

Malden Oaks PRU

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102562
Local Authority	Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number	286423
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mo Roberts HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	23
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Trevor Sykes
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2002
School address	The Dukes Centre Dukes Avenue Kingston upon Thames KT2 5QY
Telephone number	020 8547 6660
Fax number	020 8547 6665

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in close co-operation with an Additional Inspector who simultaneously inspected the other pupil referral unit (PRU) in this hard federation.

Description of the school

This is a PRU for students aged 11 to 16. There are 23 students on roll, but there are currently none in Year 7. There are more girls than boys and all students are from White British backgrounds. Most of the students have either been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, or ran the risk of being excluded. All the students have specific identified needs and some have a formal statement of Special Educational Needs. Many have regular access to other professional support services, such as the mental health team. The students experience a range of social and emotional difficulties. The PRU is part of a hard federation and the headteacher leads both units. These are on different sites within Kingston. Some staff work for part of their time at both units.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Malden Oaks is as an outstanding pupil referral unit. It fully achieves its aims of re-engaging learners, developing their self belief and building skills for their future life. Achievement is excellent even though some students start with very low standards on entry to the unit because they have missed a lot of time in school. A significant portion of students are re-integrated into mainstream schools after a relatively short stay at the unit. Others benefit from long-term, individually tailored programmes which steadily develop their potential. The outcomes in terms of examination results and students' improved self-esteem are outstanding. This is partly because, right from the first interview, students and parents or carers are involved in target setting. There are regular reviews, these record and celebrate the painstaking, but never-the-less exceptional, progress made by most students.

This inspection confirms one parent's view who wrote 'My son has never been happier at school... the teaching deserves high praise'. Teaching is outstanding and is based on the staffs' excellent knowledge of their subjects and how to skilfully adapt them to involve students and to meet their individual needs. The staffs' expertise is shared with heads of departments in mainstream schools but opportunities are missed to share this more widely. Individual students' timetables are constantly reviewed and adapted to make sure their changing needs are met. Students' attendance improves dramatically because staff take a holistic view of their needs and skilfully tackle all manner of issues, including those relating to mental health. The care, guidance and support given to students are outstanding. This effectively encourages students to improve their concentration and to apply themselves to more subjects in the rich curriculum that is available. However, the students' ability to explore food technology and to fully adopt healthy eating in a social environment is limited because there is no canteen or facilities for food technology.

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The new headteacher has adroitly built on the already excellent provision. He values staff input and, together with them, is developing an exemplary evaluation of all aspects of the school. The unit's capacity to improve is excellent as staff work closely with mainstream schools to ensure they keep on the leading edge of practice and re-involve students in mainstream where feasible. Where appropriate, students are supported in work experience placements and all leave with a place in education or a job placement. Multi-agency links are exceptionally well developed and this has a profound impact on students' recovery and their ability to cope with their problems and to reduce their personal barriers to future success. Occasionally, support from external health practitioners has been inconsistent; this situation is being monitored and has recently improved. The management committee offers outstanding support and has helped smooth the transition to new leadership.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the staffs' accumulated expertise with a wider range of the local authority's mainstream staff
- Ensure students have more opportunities to understand cooking and healthy eating and if possible encourage them to socialise whilst eating.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students' achievement is outstanding especially given their low starting points on entry. Progress is carefully nurtured and continues despite occasional setbacks. Students who have not been in school, have been excluded from school or who have previously failed to attend, gradually build up their stamina and hours of attendance. Consequently, many reach standards that are just below the national average. Their ability to settle and concentrate improves exponentially and this also underpins their ability to achieve while in the unit. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) develop well and this supports their other curriculum work and their self confidence. The standard of work done in personal, social and health education is excellent because the content is appropriately tailored to the needs of the students in the unit at any one time. Students often grow phenomenally in their understanding of some of their own self-defeating actions. Work in art is often effective in engaging students who are apparently uninterested in school. Students gain a wide variety of certificates and recognition. Most progress to externally validated examinations with students often achieving GCSE grades beyond those predicted.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The students are developing their basic personal skills well because the staff with whom they work are dedicated and committed to improving their motivation and self-esteem. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social development is good because of the time and effort staff spend in helping the students. Students have a basic understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Most behave well and the students get along together well and with their teachers. Students record far better rates of attendance now than when they were in mainstream schools. They feel safe and say that they enjoy their education more than was previously the case. Most students are appreciative of the support they receive. There are opportunities for the students to take responsibility and make a positive contribution, for example, where appropriate, the students are involved in setting their own academic and personal targets and they are all involved in an annual review. Vocational education is well provided for and this, along with good careers advice and the work done to improve literacy and numeracy skills, ensures that the students are preparing as much as possible for their future economic well-being. Sheltered work experience really builds students' confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Exceptionally high-quality lessons are planned in all subjects. In science for example, really good hands on-experimentation and finely graded challenges stimulate learners. English skills are patiently developed especially for those with special educational needs. This includes speaking and listening skills, as well as some sophisticated written work done recently on Macbeth. Mathematical skills are well-developed because any gaps in understanding are identified promptly and dealt with effectively. Indeed, students often enjoy mathematics after their initial hesitancy because the teaching builds well

on the slightest glimmer of aptitude. Citizenship education is well taught and it encourages students to look beyond their own, often narrow, horizons. Discussions of some topics have successfully changed students' negative attitudes. Developing students' practical life skills helps them to keep safe and to assess risks accurately. On-going teacher assessment is extremely sophisticated and staff use a wide range of individualised methods to get information across. The team approach to understanding students' developing needs, and the reinforcement of vocabulary and concepts, also helps students to learn. Pace and variety are incorporated in lessons and, together with ICT, motivate even the most reluctant learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The focus is on ensuring that the programme is tailored to students' individual needs. They have access, not only to the national curriculum, but to a rich variety of other courses. Music and activities undertaken with the youth service have a positive impact. New courses introduced since the last inspection have broadened the students' knowledge and understanding of the world around them. These include: art, ICT, and modern foreign languages, as well as adult literacy and numeracy in preparation for working life. The citizenship GCSE is encouraging students to take an interest in helping others. Subjects are taught by specialists who are passionate about their subjects and this has a big impact on how well the students achieve. Timetables are well constructed to facilitate younger students' re-entry into the lessons in mainstream schools' when appropriate. Personal, health, social and emotional education is given a high profile and is thoughtfully designed to involve each student. It successfully supports their improved interaction with each other as well as reinforcing work related skills like regular attendance, and adopting a positive attitude to new challenges.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding with exceptional care taken of every student. Staff persevere and often succeed where all previous attempts have failed to help individuals. They use their considerable experience to nurture improvement. They celebrate each small step of success and, by doing so, ensure each student's self-esteem and confidence is enhanced. They involve students in evaluating their own learning and where possible in setting subsequent new goals and targets. Staff identify even subtle changes in students and set about finding the source of their problems and helping them to sort them out. They draw on expert help for medical needs and work closely with the police, and when necessary experts in substance abuse. Record-keeping is detailed and is very effective in tracking individual progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Over recent years, both units have benefited from strong and inspirational leadership. Though the previous headteacher recently retired, the new headteacher has coped very well with the challenge of taking over two highly successful units. He has ensured that the strong team ethos previously established has been maintained, while identifying areas where further improvements might be made. This has been done sensitively. Thus the high quality of the staff has been maintained and this has been instrumental in contributing to the outstanding progress made by the students. Both units are further aided

by the excellent quality of the management committee. They are very supportive, keen to help and they are well aware of the strengths that exist, as well as acknowledging where improvements could be made. They also know the students well and are aware of the progress they make and the factors that contribute to this success.

The available financial and other resources, including staff, made available to both units, are used in a highly effective way and this contributes significantly to the outstanding outcomes. Both units continue to flourish and both have made excellent progress since their last inspections.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Malden Oaks PRU, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5QY

Thank you very much for agreeing to tell me about your time at Malden Oaks and what you have enjoyed doing since you began attending. I enjoyed talking to you and learning about things from your point of view as well as looking at all the work you have been doing.

You are attending an outstanding unit, and teachers are good at listening to you and helping you solve any problems you have. They help you to learn new things and there are good opportunities, either to go back into the mainstream schools, or to stay and gain the highest level of examination passes you possibly can. Teachers are good at spotting what you may have missed when you were away from school and help you to fill in any gaps in your learning. You do well in English, mathematics and science and enjoy ICT and art. There are good opportunities to learn about the world beyond school through PHSE and citizenship. I was impressed with the work you have done on your ASDAN qualifications.

I was especially pleased to see you have begun to think about your futures and that so many students go on to further education or jobs when they leave the unit.

I have asked your teachers to share their expertise with more teachers in other schools in the local authority. I have also suggested that the management committee and the headteacher look at further possibilities for promoting healthy lifestyles by seeing if you can learn to do some cooking and to have a chance to enjoy eating with other students sometimes.

Enjoy the rest of term and well done for all the improvements you are each making especially to your regular attendance at the unit.

Yours sincerely

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector