

Calderdale Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133693
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	316196
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Cathy Gunningham
Headteacher	Mr Simon Lee
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Heath Training and Development Cent Free School Lane Halifax West Yorkshire HX1 2PT
Telephone number	01422 394141
Fax number	01422 364899

Age group	7–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The unit is part of Calderdale provision for students out of school and serves the whole of the authority. It is for students who have been excluded, or who are in danger of being excluded, from mainstream schools.

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 (Key Stage 2) attend the Stepping Stones unit, which is co-located with Whitehill Primary School. Most attend for between one and four terms before returning to mainstream education.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3) are based in a four-storey town house in the centre of Halifax. Many return to mainstream or other more appropriate settings.
- Students in the Phoenix group are from Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) and usually spend the last two years of their education in the unit. The group is temporarily housed in the Queen Street Neighbourhood Centre while other premises are being refurbished.
- Staff support a number of students in mainstream schools as part of the initiative to prevent exclusion.

All students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with nine having a statement of special educational need to meet their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The high majority are of White British background. None are in the care of the local authority. Attainment on entry to the unit is below average because many students have spent considerable time out of school and most have negative attitudes to education.

Once the Key Stage 4 building is completed, work is scheduled to start on the Key Stage 3 accommodation. The alterations are due to be completed by the end of the school year. As a result of the increased space, numbers are set to rise to 84.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents and students think highly of this good unit. Comments such as 'The PRU helps you by giving you a second chance to get your life back on track - only you can make that decision, but they are there to help you' are indicative of how students mature and appreciate what is on offer.

Much has been achieved in the four years the unit has been open. Despite moving premises a number of times, it is successfully fulfilling its role of returning younger pupils to mainstream education, and preparing older students for life after school. In addition, preventative work with a number of mainstream schools has enabled several students at risk of exclusion to stay in their home school. This means the unit gives good value for money. The local authority, however, has no school specifically for students with behavioural and emotional needs; consequently, some students with statements of special educational need are there for the long term. This affects the number taking up short-term placement.

While standards are below average, students in all age groups make good progress because of good teaching and a good curriculum. Progress towards targets in individual education and behaviour plans is very good. All students in Year 11 leave with nationally recognised awards, with most attaining GCSE in English and mathematics. Moreover, almost all go on to further education, training or take up employment. Students gain awards in information and communication technology (ICT), but dated equipment and a lack of resources mean standards are not as high as they should be in all age groups.

Students' personal development is good. This is because of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and of the good care, support and guidance they receive. The majority of students improve their attitude and behaviour. Through a very good 'behaviour for learning programme', and outstanding relationships between staff and students, students learn to show respect and model their behaviour on the adults around them. Students who have a low opinion of themselves grow in confidence through their achievements, while those with a history of violence and aggression have been helped to confront their problems. Attendance is satisfactory, most students make good improvement in their attendance, but the irregular attendance of a few is affecting their progress. This is mainly in Key Stage 4 where a handful of students have missed out in odd subjects because they have not completed course work.

Leadership and management are good. Although the unit is spread across the town, there is a feeling of togetherness and working for the common aim of providing the best possible for the students. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Most of the key issues have been remedied. However, while students have been based in a number of premises, the accommodation remains inadequate for students in Key Stages 3 and 4. Plans are well advanced for the refurbishment and resourcing of upgraded premises for all three age groups. Outstanding links with other schools, health, and other professionals contribute considerable to the well-being of students and their families.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in ICT.
- Improve the attendance of students in Key Stage 4.

The school should do the following with the local authority as the appropriate authority.

- Ensure that the plans for refurbishing and resourcing the unit come to fruition.
- Ensure that the number of students with statements for behavioural, emotional and social needs does not prevent the unit from fulfilling its function as a short-term placement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

While standards are below average, students make good progress and, taking account of prior attainment, achieve well. Though at the unit for only a short time, pupils in Key Stage 2 make good advances in numeracy and literacy. It is not unusual for reading and comprehension ages to go up by two years over a matter of months. This helps pupils access other subjects when they return to their home school. Similarly, specialised reading programmes in Key Stage 3 have increased progress. In addition to achieving well in academic subjects, students in this age group work towards vocational qualifications such as junior sports leader. The range of accreditation at Key Stage 4 has been extended. As well as GCSE, students work towards the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE), unit awards, and qualifications in, for example, construction, and business studies. While students in all age groups make progress in ICT lessons and have basic skills, the inadequate equipment and lack of a network until recently has hampered progress. Students who are gifted are identified and helped further their skills, for example playing the piano, or taking part in rugby training with the local professionals.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' changed attitude to education is evident in the good volume of well presented work in all age groups. Equally, through activities such as the 'kindness tree' they recognise strengths in others and in themselves. Students respond well to the high expectations of staff and consistent behaviour management. This, alongside improved self-esteem, and gains in numeracy, literacy and basic computer skills, enables them to face the future with optimism. Often for the first time in their lives, they are making a positive contribution to the community through activities such as making bat boxes, planting trees in the locality and creating an allotment. Work towards the Healthy Schools Award alongside a wide variety of physical activities gives students a good understanding of keeping healthy and safe.

Attendance is improving, with the unit having surpassed its target for the past two years and some students achieving 100%. Despite a range of strategies to encourage attendance, a few students in Key Stage 4 have sporadic attendance, more so since their age group has been relocated.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students in all age groups learn at a good rate because teaching is consistently good. Inclusion support workers and youth workers continue to be a strength of the unit, especially in promoting personal development. Staff have taken part in a wide range of training and this is evident in their practice. Lessons are purposeful, brisk and stimulating, with well thought out activities where students are expected to take responsibility for their learning. In consequence, students who have needed much adult support in the past become independent learners. Most students have a reluctance to write because of previous problems. As a result of the focus on literacy in

all subjects, students improve their vocabulary, spelling and sentence structure. This is especially so in science. On the odd occasion where teaching was not quite so effective, the tasks changed too quickly and teachers were too directive, so students did not have time to digest all the information, or give as much input as they would have liked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is relevant and tailored to students' needs in all age groups. The match to the mainstream school curriculum in Key Stages 2 and 3 leads to smooth transfer. Links with neighbourhood schools contribute considerably to the provision and achievement in science and mathematics for older students. The range of qualifications and a good work-related learning programme enable students in Key Stage 4 to gain the skills necessary for life out of school. Very good enrichment programmes with the youth workers add well to students' personal development. As at the time of the last inspection, the buildings remain inadequate for older students. While the refurbishment of some of the sites has started, there is still a lot to be done. Nevertheless, though in temporary accommodation, displays are of a high quality and support learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Though the buildings for older students present numerous problems, including restricting the numbers on roll, procedures to protect and safeguard all students are good. Effective links with a number of professionals enable students to make changes in their lives. Students are encouraged to stay healthy, and the 'smoking cessation programme' has worked for a number of students and staff. The recording of achievement for behaviour and academic gains in each student's assessment and recording profile (PARP) is particularly successful and contributing to progress. Managers have worked hard to encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning. As a result, over two thirds of parents now attend meetings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and good direction for this complex unit. Equally, teachers in charge of each of the age groups lead and manage the key stages very well. Effective channels of communication ensure that all are well informed. Leadership, however, is not sufficiently distributed and there is no deputy or assistant headteacher to support strategic management. The unit receives good direction from the management committee. The committee is successfully planning for the new requirements, set to take place in January. The unit improvement plan is a force for change, driving the provision and its effectiveness forward. This is an outward looking unit, and links with numerous agencies and schools, particularly the headteacher of the co-located primary school, are beneficial to all parties.

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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	4
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	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

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

As you know, Mrs Thomas and I spent a short time working in the unit. Thank you for talking to us and helping us with our work. We were really impressed by the way you are coping with the upheaval of moving sites and rooms so often.

The unit is a good school. Here are some of the things we particularly liked.

- Most of you make good improvement in your attitude, behaviour and attendance, which helps many of you go back to mainstream schools.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 work extremely well with pupils in the joint primary school.
- Older students gain a range of qualifications and most go on to further education or training.
- Good teaching and good guidance from the adults in the unit help you make good progress in lessons and in your social skills.

These are the things we have asked your teachers and managers to do.

- Help you make better progress in information communication technology.
- Ensure that there are enough places to accommodate students who need a few months at the unit to get back on track.
- Make sure the wonderful plans for the buildings and equipment are carried out.

Finally, where some of you can make a difference.

- Improve the attendance of those of you in Key Stage 4 who take too much time off.

We wish you well for the future.