

The Kingsmead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132133
Local Authority	City of Derby
Inspection number	315932
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Les Allen
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Bridge Street Derby Derbyshire DE1 3LB
Telephone number	01332 715970
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Kingsmead School's pupil referral unit (PRU), previously Derby City PRU, provides education for 5 to 16 year olds in a wide variety of placements in 10 bases across the city. There are 217 on roll, made up of 18 primary aged pupils, all but one of whom are in Key Stage 2, and 199 students in Key Stages 3 and 4. The school caters for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream and special schools; pupils at high risk of being excluded; pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, who are placed at Kingsmead as an alternative to other provision, such as a special school; and pupils unable to attend school for medical reasons. Standards on entry to the school are well below average; pupils have often missed much schooling, occasionally more than a year. Forty-one pupils have a statement of special educational need and another six are being assessed. Pupils are predominantly of White British backgrounds.

Kingsmead Special School and the PRU are led and managed as a single institution with one headteacher and one governing body. The local authority intends in the near future that the base for Key Stages 1 and 2 becomes a separate PRU with its own leadership and management committee.

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 school which, as a result of strong leadership, the determination of Kingsmead School governors and the full backing of the local authority, has improved much since its last inspection, when it was the Derby City PRU. The large majority of students in Key Stages 3 and 4, are progressing at a faster rate and achieving more, mainly because teaching is now sharply focused on their individual needs. The provision in Key Stages 1 and 2, which has been good in the past, is now satisfactory, having suffered from two leadership changes in close succession. However, new leadership is making needed improvements. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school has had a marked impact on strengthening provision and ensures the school has a good capacity for further improvement

The school has some outstanding features. In an otherwise good curriculum, there is an exceptional range of work and activities in Key Stages 3 and 4, more than enough to match every students' interests and talents. Furthermore, the PRU provides every student with superb support, especially at the emotional and social levels. With such strong support, students gain the stability and motivation to achieve well. It has been instrumental in them overcoming disaffection, poor behaviour and lack of confidence. By the time they leave, students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Overall, standards stay well below average, generally as a result of the students' disrupted education. However, a significant number gain GCSE passes in a good range of subjects including English and mathematics. This number has increased in each year since the last inspection. In 2008, eighteen pupils took their GCSE science examination a year early and 15 achieved A*-C passes. Good achievement is also evident in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the success experienced in work related courses. Achievement is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. In the past this has been the strongest performing part of the PRU. However, standards have dropped and while teaching and the curriculum are both satisfactory, they are not as effective as before.

Personal development is good. Students quickly develop positive attitudes to school and willingly complete work because they find lessons and other activities interesting and relevant. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students happily accept the praise staff give them for all of their achievements and reflect maturely on how to improve their overall performance. They gain self-confidence and a positive outlook to being successful. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community by organising fundraising events for local and international charities. While all are constantly encouraged to give up smoking and eat healthily, this is not embedded with all students. However, they behave well and act safely.

Teaching and learning are good, overall. In nearly all of the school's bases, students are managed well in lessons. Teachers and support assistants create a calm and purposeful atmosphere. The good relationships between staff and students are characterised by mutual respect. Lessons are planned well and use assessment effectively to match work to each pupils' level of attainment. Teachers ensure that students know the objectives for each lesson and review these with them later, so that students get a sense of their own learning and success. However, there is some inexperience and lack of skill in helping students to evaluate their learning. Furthermore, some ineffective management of pupils' behaviour in Key Stages 1 and 2 impacts adversely on learning.

The school has improved its reputation considerably with mainstream schools across the city for its effectiveness in sharing expertise and providing support to mainstream pupils at risk of exclusion. The few parents who shared their views were all positive about the work of the PRU.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 by strengthening the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- Strengthen provision for promoting a healthy lifestyle for students.
- Help students to develop the skills to evaluate accurately their performance in each lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The great majority of students make good progress as a result of effective teaching, learning and academic support across nearly all of the 10 bases. The excellent quality of support for students also ensures those with statements have their needs met and they make good progress as well. Students' good efforts with work, and hence their progress, are stimulated well by a relevant and interesting curriculum. In particular, success in accredited courses show students achieve well by the end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations, Entry Level Certificates and vocational accreditation. Students' outstanding performance in science reflects the impact of specialist teaching recently introduced in the subject. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the numbers reaching the level expected for their age, or a level above this, in English, mathematics and science is increasing as a result of them reaching or exceeding challenging targets. Less academic students achieve as well as others in the good range of accredited vocational courses available and, like all other students, the number succeeding is increasing year-on-year. However, some inconsistency in the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 means for these pupils' the rate of progress is only satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy their time in all of the school's bases, mainly because of the very good relationships with each other and the staff. They do not suffer harassment and incidents of bullying are negligible. The number of exclusions has fallen and have more than halved in four years. Students act safely and have taken on board some aspects of leading a healthy lifestyle. In Key Stage 3, students learn about safe cycling and how to travel independently. Good progress in consolidating basic skills, gaining accreditation and vocational experience, together with good improvement in social skills and independence prepares them well for life beyond school. Students behave well, exercising good self-discipline and control, although at the moment this is not so strong at the base for primary pupils. Elsewhere, students are calm, constructive and helpful and, overall, keep their attendance at a satisfactory level.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students clearly expect to work and learn when they attend. Lessons often start with an enjoyable activity that successfully involves students and gets them engaged and thinking. Teachers know the students well, their abilities and preferred ways of learning. They plan tasks

that are challenging, relevant and interesting for all ages and abilities. Students that need help quickly receive this as teaching groups are small, although staff ensure that students work independently as much as possible. Skilled teaching assistants support learning well, by prompting students or giving regular encouragement and feedback to keep motivation high. In the Key Stage 1 and 2 base, there is some good rapport with pupils that encourages co-operation and effort, but this is not consistent and pupils occasionally misbehave.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In the Key Stage 3 and 4 bases, the emphasis on English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, personal social health and citizenship education and physical education ensures that students have good opportunities to develop personally and academically. Added breadth at Key Stage 3 is achieved through a thematic curriculum that links together subjects such as the humanities in a way that makes learning meaningful and enjoyable. The range and number of bases enable staff to group students according to age and, more especially, their capabilities and needs. Substantial improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection mean that students now access specialist facilities, such as a science laboratory at the main site. The limited use of assessment in planning pupils' work in Key Stage 1 and 2 reduces the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement, with the result it is sometimes not sufficiently challenging.

An excellent feature in Key Stages 3 and 4 is the very wide range of choices available to students, created through links and partnerships. These include vocational and therapeutic placements, giving students valuable opportunities to acquire social and life skills as well as a taste of the working world that helps them to make career decisions. These and academic courses enable students of all abilities to acquire a good range of accreditation and thus open pathways along which many progress to further education and training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The exceptionally strong provision in care, guidance and support is the key the school has used to unlock students' barriers to achievement and give a secure preparation for the future. This is matched in many respects in Key Stages 1 and 2, although some ground has been lost in managing pupils' behaviour effectively. Safeguarding procedures and health and safety arrangements are firmly in place. The school is meticulous in understanding the factors in, and surrounding, each student which disrupts their education. The school has been most effective in organising comprehensive amounts of support and good links with parents means this extends, when needed, to families. Students appreciate very quickly that they are cared about and valued. Positive relationships between staff and pupils emerge from this, which gains more strength from the close attention given to students by their keyworkers. The school has drawn in support from a wide range of agencies and specialists to counsel students, and very often their families, in positive ways. Strong links with schools, colleges and other providers ensures a continuum of support with students moving successfully between these different organisations. The school has built its own highly skilled support team including a specialist nurse, drama therapist, a counsellor and a mental health worker.

Better assessment and analysis of data has made the use of targets effective in improving students' behaviour and academic progress. Their targets form part of a detailed individual

plan to which students contribute, and are used with their key worker to monitor their progress over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides clear direction and high expectations across the whole of the school. She is ably assisted by the well-established senior leadership team. They possess considerable skill and experience in leading such a complex organisation. Well qualified and experienced staff are being recruited and the whole team is gaining in strength as a result. Each of the 10 bases focuses on a particular section of pupils, mainly providing effectively for their specific needs. As a result, the split site organisation, rather than being an encumbrance, has been developed into a strength. The one exception is the base for primary pupils, whose provision has suffered in recent years from changes in leadership. This is being rectified effectively; recovery is underway and its leadership is satisfactory. The school's success in engaging students constructively with their world, contributes well to the cohesion of their community. Monitoring and evaluation are firmly in place. Effective use is made of data on students' performance to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of provision and to set challenging targets. The latter are having a positive impact on achievement as seen in examination successes in particular.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Kingsmead School Pupil Referral Unit, Derby, DE1 3LB

We thoroughly enjoyed the visits to each of Kingsmead's bases across the city, particularly because of your warm welcome and friendliness everywhere we arrived. We want to say thank you for the thoughtful comments made by those students we managed to talk to during our visiting.

It pleases me enormously to say I found out that you have a good school because it gives you an effective education and good help to prepare for the future. This is just the break you need and I am sure you will take full advantage of it. Your behaviour is good, which helps ensure you stay safe. I was impressed by how hard you work in lessons and the result is that you are making good progress, doing well in tests and passing exams. It was really obvious you enjoy attending school and are keen to contribute in many ways. This came across clearly in what you had to say about school. Raising money for charities is something you can be proud of. Two things that really stand out about your school are the many different courses and activities available to you and the excellent support your teachers and others give to you.

Your headteacher and all of her staff are working extremely hard to improve your school and, in just one of many respects, this is seen in your new building and better accommodation in nearly all of the bases. There is still some way to go at Newton's Walk, where the primary pupils go to school. I have asked your headteacher to improve teaching and the curriculum there. I also think more emphasis needs to be given to encouraging you all towards a healthy lifestyle. I know your headteacher thinks this is important and you can help by taking seriously all the advice you are given. Finally, I have asked teachers to develop in you the skills to judge how successful lessons have been in helping you to learn what was intended.

I wish you all the best in the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector