

Stag Lane Pupil Referral Unit at Library Buildings

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133660
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	316182
Inspection date	14 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	24
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Siobhan Crawley
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	364 Stag Lane Kingsbury London NW9 9AG
Telephone number	020 8937 3193
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Age group	11-14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the pupil referral unit and investigated the following issues.

- The progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The relative strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The guidance and support provided to pupils to help them improve their work.

Evidence was gathered from: observing lessons; talking to pupils and staff, including a representative of the local authority and management committee; checking the school's self evaluation records and pupil-progress records; looking at pupils' books and the results of surveys of parents and pupils carried out by the unit. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail and the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The unit caters for up to 25 pupils who have been permanently excluded. Its aim is to reintegrate these pupils into mainstream education as quickly as possible. Hence, many pupils spend little more than a term in the unit. Periodically, a number spend time in a mainstream school as part of the process of reintegration. The unit also carries out preventative work in schools. This is with pupils who have been identified as being at risk of exclusion. Nearly all pupils at the unit have significant emotional and behavioural needs. Most arrive with large gaps in their prior education due to a combination of poor attendance and missing school because of exclusion on grounds of poor behaviour. Consequently, many pupils have additional learning needs especially in literacy. All pupils are provided with a free school meal as a result of the local authority's decision to support them in developing a healthy lifestyle. The majority of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Black Caribbean, 37%, followed by Black African, 14%. Whilst a small number speak English as an additional language, none is a beginner in English. About three quarters of the pupils are boys. The majority of pupils tend to be in Year 9 and usually no more than one or two are in Year 7.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stag Lane is a good pupil referral unit. It enables its pupils to make good progress in their personal and academic development and many successfully reintegrate into mainstream education. There is effective support to find suitable alternative provision for those who are unable to maintain a place in a mainstream school or need specialist provision. The unit is highly successful in supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in local secondary schools. This very effectively prevents the large majority of such pupils from permanent exclusion. Good teaching and excellent support for behaviour and attendance underpin the success of the unit.

Pupils join the unit with widely varying levels of prior attainment though, for most, educational standards are well below average. They make good progress in their learning often showing good development in speaking and listening. Their oral responses indicate they know and understand more than is evident from their written work. This is because writing skills for many boys lag behind other areas of work and they often see writing as a chore. The standard of girls' writing tends to be close to national norms. Whilst there is a steady improvement in pupils' writing, they remain somewhat at a disadvantage when it comes to written tests and examinations. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science. Many demonstrate flair and skill in art and physical education. By the time they are ready to leave, standards for all groups of pupils are better than when they joined. Though standards remain below average, most pupils have successfully met challenging targets. Hence, they are well prepared for their next step in education and future life. This is especially so for pupils who successfully reintegrate into mainstream education and those in mainstream schools who modify their behaviour, thus, avoiding exclusion.

Teaching contributes well to pupils' good progress. Teachers plan lessons in detail and provide clear, often written, guidance to pupils on what they are expected to learn. Effective questioning helps pupils to think through their ideas though sometimes they are not pressed to extend their answers. Behaviour management is good and working relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Support staff work well with individual pupils enabling those with learning difficulties to make good progress. Occasionally, introductions are too long and so there are limited opportunities for pupils to participate actively. Pupils themselves comment that they enjoy lessons more when they do practical work or projects. New thematic approaches to the curriculum, trialled this year, are proving successful with both staff and pupils. A crime scene investigation culminated in a court case drama enacted by pupils. It involved science work to collect and identify evidence, mathematics for statistical analysis and English to produce reports and argue the case in court. The development of such cross-curricular topics are helping to further improve a good curriculum and providing purposeful opportunities to encourage pupils' writing. A broad range of subjects are enriched through strong links with local sports providers, theatres and adventure activity centres. Hence, pupils have good access to sporting and drama activities which they enjoy immensely. Their participation in sporting activities contributes well to a healthy lifestyle. Pupils learn about healthy eating and try to maintain a good diet. They are increasingly involved in giving their views in tutor periods and beginning to contribute ideas on how to make the unit better. There are limited opportunities within the curriculum, however, for pupils to contribute to their local community other than taking greater responsibility for their behaviour when out and about.

Given the backgrounds of pupils, their personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils develop good understanding of right and wrong, and particularly how their behaviour affects others. They get on well with one another. Pupils are exceptionally well looked after and, therefore, feel safe. Good behaviour contributes to feelings of safety. Pupils have a very good understanding of their own behaviour issues and what they need to do to address these. Most make excellent progress to get to a point where their behaviour stops being disruptive, especially in lessons. Those who successfully reintegrate into mainstream schools make excellent progress to achieve challenging targets for behaviour. A few pupils' behaviour lets them down whilst going through the process of reintegration and they lose their place as a result. Most, however, have positive attitudes to school and want to continue their education. Hence, they try hard to improve their attendance and most attend regularly. The unit works very hard to achieve satisfactory attendance though the poor attendance of a few has an adverse impact on overall attendance.

The unit has good systems for tracking progress and identifying individual learning needs. Individual targets for behaviour are very clearly defined and well understood by pupils. Their progress against these is tracked rigorously. However, targets for learning are not as clearly developed or tracked. Hence, pupils are not always sure what they need to do to improve their work, including their writing. Work is regularly marked but written comments do not consistently guide pupils on the steps they need to take to improve their work.

The unit is well led and managed. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for development. There is strong teamwork amongst staff and shared goals. Staff work very closely with the local authority and local schools. The headteacher has established excellent working relationships with local headteachers. These are key to successful reintegration as well as preventative work with some of the most vulnerable pupils in schools. Mainstream schools and parents have a high regard for the work of the unit. Despite the transitory nature of the pupil population, the unit has strong links with parents and they receive weekly information on their children's progress. Work with other agencies, such as education welfare officers and educational psychologists, is very well established.

Staff have a good understanding of the unit's strengths and weaknesses and effective plans further improvement. Subject leaders manage their areas of work well. The management committee provides good support to the headteacher and acts as an effective sounding board. The unit has made good progress since its last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are actively involved in lessons and that introductions are not overlong.
- Provide clear guidance for pupils on what they need to do to improve the standard of their work, especially in writing.

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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 ¹ 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	2
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	2
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	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

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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

01 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stag Lane Pupil Referral Unit at Library Buildings, London, NW9 9AG

I enjoyed visiting your school and talking to you. I would like to thank you for making me feel welcome. The unit provides you with good support to help you improve your behaviour and to reintegrate into mainstream schools. You make good progress because you are taught well.

These are some of the best things about the unit.

- You have positive attitudes and are keen to get back into mainstream education.
- The unit is very successful in preventing others who are still in mainstream schools from being excluded.
- You are making good progress in managing your own behaviour.
- The unit works hard and very effectively with local schools and other agencies so that you have all the support you need to get back into mainstream education.
- Support staff work well with you to support your individual needs.
- Staff take very good care of you to make sure you are safe at school.
- Your headteacher makes sure that staff work as a team and put your needs first.

These are some of the ways your school can become even better.

- Make sure that work in lessons involves you actively and that you do not have long introductions.
- Make sure that you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work, especially writing.

You can certainly help by asking staff for tips on how you can improve your work. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead Inspector