much is done to prepare pupils for reintegration into mainstream school and to support them when they do move back. Some pupils who flourish in the unit are reluctant to face the move back into school. Staff of the unit do not accept this state of affairs and work tirelessly to get pupils back into school, up to and including pupils in Year 10. However, for some pupils, placements in schools are not easy to find. The biggest blockage to successful reintegration appears to be a shortage of places to which pupils with statements of special educational needs can move on. This is undermining the true function of the unit.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is very good. Links with the community, schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong links with parents and carers, including the number of home visits and the support this provides for pupils;
- The good use made of strong links with schools, colleges and local organisations to extend the range of opportunities open to pupils (as reported elsewhere);
- The unit drives innovation – taking every opportunity to improve links and shape opportunities that arise.

Commentary

25. Parents have confidence in the work of the unit and recognise the progress that their children are making. In many cases parents and carers see this progress as very substantial. There is general agreement that staff are approachable and supportive. Those attending the parents meeting and returning the questionnaire were very positive in their views, and some parents sent in letters of appreciation of the unit's work.

26. The unit places a high priority on involving parents with their children's learning, even when this may be difficult and time-consuming. Staff make many home visits, and hold open evenings which parents can attend. This draws in parents who previously had little positive contact with their child's education. Where a child has a home interest which can be used to further learning, this is valued and incorporated.

27. There is very good involvement of parents in regular progress reviews. Where pupils live in residential accommodation there are good links with carers. Communications, both formal and informal, are frequent, and parents receive good information about the unit and about how their child is progressing. Reviews provide good detail for parents about improvements in both behaviour and learning, and parents are involved in a target-setting discussion with the unit and with their children.

28. The unit works closely with outside agencies, such as the health service and the youth service, and this helps it in its aim to provide well for pupils from a range of circumstances. Links with schools, colleges and the community are also strong in most respects. In an interesting project, the head works with key staff of two mainstream schools together with representatives from other support agencies, chairing their "Inclusion Meetings" as they review their plans for pupils at risk of exclusion. The head is involved in a number of local interagency initiatives aiming at promoting social and educational inclusion and the unit's involvement is welcomed as a key factor in making things happen and seeing that things are followed through. The unit's work is well regarded and valued by head teachers, although information from schools about pupils' work and academic progress is sometimes too slow in reaching the unit. Curriculum liaison with mainstream schools continues to improve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the unit are very good. The leadership provided by the head is very good, and that provided by other staff is good. Management is very good. Governance by the LEA is satisfactory, but there are a number of weaknesses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision, energy, commitment and educational steer of the head are inspirational and the unit has come a long way in a relatively short time since its opening;
- Good monitoring of teaching has led to clear knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of staff
- There is very good ongoing self-evaluation and good use is made of its outcomes to raise pupils' achievements;
- Performance management is very well managed;
- Development planning is very good and there is regular tracking of progress towards reaching targets;
- The LEA has provided very good financial support for the unit's development;
- The LEA is overly dependent on the head to steer the educational development of the unit and to account for its effectiveness and progress.

Commentary

29. Leadership by the head of the unit is inspiring, purposeful and empowering. It shows commitment to high standards of achievement in all aspects of the unit's work. The outstanding progress of the unit in a relatively short time, reflects the drive and the clarity of vision of the head and her success in engendering in staff a shared commitment to the unit's goals and values. These are clearly focused on overcoming barriers to learning and progress, turning round pupils' attitudes to learning, helping them to improve their behaviour, and promoting high achievement. She has successfully fostered a team ethos where each member of staff – teaching and non-teaching – is valued, is clear about what is expected of them, and is willing to look critically and frankly at what is happening, within a "no blame" culture and a commitment to "doing it better". She is strongly supported by the deputy and by other staff with leadership responsibilities, who serve as good role models in upholding the unit's values and policies. The head of the unit is proactive in highlighting good practice within the unit and sharing it with a wider audience and has established a well-deserved high reputation within the LEA.

30. Management structures and strategies are clear and focus on translating the unit's priorities into action. Planning for improvement is well embedded in the unit's practice and is underpinned by clear strategic thinking. Evaluation of the unit's success towards meeting its targets is an ongoing process, one which is honest and guides future practice. Monitoring of teaching is accorded a high priority by managers in the unit. As a result, managers have a clear insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and through the feedback from observations they identify with individual teachers both good practice and areas for improvement. Performance management and appraisal are well planned, well organised and taken seriously by all staff. Managers accord high priority to the continuing professional development of staff, providing a good range of opportunities, and to effective deployment of staff. Together with the very good leadership provided by the head, these factors place the unit in a good position to continue to raise pupils' achievement.

31. The LEA has been very supportive in the setting up of the unit and in financing its development. Nevertheless, although governance overall is satisfactory, there are some weaknesses. The LEA relies too heavily on the head of the unit to set the vision and steer the educational direction of the unit's development. It has in place an appropriate structure for monitoring the quality of provision within the unit through the work of the school improvement officer, but frequent changes in personnel have prevented this from being as effective as it could be. Similarly, the regular meetings between the head of the unit and the head of service, whilst providing support for the head of the unit, have not really focused on monitoring the quality of provision. Although the LEA maintains an overview of the unit's development, the lack of regular monitoring of the quality of provision and of rigour in holding the unit to account detracts from its effective governance. The management committee is supportive and, through detailed reports from the head, is kept informed

about the unit's strengths and planned areas for development. The lack of reporting of the outcomes of the LEA's monitoring prevents it from knowing well the unit's areas of weakness.

OFF-SITE PROVISION

What is the effectiveness of off-site provision?

Off-site provision is good and pupils' achievement and personal development are the better for it.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Off-site provision for pupils unable to attend the PRU itself is well managed and is geared to keeping pupils in touch with what is going on in their mainstream school;
- Off-site provision for pupils who do attend the PRU significantly extends the range of learning opportunities open to them. It is well planned, well managed, monitored and developed in the light of experience;
- The fact that pupils taking part in off-site provision are accompanied and actively supported by PRU staff is a key to its success.

Commentary

32. A strength of the off-site provision for pupils unable to attend the unit (or their school) for medical reasons lies in the fact that it is managed as part of a unified service. This helps with transition arrangements – for example, avoiding delay or discontinuity when a pupil is discharged from hospital but still needs home tuition before being well enough to return to school. It also means that what is planned for pupils during any period of home tuition is subject to the same planning and monitoring requirements as apply to other pupils in the unit, with a clear commitment to providing a suitable education that keeps pupils in touch with what is going on in their mainstream school. Provision in the hospital class is effective, benefiting from good teamwork and positive relationships between the teacher, relatives and other professionals involved in the care of the children. The teaching inspected was very good – combining an energetic, lively approach with a sensitivity to pupils' medical and learning needs, never compromising the focus on learning. Flexibility and well prepared resources covering a wide age range were the order of the day, with good use of ICT to engage some reluctant children.

33. For pupils who do attend the unit, off-site provision is planned as an integral part of the unit's curriculum. Happily, it is not viewed as a convenient "add-on" that can be left as the responsibility of "someone else". It provides pupils with access to facilities and opportunities that would not otherwise be open to them – including, for example, the vocational courses at the college or the new media course at the e-learning centre, that have been reported elsewhere, as well as the wide range of opportunities for learning beyond the classroom, also mentioned earlier. The range of such opportunities is very good and significantly enriches the curriculum the unit can offer, raising achievement in the subjects concerned and promoting pupils' self-confidence and personal development. Senior staff of the unit are actively involved in planning off-site provision, even in cases where the teaching is the responsibility of the off-site provider. Whilst they are proactive and resourceful in seeking new opportunities, they are rightly wary of "off-the-peg" packages and are keen to negotiate the right sort of arrangements to meet their pupils' particular needs and circumstances. They regularly monitor the quality of what is provided and keep a check on pupils' progress. They are not afraid to recognise when things do not go as well as they should, following up with frank discussion and action to put things right. Where off-site provision does not live up to expectations, as has happened on occasion, they seek alternatives.

34. A key to the success of the off-site provision is the fact that pupils are always accompanied by staff from the unit who take an active part in what is on offer and are there to provide support. They ensure that the unit's expectations of behaviour, attitudes and involvement are kept constantly before pupils – but do so without stifling their initiative and independence. In a well taught introductory

child care session at the local further education college, the good team work of accompanying adults helped to break the ice and give reluctant pupils confidence to take part in discussion. In an activity that required pupils to reflect on their own childhood, one of the unit's accompanying teachers was quick to spot that, for one pupil, childhood memories were likely to be very painful. The teacher's rapid but sensitive intervention helped avoid a potential outburst. Although there is a financial cost attached, the presence of the unit's staff, who know the pupils well and are respected by them, does a great deal to set a positive working climate on off-site provision and to allow for effective carry-over when pupils return to their base. It proves a very worthwhile investment.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Lessons in English were seen in each year group. Modern foreign languages were not taught in the unit at the time of the inspection.

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**, because of a weakness in Years 7-9 – but things are improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results at 16 show good achievement for older pupils, as well as effective preparation by teachers;
- A great deal of development work has been done recently and this is beginning to pay off;
- Standards in Years 7-9 are too low and pupils have been underachieving;
- Until recently, the programme for pupils in Years 7-9 was not linked sufficiently to the National Curriculum and the National Strategy for English;
- There is too much unsatisfactory teaching;
- Staffing issues have affected the quality of provision;
- Not enough has been done to encourage literacy across the curriculum.

Commentary

35. Standards in Years 7-9 are low – lower than in other core subjects. Even given pupils' low levels of literacy on entry, achievement is unsatisfactory; these pupils have not moved forward enough. In particular, they have done too little sustained writing and their experience of reading has been too narrow. For many of them, too, their speaking and listening skills have not developed well enough. This underachievement has been linked to longstanding weaknesses in the English curriculum, which are now being tackled. Some pupils' reading and writing problems are not being diagnosed and tackled systematically enough.

36. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall, although there is a wide range of attainment. Given their circumstances and starting points, most of these pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. This is reflected in the examination results, which show a rising trend. Last year, 21 pupils gained grades at GCSE; others gained qualifications at Entry Level. Achievement is best for pupils taking GCSE; it is generally satisfactory for pupils taking other courses, but the performance of some pupils is held back by gaps in attendance or by a failure to complete work.

37. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Although there is a good deal of satisfactory teaching and learning, and some teaching is good, there is too much unsatisfactory teaching, especially in Years 7-9, where pupils have not been learning enough. Occasionally, this is because teachers fail to gain and hold pupils' attention or to involve and challenge them enough in the work. A particular weakness, however, lies in the short "Literacy" lessons held at the start of morning or afternoon sessions. These are not working. The teaching is sometimes confusing and even inaccurate; pupils are not clear enough about what they are doing and where it is leading. The past work of younger pupils confirms that there have been too many isolated, decontextualised exercises, with too little opportunity for pupils to apply what they are intended to learn to the rest of their work; there has been too little "carry-over". On the other hand, this should not obscure the fact that there is a good deal of competent teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, helped by the structure of the examination syllabus – and, indeed, some good, lively teaching. In one effective Year 11 lesson, for example,

pupils with only limited prior knowledge of “Macbeth” concentrated and worked hard and contributed well – because the teacher generated real interest and involvement and was good at challenging them to get below the surface, to explore and develop their ideas, particularly on characterisation. There was a good balance between providing the structured support that many in the class needed and ensuring the intellectual challenge that they all required. There was no “dumbing down” and a brisk pace was maintained. Pupils learned a good deal in this well planned, well managed, interesting lesson.

38. A particular difficulty, until very recently, has been the lack of a subject manager for English and a shortage of specialist expertise in the subject. Without leadership and management of the subject, and without a proper scheme of work, adequate curriculum planning or guidance, provision in Years 7-9 in the excluded pupils’ group has suffered the most. In the past, the work for these younger pupils did not take enough account of the National Curriculum or of the National Strategy for English. Until recently, they were not taught what is expected for pupils of their age or what they needed in order to make real progress. The situation is now improving. Assessing and tracking progress in English has been inconsistent – better in Years 10 and 11 (because of the framework of course requirements), but weak in Years 7-9. This has rightly been identified as an area for development.

39. The recently appointed acting subject leader is now giving a good lead and a great deal has been achieved in a short time, setting clear policies and providing guidance and schemes of work. However, with temporary staffing in English, the situation remains vulnerable.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Not enough has been done to promote literacy across the curriculum. Beyond the teaching of key words in each subject, too little is done, for example, to encourage sustained writing or to reinforce spelling strategies or to help pupils with their reading. Only rarely are pupils taught or reminded, for example, how to read for information, how to take notes or how to plan and make oral presentations. This is unsatisfactory, given the low levels of literacy of many pupils on entry to the unit.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good** and is a strong feature. Teaching is consistently good for all ages and pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently good quality of teaching helps pupils achieve well;
- Teachers have a good knowledge of individual pupils and use this well to promote improvement;
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are of consistently high quality;
- The curriculum planning for all of the older pupils is of high quality;
- The assessment and recording of individual progress for the older pupils is of good quality;

Commentary

41. Although standards overall are below average for pupils’ ages, a significant number of pupils in all years do reach the standards expected nationally. At all ages, and in each of the different groups, achievement is good in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in terms of gaining knowledge, deepening understanding and developing appropriate skills.

42. In Years 7-9, there is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils’ numeracy skills and most pupils are competent in the four rules of number. The implementation of the National Strategy is successfully developing pupils’ confidence and competence in mental calculations and in adopting a range of strategies to calculate numerical problems. The numeracy sessions are used

productively to boost pupils' competence in manipulating numbers. Pupils are able to record and interpret data using bar charts, recognise different types of angles and can identify the next two numbers in a sequence. Their work is well planned to take account of individual needs; for example the highest attaining pupil can calculate the sine and tangent of an angle and solve simple problems using the theorem of Pythagoras.

43. In Years 10 and 11, in the excluded pupils', medical and young mothers' groups, pupils are appropriately following a GCSE programme of work which is carefully planned and structured to take account of pupils' individual needs. They are competent in presenting data and in interpreting a variety of diagrams, including bar graphs and pie charts. They understand scatter diagrams and are developing skill in identifying the line of best fit. They are able to rotate, enlarge and reflect a shape around a given point and can solve simple algebraic equations.

44. There is consistently good teaching in mathematics. Teachers use their own subject knowledge well to promote pupils' learning. They use a good range of strategies to meet pupils' varying and changing needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, in terms of application, learning, achievement and behaviour. The consistently high quality of relationships between adults and pupils, which are based on respect, helps build pupils' self-esteem and creates a positive climate for learning in mathematics.

45. The subject is well led and managed. The quality of provision is successfully monitored through regular observation of teaching and through the developing of work sampling. A successful team ethos has been fostered.

46. The model of planning and assessment, which has been developed, takes very good account of individual pupils' progress and is a key reason why pupils continue to improve their mathematical skills knowledge and understanding.

Mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum

47. There is good support for the development of pupils' skills in numeracy. Pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively in other lessons. For example, in cookery, they weigh and measure accurately, calculate the cost of ingredients and compare prices in order to work out the best value for money. In science, pupils are able to record accurately the outcomes of their investigations, collect data and present it graphically.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results for pupils aged 16 show that they have achieved well, although standards remain below the national average;
- Standards in Years 7-9 are below average for pupils' ages, but represent good achievement for pupils;
- Staff who teach the subject have good subject knowledge and expertise;
- Teaching is good in all groups, with a lot of good and very good teaching;
- The curriculum is well planned;
- The subject is very well led and managed;
- There is no specialist science laboratory.

Commentary

48. Pupils' achievement is good and pupils of all ages have made good progress in their enjoyment and understanding of science.

49. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below the national average for most pupils, but a few pupils achieve in line with the national average in the GCSE single science examination. Last year, 25 pupils gained grades at GCSE, whilst others were successful at Entry Level. Overall, achievement is good, although progress for some pupils is limited by erratic attendance due too disaffection, ill health or maternity leave.

50. Progress for all pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, is good. Over the whole of the provision, pupils show an increased knowledge and understanding across all areas of science. They become more familiar with technical terms and scientific principles, the quality of diagrams improves and results are recorded more accurately. Pupils' confidence grows and shows in the way they are able to carry out investigations. Many still have difficulty working in small groups, but most willingly join in discussions, drawing upon their previous experience. With the support of staff, pupils are learning to behave appropriately and they are generally courteous to the adults who work with them.

51. The high standard of teaching is an important factor in the good progress made by pupils. In three quarters of the lessons inspected, teaching was either good or very good. These lessons featured carefully structured work, including reinforcement of previous learning, the introduction of new materials using a range of teaching methods, and careful discussion or summary at the end. Demonstrations are well used; one on the rate of chemical reactions held pupils' interest and attention particularly well. Pupils are interested in science and enjoy their lessons, thanks to very effective teaching, which frequently relates scientific topics and concepts to everyday life, thereby making them more understandable. For example, in a lesson on health and fitness for the youngest pupils, the teacher's lively and well-targeted explanations really captured their interest. Classroom assistants and support teachers give very good support. Homework is set appropriately and marked with helpful supportive and sometimes evaluative comments commending good work and describing how to improve.

52. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, a non-specialist teacher taught the subject. The work was pitched at too low a level and failed to challenge pupils to think. Consequently, not enough learning took place.

53. The subject is very well led. There is a well thought through development plan, and the assessment and recording of National Curriculum data and external examination results is well done. Further development is needed in monitoring the quality of science across the different provisions within the unit. The curriculum is appropriate; with material being used in a flexible way to meet individual pupils' needs Good use is made of ICT to support learning, both by pupils and teachers. the support for pupils development of numeracy skills is good, for example ,with pupils being taught to use and interpret charts, graphs and scientific data. The support for the written aspects of literacy is not yet good enough as pupils have too few opportunities to write at length, or sometimes even in whole sentences.

54. The department is well resourced in terms of texts and basic science equipment. However, the lack of a specialist science laboratory restricts the practical investigations that pupils are able to carry out.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** overall, with some strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Facilities are good – the unit is well equipped;
- Pupils in all groups benefit from teaching by a subject specialist;
- The early implementation of the National Strategy is paying off (in terms of improved provision for pupils);

- Teaching is never less than satisfactory;.
- For some older pupils, sporadic absences and a failure to complete work reduce their chances of accredited results;
- Some older pupils should have more to show in terms of accreditation, to bring results in line with other subjects;
- At present, there is no coordinated whole-school strategy for developing ICT across the curriculum.

Commentary

55. Standards are below average for pupils' ages in all years, although a few pupils reach the standards expected in aspects of their work. However, taking account of pupils' starting points and the headway they make, achievement is good in Years 7-9. Pupils cover a good range of work, thanks to a well structured and suitably assessed course. They learn, for example, to create and amend text, to use ICT for presentations, to handle and interpret data and to combine use of ICT tools. They are being helped to evaluate and modify their work, to refine it with an audience in mind and to make decisions for themselves. The early implementation of the National Strategy for ICT is paying off in terms of improving pupils' ICT capability as well as developing their skills.

56. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory overall – some pupils achieve well, particularly in the medical and young mothers' groups; but some pupils achieve less than they could because of absences, late arrival in lessons or failure to complete units of work. A unit award scheme is used to provide pupils with nationally recognised qualifications in ICT and pupils successfully complete a number of units showing proficiency and understanding in a range of aspects of ICT (for example, in text and graphics, modelling, data storage and media, and so on). The number of unit awards achieved has risen over recent years. Some pupils, however, particularly in the excluded pupils' group, do not do themselves justice by failing to complete units; they should have more to show in terms of accreditation. For some pupils in Years 10 and 11, evaluation skills are limited, and they rarely conduct more complex lines of enquiry. However, pupils' work shows that, where they attend on a regular basis and are prepared to carry their work through to a proper conclusion, they make progress over a suitably broad front, build on their prior attainment and experience, increase the range of ICT applications they can handle, developing specific skills and increasing their awareness of audience and purpose. The recent introduction of a short GCSE in ICT will increase pupils' options for accreditation.

57. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall. The teaching seen was never less than satisfactory; sometimes it was good. The preparation and planning had many good features. Clear, detailed objectives were backed up by well-prepared materials and activities. Demonstrations (often making good use of the interactive whiteboard) were followed by opportunity for structured practice, and, in the best lessons, encouragement and support to apply, experiment and make decisions. Pupils' learning was helped by the good level of adult support and the effective teamwork between adults. There was a good emphasis on review, evaluation and improvement – although not all pupils found this easy. In the best lessons, pupils worked with application and interest and achieved a good deal. There was a real momentum to pupils' work and progress. Some lessons were satisfactory, rather than good, because it took longer to engage reluctant learners (older pupils in the excluded pupils' group), to capture their interest, imagination and cooperation and to highlight key learning points in a sufficiently memorable way; at times, there was a need to inject more pace.

58. Pupils benefit from the unit's well equipped ICT facilities, particularly its specialist ICT suite. Another strength is the specialist expertise of the ICT subject manager and the fact that all pupils in the unit have access to specialist teaching. The subject itself is well led and managed – with good plans for developing the subject; the vision and initiative to secure early involvement in the National Strategy; up-to-date professional development and networking; detailed planning and organisation; effective and efficient procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. At present, however, the subject manager's role does not extend to leading on a whole-unit strategy for developing ICT across the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

59. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to use ICT as a tool for learning in subjects across the curriculum, often consolidating and improving the ICT skills, knowledge and understanding they have learned in their ICT lessons. Most use of ICT is made in science and mathematics. In art, interesting work has been achieved working with digitised images, following use of a digital camera. In other subjects, some use is made of ICT for word-processing and presenting work, and for seeking information. What is lacking, in order to take things forward and ensure that opportunities are not missed, is a co-ordinated whole-unit strategy for developing ICT across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Provision for history and geography for pupils of all ages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good;
- Pupils show interest in the subjects and actively involve themselves in the work orally;
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and encouraging;
- In both subjects, pupils have too few opportunities and too little encouragement to express their ideas in writing.

Commentary

60. Although pupils' attainment in both history and geography is below average, they make good progress in developing understanding of the issues being studied. This is particularly evident in their oral work, although written tasks tend to be unduly constraining. Overall, their achievement, particularly in terms of gains in knowledge, is good.

61. In both history and geography lessons inspected, the teaching was mainly good and never less than satisfactory. It successfully involved pupils in discussion and helped develop their thinking skills. This was particularly evident in a history lesson in which pupils were encouraged to think about the lifestyle of the Plains Indians and were helped to identify why the tepee was an effective dwelling. Pupils' interest and motivation were clearly evident from their eager responses and sensible questions. In the geography lessons, pupils were encouraged to think about their environment and through carefully structured information were able to understand the need for re-cycling. Teachers know individual pupils well and place strong emphasis on boosting their confidence and self esteem. As a result, teachers are able to hold pupils' attention well, and in a geography lesson some difficult behaviour was sensitively and well managed. In both history and geography lessons, opportunities were missed to help pupils' literacy development through providing opportunities for them to explain their ideas in extended pieces of writing.

TECHNOLOGY

The unit does not provide technology courses but provides recreational and life-skills cookery. Provision in cookery is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm and expertise of teachers;
- The environment largely created by teachers of the subject is very good and supports learning;
- The curriculum is very well planned and meets the needs of individual pupils;
- Pupils achieved very well in the two lessons observed;
- The lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

62. It was only possible to inspect two lessons; there was not sufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about standards and achievement.

63. The planning and preparation for the teaching of this subject is very good. Lessons are well planned and the resources are very well organised. The two specialist teachers' own obvious enjoyment of the subject is infectious and clearly enthuses pupils. Pupils made very good progress in the preparation and handling of equipment, for example when learning to prepare vegetables for pizzas; they are learning how to combine ingredients successfully to ensure a good end product, such as short bread, pizza, and lemon chicken with cashew nuts. Good attention is paid to multi-cultural and cultural aspects of the subject. Every opportunity is taken to support the development of pupils' numeracy skills through such activities as weighing and costing of ingredients, and through comparisons, for example of a "delivered-to-the door" pizza and a home-made pizza. Pupils' gains in learning in the lessons seen were very good, providing real support for their future lives.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Two art lessons were seen, one with the young mothers' group, one with a Year 10 group of permanently excluded pupils. The one lesson of music was not seen.

ART

Provision in art is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm and expertise of the specialist teacher;
- The accommodation and the way art has been displayed;
- The GCSE examination results which pupils achieve;
- Good use of ICT.

Commentary

64. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards and achievement overall. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in art lessons. Last year 10 pupils took GCSE art, and results for these were good with eight achieving grade C or above and the remaining two a grade D. For the pupils concerned, this represented very good achievement.

65. Pupils work, including that on display, shows that pupils have benefited from the teaching of a wide range of art skills. This is particularly noticeable in the portraits, showing how much pupils have learned about facial proportion. The displays of work cover a wide range of printing processes, as well as painting and drawing. Pupils are learning about the life and work of artists from a range of countries and cultures. They are encouraged to make active use of their sketchbooks. Good use is made of ICT, for example pupils use enhanced digital photography, to extend their observational and design skills and to paint, model and print their own interesting studies based on this work.

66. In the lessons seen, the response of pupils was very good. Pupils enjoy lessons and make positive contributions to discussions. Pupils are well behaved and they listen and take note of the advice and guidance they are given. This was particularly evident in a lesson where pupils were using a range of types of paints and water colour pencils to create a desired effect.

67. The art teacher has a clear sense of where she wants the subject to go, for example by increasing the range of materials pupils work with. There is a good focus on raising standards. Leadership and management are very good. The scheme of work is well planned and sequenced

and is supported a by a good range of teacher-made research booklets and other commercial texts. The newly acquired accommodation is very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

One outdoor activity session (orienteeing) was seen with Year 9 pupils and one Tai Chi lesson with Year 11 pupils from the medical group. No other physical education lessons were observed.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of opportunities for all pupils to take part in planned physical activities;
- There are good extra-curricular opportunities for sporting activities;
- Older pupils have the option to take a GCSE short course in PE – an unusual opportunity in a PRU. Those who did so last year did well, boys in particular.

Commentary

68. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards and achievement overall. Records show that all pupils take part in planned physical activities – with access to a good range of games, skills development, fitness training and outdoor activities. Suitable activities are arranged for pupils in the medical and young mothers' group, including, for example, Tai Chi sessions led by an instructor from a local gym, walks or mother-and-baby swimming sessions. Good use is made of venues outside the unit, including a local sports centre, to make up for the limited facilities on site. The unit also offers a good range of extra-curricular sporting and leisure activities, including football coaching sessions, bowling, outdoor pursuits, residential courses and opportunities to take up canoeing, mountain biking and other adventurous activities. Take-up by pupils is good.

69. Year 11 pupils have the option to take a GCSE short course in PE – a rare opportunity for pupils in a PRU. Of the nine pupils who did so last year, seven gained a grade at GCSE, four of them achieving a higher grade (A*-C). This represented good achievement for the pupils concerned. The boys in particular (the majority of the candidates) did well.

70. Although only a very limited amount of teaching was seen, the teaching inspected was good and pupils learned well, making good progress. Indeed, in the orienteeing session, teaching and learning were very good and pupils achieved very well. The session was very well planned and organised, with great attention to detail – but at the same time with an element of excitement that motivated and engaged the pupils very effectively. Risk assessments were well thought through and, during the session, there was a good emphasis on safety. The activity was suitably challenging and resulted in a very worthwhile experience, extending pupils both physically and mentally. The plenary session was successful in getting pupils to reflect on what they had learned – not only about using maps, for example, but also about the purpose and value of team work. The contribution to pupils' personal development and to raising their self-esteem was very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Child development.

Provision in child development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher's subject expertise;
- The good use teachers make of the knowledge they have of individual pupils' learning and their personal circumstances;
- The use that is made of external providers such as health professionals.

Commentary

71. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards and achievement and teaching overall. Records show that the subject is effectively managed. The curriculum is planned in depth and lesson objectives clearly identified. The work covered is adapted to meet the particular needs of individual pupils, depending on the stage of the pregnancy or age of baby. In the one lesson seen, tasks were broken down into small steps and pupils made satisfactory progress. Pupils have developed very good relationships with both the unit's staff and external providers, such as the midwife, school nurse and health visitor. The support that this provides is valued by the girls, who regularly ask questions in an attempt to increase their understanding of themselves and their babies.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching that meets the needs of individual pupils and ensures that they achieve well;
- Good use of external providers;
- A new enthusiastic and knowledgeable head of subject;

Commentary

72. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils to ensure that each makes good progress, where appropriate achieving external accreditation in GCSE Citizenship. Achievement is good.

73. Lessons make an essential and positive contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem. Elements of the PSHE programme have helped pupils to consider fundamental questions about themselves and their lives and the world in which they live. Helped by the fact that teaching is good and relationships outstandingly supportive, pupils have been given the confidence to say what they are feeling both about themselves and about their lives. They are learning to express themselves appropriately, with some understanding of how this must change to suit different audiences and occasions. Through a range of strategies, including discussions and the use of video, they are helped to recognise their own worth as individuals and to see how they can change things for the better. They make very good progress in learning to manage their own behaviour, although, as records show, some pupils continue to find this very difficult. Even so, they come to understand what behaviour is unacceptable (including very withdrawn behaviour), and why, and, through calm, persistent and constant staff support, they learn how to manage situations which they find difficult. Pupils are learning to accept the consequences of the decisions they make, both in their attitudes towards work and in their behaviour.

74. In lessons inspected, the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship was always good. Lessons were well planned and teachers were very clear about the objectives of each session. Praise was used well to motivate pupils and gentle humour and sensitivity diffused some potentially difficult situations. Relationships were very good – the key element on which these lessons were built. Teachers made it clear that they liked and respected pupils, but at the same time made explicit what was and was not acceptable or appropriate behaviour. They worked hard to help individual pupils manage their particular problems. They also

paid good attention to wider issues beyond the immediate personal lives of the pupils, who were required to think about wider issues, such as smoking and the effects of man on the environment. The newly appointed head of subject has already put in place sound plans to continue to develop the subject. As an enthusiast, she is continuing to give the subject a strong focus and this is paying off.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the unit	3
How inclusive the unit is	2
How the unit's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	NA
Value for money provided by the unit	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the unit	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the unit seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the unit's links with parents	2
The quality of the unit's links with the community	3
The unit's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the unit	2
The governance of the unit	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).

