

Parkside Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124527
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293023
Inspection date	8 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Naylor

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	32
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002
School address	291 Spring Road Ipswich Suffolk IP4 5ND
Telephone number	01473 717013
Fax number	01473 718656

Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Parkside Pupil Referral Unit serves the needs of full-time students in Years 10 and 11 in the southern area of Suffolk. The unit also has a number of part-time students in Years 9 and 12. Students are from a wide range of social backgrounds and circumstances. Many face diverse challenges in their lives. Referral is via the local authority's procedures. Students have become dislocated from mainstream education for a variety of reasons, often over several years. Many have specific psychological or emotional difficulties. Half of all full-time admissions are entitled to free school meals. A similar number are from single-parent families. Attainment on entry is variable. Six students have learning difficulties or disabilities. There are no ethnic minority groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parkside Pupil Referral Unit is highly effective in providing relevant and motivating educational opportunities for its students. Overall effectiveness is outstanding. Students make spectacular progress in their personal development and achieve good success in their examinations and coursework. The unit gives excellent value for money.

Much of the very good work that was reported at the previous inspection has been sustained and built on. The unit has also developed significantly since then in its scope, client groups and levels of expertise and therefore has shown a good capacity for further improvement. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher continues to give total dedication and commitment. He successfully inspires the equally dedicated staff team so that the quality of education available is of a high standard. This view is endorsed overwhelmingly by parents with comments such as, a 'truly excellent school with a commitment to individual learning and good communications'.

There is an excellent sense of community with all parties contributing to students' successes. The leadership has the full support of the local authority, which has implemented wide ranging improvements to facilities and resources. This has hugely improved the capabilities of the unit to meet students' varying needs.

The leadership makes careful monitoring and evaluations of the education provided. Leaders' evaluation of the unit's performance is good although somewhat tentative in some cases. There are good opportunities for in-service training, professional development and a positive regard for the well-being of staff. The response from staff is good teamwork that enhances the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good, and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge, good relationships and good classroom management, which ensure that all students gain knowledge and understanding in a very successful learning atmosphere.

The curriculum is outstanding. There is a good range of GCSE courses available. A very strong focus on the arts has led to the unit's exceptional achievements of gaining the Artsmark Gold Award and that for information and communication technology (ICT). These reflect the overall excellence of provision. There is a wealth of additional activities and opportunities for students which prepare them very well for the future.

As a result of the provision, students make good and frequently exceptional progress in their learning. Standards are broadly average to below overall. Students gain grades in GCSE examinations and many are successful in vocational preparation courses. Most students are well prepared for the next stage of education or employment. In a few cases, transitional arrangements to post-16 provision are not as successful as the leadership would like.

Personal development is outstanding. Students say they feel valued, and good about themselves. They appreciate being treated with dignity and respect. Attendance is satisfactory overall, and often good for individual students. This is shown by the considerable enjoyment students get from the activities provided. However, there is a high rate of unauthorised absence amongst just a few students. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the need to keep fit. They feel safe and well supported in their own learning community whilst also recognising the needs of others in the wider world. Relationships are very good, and students feel they are treated with dignity and respect. Care, guidance and support are outstanding, especially the counselling and support for students' welfare.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the work to support transition of students to post-16 education.
- Reduce the number of unauthorised absences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and progress are good. Some students make outstanding progress in a relatively short time. Standards are broadly average to below average. Most students take GCSE or entry-level examinations. In 2006, three students each gained eight GCSE grades A* to C. The remainder all gained A* to G grades. Students achieve particular success in art, expressive arts and information and ICT. They also gain notable success in the performing arts, dance and rock music. The unit's samba band has performed to much acclaim at several public venues. Students also have very good success in personal, social and health education (PSHE). Many are currently taking Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) work-related courses and are predicted to achieve bronze and silver awards. Most students transfer to further education and enjoy success on vocational courses, such as those in hairdressing and retail. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with parents that students' personal development is outstanding. Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. Most enjoy the opportunities available to them as is shown by the overall improved attendance. Strong spiritual development is shown by the impressive increase in students' self-esteem and confidence noted by parents. Students understand the importance of healthy eating, keeping safe, physical fitness, social relationships and responsible sexual behaviour. Students often make their own healthy meals and attend a breakfast club. During national 'anti-bullying week', they had confidence to discuss their own experiences and views. They contribute to their own and the wider community through the curriculum and through special events such as 'citizenship day' and 'big arts week'. They raise money by regularly baking and selling scones to help support a young child in Indonesia. The regular attendance of most students enables them to improve literacy and numeracy skills, and gain understanding of economic issues. They are suitably prepared for the future through their commitment to ASDAN vocational courses, college and work experience placements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. A significant amount of teaching is exemplary. The most successful lessons combine teachers' excellent knowledge of students' social, emotional and academic needs with very good subject knowledge. Excellent relationships and a sensitive approach ensure that students' behaviour is well managed and supported. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to make lesson planning, preparation and use of resources meticulous. Teaching assistants give valuable feedback to teachers on what helps students to enjoy learning and be successful. Innovative teaching methods are used effectively to support students' learning. For example, the 'virtual learning environment' enables students to work from home

using the internet. Assessment and marking are used to support students' progress, but an inconsistent approach somewhat diminishes their overall effectiveness.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and flexibly adapted to meet all students' needs. The unit is a recognised Healthy School and, through ASDAN courses, students work on garden and food-growing projects under the sustainable development programme. Some projects have involved students working with primary schools in the local community. There is a very good PSHE programme which promotes students' life and social skills. Vocational opportunities through work-experience and college placements are good. There are a wide variety of enrichment activities, visits and events in which students participate. These are highly enjoyable, motivating experiences that give very good support to keeping students fit, safe and healthy. A wide range of musical activities involve many enthusiastic performers. Distance-learning modules and video conferencing facilities provide lessons in Spanish. Very good links have been established with specialist high schools, for example to provide a GCSE course in resistant materials.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care and welfare of students is of the highest quality. A staff counsellor provides in-depth support for students and the unit also accesses a network of further external counselling services. There are extensive links to other agencies, social services, specialist provision for mental health and outreach workers. Strong links with the Connexions Service give good careers guidance support. However, support is lacking for some students to make a successful transition to post-16 education and training. Staff give good academic guidance and make sound assessment of students' overall performances. They use effective programmes to support the development of life skills. The unit has had good success in conjunction with education welfare, other services and parents in raising the level of overall attendance, but needs to address further the incidence of unauthorised absence. Procedures for safeguarding students are fully in place. There are very good links with parents that include a web-site and support groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Although the unit rates them as good, leadership and management are outstanding. Good continuity in the membership of the leadership group has helped the stability of the unit and supported good teamwork. Staff retention is high. The leadership ensures good relationships with parents. Arrangements for monitoring of teaching and learning and of the curriculum are very thorough. The headteacher and the leadership team show excellent vision and direction. The unit improvement plan sets out clear objectives for future development. This has led to better facilities, outstanding care and personal development for students. Prudent financial management helps to support a wide range of additional opportunities, including part-time placements for Year 9 and Year 12 students. The management committee has improved since the last inspection and plays a stable and influential role in the unit's development. Very good

support to the unit is provided from the local authority. The issues from the last inspection have all been successfully addressed.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 May 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Parkside Pupil Referral Unit, 291 Spring Road, Ipswich Suffolk.

Thank you very much for the way you made Mrs Smith and me welcome when we visited recently.

We were extremely impressed with all the work that you do. We congratulate you on the success you are having in your examinations and coursework. We hope you achieve the results that you deserve from your hard work.

We think that the success you are having in the performing arts is spectacular. Well done!

These are some of the other good things about the unit that we noted.

- Teaching is good and often excellent. This gives you good support for your work.
- There is a very exciting and wide range of activities for you to participate in and help you to learn.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to your learning are excellent.
- You make good progress in your work and examination courses.
- Staff provide very good help and support, such as the opportunities for counselling.
- The headteacher has excellent ideas and leads the unit extremely capably.

We think that a few of you should attend more regularly to help you to achieve more.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to build on their good work to ensure that there are effective arrangements for supporting every student going into education, training or work.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Naylor Lead inspector.