

St David's Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130991
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	328543
Inspection date	1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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)	23
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Stephen Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Coningsby Street Hereford HR1 2DY
Telephone number	01432 274485
Fax number	01432 351695

Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St David's is a centre for students with a wide range of difficulties that prevent them from attending a mainstream school. These range from fear of attending school and mental health issues to, for the majority, difficulties with behaviour and often substance abuse. Most have additional learning difficulties. Many students have been permanently excluded from their previous schools and have spent considerable time away from school with very poor records of attendance. About half of all students arrive during the school year into both year groups, doubling the number on roll by the end of each year. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The headteacher was seconded to the local authority behaviour support team for two years during which time the unit was led by the deputy headteacher. The headteacher returned to his post at the beginning of September 2008, three weeks before the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St David's is an outstanding centre. It is transformational in the lives of the majority of its students fulfilling very well its central aim of preparing them for meaningful inclusion in adult life. It is very successful in working extremely hard to reach young people and changing their attitudes to themselves, to others and to learning. They make outstanding progress in their subjects and courses. Most students leave with a range of qualifications and go on to further education or employment. This results from outstanding teaching, leadership and management. A highly skilled and dedicated team provide exceptionally good guidance and support for students. Every lesson and each of the courses they take are planned specifically to meet their level of achievement, interests and different learning needs.

Students enjoy their time at the centre and this is particularly evident when so many of them regularly return to visit, once they have left, to say how much they appreciate the help given. The high quality, attractive environment plays a significant part in helping students to feel valued. They respond with excellent behaviour, respecting their surroundings and the people around them. For this reason students feel very safe and act very safely within the centre. Parents think highly of the centre expressing their appreciation with comments such as 'Our child is making good progress and always arrives home positive and looking forward to the next day.' Staff have developed a truly innovative approach towards the excellent curriculum which is developed within a framework of the 'St David's Award'. This enables students to link their personal, social and learning skills with their achievements and relate these to the world of work. They gradually begin to realise that their habits, attitudes and behaviour each and every day are closely linked to their future success. This leads to outstanding personal development and contributes substantially to their excellent preparation for their future lives. Subjects are planned in very thorough detail with one exception. The leadership recognises that the way information and communication technology (ICT) is organised does not ensure that all students receive a balanced range of essential ICT skills. There is nevertheless some skilled teaching of this subject.

Leadership has maintained the high quality of outcomes for students over some considerable time despite the changing nature and significantly increased difficulties of the students they take in. Constant evaluation to keep improving each aspect of the provision ensures that students continue to receive the best possible care and education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan the ICT curriculum to ensure that all students develop a balanced range of skills in this subject.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Attainment on entry and standards are well below national averages due to the nature of students' learning difficulties. Almost all students demonstrate at least good progress in their subjects and courses and a high proportion of students of all abilities make outstanding progress in the key subjects of literacy, numeracy and science. Students achieve several qualifications, which include English, mathematics and science at levels well above those predicted by their attainment on entry. They also make very good progress with the centre's own St David's Award, whereby they demonstrate the essential skills necessary for engaging successfully in adult life.

Several students also achieve a sports leader qualification, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and art GCSE. A high proportion of students go on to further education or employment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students show significant improvement in every area of their personal development. They clearly enjoy coming to the centre and most significantly improve their attendance and behaviour from their levels in their previous school. They are closely involved in setting and evaluating their own behaviour targets. A small minority do not attend regularly, reflecting the turmoil in their lives. Students show a mature attitude to developing the skills they need for the future and these are substantial. For example they annually run a Young Enterprise company, which is of such high quality that they continually win awards in competition with sixth forms and schools. They are regularly the only students in presentations who speak without notes in finals. In addition, they contribute significantly to the school and local community, through their activities such as a musical performance to local people, through extensive charitable work, for example serving lunch to the elderly, and by helping in primary schools. Students respond well to the many activities provided by the centre to help them lead more healthy lives. Their involvement in sport is particularly good and the centre has noticed a recent increase in the energy levels of students as a result.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There is a calm and very pleasant atmosphere in classrooms. Teachers are highly skilled in organising and managing lessons to get the best out of sometimes reluctant or disturbed students. Almost all teaching is at least good and it is consistently outstanding in the core subjects of English and mathematics. As a result of thorough and careful assessment, lessons are very well planned to meet students' different needs so that they progress rapidly within lessons. In one lesson students made very good progress as they experimented on the sugar content of food. The relaxed and supportive relationships resulted in excellent behaviour and good humour where students felt comfortable trying out their ideas. Lessons have improved recently so that they are fast paced with an improved variety of activities, thus helping students to remain interested and highly focused. Students are involved very well in understanding what they must do to improve their own learning and can take practice tests on the computer to follow their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is planned in great detail to help each individual student follow their interests and aptitudes both academically and personally. The inspirational St David's Award provides the structure through which students can relate to a whole range of activities connected to their future success. These include an outstanding array of visits, visitors and activities all planned to develop essential skills and understanding further. From finance and first aid, to theatre and the frequent activities to encourage understanding of the different beliefs and cultures of others, students receive a very rich and varied diet. They regularly cook their own lunch, for example, and on the day of the inspection had been making seats in a local wood.

Many lessons are linked by themes that change each half term to keep students motivated. The centre values the development of skills in ICT highly and these are well taught in all subjects and are linked closely to achieving the St David's Award. Nevertheless this is not well planned or tracked to ensure that each student has the opportunity to develop the full range of skills in ICT. Provision for developing work-related skills is exceptionally good. There is extensive, flexible and very well supported work experience, including mock interviews and many courses, some off site, to give students a taste of different jobs such as hairdressing and catering.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures to safeguard students are robust. The centre considers a major part of its work to be turning around previously poor behaviour and attendance. Systems to address these areas are very detailed and, for a large majority of students, are very effective. Parents are involved well in this process. High quality liaison links the work of many agencies such as social services, mental health services and the Youth Offending Team. This provides a very effective joined up approach to keeping students safe and meeting their many needs. The centre employs their own counsellor and runs a mentoring programme to support this external agency work which has helped some of the students significantly, for example in addressing substance abuse. Detailed systems to assess and monitor students' progress and set them challenging targets are outstanding and ensure that they make rapid progress. There is also thorough and careful guidance to help students make the right choices on leaving and successfully transfer to the next stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management have sustained some very effective personal and academic progress for students for several years, despite the headteacher's long absence. This demonstrates the strength of leadership throughout the school. Self-evaluation is very detailed and has led to many instances of continuing improvement. For example there is improved teaching, improved results in science, more students are achieving sports awards and there is an increase in the numbers achieving literacy and numeracy qualifications. The capacity to improve is excellent. The management committee has a limited remit and makes a limited contribution, but its role is currently being further developed. The leadership has been effective in promoting community cohesion, not least through increasing students' understanding of themselves and increasing their respect for the beliefs and values of others. In addition students are provided with the same opportunities for success as other young people, helping them to play a useful part in everyday life when they leave.

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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	4
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	2
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	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**

2 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St David's Pupil Referral Unit, Hereford, HR1 2DY

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your centre. I very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your centre is a calm and happy place to be and it is impressive to see how well you look after it. It is an outstanding centre, with some very interesting and helpful things going on, just as you described. Excellent teaching helps you to make some outstanding progress in your subjects and courses and in your social and personal skills. You do particularly well in literacy, numeracy and sport and in the skills you develop for the St David's Award.

Staff work hard to keep improving the centre. For this reason more of you are gaining important qualifications. Your work with the St David's enterprise is outstanding, showing how you have overcome often great difficulties to work well for your future. I have asked staff to plan your ICT work more carefully so that you are sure to develop all the ICT skills you will need. Maybe you would like to share your ideas about this with your teachers.

Your teachers see to it that you have an excellent range of activities to help you develop greater confidence, lots of work based experience and a better respect for the differences between people. You were keen to tell me that the unit also keeps you very safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise. Your behaviour is excellent in lessons and when you are out representing the centre.

I am also impressed with the responsibilities that you take on and how much help you give to others. You clearly enjoy coming to the unit. All these things, together with your very well developed basic skills and skills in working together, will help prepare you well for your next placement and future lives.

Yours faithfully Lead inspector Patricia Potheary