

Fountain House

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117703
Local Authority	Kingston-upon-Hull
Inspection number	326665
Inspection date	22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Mel Blackband

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	25
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Michael Melvin
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Fountain Road Hull HU2 0LH
Telephone number	01482 226166
Fax number	01482 609806

Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provides for pupils who have experienced significant difficulties in coping in mainstream schools. The roll is unstable because during an academic year, as many as 100 pupils may attend the unit for varying lengths of time. A third of pupils are dual registered with their mainstream schools. Other pupils in Year 10 have been permanently excluded from one school and will move to another school in the city. A small number of pupils in Year 11 who have been excluded, remain at the unit as do all other pupils who have been excluded twice from mainstream schools. A third of the pupils are girls and the pupils are almost all of White British origin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Fountain House PRU has made excellent progress since the previous inspection in improving the quality of provision for its pupils. It provides an outstanding quality of education. All the pupils achieve well and the majority make outstanding progress. This has been achieved through the impact of work by the staff to improve the curriculum, teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers effectively record each step in the pupils' learning and, as a result, the pupils' learning targets are focused and relevant. This leads to very clear and specific planning of activities for each pupil in each lesson. Teachers make sure that the pupils fully understand how well they are doing and how to improve still further. This has resulted in pupils demonstrating extremely positive attitudes to learning and consequently, achieving very well.

Personal development is exemplary. Once in the unit pupils quickly gain much more confidence in their ability to learn, sometimes after a long history of failure at previous schools. The pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Teaching is outstanding because teachers throughout the unit very successfully adapt learning activities to the differing abilities and interests of the pupils. Lessons are made interesting and often fun. The pupils, many of whom enter the unit with very negative attitudes to schools and learning, very quickly regain their motivation to make academic progress and this has a profound impact on their academic achievements. The excellent curriculum provision is enriched by well planned opportunities to interact with the community and by very good programmes in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. There is outstanding provision for older pupils to learn work-related skills and the pupils are motivated by a variety of opportunities to prepare themselves for college or further training when they reach the end of Year 11.

The pupils value what the unit offers them. They are very well cared for and they develop excellent relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy coming to the unit and this is clear from the outstanding attendance of the great majority of pupils and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere found within the unit. The great strength of the PRU's effectiveness is shown in the pupils' exceptional gains in their personal development. Very quickly, the pupils respond to the exemplary levels of support in which the PRU excels. This support enables the pupils to regain confidence in their own ability and in their personal skills. Parents without exception are pleased for their children to attend, knowing they will be well looked after and that the unit staff have high expectations of their success. One parent's comment was typical, 'His whole attitude to learning is transformed. He is eager to attend and has made strong relationships with staff.'

The headteacher has led the unit outstandingly well. Under his management and, supported by a strong senior team, the unit has continued to move forward since the previous inspection. The management committee is very supportive and has provided a good standard of strategic leadership. The PRU evaluates its own work very effectively and there are excellent procedures for development planning. For instance, the PRU's leaders have evaluated that they could streamline tracking systems further to provide them with even better information about pupils' progress. The unit provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further refine the already good recording systems to help the PRU's leaders to more quickly gain an overview of pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The pupils' attainment on entry to the unit is generally well below average. Once in the unit, however, pupils quickly improve their attitudes to learning. As a result, most pupils make spectacular progress, particularly in improving their reading and mathematical skills. Many pupils, for instance, improve their reading age scores by as much as three years in a matter of a few weeks. Most pupils remain at the unit for about six weeks and in that time catch up with the performance of pupils in mainstream schools. This enables pupils in Year 10 to return to mainstream education with confidence and with a very high rate of successful reintegration.

The pupils in Year 11 who remain at the unit make equally impressive gains and most go on to achieve the highest grades in Entry Level qualifications. A few pupils with higher ability will, this year, be entered for GCSE. This very high level of achievement is made possible through the exceptional strides the pupils make in their self-confidence. They quickly start to believe that they can succeed in school work and this gives them the motivation to do their best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' excellent progress in personal development reflects their understanding of the PRU's emphasis on moral and social values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. When pupils first enter the unit, their attitudes to authority and to other pupils are often negative and challenging. Many examples were observed, however, during the inspection where pupils supported and encouraged others. The pupils behave outstandingly well and usually have a smile on their face and a spring in their step.

The pupils develop a strong awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities to take part in physical activity during the day and through their experiences of growing their own vegetables on the PRU's allotment. This very popular activity also helps the pupils to understand the importance of team work with other pupils. Older pupils make very good gains in acquiring life skills through effective careers provision and work experience. In summer 2008, for example, all the pupils in Year 11 left to take up opportunities in further education, employment or training. Pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them within the calm and supportive atmosphere. The attendance of most pupils is excellent because they love to be there. Pupils were emphatic that they felt free from bullying or unpleasantness and that they now really looked forward to learning. Parents were unanimous in their unqualified praise for the unit and its impact on their children's lives. As one parent wrote of their son, 'He has flourished at Fountain House.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers know their pupils well and this enables them to plan interesting well paced lessons. Lessons proceed with clear objectives and pupils receive instant feedback on their performance. A major strength of teaching is the quality of personal tuition and support which all pupils receive. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers mark and assess pupils' work very effectively. As a result, they are able to plan challenging activities for each pupil, so enabling them often to make outstanding progress. Pupils understand and respond

to clear routines and their behaviour and punctuality is exceptionally good. When a pupil's behaviour is occasionally unacceptable it is dealt with calmly and with support for the pupil involved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is well balanced and matched appropriately to the work pupils would do in mainstream schools. This helps the pupils to return successfully to these schools. The pupils' learning activities have been very well adapted to their abilities and aptitudes, thus enabling every pupil to enjoy learning and to make progress very quickly. There is a clear and successful emphasis on developing the pupils' skills in English and mathematics. The pupils enhance their learning through a range of extra activities, such as gardening. This adds to their enjoyment and their achievement.

There are very good arrangements for vocational and work-related learning. Pupils have a very wide range of opportunities to develop skills off-site and in the PRU, for example, through courses in food hygiene and preparation which have enabled several pupils to start careers in catering.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The PRU ensures that all pupils are safeguarded to a very high standard. Pupils have many opportunities to talk to adults because all staff stay on duty throughout the day. There are very supportive relationships. The pupils have an excellent understanding of their academic and personal targets. Teachers discuss with the pupils how well they have done on each piece of work. The pupils are helped to assess their own efforts and they understand clearly how to improve their work and how to reach the next challenging target. Those pupils who return to mainstream schools are very well prepared for the transition and receive very strong support from the unit's staff in the first few weeks of their return. Year 11 pupils receive very good advice from careers specialists as they get ready to leave the provision. Because of this support, most pupils leave the unit with positive plans to access further education, employment or training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

As a result of the excellent procedures for assessment and the effective tracking, the management team retain a very good overview of pupils' achievements. This enables them to ensure that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities and that their targets are both relevant and challenging. One of the unit's many strengths is in the rigorous and effective way managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of both the unit's performance and the pupils' achievements. The management committee provides good support. Members are successfully developing rigorous monitoring procedures to audit the unit's strengths and areas for development.

Morale within the PRU is very high. Staff members feel fully consulted, involved and valued. There are excellent procedures to manage and improve their performance and to ensure that

the excellent range of further training for staff is closely linked to plans for the PRUs continuing improvement.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

23 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fountain House, Kingston-upon-Hull, HU2 0LH

Not long ago I came to the PRU to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the provision better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classrooms and on my guided tour of the allotment.

I was only with you for one day but that was long enough for me to realise that Fountain House provides you with an outstanding education. I could see that you all enjoy being there very much. I liked many things. Here are a few.

- You work hard and make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development. Your behaviour is outstanding and shows what excellent progress you have made in a very short space of time since you came to the PRU.
- All the adults at the school look after and support you very well.
- You have an excellent range of activities which prepare you to return to a mainstream school and those activities which prepare you for further training or education when you leave at the end of Year 11.
- Your teachers help you to do as well as you can by giving you ambitious targets to aim for but also by supporting you all the way, as you try to reach them.
- Your headteacher runs the PRU extremely well. Everyone else, including your parents, gives him good support.

I think the PRU could improve even further and I have asked the staff to make it easier and quicker to see how well you are making progress.

You can help of course by continuing to try your best at all times.

Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector