

The Buzz KS2 PRU

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133945
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	301353
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Eric Craven HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	8–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Mike Carmody
Headteacher	Ms Rosemary Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Peacock Close Gorton Manchester M18 8AX
Telephone number	0161 2231216
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Age group	8–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Buzz is the only pupil referral unit (PRU) in the local authority providing for Key Stage 2 pupils and as such pupils come from all parts of Manchester and mainly from localities with significant disadvantage. All but one of the pupils has been permanently excluded from mainstream primary schools. As the aim of the PRU is to provide largely short term placements, the profile of the pupil population changes quite frequently. More recently however a few pupils have remained at the PRU for extended periods whilst being formally assessed. At the time of the inspection most of the pupils were from a White British heritage and a small number were from Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. Eight pupils have returned to mainstream schools in the last two years. Three pupils have statements of special educational need and two are undergoing statutory assessment. All of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good pupil referral unit which is very successful in helping pupils re-engage with education. There is a shared philosophy of therapeutic work and staff build very good relationships with pupils and help them to understand and control their emotional and behavioural difficulties. As a consequence, the pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. They feel valued, trust the staff and, as a consequence, their self-esteem and confidence improve. The pupils enjoy their education as evidenced by the high rate of attendance in comparison to other pupil referral units.

Baseline assessments show that pupils' academic achievements are most often below average when they arrive at the PRU. Nevertheless, the academic progress made by the pupils is satisfactory overall because barriers to their learning are reduced enabling them to catch-up on lost learning. Some pupils make rapid progress in a short space of time although their progress then steadies. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good aspects. However, more consistently good and better teaching would stretch pupils even further. The use of verbal rewards and merits in lessons is very good and helps pupils stay on task, try hard and recognise their successes. The work of learning mentors is very effective and they work in close harmony with teachers to support pupils and to respond quickly to emerging behaviour difficulties. The main drawbacks in teaching are the limited use of learning objectives at the start of lessons. Where they are used they could also be made more meaningful to pupils to help them understand what they are to do and why they are doing it. There is unnecessary inconsistency between teachers in the way academic targets for pupils are used and in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The lack of interactive whiteboards is a shortcoming and a barrier to lessons being more interesting, relevant and exciting for pupils.

The care and guidance provided by staff is good because staff are very committed to the work they do and there is very good communication with parents. Pupils are very clear about their behaviour targets but have limited knowledge of what they need to do to improve in their academic studies. The curriculum is good and particularly well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. It is enriched well by suitable visits and visitors. For example, a visiting therapist provides very good support for pupils in helping them manage their emotions and behaviour. There are extensive extra-curricular activities which are well supported by learning mentors.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership shown by the headteacher is good and a significant strength which accounts for the very positive ethos at The Buzz. Staff are extremely committed and operate very well as a team. The PRU is regarded highly by other agencies and schools with which it works. Parents too are unanimous in their support for the PRU and greatly value the work it does with their children. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks in the management of the PRU. Although there has been plenty of suitable training to equip the staff with the skills and knowledge to meet the pupils' personal, social and emotional needs there has been insufficient emphasis placed on the development of the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. The mathematics and English coordinators have not undertaken training for their respective subjects for quite some time. Monitoring of daily events is good as there is a de-briefing session by staff each day. However, monitoring and evaluation of the PRU's work more generally are not systematic enough and they do not drive forward improvements with sufficient urgency. However, because there has been improvement since the last inspection and because of the impressive success the PRU has in enlivening pupils' interest in education, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by giving more emphasis to improving the quality of teaching and learning including better use of learning objectives and academic targets.
- Improve the quality of monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards achieved by pupils are below those expected for pupils of a similar age. Of the six pupils eligible to take the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2007 only one achieved the nationally expected Level 4 in English and mathematics and two achieved Level 4 in science. Nevertheless, from low starting points when they arrive at the PRU records show they make at least satisfactory progress and some make good progress. Given their low starting points in English, the pupils make most rapid progress in this area once the barriers to their learning, such as behaviour difficulties, have been reduced. Pupils from Caribbean and Asian heritage make equivalent progress to other pupils. Pupils achieve very well in music where all learn to play a musical instrument.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils say they enjoy coming to the PRU because staff are very good at listening and help them to learn and overcome their problems and worries. All current pupils have improved their attendance since being at the PRU, some of them quite markedly. On some occasions pupils still get very angry or disruptive, however they are very well supported and their behaviour improves significantly over time. Staff know the pupils very well, identify potential problems quickly and try to nip them in the bud. Pupils develop skills that allow them to cope with feelings of anger and anxiety and this prepares them well for the transition to their next school and the outside world. They enjoy sharing a meal in a well supervised breakfast club. Fresh fruit and water are readily available. Overall, pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupil's spiritual development is very good because of the frequent sessions of meditation, aromatherapy and relaxation. Pupils say that techniques they learn help them to stop worrying, control anger and sleep at night. Pupils take part in a range of community events including playing in a steel band for pensioners and undertaking charitable appeals that help develop a sense of responsibility and build relationships with adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the PRU's assessment that the quality for teaching is satisfactory overall. It includes some good teaching but is variable and is not consistently good or better. Its strengths lie in the cooperation between teachers and learning mentors and in the very good relationships with pupils. There is inconsistent use of ICT, for example it is utilised more in literacy lessons than in numeracy. There has been a marked lack of recent training for teachers in numeracy and literacy which means they have not built on their knowledge and skills sufficiently in these

subject areas. Marking of pupils' work is regular and celebratory but fails to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it is closely matched to the needs of pupils.

It broadly reflects the curriculum that is taught in mainstream schools with suitable emphasis placed on the skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils benefit from extensive opportunities for activities outside normal school time. Staff go to great lengths to ease transport difficulties and enable pupils to attend activities such as swimming and theatre trips. Pupils are made aware of the health, safety and moral implications of their actions both inside and outside the PRU. This approach is integrated well into lessons, in circle time and in one to one discussions with staff. There have been significant improvements in the availability of resources in science and ICT although the PRU has no interactive whiteboards. When pupils undertake re-integration programmes into mainstream schools, insufficient links are made between the school's and the PRU's curriculum to ease the transition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff provide good care, guidance and support for pupils. They help them to see the reasons why they have been excluded from mainstream schools and enable them to develop skills to cope with their difficulties. Pupils have effective individual behaviour plans that are well targeted and meticulously checked. Parents and carers are closely involved with their children's education and staff often see them on a daily basis to share information. Parents' attitudes are very positive and were summed up by one parent who said, 'The Buzz is the best thing that has happened to my son, without the support it has given he would have been lost.' The arrangements in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils lack rigour. This has been recognised by the PRU and they are working urgently with the local authority to improve systems.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has ensured that all staff share a value system that underpins the therapeutic way they work with the pupils. However, there is insufficient emphasis placed on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are good links with other agencies and this work is effective in responding to individual pupils' needs. However, preventative work is less prominent and there is a lack of a coordinated multi-agency approach. This has been recognised by the management group who have recently written to the director of children's services on this matter. The exterior of the buildings is unattractive and in poor condition in parts. However, staff have made the best of the accommodation and attractive displays contribute to a more pleasant interior. Self-evaluation most often stems from a close monitoring and review of individual pupils and staff learn together during these regular case reviews. However, more systematic evaluations of the PRU's work are limited. For example, no formal observations of teaching and learning are undertaken by the headteacher although regular visits to classrooms are made on an informal basis. There are insufficient measurable targets in the PRU's development plan and it does not include costings. The PRU does not have an accessibility

plan in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act even though this was raised at an Ofsted visit over a year ago. The management group has benefited from recent additions to its membership and there are promising signs that the group is beginning to operate more effectively as a critical friend to the PRU.

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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?	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	3
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	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	3
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?	3
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	3
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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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

It was lovely to meet with you all in circle time during the inspection of The Buzz last week. Thank you for giving us your views which we found very helpful. Mr Johnson and I enjoyed the time we spent with you and we think The Buzz is doing a good job.

We were impressed by the way many of you learn to control your emotions and behaviour and the staff do a good job in helping you do this. Your parents too said they were very pleased with the way you come on during your time at The Buzz. You told us that you enjoy The Buzz and all of you have improved your attendance since being there, which confirms to us that you must be enjoying your education now. We were pleased that you told us you feel safe and that you could turn to any member of staff if you had any worries. The subjects you have as well as the other activities, such as the steel drum playing and the weekend trips, give you lots of good opportunities to learn the life skills you need. We think that the achievements you make in your subjects are generally satisfactory but they could be even better. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes it is good. We know there are more computers to work with now but we think better use could be made of these in some lessons. We could clearly see how all the staff are working together as a team to help you develop your social skills and to control your behaviour.

We have asked Mrs Harrison to do two things to make The Buzz even better than it is. The first is to focus attention more on improving the quality of teaching so that you can achieve more. The second is to check more carefully on how well the Buzz is doing in all of its work.