

# CEDARS Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131652
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328630
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Potheary

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	67
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynn Jackson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Fenton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 December 2005
<b>School address</b>	2 Woodland Avenue Wolstanton Newcastle under Lyme ST5 8AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 297510
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 297510

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

CEDARS is a large pupil referral unit with two Key Stage 3 sites and one Key Stage 4 site containing a total of 27 students. Two thirds of students on roll are not at these sites, but attend various colleges and training providers. Students arrive and leave throughout the key stages, a few towards the end of their secondary schooling. Most students come from areas with severe socio-economic disadvantage. A few students are dual registered and attend part time, before re-integrating into their main schools. About half of those in Key Stage 3 return to a mainstream placement. A few students have statements of special educational needs for emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, while others are permanently excluded. Most are boys. A small minority of students are looked after by various local authorities or are in foster care. The majority of students are White British with, occasionally, a very few from other ethnic groups who speak little English. CEDARS staff provide schooling at a residential adolescent psychiatric facility for students aged 11 to 18 but these remain on their school rolls.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

CEDARS is a good pupil referral unit. Students, who have all experienced difficulties at school, are helped exceptionally well to return to learning and plan successfully for their futures. Students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their academic work and demonstrate outstanding personal development. This is because the unit is well led and managed and teaching is good. When students join, they have often missed considerable schooling. By the time they leave CEDARS at 16, all students have acquired several good GCSEs or a suitable range of vocational and basic skills qualifications. Those who eventually return to mainstream school make good progress in their courses while at CEDARS. Regardless of their age or ability, all students do well in English and mathematics.

Students really enjoy their time at the unit and particularly appreciate the progress they begin to make, because they receive such good quality teaching and individual attention. Students make outstanding progress in reading because expectations of what they can achieve are high. In writing, progress is satisfactory, although students are not sufficiently involved in the setting of their individual short-term targets to be clear about exactly what they need to do to improve. This means they don't always develop key writing skills rapidly enough. New systems to set such targets are currently being trialled.

Excellent links to other agencies support the outstanding care given to ensure students' well-being. In particular, the daily mentoring and review of students progress with other providers is exceptional and secures the success of those placements. The good curriculum, with clearly agreed pathways, provides students with aspirational and successful long-term goals for their future. Some of the provision is outstanding, particularly the quality of sport and physical education (PE), which helps pupils to keep healthy. There is a new, purpose-built centre opening by September 2009 which will enhance the breadth of the curriculum offered to most students. For a small minority of students in Key Stage 3, the Biddulph base, which is not fully fit for purpose, will remain.

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the unit, especially the turn-around in their children's lives. As one reported, 'They give the children an understanding of how to improve their lives and be good contributing members of the community'. Unit leaders work ceaselessly to improve and develop provision. They have achieved a great deal recently in locating a wide range of vocationally based courses with local providers. In doing so they are able to support considerably more students. Senior staff monitor individual student achievement very carefully, but do not look closely enough at trends in progress for different groups. With the large increase in student numbers, this limits their ability to clearly identify key areas for improvement. This is recognised by management, who are already identifying ways to develop a better overview of performance.

Students develop more confidence, a renewed sense of purpose and a much better ability to contribute well to society as they experience increasing success. This is evident in the care and respect they show towards others. They also experience pleasure working in and for the community, for example, producing decorative art work, acting as sports leaders or representing the unit at a local council meeting.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of students' written work by involving them more in working towards clear, short-term targets.
- Develop a better overview of trends in performance for different groups of students, to more clearly identify key areas for improvement.
- Work closely with the local authority to ensure that facilities at the Biddulph base are fit for purpose.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Attainment on entry and standards overall are well below those found nationally owing to the nature of students' difficulties. Nevertheless, in many courses taken, the levels students reach are broadly average. In all age groups students make good progress in their subjects and courses and their achievements are better than predicted when they first arrive. Students of all abilities, including those with learning and behaviour difficulties, make equally good progress because each individual is supported so closely. In the Key Stage 3 bases most students make more than expected progress in English, mathematics and science. In addition, most students achieve one or more qualifications in key skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), by the end of Year 10. All students in the Key Stage 4 base leave with up to six GCSEs, including English, mathematics and science, which is exceptional. Students attending the recently developed college or training provision are also doing well and are on track to achieve a wide range of work-related and key skills qualifications.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

When students enter the unit they have often been absent from school, and many have serious difficulties with their behaviour, attitudes and achievements. By the time they leave the great majority go on to further education, training or employment. Students enjoy being at the unit and attendance is good, with most increasing their attendance considerably. Behaviour is outstanding. Enthusiasm for work, respect for those who are different to themselves and consideration for others is the norm for students at CEDARS. Students feel safe and behave very safely, and unkind incidents are extremely rare. Students willingly take on a good range of responsibilities in the bases and local community, including helping at a local special school and nursery. Despite this, their contribution is not outstanding because they lack sufficient opportunities to contribute their ideas to the working of the unit, for example, through a formal council. Students' preparation for their futures and the world of work is outstanding, with strong basic skills, a keen sense of what they want to do and mature approaches to working together with others. The unit's own tracking shows that almost every single ex-student, from the last 12 years, is now in gainful employment. This is a remarkable transformation in students' lives and personal development.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers' strong specialist subject knowledge enables them to plan thoroughly and take learning forward with sufficient challenge. As one student observed, 'Work is more challenging but we have more time to complete it.' Teachers are highly skilled at managing difficult behaviour and creating a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. For this reason students work hard and want to do well, and behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Teaching in PE, ICT and art is consistently outstanding across the provision and students do very well in these subjects. Although teachers assess students' skills and have an accurate view of what they can achieve, they do not involve students well in this process. For this reason students are often not clear about their own short-term targets or about the specific things they need to do to improve. This is having a particular impact in written work, where progress is slower than it is in other subjects. The exception is ICT, where students are highly motivated by very visible personal targets, with some achieving GCSEs before Year 11.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Overall the curriculum is well suited to take students' learning and personal development forward, meeting their different needs. There is an outstanding range of basic skills and vocational qualifications offered. These are well selected and really engage students' enthusiasm, often for the first time. The 'preparation for working life' qualification for Key Stage 4 students is very thorough and of high quality. The breadth of the curriculum for some groups is currently limited by a lack of suitable accommodation and specialist facilities in the bases. The new building, opening before September 2009, will fully address this problem for most students. However this is not the case for a small number of Key Stage 3 students where the remaining accommodation is unreasonably cramped, with no access to the outside during the day. In this base, there is also a lack of dignity for students and staff using the only toilet in close proximity to the teaching rooms. Unit leaders are unable to resolve this situation in the near future. Numerous trips, visits and opportunities for performance bring learning to life. This has resulted recently in some stunning art work following a trip to the seaside to see Anthony Gormley's beach statues and a visit to some woods to study Andy Goldsworthy's sculptures. Students develop a good awareness of how to keep healthy, particularly by taking part in the many tournaments and sports provided.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

All procedures to safeguard students' welfare meet requirements. The advice provided to students about the courses they should take is of high quality and is linked very closely, from the start, to information about their eventual careers. Very good procedures ensure early identification of any student concerns, especially for the most vulnerable students and those placed in care. This is supported by very effective intervention, incorporating strong links with parents and other agencies. Any issues are resolved speedily and students are very appreciative of the help they receive. The guidance to help students achieve well is good. This includes accurate assessment, the setting of challenging individual targets and very regular tracking of progress. Nevertheless staff recognise that students are not involved closely enough with this

process. The guidance to support students' personal development is outstanding. Very effective approaches to help students improve their behaviour and attendance, for example, include individual targets, daily behaviour records, self- review and regular discussion with staff. The resulting substantial improvement in behaviour and attendance provides convincing information when negotiations to move students back into mainstream school take place.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management are effectively supported by the management committee. The headteacher's achievement, in securing improved accommodation, whilst setting up such extensive college and training placements, within a short timescale, is remarkable. The long-term quality of provision is more secure. Senior leaders have also overseen many improvements. These include better teaching and assessment, increased standards in ICT, faster progress in reading and accreditation in Key Stage 3. The capacity to improve is good. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, but is based mainly upon individual student data. This is no longer appropriate with much larger student numbers. Senior leaders recognise the need for a more systematic overview, to assess trends in academic performance for different groups of students. They can see that the current system does not enable them to identify key areas for improvement quickly enough.

The unit is very successful in ensuring all students are included and succeed equally. Work to monitor and evaluate provision to support students' understanding and tolerance of people who are different to themselves is satisfactory. The promotion of such understanding is good, however. There is, for example, a most interesting link with some schools in Africa as well as local organisations, with a 'challenging assumptions' element to several parts of the curriculum. The unit has received the International Schools Award for this work.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of CEDARS Pupil Referral Unit, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 8AZ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your unit. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. It is a good unit, with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Senior staff work hard to keep developing opportunities for you and, for this reason, the standards you reach and the progress you make keep improving.

Skilled teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons. As a result, you do well in all your subjects, but particularly in reading and the qualifications you achieve. We like the way you really enjoy your work and always try to do your best. You told us that your teachers give you plenty of individual attention and we can see that they help you do as well as you can. We have, though, asked them to make sure that you make more progress in writing by involving you more in knowing what you are aiming for. We also want senior staff to pay more attention to the progress different groups of you make, so that they can see more clearly which areas need to be improved. We are sure that you will discuss this with staff and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas.

Outstanding care and support and a good curriculum help you to make excellent progress in your social and personal skills. You were keen to tell us 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, especially in the way you value learning and respect others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living. The staff do well to make up for the limited accommodation in the different bases but we have asked the unit managers to try to improve the facilities at Biddulph.

The changes you make in wanting to learn and prepare for the future are impressive, particularly in the way most of you attend every day and make so much effort in your work. It is good to know that you feel that staff take your views seriously and that you can make a difference. You clearly enjoy coming to the various centres and colleges. We think that these things, alongside your good quality basic skills and mature attitudes, will help prepare you well for the next stage of your education and careers.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary Lead inspector