



Reading Pupil Referral Service

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134984
Local Authority Reading
Inspection number 294240
Inspection dates 11–12 September 2006
Reporting inspector William Geoffrey Robson

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Childrens Education Support Service ECOS House, York Road Reading RG1 8DH
School category	Pupil referral unit		
Age range of pupils	5–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189 015890
Number on roll (school)	61	Fax number	01189 015884
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Ms Zoe Lattimer
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–16	11–12 September 2006	294240

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Reading Pupil Referral Service is a complex pupil referral unit (PRU) on five separate sites in the borough. It provides for pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools because of behavioural difficulties, and for pupils with medical needs. The Lavender Unit is for excluded pupils in Years 1 to 6; the Boundary Unit for excluded pupils in Years 10 and 11; the Highways Unit for pupils with medical needs and some at risk of permanent exclusion in Years 7 to 11; the Seagulls Unit for pupils who are excluded or at risk of exclusion in Years 7 to 11. In addition, the service provides hospital tuition for children at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and home tuition for those who are too ill to attend school. Some pupils with statements of special educational needs receive individual tuition and follow an alternative curriculum while they are awaiting placements in a special school. The service was first registered as a PRU in April 2005 and has not previously been inspected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection shows that the PRU is correct in evaluating its overall effectiveness as good. Most pupils enter the PRU with a history of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that have severely disrupted their learning in other schools. Standards are very low compared with those in mainstream schools nationally. However, teachers and support staff work with real commitment and establish excellent relationships with pupils so that they begin to enjoy their education and make good progress. Pupils say, 'It's easier to learn and concentrate in smaller groups; teachers are easy to talk to and more understanding. They're like older friends and give you good advice.' The great majority of pupils respond by behaving well in lessons and feel safe in an orderly, well supervised environment. They learn and achieve well. In all of the units, pupils benefit from a curriculum that meets most of their needs well. They participate in a wide range of sports and outdoor activities through good links with community-based activity groups. These, together with the PRU's emphasis on healthy living through food technology and personal, social and health education, result in many pupils adopting a healthy lifestyle. Good teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) helps pupils to make good progress in these basic skills. A work-related learning course, work experience and taster vocational courses at the local college also develop their workplace skills well. However, despite teachers' efforts, links with post-16 training providers and employers are unsatisfactory and too few pupils who leave the PRU at the end of Year 11 move into employment, education or training. A few pupils with statements of special educational need are inappropriately placed in the PRU, pending placement in a special school. The PRU makes every effort to provide what their statements require, but is sometimes unable to do so. Good links with local mainstream schools enable the PRU to work very effectively with primary school and younger secondary school children who are at risk of permanent exclusion. A 'Respite' programme helps many to return successfully to mainstream school after a few weeks in the PRU, with good support from the behaviour support service. However, comparatively few pupils in Years 9 to 11 are able to return to mainstream education. Many are excluded from neighbouring local authorities and the PRU cannot reach agreement with secondary schools in Reading for their re-integration.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has successfully managed the amalgamation of a range of provision in different units since the registration of the PRU in 2005. Staff work together as an impressive team, with a common commitment to meeting pupils' needs, however great. Self evaluation is good. All staff, parents and pupils are fully involved in the evaluation of the PRU's work and clear areas for development have been identified. However, the lack of a management committee since the PRU's registration has resulted in insufficient support for these developments. A management committee is now being established and the PRU's capacity for improvement is, therefore, satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve links with mainstream secondary schools, post-16 training providers and local employers to help more pupils to re-integrate into mainstream education and society.
- Establish a management committee to provide more support for the head teacher and staff.
- Work closely with the local authority to ensure that all pupils with statements of special educational needs are provided with the education to which they are entitled.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils enter the unit with exceptionally low standards because of their prior difficulties in mainstream schools. Overall, pupils achieve well during their time in the unit. They make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans, although some of these are not specific enough. Most gain entry-level qualifications in English, mathematics, ICT and art in Years 10 and 11. Last year, the majority of Year 11 pupils who attended regularly gained GCSE passes in mathematics and English. Although these are still well below average standards, they represent a considerable achievement for these pupils. Several pupils arrived at the unit last year during the final two terms in Year 11 from schools where they had not been entered for examinations. They did not attend regularly and, as a result, made very little progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well being are good and contribute well to pupils' progress. They feel safe in the unit and feel they can confide in an adult. Many begin to adopt a healthy lifestyle, participating in sport and physical activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They grow in self esteem and confidence and contribute to the local community through, for example, helping in a local primary school and participating in a conservation programme in Reading. They willingly contribute suggestions about ways in which the unit can be improved and appreciate the fact that teachers listen to them. Their behaviour improves, and is good in lessons. The development of their workplace skills is satisfactory but too many leave the PRU without employment or access to further education or training. Pupils who attend regularly clearly enjoy their time in the unit. However, although attendance improves significantly by comparison with pupils' time in mainstream schools, it is still unsatisfactory overall. This is partly explained by the influx of excluded pupils in the final terms of Year 11, when teachers have insufficient time to change their negative attitudes to education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff quickly establish excellent relationships with pupils. They build well on pupils' previous experience to interest and motivate them, so that pupils willingly contribute to discussion. Support assistants and teachers work very well together. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to provide clear explanations for pupils. In the hospital, teachers plan and use an excellent range of resources very flexibly to meet children's needs. Although all teachers plan carefully, they do not tell pupils exactly what they are expected to learn or involve pupils sufficiently in assessing how much they have learned in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The unit provides a good curriculum that meets most pupils' needs well. It rightly emphasises literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, even the more restricted curriculum for pupils with medical needs provides a very good range of National Curriculum subjects and enrichment opportunities. A personal, social and health education course contributes well to pupils' personal development. Full-time pupils and those with statements of special educational needs awaiting placement in a special school benefit from community-based programmes. These build teamwork skills and self esteem but the unit is unable to meet the requirements of all pupils' statements. There are good opportunities for pupils to experience taster courses at college and short work placements. However, few of these lead directly to further training opportunities when pupils leave the PRU.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This area of the unit's work is satisfactory, although there are many good aspects. Staff pay close attention to child protection and procedures meet statutory requirements. Parents frequently express their relief and gratitude for the PRU's work in enabling their children to overcome longstanding difficulties. Pupils and parents are fully involved in preparing individual education plans. Pupils are well aware of their targets, especially for personal development, but some of their academic targets are not specific enough. The PRU has close links with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils have access to extra support when needed. However, links with mainstream schools, especially in neighbouring boroughs, and with post-16 training providers are unsatisfactory, as shown by the poor rate of reintegration for older pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The head teacher's good leadership and management, fully supported by teachers in charge of different sites, have resulted in a successful reorganisation of the PRU's work. This has enabled pupils to benefit from consistently good teaching, sensitive support and a worthwhile curriculum. As a result, they achieve well and many begin to overcome their difficulties. Self-evaluation is good, although improved use of data is needed and planned for next year. The PRU's capacity to improve is satisfactory, but the lack of a management committee has resulted in too little practical support for the PRU's attempts to link more closely with neighbouring schools, colleges and local employers.

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?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

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?	3

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.

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

I very much enjoyed inspecting your unit. I agree with you that it is a good place to learn. Many of you told me how you get on very well with the teachers and staff, enjoy learning and feel safe. This letter is to let you know what your unit does well and how it can become an even better place to learn. I also encourage you to read the report.

The main strengths of the unit are that:

- you make good progress and many of you improve your attendance and behaviour a lot
- the unit provides lots of interesting activities for you that help you to enjoy your education more
- the teaching is good; teachers know their subjects well and make learning interesting for you
- teachers and other staff work very well together to help you to do well.

To make your centre even better I have asked for three main things to be improved, and these are:

- to make better links with schools, colleges and local employers so that older pupils have a better chance of going back to secondary school, getting training or a job;
- to set up a management committee to provide more support for the head teacher;
- to ensure that those of you who are waiting for a place in a special school get the education to which you are entitled.

My very best wishes to you. I hope you continue to work hard and make the most of the good opportunities that the unit provides for you.

Bill Robson AI

Lead Inspector