



Oxfordshire Pupil Referral Unit and Integration Service

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133776
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 282381
Inspection dates 9 January 2006 to 10 January 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	The Harlow Centre
School category	Pupil referral unit		Raymund Road
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 253198
Number on roll	388	Fax number	01865 253199
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Tony Scott
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Creese

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Oxfordshire Pupil Referral Unit and Integration Service (PRUIS) was formed in 2002 from a reconfiguration of six previous pupil referral units. The central base was established in new accommodation in Oxford just over a year ago, with smaller bases in Banbury and Abingdon. PRUIS caters for pupils from across Oxfordshire who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of exclusion, for looked after children without other educational provision, and for other pupils with other social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It incorporates three different programmes: Rapid Response and Integration, which concentrates on preventing exclusion and reintegrating pupils into mainstream schools, short-term placement (for 20 days) for pupils at Key Stage 3 and longer-term placement at Key Stage 4. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Senior managers are right in their belief that PRUIS provides a satisfactory education and there are some good features to its work. The present quality of provision reflects the fact that PRUIS has been subject to major reorganisation over the last three years and there have been several changes in staff, as well as a move to new accommodation. Although there is still work to be done to refine what PRUIS provides for pupils, it is clear that reorganisation has brought with it significant improvements and it is well placed to improve further under the good leadership of the headteacher and the local education authority. The Rapid Response team is good at working with schools and PRUIS is successful in returning many pupils to mainstream education. Pupils at Key Stage 3 who are on short-term placement at the unit achieve well as a result of focused support that is matched closely to their needs. PRUIS cares well for its pupils and the curriculum is good. Senior managers work effectively as a team but systems for checking the quality of education that PRUIS provides are not as effective as they should be. Expectations of how pupils should behave and how hard they should work are not consistently high, largely as a result, of variation in the quality of teaching. Although there is some good teaching, mostly in Key Stage 3, teaching and pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 are only satisfactory. Parents and younger pupils in particular are positive about the support they receive, but some older pupils are less co-operative and enthusiastic. The attendance rate is improving: the poor attendance of a minority of pupils at Key Stage 4 limits their achievement. PRUIS gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* At Key Stage 4, raise achievement and improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour*
Improve the quality of teaching, especially at Key Stage 4, by ensuring that expectations are consistently high and that work is appropriately matched to pupils' needs* Reduce absence by tackling the poor attendance of a minority of pupils* Improve the use that managers make of monitoring information to evaluate and develop PRUIS's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As a result of their emotional and behavioural difficulties, the attainment of most pupils is below average when PRUIS begins to work with them and standards are below average overall by the end of Key Stage 4. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' make good progress towards challenging targets at Key Stage 3 and achieve well. Improvements in their ability to learn, as well as their basic skills of literacy and numeracy, means that many of these pupils are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools. Achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, where poor attendance adversely affects the progress made by a minority of pupils. In 2005, pupils performed reasonably well in gaining nationally recognised qualifications, including some GCSE passes at grades D to G in English and mathematics and a number of other awards.

Vocational qualifications were low in number but nearly half the pupils who left PRUIS at the end of Key Stage 4 took up employment or a college place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many improve their attitudes and behaviour in their time with PRUIS, especially at Key Stage 3. They say that they find the teachers kind and tolerant, and enjoy being taught in small classes. However, a significant minority at Key Stage 4 behave inappropriately. Overall attendance is well below expectations as a result of the poor attendance of a few pupils. Attendance is very good at Key Stage 3 and there has been a marked increase in attendance at the Banbury site. Pupils are developing an awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and they generally feel safe at the unit. They say that there is some bullying but they have adults to whom they feel able to talk. A number of pupils continue to smoke, although staff are working hard to make them aware of the dangers of drugs. At Key Stage 3 especially, pupils are increasing their skills in working as part of a community. Through various activities, pupils have the opportunity to develop their teamwork skills. Only a small number of pupils have chosen to become involved in the school council and there is scope for older pupils to take more responsibility. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills, they find out about their career options and have increasingly good opportunities to gain experience in work-related settings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4, but the quality of teaching is variable. Expectations for the work that pupils do, the way they behave and the general atmosphere for learning are not consistently high, particularly at Key Stage 4. Senior managers have, rightly, identified the need to strengthen the range of skills at teachers' disposal and PRUIS has become involved in a teaching and learning project. In the best teaching, work is relevant to pupils' needs and interests, teamwork between support staff and teachers is strong, and pupils apply themselves well. Where tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs, because they are too easy or too difficult, some pupils behave inappropriately. In these lessons, staff do not work well enough together and expectations are too low.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The wide range of individual programmes provided for pupils, underpinned by links developed over time with a large number of firms and organisations, means that the curriculum is tailored to pupils' needs and interests. Recent developments in the way

that the curriculum is planned have strengthened the learning opportunities provided and mean that pupils cover parts of the National Curriculum combined with a strong emphasis on careers education, work-related learning, citizenship and personal, social and health education. An appropriate, and growing, range of qualifications is offered to pupils at Key Stage 4. The introduction of a number of vocational opportunities at the Oxford base, including hairdressing and bricklaying, is well suited to pupils' needs. Throughout the unit pupils' learning is enriched by an outstanding range of additional activities, including visits to places of cultural interest. Pupils have the chance to work with artists, drama groups, the community police, youth workers and with various specialists who extend the learning opportunities open to them. Involvement in the Forest Schools project contributes significantly to pupils' development at Key Stage 3. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to increase their understanding of health and safety. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities in the community. Pupils are increasingly well prepared to move on to work or further training when they leave, for instance, through developing enterprise skills and learning about the world of work. Very good accommodation at the Oxford base and a good use of display across the sites provide stimulating learning environments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are a number of clear strengths in the way that PRUIS cares for and supports pupils. They are treated as individuals through the emphasis on providing individual programmes of activities. PRUIS liaises closely with parents, schools and a number of agencies in its support for pupils. The employment of an educational psychologist, who is a member of the senior management team, and the allocation of a key worker for each pupil make significant contributions to the care and guidance provided. Child protection arrangements are effective and any learners at risk are identified early. Pupils are taught strategies to avoid confrontation and to manage their feelings. They are well informed about the future options open to them and have a fair understanding of their targets. However, the guidance provided to pupils whose behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory is not as firm as it should be at Key Stage 4. PRUIS has good systems in place for identifying pupils' academic and personal needs. It involves pupils and parents appropriately in setting and reviewing individual targets. Parents receive termly reports on how well their children are doing, and managers collect a significant amount of information about pupils' performance. PRUIS recognises the need to analyse this information more closely at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

PRUIS is led well and satisfactorily managed. The headteacher works closely with the local education authority in developing and directing the work of PRUIS. Good leadership by both parties is evident in the way that six separate pupil referral units, some known to have important weaknesses, have been reorganised to form a range of services that provide a considerable amount of support to schools as well as pupils.

Now that the reorganisation is complete, PRUIS is well placed to improve further. The headteacher is instrumental in the development of services for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties beyond the work of PRUIS and is currently involved in strengthening the education of looked after children across Oxfordshire. This means that the three assistant headteachers and other staff with management responsibilities undertake most of the management of PRUIS. There is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of different pupils and parents' views are taken into account well. Day-to-day organisation is smooth, and managers collect a significant amount of information for use in judging effectiveness. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but the findings from monitoring are not used as well as they should be. Managers are not rigorous enough in ensuring that all staff have consistently high expectations for pupils' academic achievement and personal development which has led to some unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes, especially at Key Stage 4. PRUIS is adequately staffed and well resourced to support pupils' learning. These resources are deployed satisfactorily to achieve value for money. Strong links with a wide range of other organisations extend what PRUIS is able to provide for pupils. Partnership with mainstream schools is productive and schools value the support that they receive.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	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	3	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?	2	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?	3	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	3	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	2	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

After my visit earlier this week, I am writing to thank you for the contribution you made to the inspection and to let you know about what I thought about PRUIS.

I found that PRUIS provides a satisfactory education and there are some good things about the support that it provides for you. I am pleased that PRUIS is helping so many of you to get back into mainstream school, and I could see that those of you on the 20-day programme at Key Stage 3 are making good progress. It is good that you find the small classes helpful and that the staff are kind. You all have very good opportunities to go on visits and many of you at Key Stage 4 have programmes that have been planned especially for you. I know that several of you have already begun to enjoy the new vocational courses - in subjects like hairdressing and bricklaying - that are available at The Harlow Centre.

In some lessons, you work hard and behave well, but a few of you, especially at Key Stage 4, should behave better, show your teachers more respect and attend regularly. The staff need to keep reminding you about how important this is and make sure you all work as hard as you can. The headteacher and the local education authority provide good leadership and the managers are trying to make things better for you. They now need to use all the information they collect about the work of PRUIS to make it even better.