

North Cornwall PRU

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134754
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	328968
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brett Elliot
Headteacher	James Smith
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2007
School address	Campus XXI The Gaia Building Delabole PL33 9DA
Telephone number	01840 213968
Fax number	01840 213834

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

North Cornwall Pupil Referral Unit provides education for students who have been excluded from their mainstream schools across a wide area in the north of Cornwall. It also supports students within mainstream schools who are at risk of being excluded. It is intended that students who have been excluded in Key Stage 3 return to mainstream education within two school terms. Students who are excluded in Key Stage 4 may remain on the centre's roll until their leaving date. Since the last inspection, the centre has limited its range of provision so that it now only provides for students who have behavioural difficulties. Following the departure of the previous headteacher, the centre is currently led by an acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed to begin in September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The North Cornwall Pupil Referral Unit provides its students with a good education. The astute leadership of the acting headteacher, with good support from the local authority, has ensured that students make good progress in their academic and personal development. Major factors in the success of the centre are the close attention paid to students' individual needs and the effective tailor-made programmes that the centre provides. Parents typically say, 'This place has been a godsend for our family. But for the people here, our son would still be out of control and going downhill. We are very grateful for all they have done.'

Students join the centre following turbulent experiences in their mainstream schools. This has led to them falling behind in attendance and in their studies, often undermining their confidence. Once they join the centre, they receive good support from the staff who treat them with care and kindness without being unduly judgemental. As one student said, 'The staff are angels. They put up with us and show they like us even when we are bad. They are pretty strict but very fair.' Parents and students have noted a significant uplift in standards of behaviour during the acting headteacher's tenure, following his development of a 'respect' agenda. This agenda has had a positive impact upon other aspects of students' personal development, for example by imposing a policy of zero tolerance for cigarettes. This has led to a number of students reducing or even stopping smoking. Through initiatives such as this, and through good reminders about diet and the need for regular exercise, students develop a good understanding about how to make healthy choices in their lives.

Students respond well to the good teaching and the interesting range of activities that the centre provides. Staff develop strong relationships with the students in the small groups, and provide them with on-the-spot assistance whenever they need it. This helps them build up confidence and resilience in learning. Students' behaviour and self-esteem improve quickly too through the effective links forged with local further education colleges. Although staff work hard to help the students, some teachers do not consistently refer to students' individual targets in lessons and in tutorials. As a result, some students do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve them quickly. The centre provides a good curriculum that suitably focuses on students' priority needs, and includes aspects that the students clearly treasure, such as helping a local farmer during lambing or the 'Dine with Me' project. Not all teachers are equally proficient at ensuring that students' basic skills are promoted in every lesson, for example by going over key vocabulary in food studies. Partnership arrangements with local schools are good and generally productive, although some students on joint programmes do not receive a full teaching programme. This holds them back from even faster achievement.

The acting headteacher has worked hard and skilfully to bring the centre unscathed through this current transitional period. He has done this with good results and has introduced some lasting improvements, especially in relation to the collection and analysis of data about students' performance. The good leadership and management mean that the centre is well placed for further improvement under the new headteacher when she arrives in September.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students receive a full timetable every week, so that they have every opportunity to make progress.

- Ensure that all students have a good understanding of their individual learning targets, so that they know how to reach them quickly.
- Ensure that all teachers take up every opportunity to promote students' basic skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the centre often with a severely disjointed educational history. Previous poor attendance at school has led to gaps in learning and inevitably, students are behind their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Although standards are just below the national average, staff at the centre do well in putting students quickly back on the road to recovering most of the lost ground. With very few exceptions, students who join the centre during Key Stage 3 successfully return to mainstream education within two terms. In Key Stage 4, students achieve good results in their examinations, and all move on to productive education, employment or training. Students make good progress in most of their subjects, and achievement in mathematics and science is particularly strong. Achievement in English and information and communication technology (ICT) is not quite so strong. The centre has been alert to this and has brought in some innovative approaches, such as the themed curriculum, that are already having a good effect. There are no discernible differences between the achievement of girls and boys. Students make sound progress against their individual learning targets, although some students do not have a clear enough understanding of what specifically they need to do in order to achieve them quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Students take good advantage of planned opportunities, particularly through the personal, social, health and citizenship programme, to reflect on their lives and actions. They develop a good understanding of the diversity of the world about them through a good range of visits and visitors. The centre's constant focus on the social and emotional aspects of learning means that students gain a good insight into what upsets them and learn how to manage their feelings. In lessons and at breaktimes, most students are able to work cooperatively in groups, motivating themselves and demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks. Students say that they feel safe in the centre, and that there is no bullying or fighting. Students like coming to the centre. This is evident in their good behaviour and much improved attendance. In Key Stage 3, students attend well but for students who join the centre in Key Stage 4 attendance, although satisfactory, is more patchy despite the best efforts of the staff. Students have opportunities to be of service within the centre, such as through the school council. Opportunities to participate within the local community are more limited because many students live some distance from the centre and there is no public transport to the nearby communities. Students are prepared well for reintegration or for the next stage by their good acquisition of basic skills, for example in literacy and numeracy, and by the good programme of work-related learning that the centre provides.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students are taught in small groups and frequently receive one-to-one support. Teachers make good use of assessment in planning their teaching, and students have good opportunities for self-assessment of both their academic and personal performance at the end of each lesson. This individualisation, close vigilance and good assessment are key reasons why students quickly learn and swiftly improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Staff know the students very well and are able to step in at just the right moment if students begin to become disheartened or upset. Relationships are respectful and positive. Teachers organise their classrooms well, with good displays of exemplary work by students, and constant reminders of the centre's behaviour code. There is a very consistent use of the reward scheme and students receive good encouragement when they have done well. Not all teachers are consistently good at identifying and taking opportunities to promote students' basic skills, for example in literacy and numeracy, in every subject.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The centre rightly prioritises the need for rapid improvement in the students' functional skills, so that they can return quickly to mainstream education or go on successfully to further education or training. Each student receives a custom-made programme tailored to meet their specific needs. Students are offered a wide range of choices of programmes off-site, particularly at Key Stage 4. There is a very effective partnership with a farm close to the centre, where students learn agricultural skills and have positive experiences such as having to respond to call-outs during lambing. The centre provides a suitable range of opportunities for students to achieve recognition for their efforts through nationally accredited programmes. This year, the centre has introduced an effective themed approach to the curriculum, involving all staff, to promote functional skills in English, mathematics, ICT, science and art. The students have participated in two very successful projects, one based on a fashion show and the other on throwing a dinner party, and students say how much they enjoyed them. Some students receive part of their teaching in mainstream schools as part of their planned programme of reintegration. However, some glitches in the organisation have meant that one or two students do not receive a full five-day programme each week, and this unnecessarily limits what they can achieve.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff come to know students very well, and provide them with affectionate, timely care at all times. Students told the inspector, 'You know they really care about us. Even though they tell us off, you can see they do it for our own good.' The centre meets all current safeguarding requirements. There is a good partnership with both parents and other agencies, such as the police and Connexions, to ensure a good package of individual personal support for students. The centre, in collaboration with education welfare officers, does its best to maintain good attendance for all students, although those coming in at Key Stage 4 have a poorer history of absence at their previous schools, and so improvement is slower. Students receive regular feedback from teachers, through marking for example, about how well they have done and what needs attention. However, there is not always a consistent emphasis on students' individual

targets during lessons and tutorials, and not all students are fully involved in devising their own learning targets. As a result, students are not always completely sure of what next steps they need to take.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has done well to maintain good progress through this transitional period. He has rightly concentrated on the development and analysis of accurate data on student performance, and this has enabled the centre to know what it does well and where further effort is required. This is demonstrated by the fact that the centre's overall judgement of its own effectiveness is in line with that of the inspection. The leadership team has yet to bring about full effectiveness in terms of the use of learning targets, and in ensuring basic skills are promoted at every opportunity. There has been good support for the leadership team throughout from the local authority, the school improvement partner and the management committee. The acting headteacher and his team have brought about palpable improvement in important areas, for example in the behaviour of students, by significantly raising the level of expectation. The centre has introduced measures such as a clear uniform policy, a ban on mobile phone use and zero tolerance of smoking. Staff effectively counter verbal abuse through the centre's 'respect' agenda. As a result of the good leadership backed up by timely external support, students have attained a good degree of personal and academic success, with a significant, measurable reduction in the incidence of unacceptable behaviour. Staff morale is high and the outlook for further improvement is very favourable. The centre has carried out a thorough audit to examine the extent to which it promotes community cohesion, and is currently implementing its action plan for improvement. The centre has good links with the schools in the local authority's 'Behaviour for Learning' partnership and has productive links with similar centres in the county, including a five-a-side football tournament for the students.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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	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**

10 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of North Cornwall Pupil Referral Unit, Delabole, Cornwall PL33 9DA

Thank you for your hospitality and welcome when I inspected your centre recently. Thanks also to the members of the school council who came and spoke to me about the good things that the centre provides. Please thank your mums and dads for filling in the questionnaires and for taking the time to meet with me. Finally, a big thanks for the excellent lunch that you prepared.

This is what I found out.

- You make good progress in your studies and this will help you return quickly to mainstream school or to go on to training, work or college.
- You make good progress in your personal development, and I was very impressed by your courteous behaviour and the way you worked hard in lessons.
- Your teachers do a good job and provide you with lessons that interest you.
- You have a good range of subjects that will help you to be successful at the next stage.
- The staff care about you, and you trust and respect them.
- Those who run the centre do it well and have your best interests at heart.

In order to make the centre even better, I have asked them to do three things.

- Make sure you all have a full timetable on every day of the week.
- Make sure that teachers give you frequent reminders of what your targets are and how to achieve them.
- Make sure that teachers incorporate literacy and numeracy into every lesson, so you improve your basic skills even more quickly.

Perhaps you could help by remembering your targets yourselves.

I really enjoyed my visit to you, and I hope you have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee Lead inspector