

St Edmund's House

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131596
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	293790
Inspection date	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	20
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Cole
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001
School address	Ray Mill Road West Maidenhead SL6 8SB
Telephone number	01628 670816
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St. Edmund's House provides education for students aged 11 to 16 who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. The vast majority of the students are in Years 10 and 11 and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is their designated educational base. The focus of the PRU for the few students in Years 7 to 9 is re-integration into a mainstream school. There are 20 students on roll, all of whom have behavioural needs but none have a statement of special educational need. The gender mix is about 2 to 1, boys to girls and nearly all students are of white ethnic background. The number of students eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The education of students before they enter St. Edmund's House has been considerably disrupted and their attendance patterns were poor.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Edmund's is a good PRU in which students receive excellent care and support which enables them to successfully re-engage in education. Students and their parents are very supportive and comments such as 'my son has come on in leaps and bounds' show the esteem in which it is held.

Most students significantly improve their attendance, but there are a very small number who, despite the best efforts of the staff, do not take full advantage of what they are offered. Those students who attend regularly achieve well and this is clearly shown by the GCSE results they attain. For example, in 2006 the 11 students in the cohort gained 32 GCSE grades A* to G. On entry to the PRU the attainment of these students was low. This good achievement is based on good teaching and the very good contribution made by support staff to nurturing and developing students' learning and in helping them to manage their own behaviour. When they enter the PRU the self-esteem of students is low and the staff are very adept at working with them to build their confidence and helping them to realise their potential. The pastoral care system is a crucial factor in the PRU's success. On entry, each student is allocated a personal tutor who works with them throughout their time in the PRU. Coupled with the small group sizes this ensures that students receive the personal attention they need and that all staff are fully aware of the needs of each individual. As a consequence of this excellent support and the care given by all staff, the behaviour and attendance of most students improves dramatically. Across the PRU both behaviour and attendance are good overall.

The unit has built up good systems to identify the learning needs of its students, set challenging targets for them, and to track and record their progress. Staff give regular feedback to students, but often this celebrates what they have achieved and does not always give sufficient emphasis to what they need to do to improve their work. This is particularly the case for GCSE students in Year 11 because feedback from staff rarely explains what they must do to gain the next grade.

The headteacher provides clear vision for the work of the PRU and drives forward her commitment that students deserve of the best to motivate them to re-engage into mainstream education. She is very well supported by the two Key Stage Co-ordinators and has established a very strong team approach in which the skills of each member of staff are fully valued. Excellent partnerships have been established with a wide range of others. The unit's own systems for self-evaluation give a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and put them in a good position to move forward. However, they often undervalue their success and this is partly due to the issues related to the constitution of the Management Group, as identified in the previous inspection, which have not been fully addressed. To develop the provision further the Head of Specialist Inclusion Services and the Local Authority (LA) Link Advisor have drawn up a revised constitution for the Management Group to finalise the issues raised in the inspection report. This was due to be in place at the start of the present academic year but has not yet been implemented. Consequently, the present Management Group is not in a position to critically appraise, evaluate and celebrate the PRU's success.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the systems for the review and evaluation of the targets set for individual students to ensure that they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

- Ensure that the revised constitution for the Management Group is implemented as quickly as possible so that the effectiveness of the provision at St. Edmund's House can be critically evaluated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, students achieve well. This is clearly demonstrated by the GCSE results which, although below average, show students have made good progress from a low baseline on entry to the PRU. In 2006, all but one Year 11 student attained GCSE grade A* to G in English and mathematics, and the 9 students in this cohort achieved 32 GCSE grades A* to G. The expectations for the present Year 11 are equally high and inspection evidence confirms this picture of good achievement across the PRU. When students enter St. Edmund's House, they undertake a baseline assessment which, with an initial interview with their personal tutor, enables clear and challenging individual targets to be set. Those students who attend regularly invariably meet, and often exceed, their targets. There is a good system in place to review and evaluate these targets, but the feedback to students concentrates on what they have achieved and places less emphasis on what they need to do to improve their work. This is particularly the case in Year 11, where students are not given sufficient information about what they need to do to gain the next grade at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pastoral system is a strength of the PRU. Linked with a strong programme for their personal and social development it ensures that students' personal development and their well-being is good. When they start at the unit, most students have erratic patterns of attendance and behaviour and they are disillusioned by education. On their first day, each student is allocated a personal tutor who works with them throughout their time in the unit. By working with them on this individual basis students learn to manage their own behaviour and their attendance rates improve dramatically. Across the PRU, students' behaviour is good and all students understand and respect the agreed systems. In particular, the group reward system is highly valued by students and has a very positive impact on their behaviour and attendance. Good use is made of external facilities to ensure that all students have regular opportunities for physical exercise that are highly valued by the students. Students clearly enjoy their time in the PRU and through lessons, the daily Breakfast Club at break, and at lunchtimes, they develop their understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They respond to this well and the PRU is applying for the Healthy School's Award. There are strong systems in place to ensure the safety of students and these are well respected. All say that they feel safe. Students make a good contribution to their community through their work experience and money raising activities. Older students often mentor and support their younger peers and those new to the PRU. Through the emphasis that is placed on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) and the accreditation which is available for these and the wider skills for future living, students are well prepared for adult life. Overall, student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their moral and social development is particularly strong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, teaching and learning are good. There is a rigorous and robust system of monitoring in place carried out by the headteacher, well supported by the two Key Stage co-ordinators. This ensures that staff new to PRU settle quickly and are given the support they need to develop their practice. A notable factor in the success of the PRU is the contribution made by the support staff. All staff pay particular attention to developing students' literacy and numeracy skills well not just in English and mathematics lessons, but through the other subjects which they study. What will be taught in lessons is well planned and relationships are good enabling learning to move forward at a good pace. However, in some lessons, teachers do not pay sufficient attention to how teaching assistants are to be used to support individual learners. Staff mark and assess student's work carefully but the feedback to students does not always clearly indicate what they should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Across the PRU, the curriculum is good. All students are able to enter for 5 GCSE subjects and there is a wide range of other accreditation available to them. Many of these opportunities such as AQA Unit Awards and the Entry Level Certificate in 'Preparation for Working Life' provide a good basis for life after school. A very strong feature is the Alternative Curriculum provided through a Specialist Inclusion Service project. This offers students excellent vocational and work-related options enabling them to re-discover an interest in learning because they are able to achieve success and gain accreditation. The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of activities and visits. Good links have been developed with local schools and colleges; for example the ICT link with a local specialist status high school. These links are also very successful in enabling the younger students to re-integrate into mainstream schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall care, guidance and support are good. There are significant strengths in the care and support provided for students and these are outstanding. The personal tutor system plays a crucial role in ensuring that students receive the individual support they need to re-engage with education. Staff are very adept in identifying the support that is needed both inside and outside the PRU to ensure that, as one parent put it 'my son can make a success of a second chance to prove himself'. The strong links with the Specialist Inclusion Service ensure that the PRU has quick and easy access to other outside agencies including Social Services and the Police. The educational psychologist provides very helpful intervention groups related to anger management and self-esteem. There are good systems in place to assess the effectiveness of students' academic learning with regular reviews and meetings with parents. However, these are not always fully used to ensure that students are clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the provision should develop and she provides focused and strategic direction for the work of the PRU. There is strong commitment to raising standards and developing students' personal skills so that all can make a 'fresh start'. She is very well supported by the two Key Stage Co-ordinators, and together they have been particularly successful in bringing together a very strong team and establishing the ethos of the PRU and its standing with other schools in the LA. There are good systems for self review and evaluation in place and these provide a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the unit. In many aspects of its work, the PRU has been conservative in judging its success and this is due in part to constraints imposed by the present constitution of the Management Group. The Head of Specialist Inclusion Services and the Local Authority (LA) Link Advisor provide effective and comprehensive support for the PRU's work. They have been very active in developing a new constitution for the Management Group. However despite their best efforts, this has not yet been implemented. Consequently, the Management Group is not able to act as a critical friend to the PRU and provide the LA with the information it needs to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision. The PRU works extremely well with other sections within the Specialist Inclusion Service, as well as with other schools and colleges and outside agencies to ensure that students have the widest possible range of opportunities to develop and fulfil their potential.

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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?	2
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	4
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?	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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

8 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund's House, Maidenhead, SL6 8SB

Thank you for all the help you gave me and the discussions we had when I visited you on 22 May 2007. You told me that St. Edmund's is a good school which has helped you to make significant changes in your lives. You were very clear that this is due to the ways in which all staff look after you and help you to manage your own behaviour and improve your attendance. I agree with you about this and with your explanation that this success is due to the care that your personal tutors pay to helping you to discover that learning can be fun.

All staff listen to you and take account of your views. They may not always agree with you but they take time to explain why. You told me you appreciated this and felt that the PRU's systems for rewarding you were 'hard but fair'. You all said that you enjoyed the activities the PRU provided, particularly the outside sporting and leisure activities. You all appreciated the opportunities which you were offered and particularly that you could gain qualifications that would help you get a job after school.

To ensure that you do as well as you can when you take your GCSEs, I have suggested that staff pay more attention to explaining to you what to do to get the next grade. There are also some issues that the Management Group for the PRU need to address to ensure that other schools realise how well you can do.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Charlton Lead inspector