

PACE

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 104757 |
| Local Authority | St Helens |
| Inspection number | 324098 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 September 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Eric Craven HMI |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Pupil referral unit |
| School category | Pupil referral unit |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 32 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Karen Prescott |
| Headteacher | Margaret Simpson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 October 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Derbyshire Hill Road St Helens Merseyside WA9 2LH |
| Telephone number | 01744 677175 |
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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

PACE provides part-time places for up to three terms for primary age pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which put them at risk of exclusion. Currently there are four pupils at the Key Stage 2 base although this has a rolling programme of further admissions planned. There are also three nurture groups attached to primary schools which provide for 28 pupils presently, mainly from Key Stage 1 but with a few from Reception classes and from Key Stage 2. Although the pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream school they spend part of the week at PACE or their nurture group and the rest of the time back in their mainstream class with some support from PACE staff. Around 65% are entitled to free school meals. All the pupils are of White British heritage. All have been assessed as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities although only a very small number have a statement of special educational need. A review of the local authority's pupil referral units has taken place and options for re-organisation are being considered.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of PACE is good and some aspects of its work are outstanding. When the pupils arrive most are below the educational standards expected of boys and girls of a similar age nationally. This is most often because their troubled educational histories have inhibited their learning. At PACE they flourish and make good progress because the barriers to their learning are largely removed. Their behaviour and attitudes improve because they are taught how to control their anger and frustrations. The rewards they can earn mean a lot to them and so they work hard to gain these. Their successes help them realise, sometimes for the first time, that they can achieve and as a consequence their confidence and self-esteem improve.

Staff are outstandingly good at caring and supporting the pupils who, in turn, value the respect staff show to them. As a consequence they trust staff. These good relationships are capitalised upon in lessons and in the successful management of pupils' behaviour. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Thorough assessments mean staff have a comprehensive knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Individual targets are set to improve behaviour and the pupils are well aware of these. In Key Stage 2, however, lesson planning does not consistently have sufficient focus on learning outcomes and this hinders pupils' understanding of what they are expected to achieve in a lesson. The pupils say they enjoy their time at PACE and this is supported by the comments of parents who also recognise the good progress they make. Pupils' enjoyment is confirmed by their attendance, which is good in comparison to pupils in many other pupil referral units. A focus on healthy living and physical activity is reaping rewards as pupils become more aware of how they can best look after themselves. Regular and effective communication with staff from primary schools helps to ensure the PACE curriculum complements what the pupils are taught at their primary schools and forms a coherent whole for them.

Leadership and management are good because PACE is most often successful in achieving its aim of reintegrating pupils into their primary schools. The teacher in charge has developed an effective team of staff with a common purpose, who apply the agreed systems consistently well. The unit is an integral part of the local authority's Inclusion Support Service (ISS) and its work has contributed to the very low level of permanent exclusions in St Helens. The ISS service plan is used by PACE as its own strategic plan. However, for use as a school improvement plan, this is insufficiently detailed and is not focussed enough on improving the achievements of the pupils at PACE. Data is used effectively at an individual pupil level but is not used sufficiently well at a whole-centre level to check on pupils' progress and to help form priorities for further action.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Three pupils from Reception classes are taught in nurture groups alongside pupils from Key Stage 1. Because the staff devise individual programmes for the children and draw upon the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum as well as the National Curriculum they are able to meet their needs well. They make good progress overall and particularly good progress in their personal development. Their learning is well monitored and good quality records are kept to check how they are getting on. The nurture groups, which include the provision for the Reception age children, are well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve short term planning at Key Stage 2 in order to improve pupils' understanding of what they should achieve in lessons.
- Make better use of data at a whole-centre level to check on pupils' progress.
- Prepare a specific improvement plan for PACE, focused upon raising pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils make markedly good progress in learning how to control their behaviour and in developing learning readiness skills such as turn-taking, choosing, concentration and resilience. This puts them in a good position to learn and overall they make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Subsequently, many are at about the nationally expected average level by the time they are ready to return to full-time mainstream classes. A few achieve even better than this although some do remain below this level. Virtually all pupils from the nurture groups successfully return full-time to their mainstream classes. Indeed of the 67 pupils since 2004 to have returned full-time only two have not sustained their education in mainstream schools. At Key Stage 2 around 65% of the pupils in the past few years have returned full-time to their primary schools with most of the others moving on to special schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The aim of PACE is to ameliorate the pupils' social, emotional and behaviour problems. It is largely successful in achieving this aim. The excellent quality of care and support provided and consistent and clear systems to modify behaviour are coupled with regular opportunities to discuss with the pupils their anxieties and frustrations. These help the pupils improve their education. Pupils learn about how to work with others and this substantially enhances their chances of achieving economic well-being later in life. They play their part in the PACE community by taking on helper roles. Their awareness of other communities and cultures is good. They raise funds for charitable causes, such as Water Aid, and they have learned about the plight of others from a contact with a teacher in Uganda.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some aspects outstanding. Praise is used extremely well to help the pupils understand when they have been successful. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Pupils benefit from the regular opportunities they have to use literacy and numeracy computer programs which are well matched to their levels of ability. The senior learning assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. They work in close collaboration with teachers and are insightful in providing as much support as necessary whilst encouraging pupils to work as independently as possible. Planning in the nurture groups is of good quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is judiciously organised to ensure pupils do not fall behind in their academic studies whilst they are developing the skills and attitudes they need to help them learn. The curriculum suitably draws on the areas of learning from the EYFS curriculum and the core National Curriculum subjects along with personal, social and health education, physical education and ICT. This allows teachers to provide a broad and interesting programme of work. The pupils' individual education plans, which map out their next areas of learning, are helpful documents which are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to be well matched to the pupils' abilities and needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Due concern is given to the pupils' health and safety and statutory requirements are met for checking the suitability of staff. Staff know the pupils very well and their care for them is tangible. They celebrate the smallest of steps forward a pupil makes as if he or she was their own child. There are excellent working relationships with partners from the ISS in assessing pupils' needs and in providing appropriate additional support where this is needed. Communication with primary schools is frequent and effective.

Communication with parents is particularly good in the nurture groups as parents and staff meet on a daily basis. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in their reviews where this is feasible. They understand their behaviour targets and how they are progressing because the staff give feedback to pupils on how they are doing throughout the day.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Staff have a very clear understanding of their shared aim, which is to remove the barriers to the pupils' learning. The headteachers of three primary schools, which host the nurture groups are very positive about how these barriers are being removed; they value PACE greatly. The unit generally knows its strengths and weaknesses because it takes soundings from parents, pupils and other people who are involved with it. It also benefits from the self-evaluation work of ISS as a whole. The teacher in charge monitors the quality of teaching and learning effectively on an individual teacher basis, but could make better use of this information as a whole to determine how to improve the quality of teaching further. Because PACE staff support pupils during their time each week in their mainstream classes they make a valuable contribution in influencing the work of their colleagues in mainstream schools. Data is beginning to be collated at a whole-unit level but this is not yet at a point where it can be analysed and interrogated.

The management committee has fairly recently been reformed and is developing rapidly. It oversees the work of the ISS as a whole rather than PACE discretely. There are advantages in this approach, such as having a wide ranging and committed membership and the committee being able to see how the various components of the ISS interface and provide a continuum of support to pupils and schools. Members appropriately question the reports they are presented with and some visits are made to PACE to get an on-the-ground view of its work and

effectiveness. Nevertheless, the drawback to this model is that it does not always provide PACE with enough of the direct support and challenge it needs.

Because of the success rates in returning pupils to mainstream education and the positive influence PACE staff have in working with primary schools its value for money is good. Its capacity to improve further is also good because it knows itself well, has dealt with the areas for improvement from the last inspection and has proven it can take steps forward in increasing the reintegration of pupils into their mainstream schools.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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/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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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**

Inspection of PACE, St Helens, WA9 2LH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I recently visited your Key Stage 2 base and the nurture groups. I would particularly like to thank the pupils with whom I met and who willingly gave me their views.

I have judged that PACE is doing a good job and a few of the things it does are excellent. It is very successful in helping you overcome your difficulties and get back into your primary school classes full-time. It does this well because it helps you learn how to do very important things such as sharing, choosing, listening carefully, thinking about others and behaving well. Well done to you for learning these things – keep it up! The staff care for you greatly and the support and help they give you impressed me a lot. The quality of teaching is good and I was pleased to see you using the computers so well to develop your reading and number skills. I like the way that the staff help you when you need it but are also keen to encourage you to work on your own as well. The staff talk to the teachers in the primary schools a lot and this helps them carefully plan the work they give you to do so that you are not repeating work you have already done in school. It is clear that you enjoy your time at PACE and those of you I met with told me that as well. I am pleased that you have learned about keeping healthy – this is really important. Mrs Simpson manages what goes on in the Key Stage 2 base and the nurture groups well and she is helped by the staff, who are all clear about what they have to do.

I have asked Mrs Simpson to do a few things to make PACE even better. Firstly, the teachers' plans for your lessons in the Key Stage 2 base could include targets for you to achieve each lesson. Secondly, the information the staff have about the progress you are making could be used more to check on what's going well and what's not. Finally, PACE needs to make clearer plans for what it is going to improve next.

Thank you all once again and you have my best wishes for your futures.