



Cedars - Newcastle and Wall Lane Bases

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131652
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 282243
Inspection dates 13 December 2005 to 14 December 2005
Reporting inspector Steven Parker RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	2 Woodland Avenue
School category	Pupil referral unit		Wolstanton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 8AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 297510
Number on roll	24	Fax number	01782 297510
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Stuart Lee
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Michael Fenton

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 13 December 2005 - 14 December 2005	Inspection number 282243
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cedars is a complex pupil referral unit (PRU) serving the Newcastle-under-Lyme district of Staffordshire. The unit provides support for up to 50 secondary-aged pupils who have experienced a range of difficulties in their mainstream schools and exhibit patterns of challenging behaviour. There are currently 34 pupils on roll, with a further five receiving tutorial support in schools and colleges. They are almost exclusively from White British, deprived backgrounds. The majority are boys and about 20 percent have statements of special educational need. There is a strong and successful commitment to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream settings wherever possible. The provision has expanded considerably since the last inspection. It now has four bases. There are three for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties in and near to Newcastle, and one which provides education for an 11-18 years inpatient psychiatric ward in Leek, as part of the patients' overall treatment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good PRU with some outstanding features. Pupils' progress and achievement are good and sometimes excellent, as a result of consistently good teaching and learning. Consequently, many pupils return successfully to mainstream schools and colleges. Pupils are very happy to attend, often significantly improving their previously poor attendance. They engage very willingly in the opportunities offered to them, behaving exceptionally well and developing the ability to function confidently and independently. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the excellent care and guidance they are given. The unit's approach to assessing pupils' performance is satisfactory, but is not consistent or fully effective across all four bases. Pupils and their families receive sensitive and very well focused support from the unit's staff and other professionals working alongside them. The unit is very well led by a highly capable headteacher, who works in successful partnership with the deputy heads who manage each base. However, monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not as formally structured as it could be. There is very effective collaboration with schools, colleges and other agencies. The unit benefits from the support of a satisfactory management committee, but is not held fully to account by them. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and inspectors confirm the unit's overall evaluation of its own performance. The unit provides good value for money

What the school should do to improve further

- The deputy headteachers should ensure that more formal checks on the quality of teaching and learning are carried out in all the bases.
- Develop more consistent practice in assessing and analysing pupils' achievements across the bases to find out how well they are getting on in the longer term.
- Further develop the work of the management committee, so that it has a better view of what is happening in the unit.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many pupils arrive at the PRU significantly underperforming because of their previous fractured and negative experience of school. The unit's good teaching helps them to make good progress in their learning and often attain at least national expectations, sometimes achieving excellent results at GCSE and in other accredited courses. They make very good progress in developing their social skills and improving their self-esteem. As a result, they have increasing confidence in their abilities over time, helping them to achieve results that many of them would not previously have imagined. Basic skills are very strongly promoted, enabling pupils to engage successfully with subjects across the curriculum. As a result, the majority of younger pupils return successfully to mainstream settings. There are no differences in the performance of girls and boys or of pupils with additional needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is excellent. They enjoy lessons and work conscientiously to improve their skills. Pupils are polite and very respectful of other people's views. They speak highly of the outstanding relationships between staff and themselves that contribute much to their health and emotional well-being. A very clear and positive rewards system, combined with consistently applied rules, helps pupils manage their own behaviour and keep safe. As a result, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. The unit's policy on bullying is understood by staff and pupils alike and any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils say that they feel secure because of this. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. During lessons, pupils think deeply about a range of issues and develop an excellent sense of right and wrong. For many pupils, attendance has previously been poor, but nearly all attend the unit regularly and arrive on time. Pupils show great pride in what they achieve and delight in showing their work to visitors. They are keen to take responsibility in the unit, and contribute much to its effectiveness by completing questionnaires about what they like and what could be improved. Pupils are very well prepared for leaving school, being in the wider community and living an independent life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching across the bases is good overall, with some outstanding practice. Staff have high but realistic expectations of pupils' behaviour and academic capabilities, successfully promoting their good learning and helping them to achieve often impressive results. This encouragement extends into mainstream schools and colleges when pupils return there, through the well-regarded work of a re-integration officer, helping them to continue to flourish. Teaching effectively addresses the full range of needs because activities are very carefully planned and adapted to take account of individual difficulties in learning. Teachers' strong subject expertise is very well used across the bases, so that pupils can enter successfully for a wide range of GCSE and other accredited qualifications. Teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning is satisfactory overall. Staff know their pupils well, but there is inconsistent formal practice, both by subject and across the bases. There is a need to spread the best practice across the unit. Pupils know what they should be learning. They are fully involved in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their own performance towards achieving them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is planned well to provide an interesting range of activities that are relevant to the needs of all pupils, including those with statements of special educational need. They also help to make learning fun. The unit rightly focuses on enhancing pupils' future economic well-being with good provision for teaching basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. There are also very good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of subjects such as art and design, cookery, history and geography. There is a very well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme that plays an important part in helping pupils understand the need to live healthily and stay safe. Teachers make very effective use of the school nurse to provide sex education and teach pupils about the dangers of the misuse of drugs and alcohol. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits that bring subjects such as history and geography to life. Pupils are prepared very well for work through a comprehensive programme of work experience, careers advice and skills training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and is an important reason for the PRU's success. Pupils are very well cared for through the individual learning programmes planned for them on the basis of teachers' detailed knowledge of their needs and difficulties. Parents speak very highly of the quality of this planning and of the impact it has on pupils' academic, social and emotional development. There are excellent systems to check on pupils' personal development and behaviour. For example, the daily staff meetings, when events of the day are reviewed and carefully analysed, enable staff to share valuable knowledge and set targets for the future. Child protection procedures are rigorous and all staff have pupils' welfare very much at heart. Health and safety procedures are good, as illustrated by the detailed survey completed recently on the suitability of the unit's accommodation. The staff have excellent relationships with other schools and professionals that do much to enhance pupils' progress and prepare them for the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, working in successful partnership with his deputy headteachers, who manage each of their bases well. He has a clearly expressed vision for how the unit should develop, reflecting his strong support for the rights of young people to be included in mainstream education wherever possible. He is held in high regard by colleagues in schools, colleges and other agencies, thereby successfully promoting collaborative, multi-agency working practices. The unit has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and takes notice of the views of its pupils and

their parents and carers. It plans effectively to improve those areas of its activity that require attention. The unit's approach to gathering information and analysing the outcomes of its work is sound, but the work in the bases is not formally monitored. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in the curriculum, management of the budget, learning resources, particularly for ICT, and a management committee has been established. Whilst this new committee is very supportive, it is not yet fully clear about its role and purpose. As a result, it lacks rigour in fulfilling its responsibility to hold the unit to account. The unit's resources are well managed and it has strong capacity for further improvement.

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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	NA	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	3	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Cedars Pupil Referral Unit 2 Woodland Avenue Wolstanton Newcastle Staffordshire ST5 8AZ

4 January 2006

Dear Pupils

As you know, I recently visited the four bases that make up your unit, with a colleague. We came to find out how well you are doing and how effectively the staff help you. Thank you for making us feel so welcome, showing us your work, some of which really impressed us, and talking so openly about how you feel. We really enjoyed being with you and finding out your views. We very much appreciated your honesty about some of the difficulties you have experienced in mainstream schools. We were very pleased to hear how much you appreciate the support that you and your families get from the unit.

What we liked about the unit:

- It is a very positive place, where you enjoy learning about a wide range of things that will help you in your future lives.
- The teachers encourage you to work hard and do the best you can.
- Those of you that stay on until you are 16 achieve some creditable results in exams.
- Those of you that go back to mainstream schools settle in very well, with the very sensitive help of the unit staff.
- Your behaviour is very good, especially in comparison with how it was in the past.
- Teachers and other staff look after you exceptionally well. This helps you to mature into more confident young adults and feel good about yourselves.
- The headteacher leads the staff very well and makes it possible for everyone in the centre to work together successfully.

What we have asked the unit to do:

- Find more ways of showing how well the unit is doing its job.
- Develop the role of the management committee (a bit like a school's governing body) so that it is more effective in its support of the unit's work.
- Develop better ways of finding out how well you are getting on so that they can plan your work better.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead inspector