



PACE

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104757
LEA St. Helens
Inspection number 277214
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 12 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Frank Carruthers CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Derbyshire Hill Road
School category	Pupil referral unit		St Helens
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Merseyside WA9 2LH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 677175
Number on roll	8	Fax number	01744 677176
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	N/a
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2000	Headteacher	Margaret Simpson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The St Helens Primary Assessment Centre for Education (PACE) is a pupil referral unit for primary aged children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who have been or who are in danger of being excluded because of their poor or very challenging behaviour. It is part of the local authority's Inclusion Support Service. All eight boys are White-British and none has English as an additional language. The children remain registered at their mainstream school while attending the unit and after their first two weeks of full-time attendance, they spend parts of each week in their own schools. A few children do not return to mainstream schooling and go on to a special school if this is deemed appropriate. All the children are on the unit's list of pupils with learning difficulties and some have a Statement of special educational need. The social circumstances of most of the children's families are well below average and from time to time some of the children are in public care. The unit also operates three nurture groups in three mainstream schools for children aged four to seven. Each one caters for eight children who are assessed as requiring extra support for their personal development so that they can achieve better at school. They are funded through grants from the Behaviour Improvement Programme as well as the unit's own budget.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The unit's effectiveness is good and it has a number of outstanding aspects. This judgement is in broad agreement with the view of senior staff. The unit caters well for the needs of the children, helping them to remain engaged with their mainstream school while at the unit. They begin to enjoy education again because their self-esteem is improved and their specific social, emotional and behavioural needs are met. The staff care for and support the children exceptionally well. The unit is highly effective in working with other agencies to help the children and, whenever possible, their families. Its overall success is measured by the many examples of children returning to and remaining in mainstream school and by the confidence that schools have in both the nurture groups and the unit. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. The quality of provision for children in their reception year, who are taught in the nurture groups, is exceptionally good. Leadership and management of the provision are outstanding. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The senior staff promote high quality care and the responsible officers of the local authority manage the provision as part of the Inclusion Support Service very well. The unit has good capacity to maintain its quality and make further improvements. The cost of educating a child in the unit is significantly less than a place in most special schools and, because of its good provision, gives exceptionally good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek the views of parents and make better use of information about the children after they leave the unit and nurture groups in order to evaluate the performance of the pupil referral unit.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children achieve well while they are receiving support in the unit and the nurture groups. The attainment of children in the unit in English and mathematics ranges from broadly average to exceptionally low. For example, in a sample of the work of children aged nine and ten, there were those whose attainment was just below the average expected at this age and others who were only just achieving the levels expected of six year-olds. Children make good progress in the two or three terms that they attend the classes. Almost all the children make at least good and some make very good progress towards the targets in their individual behaviour and education plans. They make good progress in English and mathematics and begin to regain the ground lost during difficult times they have experienced in previous schools. Because they regularly attend mainstream school while at the unit they are able to re-integrate successfully in a short period of time. Pupils also make good progress in science, which was a key issue at the last inspection, and in information and communication technology. It is a similar success story for the children in the nurture groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Progress in the personal development of the children is the most important aim of the pupil referral unit and both the unit and the nurture groups do this really well. Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Their behaviour improves from being totally unacceptable before they start at the unit to at least satisfactory and often better. Their attendance at the unit and part-time at their school improves and is good. Their enthusiasm for learning is renewed because of the excellent support and encouragement they receive. The children really enjoy their work again. They make particularly good progress in their moral and social development and begin to think about others. Good examples of this are when the children save the points they receive for good behaviour in order to exchange them for presents for parents and carers rather than for themselves. The unit is working towards the standards of the local authority's Healthy Schools Award and children are becoming more attuned to a healthier and fitter lifestyle. The children begin the long road towards working co-operatively with one another. It is very difficult for some! Thanks to the excellent levels of care and support, the children learn to control their behaviour and work responsibly in lessons. They begin to re-engage and soon enjoy their work. As one nine year-old pupil commented, 'It's (the quality of my behaviour) gone up and up. It's the best thing that's happened to me (coming to the unit).' The nurture groups provide the younger children with a secure and stable environment to help them work effectively in a group. Children acquire skills that have eluded them before, often caused by vulnerable and volatile situations in their private lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

On the day of the inspection, all children attending the unit were in their mainstream schools and inspectors spent time visiting a sample of schools observing how children are re-integrating into classes. All were doing well. They receive part-time support from staff of the unit in order to help them and this promotes good links with the schools. Teachers and inspectors agree that children learn well in the unit. This is backed up by the quality of work in their books. There are good systems to assess the children's attainment and a very effective computer-based integrated learning system to help the children improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy to help prepare them for future life. This has the added benefit of involving the children in checking how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The staff at the unit interact very well with the children and are very flexible in how they operate in schools. Teaching and learning in the nurture groups are of high quality. Staff make good use of early assessment systems to identify who will benefit from provision in the nurture groups and track the children's progress carefully. Particular strengths of the teaching are the very good relationships evident and the very good strategies for managing the children's behaviour and getting the best out of them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. At the time of the last inspection, there were several key issues and these have been resolved very well. Through changes in provision, so that the children continue to have some lessons in their mainstream schools, and through improvements in how subjects are taught in the unit, all shortcomings have been overcome. The children now receive a much better balanced curriculum, which includes opportunities for physical education and swimming that help the children to become fit and healthy. They are able to keep up better with their peer group in mainstream schools. Lessons of personal, social and health education are a daily feature and help the children's awareness of safety and moral issues. Weaknesses in mathematics and science have been corrected. Opportunities for children to take part in extra-curricular activities are now much better because of improved links with mainstream schools. In individual cases, staff will ensure that a child returns to school for a particular club or event after school hours. The learning of younger children in the unit was also a cause for concern at the time of the last inspection because of poor levels of resources for the younger children. This issue too has been resolved very well by the introduction of nurture groups on different school sites.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The unit provides outstanding care, guidance and support for the children. In addition to the very good relationships evident among staff and children and very good systems to safeguard the children, the unit has also developed high quality partnerships with agencies. These include outreach teams, specialists in behavioural support, educational psychologists and social and family services, so that there is a co-ordinated approach to helping the children and their families. Parents and carers are fully involved in planning and reviewing the provision for their child. Assessments are used well to identify the children's needs and individual education plans are clear and well targeted. As a result, the level of care, guidance and support has a massive impact on changing the children's attitudes to learning, behaviour and working with other children. It is a key factor in promoting the successful re-integration of children into mainstream school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management of the provision are outstanding. The pupil referral unit plays a very effective part in the local authority's Inclusion Support Service to help children, especially more vulnerable children, to remain in mainstream schools and get the most out of education. It helps schools and social services well to identify early those children most likely to fail in the school system and to bring back on board those older children on the brink of becoming disaffected, aggressive or withdrawn.

The management committee has a very good overview of provision and carries out its responsibilities very well. The senior managers, who are the head of service and the teacher-in-charge, have a clear vision of what they want the unit and the nurture groups to achieve. They have significantly improved the provision and sought funding to establish new projects and maintain them. They have gained a good awareness of the strengths of the provision through effective use of an independent review in 2004 and they acted well on its findings. Systems to evaluate the work of the unit are good but the managers have not as yet documented the views of parents nor have they set up a longer-term database to track the overall destinations of the children they have helped. This is now possible given the overarching role of the Inclusion Support Service. Such information could add significantly to what is already known about the performance of the pupil referral unit.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to the unit very much and we were able to see lots of you in your schools. We're very sorry we didn't get to meet all of you but we just didn't have enough time.

Now we want to share with you what we thought about PACE. There are lots of things that are very good. For instance:

- your teachers are doing an excellent job taking care of you and helping you all to improve
- you work hard and we were very impressed with how hard you are trying in subjects such as English, mathematics, science and ICT
- you're beginning to really enjoy your work again and this is marvellous. Some of you told us just how much being in the unit has helped you.

There is nothing much wrong in the unit that your teachers need to put right. We think they should find out more about what your parents think about the unit and how it has helped you. Maybe you can help the teachers find this out!

Finally, we send our best wishes to you all for the future. Work hard and enjoy your education whichever school it is in!