

The Pupil Referral Service, Peterborough

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110601 |
| Local Authority | City of Peterborough |
| Inspection number | 325177 |
| Inspection date | 30 April 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | George Derby |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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) | 91 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Headteacher | Mr Paul Copping |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 May 2006 |
| School address | The Old CourtHouse High Street Old Fletton Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE2 8EW |
| Telephone number | 01733 452 667 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspection of the service evaluated its overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues:

- the service's assessment, tracking and target setting systems and how they support whole service self-evaluation
- how leaders at all levels monitor and have an impact on improvement in their subjects and aspects of the service's work
- how the management committee monitors the service's effectiveness and holds it to account.

Other aspects of the service's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the service'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 Pupil Referral Service (PRS) is a large and complex organisation spread across seven centres in Peterborough. Managed by teachers-in-charge, the centres provide support for students who, in the main, have been excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. They help students across four key stages and the service also provides ward teaching at the local hospital as well as a range of mental health support. Although able to take pupils from the age of five years, the service does not admit children who are eligible for Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The PRS also manages the Year 11 Learning Education and Achievement Partnership (LEAP), located at, and operated jointly with, Perkins Engines.

Some students are dual registered and educated part time at a PRS centre and the remainder of the time on programmes organised by their mainstream school. The service also supports a large number of students who attend mainstream school who are not on its roll, as part of its outreach programme. As a result of their past experiences and often disrupted patterns of education, students' attainment on entry is very low and their personal skills are poor. Some students have a statement of special educational needs, often acquired while registered with the service, and most are awaiting a place at another school.

The service has an Activemark award and LEAP / Perkins partnership won a 'Big Tick' business and community award in 2007 for the training partnership.

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

This is a good service which has a positive impact on increasing its students' life chances. This is because the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff have created an ethos of high expectations which are shared by all staff across the service and centres. The result is a very calm and productive working atmosphere with students who are keen to do their very best. All staff are highly aware of the negative effects of students' previous experiences which include: low achievement; restricted access to education because of negative behaviour; high risk and unsafe activities; and poor health outcomes. The service and centres clearly counter all of these and provide a good programme of activities which makes a positive improvement in all respects. The excellent support and guidance for their personal development, coupled with the outstanding range of physical activities, including the measures taken to eliminate substance abuse, result in students' excellent awareness of how to keep healthy and a good understanding of how to stay safe. These aspects are especially supported through the centres' effective personal, social and health education programme, which also accredits their good skills in contributing to their own community through the school council. The service's systems to safeguard students meet government requirements. A significant feature is the way the service changes students' attitudes to life and learning for the better and puts them on the right track for the future. Some students have made a remarkable transformation in a matter of months. Students are positive about the service's work and the way they are supported by staff. They say they now enjoy learning because the classes are small and staff are understanding. As a result, relationships are excellent. The service's 'jewels in the crown' are the exceptional provision at LEAP with its vast range of vocational opportunities and the excellent support for students' mental health through its provision at child and adolescent services.

Partnership with parents is good and they are seen as key contributors in helping the students with their particular needs. Positive and negative features of students' personal development are frequently fed back to parents so they too can take any action, if needed, to support their child. Parents too are supported by staff as evident in the comment, '...the help offered to my son and myself has been fantastic'. Another praised staff's knowledge of students' needs by saying, '...my son is much happier and has become more confident in himself...if it wasn't for the care and understanding of the teachers I don't think my son would be able to get back to mainstream so quickly'. Excellent partnerships with local companies, schools and training establishments ensure a wealth of vocational and learning opportunities and excellent support for transfer to local school, work or college. Overall, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life and most sustain their future placements well. Students achieve well, personally and academically, because they are highly supported, have clear sight of the goals that they want to achieve, and because the quality of teaching is good. Achievement across the centres is generally good and excellent through the LEAP programme and for mental health outcomes. However, the service is aware that, although students make satisfactory progress in writing in the primary provision, their achievement is not as good as in other subjects. Some students achieve academic standards close to their mainstream peers and some exceed these, such as a Year 11 student who achieved 11 GCSE passes last year. Academic standards improve over the time that students are in the centres but are well below average overall. In vocational qualifications students clearly excel, with some gaining a vast range. Assessment is generally precise, regular and informs teachers' planning. Systems and procedures have improved well since the last inspection and academic guidance is good. The service has a good range of ways of assessing and gathering information about students on entry, although it often has to

make extensive requests to obtain some background information. Activities build knowledge, skills and understanding in small steps, to boost students' confidence and ensure they are on the right track. Occasionally, though, there are missed opportunities in lessons to take bigger leaps, and so some students are learning faster than others.

Nevertheless, the courses to be undertaken and the levels students are to achieve are well considered and activities matched effectively to their aptitudes and abilities. Students are well on track to reach their longer term, challenging, academic goals. These, and their personal targets, are reviewed regularly and adjusted so that students' learning does not stand still and they are precisely informed, through the weekly tutoring system, of the next steps. Similarly, in lessons the guidance and advice is carefully provided so as to inspire and motivate students, often getting them to think and reflect, but also challenging them to do things for themselves. In one instance during the inspection, a student who lacked confidence to try something out was given extremely careful support by a teaching assistant. This resulted in a 'Eureka moment' of discovery by her and grateful thanks to the adult for the help given. Highly competent teaching assistants provide excellent role models for students, especially where some, too, are learning alongside the students. Work is marked regularly but sometimes there are missed opportunities to inform students through written comments on how they might improve.

Learning is fun and students like being at the centres. They settle quickly and know precisely what is expected of them. Attendance is satisfactory overall and the great majority of students show significant increase in attendance at the centres' full time programmes from very low levels previously. Because 'ground rules' are laid down so clearly, students meet these expectations and learn that they are there to support the harmonious community which is clearly established in each centre. This, and the service's outreach work across the authority, contributes to effective community cohesion. Students behave well and the occasional disagreement or non-compliance is dealt with very effectively by skilled staff. As a result, exclusions are minimal and students' access to learning is maximised. There is a great onus on students to take responsibility for their own learning and to gain independent skills so they are able to take advantage of learning opportunities in the future. As a result, students concentrate well and also are encouraged to work and learn from one another. Questioning is probing and is used particularly effectively to find out what students know before a new unit of work is tackled.

Students do well because the leadership and management of the centres and the service overall is effective. The headteacher and senior staff have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Information from systems to check the provision feed well into the service plan and to the challenging targets that are set. There is a clear vision for the future of the service and the headteacher has shown great resilience in the way he, with the senior staff, has responded to requests by the local authority for changes to the service's approach. Some of this has inevitably slowed its ability to re-integrate students because some placements have stretched over a longer term than expected. However, re-integration is a central feature and effective. Changes within the local authority and local school provision are now enabling the flow in and out of the centres to increase to the good levels previously achieved. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the service is well placed to improve further.

The procedures for monitoring the work of each centre are effective overall, although the work at the LEAP provision and the mental health support are checked exceptionally well to ensure that the outcomes meet the levels and targets set. The outreach support to mainstream schools is a much valued provision, with high levels of school requests and requests through the local

authority placement panel. However, opportunities are missed to ensure that the schools' views are formally gathered and fed back into the service's self-evaluation systems.

Each centre is effectively monitored, especially to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently at least good, the curriculum matches student's needs and that their access to full time education is assured. The local authority is currently addressing the provision for a very few students whose dual registered provision is not yet full time because the programme additional to PRS is not fully in place. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and monitor teaching, the curriculum and its planning effectively. As a result, the curriculum is effective and meets all needs well. However, the leaders operate largely within each centre and there is little opportunity to share good practice across the service.

Students' progress both academically and personally are tracked satisfactorily, although much of this is paper-based which does not make analysis easy. For students whose academic progress is much slower than the rest, the systems are not always sensitive enough to measure small but significant steps. An electronic system is currently being completed. This is designed to enable swift collection and analysis of data across a range of indicators that have been carefully chosen to assess the service's effectiveness. However, the development of the service's information and communication technology (ICT) provision to support administration, teaching and learning has been inhibited by many unresolved technical problems.

Members of the recently re-constituted management committee bring a wealth of expertise to the service and are clear about their role in monitoring and evaluating the service's effectiveness. Most are new to the committee and have responded promptly by visiting the centres to find out about their work. The headteacher provides them with comprehensive information about the service's work and its achievements but, because they are still assimilating information, they are not yet in a position to hold the service fully to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the proposed improvements in ICT to strengthen the tracking and analysis of student's progress, to provide a wider range of ways of evaluating the performance of the service and to support teaching and learning.
- Ensure that those with responsibility for subjects are able to share good practice across the centres and that the members of the management committee speedily develop their knowledge and skills to support and challenge the service.

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 |

Achievement and standards

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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

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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 | 1 |
| 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

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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? | 2 |

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 | 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 | 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**

1 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Pupil Referral Service, Peterborough, PE2 8EW

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us during the inspection and letting us see your work. We were impressed with the calm atmosphere in each centre and how you were working hard and concentrating well. The Pupil Referral Service is a good one, and you told us of how you were 'aiming high' to reach your personal goals, including for many, a return to a mainstream school. You were clear on what made the centres an enjoyable place for you. You said that personal attention by staff who understand your needs, working in a small group and a range of really enjoyable activities, including yoga, sport and sailing and work related learning were the main features. We agree!

Mr Copping and the senior staff have high expectations of you and this pays off. Because they clearly set out the 'ground rules' you know what you should do and how to behave. Behaviour is good in the centres and it was good to see how much your attendance has also improved. Well done!

We have asked Mr Copping to make the service even better by:

- using ICT to track and analyse your progress, checking better on how good the service is and using computers to support teaching and your learning in lessons
- asking those with responsibilities within the centres to share what is good with others in the service and for the members of the new management committee to develop skills and knowledge to help the service be even more effective.

Good luck for the future.

George Derby

Lead inspector