

# Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104850
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308684
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Frank Carruthers

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	22
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Dowd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Patricia McDonald
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 April 2003
<b>School address</b>	Gores Lane Formby Liverpool Merseyside L37 3NY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01704 395945
<b>Fax number</b>	01704 395947

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This pupil referral unit (PRU) caters for up to 24 students aged 11 to 14 excluded from mainstream schools because of significant behavioural problems. All students are of White British origin and most have significant barriers to their learning, including high levels of social and economic disadvantage. A small minority is in public care. The students' attainment on entry ranges from below to well below average, often caused by gaps in their learning through absence from previous schools. The unit has the Eco-School (Bronze) Award and has gained four strands of the Healthy Schools Award so far.

## 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 an effective pupil referral unit, which has a significant impact on improving the students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. While at the unit their achievement in school subjects is good. Those students who return to secondary schools are working at levels just below those of their mainstream peers. Some move on to the Key Stage 4 PRU, or other alternative provision such as IMPACT, as they start in Year 10.

Students make good progress in their personal development, for instance, their social development, their awareness of a healthy and fit lifestyle and citizenship. In addition, they achieve well academically because of the good quality teaching and the care, guidance and support they receive. An outstanding feature is the role of the school counsellor who provides much valued support for students and their parents and carers. Excellent links with outside agencies and schools help the progress of the students who benefit from a good curriculum that covers English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as a wide range of opportunities in other subjects. Teaching and learning are good because of the high expectations of staff and their very good relationships with students. The needs of those students who have difficulties with basic skills such as reading are catered for well by visiting specialist staff. The procedures to assess the levels that students are working at in English, mathematics and science are good. However, the tracking of their progress is not always precise enough to identify where students are underachieving. The marking of students' work is supportive but does not consistently tell students what they need to do next to improve.

Leadership and management of the unit are good. Progress since the last inspection has been very good as a result of the dynamic leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. School self-evaluation is good and accurately reflects most of the findings of the inspection. As a result, the unit has good capacity to build on its current position. The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff, however, is only at the early stages of development. Senior staff are aware of the need to maintain the key aim of the unit which is to reintegrate students into mainstream schools and not be a holding place for students before they move on to the Key Stage 4 PRU. Currently, an increasing number of students are successfully reintegrating but this has not always been the case in the past and has undermined the unit's fundamental purpose. The local authority maintains a good overview of the work of the unit and members of the management committee have close and regular contact with the headteacher and staff. The committee has excellent representation from a variety of branches of children's services. Its key members serve the unit's interests exceptionally well on important decision-making panels. The cost of educating a student at the unit is in line with similar special schools and units nationally and the unit gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the drive to reintegrate students into mainstream secondary education.
- Develop the monitoring of teaching and learning to promote consistency of best practice.
- Improve procedures to track the progress of students, including the marking of their work, to help them achieve well.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of the great majority of students is good. Standards in Year 9 in English and mathematics are below or just below expected levels and students have made good progress from low starting points. Students achieve well in science, ICT, and art and design because of good quality teaching by staff who put their specialist interests to good use. The high quality of displayed work of students in art and design illustrates well the students' achievement. They have good opportunities to take part and achieve well in food technology, design and technology, French and a variety of physical activities. Their overall good achievement is triggered by the high expectations of staff.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' attendance and attitudes to learning improve significantly while at the unit. The students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to be independent. For example, in the last term of Year 9 they are expected to travel to the unit on public transport, chiefly by train. This has proved highly successful and students appreciate the value of this. Attendance levels of the great majority of students are now at 80% or higher. The centre is tackling poor attendance robustly, including taking legal action where necessary. The students' behaviour improves while at the unit, being satisfactory overall. There are examples of students behaving in a confrontational or aggressive manner but these are handled well by the unit staff and there have been no exclusions in recent years. The system of rewards, detentions and loss of privileges is very effective in promoting good behaviour. Students learn well how to cooperate with one another and about citizenship and rights and responsibilities, and there is an effective school council and Eco-school council. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development improves as their self-esteem rises and is satisfactory. Students gain a better awareness of personal safety, drug awareness and a healthy and fit lifestyle through the quality of the curriculum. All these aspects go towards improving their personal development and economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The key strengths of the teaching are the relationships that build between students and staff, so that the students' learning improves and they grow in self-esteem, taking a greater pride in what they do. Staff have high expectations for the students and a twice daily feature of life in the unit is the time when students assemble together with all staff to reflect on the positives of what has happened earlier in class or in activities off site. Everyone's confidence is helped by these sessions. Teachers use their specialist subject knowledge well and lessons are carefully planned. The teaching of English and mathematics in small groups is consistently good. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to class teaching. Staff mark students' work conscientiously with a focus on encouragement but they do not consistently show what the next steps to improve are. They take a pride in the work of students and show it off very effectively in stimulating displays that raise the students' self-esteem.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Through very good use of the specialist expertise of the staff, the unit offers a good range of subjects. Core subjects of English, mathematics and science are covered well. Resources for ICT are good and students have regular opportunities to use the extensive equipment in the computer suite. As a result of good teaching by the part-time specialist, students follow a curriculum in ICT that matches that covered in mainstream schools. French, art and design, environmental studies, food technology and design and technology feature in the curriculum. The humanities curriculum, which includes careers education for Year 9 students, is satisfactory and is currently under review. Personal, social, health and citizenship education makes a good contribution to the students' personal and emotional development. The unit also supports students successfully through programmes of sex and relationships education, and drugs and substance misuse. A lively example is the project students have been following on anti-bullying which involved the composing of a 'rap' song later recorded by a local band. On and off-site physical, environmental and creative activities are an integral part of an effective programme that rewards students' good behaviour and effort. Outside agencies and projects make an excellent contribution to these activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All procedures for child protection, health, safety and the safe recruitment of staff are in place. Good quality advice and guidance are provided for parents or carers about their children's progress. The role of the counsellor in this vital link between home and unit is outstanding. A comfortable, well resourced quiet room was established last year for staff and parents to meet and for students to use confidentially with the counsellor. This means that staff gain insight into how the student sees himself or herself and where any anxieties lie. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the work of staff in helping their children. One commented, 'The staff at Oakfield are fantastic. Their job is extremely difficult.' Another wrote, 'My son really enjoys going (makes a nice change).' There are very valuable links with other agencies, such as behaviour support staff, basic skills teachers and reintegration teachers, to promote students' learning. Students are assessed for their academic learning on entry and regular assessments are made while at the unit, which help to set targets for improvement. Students have a good awareness of their targets. However, the tracking system is not always as precise as it might be in identifying underachievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has improved provision very well since being appointed after the last inspection and broadened the range of learning opportunities available for students. Specialist staff have been added, the accommodation improved and links with other institutions forged to promote the curriculum well. Improvements in the consistency with which the staff manage behaviour have led to significant changes in students' personal development making the unit a calm, purposeful place for students to progress. Staff have worked very well as a team to set the parameters for behaviour, for instance, in establishing the premises and grounds as a no smoking area and taking a hard line with students who do not cooperate. Procedures to evaluate how

well the unit is performing are good and as a result, the views of senior managers match almost all the findings of this inspection. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, however, are at the early stages of development and are not yet picking up any inconsistencies across teaching groups.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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**

Inspection of Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit, Liverpool, L37 3NY

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the inspection of the unit. I enjoyed my visit very much.

The Oakfield Centre is giving you a good opportunity to get more out of your education and the staff are offering you much that will help you in the future.

- The headteacher and staff give you lots of good help and guidance to make you successful. I know you particularly appreciate talking to the counsellor.
- The staff are teaching you well and giving you the chance to keep up with vital studies in English, mathematics, science and ICT. I enjoyed seeing you at work making savoury rice and omelettes in food technology, and designing bridges in design and technology. Your artwork is especially good.
- Good relationships between yourselves and staff are a key strength.
- You are gaining confidence in what you do and putting a lot of effort in now. I saw this, for instance, in the training you did during the boxing session.
- You are also benefiting from the work you do elsewhere at sports and music centres, as well as with the local rangers, the fire brigade etc.

Talking to you and reading the comments from your parents and carers, I can see that you appreciate what the staff are doing for you.

What the staff need to do next is to:

- do as much as possible to help you to get back into secondary school
- make sure their teaching is as good as it can be and do this by senior staff observing lessons and giving advice to staff
- improve the way staff keep track of how well you are doing and, when they mark your work, give you points for how to improve.