



The Pupil Referral Service

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110601
LEA Peterborough
Inspection number 295935
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 12 May 2006
Reporting inspector Steven Parker AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	The Old Court House
School category	Pupil referral unit		High Street
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE2 8EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01733 60504
Number on roll	211	Fax number	01733 898435
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	4 February 2002	Headteacher	Paul Copping

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Peterborough Pupil Referral Service (PRS) provides a complex range of provision for pupils who are out of school, or in danger of being excluded, for a variety of reasons. It was established in September 2004.

Out of school support is provided in seven different settings for around 235 pupils, many of whom are dual registered in both the PRS and their home school, and typically exhibit patterns of challenging behaviour with associated specific learning difficulties and poor attainment. Most are taught in one of five age appropriate settings. There are also two elements of educational support based in the District Hospital.

Comprehensive, preventative, in-school advice and support are provided across both primary and secondary schools through outreach teams. The number of pupils helped in this way is considerably more than those educated in the centres.

The majority of pupils are White British and most of the others are from an Asian or Asian British heritage. Over three quarters are boys and a significant proportion has statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Peterborough PRS is a good service. It is very successful in returning pupils to mainstream schools, and has made an important contribution to significant reductions in exclusions across the city, through its highly regarded outreach provision.

In all its centres, pupils achieve well in their learning and personal development as a result of good quality, well planned teaching and a relevant curriculum. Younger pupils are very well equipped to return successfully to their schools, because of the good progress they make in developing basic skills and learning to control their own behaviour. The great majority of older pupils achieve creditable passes in GCSE and other courses by the time they leave. They have all become much more confident and capable because they have benefited from excellent, carefully selected work experience placements. Many achieve well beyond what they would have expected prior to coming to the service. Parents, carers and other professionals agree that the service has often turned these young people's lives around.

The head of service has worked tirelessly and very successfully, with the support of his capable senior management colleagues, to establish this comprehensive provision in a short time.

The service has a clear view of what it does well and what it needs to do to improve. Inspectors agree with all the service's judgements of its effectiveness. This self-evaluation is, however, not fully informed by rigorous and structured monitoring, most especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. Neither is there a consistent approach across the centres to gathering assessment information about pupils' progress and using this to inform the planning of learning activities.

The management committee is gradually developing its role and purpose, providing good support, encouragement and oversight. Members have been fully involved in both strategic planning and lobbying on the service's behalf.

The service has excellent capacity for continuing improvement and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop and fully implement the existing formal systems to evaluate all aspects of the service's work through monitoring processes, in order to properly inform future development of the provision.
- Audit current best practice in assessment across the centres and use this as a basis for developing an effective, whole-service approach, so that all pupils make the best progress they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well over all parts of the service, in spite of the fact that they arrive significantly underperforming because of their previous fractured and negative experience of school. There are no discernable differences in the performance of different groups of pupils, although information on this is limited. Younger pupils benefit from well focused support to improve their social skills, make good progress in their learning, particularly literacy and number capabilities, and develop effective strategies for controlling their own behaviour. This enables the great majority to return successfully to mainstream schools. Older pupils are more likely to stay till the end of their full time schooling. They are helped successfully to believe in their own potential and capacity to learn, so that they improve their basic skills and make good progress across a range of subjects. Consequently, having taken full advantage of what is on offer, most leave with a range of accredited qualifications. When combined with the valuable lessons learned from work experience placements, many go on to employment or further training.

Pupils who are supported in their mainstream schools by the outreach staff are helped very effectively to improve their challenging behaviour so that they can participate more productively in their lessons and make better progress. This helps them to remain in school and achieve good results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. Many have a history of poor attitudes to work, but here, with such good support, they enjoy lessons and work hard. Their attendance is satisfactory overall and occasionally poor. However, for many pupils, it is significantly better than at their previous school. Pupils and parents speak highly of the strong relationships between the staff and themselves. One parent said that her daughter is now 'much more confident and thinks the world of the staff'. Behaviour is good, and pupils respond well to the service's very clear and positive system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils are confident that they will not be bullied, and feel safe because of this. They have a good understanding of the need to live and eat healthily and enjoy cooking nutritious food for themselves and others. Most enjoy regular exercise, and younger pupils were very proud to receive an award for their project encouraging people to cycle rather than use cars. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils think deeply about important issues and develop a clear sense of right and wrong. They are keen to take responsibility, and are enthusiastic about raising funds for local and national charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good across the service. The high staff ratio of teachers and teaching assistants, working in effective partnership, provides the opportunity for pupils to learn well in small classes. Consequently, lessons are less formal than in mainstream schools and pupils thrive on the very well focused support and encouragement they receive. They enjoy being taught in this way and become increasingly comfortable as learners. The very effective, positive approach to managing difficult behaviours, combined with high quality relationships, explains the unusually calm and productive atmosphere in lessons. Planning of learning is generally detailed and relevant, taking full account of individual needs, and is mostly based on good, informal knowledge of each pupil. It is not, however, always properly informed by detailed assessment information that could make the planning of next steps even sharper. In spite of this, most pupils work on tasks which are challenging but achievable.

The quality of teaching provided by other agencies and services in, for example, work experience and other training, is also of good quality.

The outreach teams are highly effective in promoting successful learning in mainstream schools. They work very well with other teachers and support staff on a one-to-one basis and with groups, through much appreciated training sessions. Additional benefits accrue to pupils, their families and teachers from sensitive pastoral guidance, often involving other agencies.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is planned carefully to provide an interesting range of activities that are relevant to the needs of all groups of pupils. The time allocated to teaching is sufficient, even though some pupils attend less than the recommended amount of time. This is a sensible decision, based on individual pupils' needs and capabilities. The service rightly focuses on enhancing pupils' future economic well-being with good provision for teaching basic reading, number and information and communication technology skills. There are excellent opportunities for work experience arranged through both the Honeyhill Centre and the Learning Education and Achievement Partnership (LEAP) project at Perkins. Courses in, for example, motor vehicle maintenance, hairdressing, gardening and stonemasonry prepare pupils very effectively for the world of work. The well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme plays an important part in helping pupils understand their own feelings, handle their frustrations and keep safe. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities out of school time that make learning fun. For example, a group of boys joined a local dance group and surprised even themselves by how much they enjoyed it. In addition, pupils gain a lot from residential trips, particularly in terms of

their personal and social development. Facilities for break and leisure times are not adequate in some centres.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The staff's very good knowledge of pupils' individual needs enables them to set achievable targets and provide effective support to help meet them. Partnership with parents is very good, and they are very appreciative of the support provided for both the pupil and the whole family. A strength of the service's work lies in the very effective way it prepares pupils for their return to their own school. In particular, communication between staff at the different units and local schools is very good, and explains why the move is usually accomplished so smoothly. The provision for pupils with mental health problems is very good and organised well to provide high quality support and guidance to meet pupils' complex needs. Child protection procedures across the centres are rigorous, and all staff have pupils' welfare very much at heart. The service's excellent partnership with a wide range of professionals does much to enhance the quality of care, support and guidance. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are thorough and ensure that pupils are well cared for. The service has very good relationships with the local community which support pupils' learning well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The head of service has had the determination and impressive capability successfully to bring together a wide range of very different elements into a cohesive whole, while also being an active member of the local authority leadership team for pupil support services. He has been helped considerably in the task of leading a large staff team by his talented and highly supportive senior management colleagues, working collaboratively with an able group of teachers in charge of individual centres. Together, they are well advanced in the process of developing a strong whole-service ethos. They are doing this under often difficult and challenging circumstances, and good performance management procedures, supported by well planned and delivered professional development opportunities, are helping considerably. There is clear ambition and commitment amongst all staff to build on such a good start, and this has led to many strong initiatives. The service has excellent capacity to continue this process.

The head of service recognises that there needs to be a better, structured understanding of how effectively the service is functioning, and how well pupils are getting on. Appropriate processes are being developed to fulfil this aim, but they are not yet fully operational. This should be the case when various elements of data collection and formal monitoring of activity, particularly teaching and learning and pupils' individual progress, are fully embedded. This does not, however, prevent the service from having a clear view of its strengths and areas for development, often on the basis of helpful

views expressed by parents and other stakeholders, and planning strategically for its continuing improvement. The proposed new build of accommodation at Fletton, for example, has been a long-standing goal, which is about to be realised. The service is managed very efficiently on a day-to day basis, as is the large and complex budget.

The management committee is developing a model of practice that should enable it fully to carry out its brief. Members are already well informed about the work of the service and ask challenging questions of its leaders. They are supportive and encouraging and have been very involved in advocating for the service and influencing strategic planning.

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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	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	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	1	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

My colleague and I very much enjoyed our time with you when we visited your various centres and schools recently. Thank you for talking to us so honestly about how you feel, and showing us your work. Now we want to let you know what we think about the service.

We think you gain great benefit from being involved with the service for a number of reasons:

You make good progress in your learning, behave well and become more mature and responsible because you are well taught.

A great many of you are helped to return successfully to your schools.

Very good support is offered to your teachers to help many of you to stay in your mainstream schools.

What you learn in lessons in the centres or out on work experience is right for you and helps prepare you well for your life after school. Many of you feel that you would not have been so successful if you had not been given this second chance.

You and your families are looked after and encouraged very well.

You enjoy what you do and, because of this, often attend much more than you did in school.

The service is very well led and managed.

We have asked the service to do the following things to make it even better:

Find more ways of showing how well the service is doing its work.

Develop better ways to find out how well you are getting on.