

The Milton Keynes Primary Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134310
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	298609
Inspection date	28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	12
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Wayne Marshall
Headteacher	Mr Wayne Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
School address	Galley Hill Education Centre Stony Stratford Milton Keynes MK11 1PA
Telephone number	01908 254502
Fax number	01908 254540

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The pupil referral unit provides a temporary placement for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, usually for two terms. Pupils attend the unit in the mornings and, currently, three also attend mainstream school in the afternoons. The remaining pupils receive all of their education through the unit: four of these have been permanently excluded from school and the other five have not been formally excluded but are awaiting a suitable school placement. At present, pupils' ages range from 6 to 11.

At its last inspection, in May 2006, the unit was issued with a Notice to Improve. It received a monitoring visit in January 2007, when it was found to be making satisfactory progress under the leadership of the headteacher of Romans Field School, a successful local special school which also caters for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The headteacher continues to divide his time between the two establishments and the unit is scheduled to relocate to the Romans Field site at the beginning of the next academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The unit has made satisfactory progress in resolving the issues identified at the last inspection and now provides a satisfactory education. Parents are very appreciative of the way the unit supports their children, describing it as 'excellent' and the staff as 'brilliant'. They particularly like the way they are kept informed about how their children are getting on and how the staff go 'above and beyond the call of duty' in the help they provide.

Pupils enjoy the time they spend at the unit because they have good relationships with the staff and get on well with one another. Pastoral care is good and pupils benefit from the high level of adult support available. As a result, they make good progress in their social development and are more willing to learn. Their overall personal development and well-being are satisfactory.

A number of pupils join the unit with gaps in their education and some have learning difficulties in addition to their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Standards remain below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The unit collects significantly more information about pupils' prior attainment and assesses and tracks their progress better than it did at the time of the last inspection. Work in reading and spelling is now matched to the needs of individual pupils. However, teachers do not use assessment information as much as they should in planning lessons in other subjects, nor do they provide support specifically tailored to pupils' learning difficulties. Teaching and learning is, therefore, satisfactory despite the high level of support and encouragement pupils receive.

The headteacher of Romans Field School has brought about good improvement in leadership and management, which are now satisfactory. He has provided much-needed drive and direction to the unit's work. He necessarily divides his time between the two establishments and has not yet been able to set up fully effective systems for self-evaluation and monitoring. The unit is satisfactorily placed to improve further, with some planned developments awaiting the move to the Romans Field site. This relocation is intended to provide much improved facilities for pupils and to make the joint management of the unit and the school easier. The unit provides satisfactory value for money.

Members of the management committee provide valuable expertise and have begun to become involved in checking the unit's work. However, the purpose of the unit, within the local authority's overall provision for pupils who are out of school, is still not as clear as it should be. In particular, the authority does not ensure that pupils placed at the unit as their only educational provision receive a full-time education matched to their needs. The local authority is, rightly, reviewing its arrangements for referring pupils to the unit and finding suitable placements when they are ready to leave. In order to assist this process, a teacher has been appointed to liaise between schools and the unit.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify the role of the unit, including admissions and the identification of suitable places for pupils when they are ready to move on, and ensure that all pupils receive full-time education.
- Improve the way information about the precise next steps in pupils' learning is used in lesson planning and in providing intensive support to pupils with learning difficulties.
- Improve self-evaluation and ensure that all aspects of the unit's work are regularly monitored.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening and benefit from the many opportunities for discussion. They produce a satisfactory amount of work in literacy and numeracy. Handwriting is better than it was at the time of the last inspection and pupils are making good progress with their reading and spelling, which have been receiving particular attention. They make satisfactory progress in other areas, but in lessons where work is not matched closely to the next steps in each pupil's learning the youngest pupils sometimes do work that is not appropriate to their age. There is still insufficient intensive support for those pupils who have learning difficulties, for instance, in order to concentrate on those aspects of their work that they find most difficult.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their attitudes to learning are satisfactory, they enjoy their time at the unit and attendance is good. They make satisfactory progress in their spiritual, moral and cultural development and good progress in their social development. They grow in confidence during their time at the unit, make friends and clearly trust the staff who work with them. Pupils make good progress in improving their behaviour so that it is satisfactory overall and some pupils behave well. The unit has gained the Healthy Schools bronze award but has no facilities to provide a school lunch or to enable pupils to play outside. Pupils therefore make satisfactory progress in learning about healthy lifestyles. They make good progress in learning about keeping safe, and the unit provides an environment where pupils are closely supervised and therefore free from bullying. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, for instance in handing out equipment in class. They participate in identifying their individual targets and reviewing their progress at the end of activities. They have taken part in some activities in the local community, for instance, taking gifts to a local care home at harvest and Christmas. The unit prepares pupils satisfactorily for the future. It helps them to address their behavioural difficulties, to relate more effectively with others, and to make satisfactory progress in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Classrooms are attractive and teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide pupils with a great deal of encouragement and reassurance. Teaching assistants are generally used well and most are very experienced in supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Effective systems are in place for dealing with any seriously inappropriate behaviour, but in class some staff have higher expectations than others about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Lessons are satisfactorily planned. Pupils have been grouped into two mixed-age classes by ability for literacy and

numeracy, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However, at times all pupils undertake the same written activity rather than having work that is matched to their particular learning needs. On entry, pupils' reading and emotional skills are tested, and their National Curriculum levels are identified. Weekly assessment and tracking have been put in place in the core subjects. There is not yet a system of regularly sharing assessment information between the unit and mainstream schools for pupils who spend part of their time in each. Additionally, pupils' learning difficulties are not diagnosed as closely as they should be to plan focused support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests satisfactorily. Great emphasis is placed on personal, social and emotional development, which brings about good improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning and increases their belief in themselves. Individual programmes have been put in place to support pupils' skills in reading and spelling, and teachers are using knowledge gained in recent training in the teaching of literacy and numeracy to revise planning for the next academic year. The lack of facilities in the current accommodation places some restrictions on the curriculum. There is no playground or hall for use at break time or for physical education. The unit provides a breakfast club for pupils to socialise and play indoor games, and weekly swimming lessons. Although home learning packs have been produced for use by those pupils who are permanently excluded or are out of school awaiting a mainstream placement, their needs are not fully met by the current arrangements. A range of trips enriches pupils' learning and these are linked effectively to topic work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pupils are well known to the staff and receive a great deal of care and personal support. The unit works closely with a range of other agencies, for instance liaising with social services, and pupils receive play therapy through a link with the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Parents and carers receive regular contact through home-school diaries, telephone calls and letters, and are given the opportunity to attend activity sessions. Pupils receive satisfactory academic support and guidance. They help to devise their individual education plan targets, but teachers' marking and the learning targets set for them do not fully inform them about how to improve. Effective procedures are in place for child protection and some members of staff are skilled in first aid. Appropriate checks are conducted on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Risk assessment is in place and health and safety checks are regularly carried out in the building of which the unit is a part.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The assistant headteacher is now better supported as a result of the headteacher's input and that of senior staff at Romans Field School. This has brought about some development in assessment and is beginning to lead to improvement in curriculum planning. The staffing is now stable: the unit now has two full-time teachers and is well staffed with teaching assistants. Staff morale is good and teachers and teaching assistants

are committed to improving teaching and learning. The unit is working to a brief action plan that addresses immediate priorities. The production of a longer-term school improvement plan is, reasonably, awaiting the relocation to the Romans Field site. The headteacher is clear about the main development priorities, but self-evaluation is undeveloped and aspects of the unit's work are not monitored closely enough. The unit has an improved relationship with the Behaviour Support Team and is working to develop a closer relationship with the wider educational community.

The impact of the local authority on the unit's work has been satisfactory in some areas, but the role and purpose of the unit is still not entirely clear. The local authority is in the process of consulting on the future of its special school provision, but admissions and exit strategies are not properly thought out and the unit is not best placed to meet the needs of some of the pupils who attend it. The unit now has a management committee, including three headteachers and governors from Romans Field School as well as other representatives, which has begun to provide suitable support and challenge to its work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

11 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Milton Keynes Primary Pupil Referral Unit, Milton Keynes, MK11 1PA

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your referral unit. I enjoyed my visit and now I am writing to let you know what I found out about it.

The unit has improved since the last time I came and it now provides you with a satisfactory education. Your parents really appreciate the way it helps you and how it keeps them informed about how well you are doing, for instance, through the home-school diaries. I could see that you are happy at the unit and that you enjoy the things you do there. You get on very well with the staff and make friends with one another. You are well cared for and have lots of support from the teachers and teaching assistants. You make good progress in learning how to get on with other people and in your behaviour. You make satisfactory progress with most of your work, and good progress in reading and spelling, but sometimes work could be matched better to the next things you need to do to reach higher standards.

The headteacher of Romans Field School is working with the staff and they all want to make the unit better for you. I have asked them to:

- make sure that work is always matched to the next steps in your learning, including for those of you who find some work difficult
- check all areas of the unit's work to see what is working well and what needs to be improved.

I have also asked the local authority to think very carefully about which pupils should go to the unit and to help the staff to find new schools for people when they are ready to move on.

You can help Mr Marshall and the other staff by trying hard in all your lessons and by remembering to behave well all the time.

With best wishes

M Goodchild

Lead inspector