



Launchpad Suite

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132033
LEA St. Helens
Inspection number 282281
Inspection dates 20 March 2006 to 21 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Gina White HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Napier Inclusion Centre
School category	Pupil referral unit		130 Napier Street
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		St Helens WA10 2EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 677522
Number on roll	71	Fax number	01744 677228
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	NA
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Ms Irene Pritchard

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	20 March 2006 - 21 March 2006	282281

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

At the time of the previous inspection, the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) catered for pupils aged 14 to 16. Following re-organisation of PRU provision in St Helens this has changed and the PRU has expanded from 2004 to include pupils aged 11 to 16. Provision is spread across three units on three different sites and is part of the local authority's Inclusion Support Service. Most of the pupils on roll are at risk of exclusion and underachieving. They attend the PRU as part of a preventative course in agreement with mainstream schools and remain on the school roll and that of the PRU. Very few pupils attend as a result of exclusion, but all are at risk of exclusion from schools. All the pupils have emotional, social or behavioural difficulties; a few pupils have statements of special educational need. A third of pupils on roll at the unit are Traveller learners and the remaining pupils are white British. Most pupils come from areas of high social and economic deprivation. Many have had a history of poor attendance at school prior to attending the PRU.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Launchpad Suite PRU provides a good education for pupils, and partnership with parents and other agencies is outstanding. The PRU works effectively and is well integrated with the local authority's Inclusion Support Service. The purpose of the PRU and the expansion in provision have brought significant change and new challenges since the previous inspection. Work with pupils is firmly focused on preventative work with those at risk of exclusion. Leadership and management are good. Systems and processes for the management of the unit are developing quickly. The setting of overall targets and objectives for the unit, and precise learning targets for pupils, are at an early stage of development. Currently, they do not provide sufficient means for the leadership and management team to measure progress effectively.

The PRU has proved successful in the last year in meeting its core purpose; most pupils at Key Stage 3 are successfully re-integrated into schools and most Year 11 pupils continue into education, training or employment. This is because of the good care, guidance and support pupils receive. Given their starting points on entry to the PRU this represents good achievement. Pupils' personal development is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although lessons are generally well structured, some lack challenge for the most able pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory but some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to study at an advanced level and achieve qualifications in science. The PRU has the capacity to improve and the unit provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all pupils have access to science and opportunities to achieve further qualifications.
- Develop robust systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' academic achievement and progress across the curriculum.
- Use the data and assessment information to ensure that all lessons contain an appropriate level of challenge for each pupil.
- Make clear in the unit's improvement plans how the intended actions will make a difference to pupils and how the impact will be measured.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As a result of previous difficulties in learning, behaviour and infrequent attendance many pupils arrive at the PRU significantly underperforming. Pupils remain at the unit for a relatively short period of time and the standards of the oldest pupils remain well below the average expected for their age. Work to re-engage pupils in learning is effective. In 2005, most Year 11 pupils achieved at least one general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) qualification and the number of pupils who continued into further education, employment or training was well above average. Given their starting points on entry to the PRU, such outcomes represent good achievement.

Results in mathematics are slightly stronger than those in English. However, not all pupils have opportunities to undertake science qualifications and build upon their earlier knowledge of science. The PRU recognises that further work to expand pupils' access to qualifications is required to enable some pupils to reach the higher levels of achievement that they are capable of.

Pupils in Years 7 to 9, who undertake 12-week placements at the PRU, make rapid progress in their behaviour and social skills. This enables them to return successfully to their original school or to a more appropriate specialist setting.

Most pupils made at least satisfactory progress and some made good progress in the lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Some staff are beginning to use data more sharply, to identify measurable targets to monitor learners' progress in relation to their capabilities. Such practice is at a relatively early stage and is inconsistent across all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the PRU that pupils' personal development and well-being is good. The majority of pupils enter the unit needing considerable support. They quickly settle in to new routines and expectations. Most say they enjoy coming to the unit and feel they make good progress in lessons. This is due to good, consistent approaches to the management of pupils' behaviour by all staff. Instances of poor behaviour in and around the unit are dealt with quickly and effectively. The majority of pupils behave well, show respect for others and they say there is no bullying. Attendance overall is below average. Absence, particularly for the Key Stage 4 pupils, remains a significant factor in hindering pupils' progress. However, for most pupils, including Traveller pupils, attendance rates are improving because of the good strategies the unit has put in place. All pupils are timetabled for lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE). This contributes greatly to pupils' awareness of social and moral responsibility and their understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils say they feel safe in the unit and are gaining an appropriate awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. However, practice currently lags behind the intentions: pupils say they would like healthier options for midday meals. Pupils consider an awareness of the needs of others through their life skills lessons. Pupils' awareness of the world of work is developing well through the work related programme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; however, the school has graded this aspect of its work more positively. Teachers take good account of pupils' difficulties and personal circumstances on arrival. Relationships between staff and pupils are very

positive and are characterised by mutual respect. Pupils soon realise that the staff are committed to helping them learn and a 'can do' culture is firmly promoted. In lessons, most pupils respond well to tasks and activities and rise to the challenge of gaining accreditations and improving their attendance and behaviour. Pupils are most motivated by lessons that promote learning relevant to their life experiences or practical investigative work. Teachers have good questioning skills to test pupils' understanding and extend pupils' thinking. In the best lessons, teachers' planning took account of the testing that the unit undertakes to determine pupils' prior attainment. This successfully moves learning on. However, this good practice was not consistent. Some lessons lack challenge and are narrow in the strategies employed. Pupils, especially the most able, occasionally become bored and unco-operative. Consequently, learning is not as effective as it could be.

The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Pupils gain daily credits for their effort in lessons and in achieving individual behaviour targets. They respond very well to this system and it is effectively used to inform the day-to-day discussions between parents and teachers about pupils' progress. At the end of each lesson all teachers consistently review pupils' progress with them. While this tells pupils how well they have achieved in the lesson it does not tell them enough about the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Consequently, pupils do not know precisely how to improve their work. Effective marking and helpful written comments are practiced by some teachers but this is not consistently embedded throughout the unit.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the unit that the curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and meets the basic requirements at both key stages. Literacy and numeracy are firmly embedded in the curriculum. Outdoor activities are varied and wide ranging, and a significant number of older pupils gain recognition and certificates of merit for their work in sports and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Older pupils have opportunities to sample a wide range of vocational courses. They have appropriate access to training and courses to prepare them for work and to raise their awareness of essential life skills. The curriculum is restricted by limitations in facilities. Opportunities for younger pupils to continue their studies of food technology and for all older pupils to study science and achieve additional GCSE and vocational qualifications are restricted. However, the PRU has made good alternative arrangements for pupils to study physical education to overcome the limited facilities on two sites and have ensured an older pupil can continue with an examination course in design and technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The unit and the inspectors agree that good care is taken of the pupils. This is reflected in the priority given to ensure each pupil has an assigned key worker to whom they can turn to discuss personal concerns as well as their progress towards behavioural targets. Pupils say these discussions help them improve generally and give them

confidence to learn and gain some accreditation. However, pupils do not have curriculum targets that are specific and promote their achievement effectively.

Parents are fully involved in their children's learning and receive daily accounts of their progress and help when needed from their key worker. The comment 'the help we received was priceless' from one pupil's parents reflects the view of many.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet requirements. There are outstanding links with outside agencies such as the local authority inclusion team and the staff of the schools where pupils are reintegrated into mainstream education. Consequently, most pupils at Key Stage 3 are successfully reintegrated into schools. A Connexions adviser on site provides effective advice to older pupils about work options and life skills such as financial management.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The PRU has undergone significant change and remodelling since the last inspection. It is at a relatively early stage in its development and targets to measure the impact of the unit have yet to be developed. In contrast, operational procedures and systems have developed quickly and are in the process of becoming embedded across all sites. The teacher in charge and the three site managers work well together and with staff. A positive ethos is established based securely on supporting and engaging pupils with learning. Day-to-day management is good and the recent re-organisation of the PRU has been completed efficiently and effectively. Impressive results have been achieved by the PRU during the first year of operation: most of the younger pupils have been successfully re-integrated in appropriate provision and most older pupils have transferred into further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. The PRU works effectively and is firmly integrated with the local authority's Inclusion Support Service. Consequently, partnership work with agencies and schools is exceptionally good and processes for referral and reintegration of pupils operate effectively. Work to engage parents with their children's education is outstanding and is firmly embedded across all three sites. The time and commitment staff devote to this work is highly regarded by parents.

The leadership team share an accurate understanding of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils, parents and the views of other partners inform the PRU's new process of self-evaluation. Service planning for the PRU is encompassed in the plans for the Inclusion Support Service. While the plans identify new initiatives and developments, they are insufficiently linked to the PRU's evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, this gap in strategic planning currently remains unfilled. A lack of specific and measurable outcomes in the Inclusion Support Service plan hampers the PRU and the management committee in precisely identifying the impact new actions are intended to have on learners' attendance, achievement and attainment.

The management committee and the local authority satisfactorily meet their responsibilities. Use of resources is satisfactory: staff are appropriately qualified and

systems for monitoring staff performance are in place. Vetting procedures for adults who work with pupils are robust, and arrangements to ensure adequate training for staff with child protection responsibilities are in place. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Strengths have been maintained and developed during a period of significant change, although limitations with some aspects of accommodation and resources continue to restrict the curriculum.

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	3	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	3	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	3	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

Thank you very much for your contribution to the recent inspection. We enjoyed our visit. We were able to visit lessons and talk to some of you in meetings. Some of your parents/carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and this was very helpful. This is what we found from our visit.

- The PRU provides you with a good education. During the last year, many younger pupils have been helped to successfully return to schools. Some older pupils have achieved qualifications and most have successfully moved on to jobs, further education and training courses.
- The PRU is well led and managed. The way that it works in partnership with other services, schools, parents/carers and yourselves is outstanding. The good and sensitive care helps you to feel safe and settle well to the new routines and expectations in the PRU.
- You make good progress in your personal development: you know about healthy lifestyles and enjoy outdoor pursuits but would like healthier options for midday meals
- Most of you behave well while you are in the unit and show respect for other pupils and staff.
- Attendance is improving: some older pupils have improved their attendance records but for others it is still a problem that holds them back from achieving their best.
- The curriculum and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and support staff are committed to helping you learn, they have good questioning skills and set interesting activities and tasks for you in lessons. Some of you told us how you wanted to do your best: some of you are not challenged enough.

These are the things we have asked the PRU to improve.

- Make sure all of you are able to study science and to achieve further qualifications.
- Use the data they have to make sure you are all challenged in lessons and to develop better systems for checking how well you are learning and making progress in subjects.
- Make clearer improvement plans for the PRU to show the difference the actions will make to you and to help them measure more accurately how well they are doing.

I wish you well for the future.