

Carrick Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134756
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	328969
Inspection date	20 January 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)	22
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Linda Gulley
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2006
School address	Glynn House County Hall Treyew Road Truro TR1 3AY
Telephone number	01872 322443
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Carrick Pupil Referral Unit provides education for pupils who have been excluded or who are at risk of being excluded from their mainstream schools because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. No pupils in Years 1 to 6 currently attend the unit. A small and reducing number of pupils who have been permanently excluded from their schools attend the unit on a full-time basis. The remaining pupils ('school support pupils') are dual registered and attend the PRU on a part-time basis while continuing to attend their mainstream schools for the rest of their timetable.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Carrick Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is a good school where pupils' academic and personal skills are developed well. The unit successfully ensures that pupils return quickly to their schools or move on to college. At the heart of the PRU's success are the very effective leadership of the headteacher and her deputy, the excellent self-evaluation systems, and, most importantly, the caring, individual attention which each pupil receives as soon as they join. One typical comment from a pupil was, 'Teachers here understand each one of us, so we respect them because they know us and treat us as human beings.'

Class sizes are small so that pupils straight away feel secure and at home. Staff and pupils get to know each other very well, and trust and confidence increase. This is essential for pupils who have often had a harrowing experience of learning and whose self-confidence has been undermined. There is much good, skilful, specialist teaching in the PRU as well as a range of enjoyable classroom activities calculated to recover pupils' enjoyment of learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in many subjects, for example in English, mathematics and art. Teaching is good, but it is not so strong in science, where frequent changes of staff have meant that achievement, although satisfactory, is not as good as in other subjects. The school has advanced plans to resolve this issue in the near future.

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good aspects. Programmes are tailor-made for each pupil following discussions with the pupil's mainstream teachers. This year, the PRU has introduced a wider, more suitable range of opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation to match their wide range of abilities. However, there are few timetabled opportunities for physical education (PE), particularly for girls, which means that achievement in PE is not good. The curriculum is not yet sufficiently enriched by activities beyond the school day, such as after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support are good. Relationships are very positive all around the PRU and pupils receive highly effective personal support that enables them to move on quickly after their previously bad experiences of schooling. A typical comment from a parent was, 'There's been a complete turnaround for my son. It's always been a battle with him, but with these staff, he's calming down and maturing, and he now believes in himself.' Occasionally the academic support can be a little too intrusive so that pupils are deterred from developing their own independent ways of resolving problems. The PRU's procedures for target setting are not yet fully effective. Targets are specific and relevant, but there are too many of them. This makes it difficult for teachers to emphasise them regularly in lessons, and for pupils to remember them.

The leadership team, together with an effective management committee, keeps a steady hand on managing the unit and provide the staff with a very clear plan for future development. Their cutting-edge work in developing an excellent system for tracking and analysing pupils' progress has already resulted in major benefits for their own pupils and for those who are at risk of exclusion in the partner schools. The leadership team has helped to engender and maintain excellent links with parents, its partner schools and other agencies. The PRU has improved considerably since the last inspection and it has good potential to become even stronger in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Offer sufficient timetabled opportunities for pupils to achieve well in PE and develop their learning outside the school day.
- Make more effective use of individual academic targets so that pupils know what they are and teachers regularly emphasise them in lessons.
- Ensure that all pupils are encouraged to become independent learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils join the unit because they are experiencing serious difficulties in maintaining a positive approach to school life. These difficulties mean that the standard of their work has dropped below the levels expected nationally. Almost all are working well below their true potential and their self-belief has been seriously dented. Once they join the PRU, pupils begin to rebuild their education and make good progress in their studies, particularly in English, mathematics and art, where the specialist teaching is of very good quality. Most pupils are restored back into full-time mainstream education within two or three terms. Achievement in science is not so strong because there have been several changes of staff, which has disrupted the learning of the pupils. The school has recognised this and is taking action to appoint a permanent science specialist later this year. Achievement in PE is hampered by a shortage of timetabled opportunities, particularly for girls. There is little difference in the achievement of the various groups in the school, except that the small number of pupils who have been excluded do less well than those who are on 'school support'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The key to the pupils' good personal development is the affectionate and individualised support given to the pupils from the day they join. This enables the pupils to experience once again a deep enjoyment and appreciation of learning. One typical comment from a pupil was, 'They're all my friends here, including the staff. We're all so different, but we get along really well.' The most evident effect of this is seen in the transformation in their attendance and particularly their behaviour, which is excellent. Pupils are very respectful to each other and to the staff. They talk with great fondness about the PRU, and how life has changed for them. Parents too are amazed at the often quite dramatic changes that result from their children joining the PRU. As one parent put it, 'My son's gone from nought to ten. He's really excelled since he got here. It's hard to believe he's the same boy.'

The small numbers attending the PRU mean that there is constant vigilance, and good opportunities for guidance by staff. As a result, pupils feel very safe within the PRU, and behave thoughtfully. A Year 11 pupil said, 'If we see one of the younger ones getting in trouble, we help out and talk to them. They listen to us. I think I've grown up a lot here.' There is hardly any disruption to lessons, and absolutely no intimidation or bullying. Pupils have a sound understanding about how to make healthy life choices, but many of the pupils ignore the staff advice and continue to smoke, albeit only when they are away from the unit.

Pupils reflect frequently on their own lives and those of people from other cultural backgrounds during personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions and regular meetings with their mentors. The staff's consistent use of firm boundaries enables the pupils to make good progress in their social and moral development. The pupils develop a sound sense of responsibility to

others through activities such as fund raising, although the PRU provides few opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community in which the unit is situated. Although pupils voice their opinions freely in lessons and mentoring sessions, there is no school council through which pupils can make their ideas and views known as a group. The pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives by their rapid reintegration back into mainstream schools or colleges and by the good development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are characterised by good relationships, individualised support and a determination by teachers to make activities as enjoyable as possible. For example, in one lesson on probability, pupils were encouraged to prove Murphy's Law by throwing buttered toast in the air to see whether it always landed buttered side down. Teachers are making good and improving use of assessment to ensure that activities are well matched to the needs and capabilities of the pupils. This results in good learning and rapid progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong in most subjects, although difficulties in staffing for science have resulted in lower achievement in that subject. Teachers do not always sufficiently emphasise pupils' individual targets in lessons. The small numbers in teaching groups mean that academic advice and support are constantly available. In a few cases, however, staff provide too much guidance and this inhibits pupils' development as independent learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Each pupil has a customised programme of activities, with a clear priority given to the subjects necessary for a quick return to their school or for their move on to college. Pupils' personal development is supported well by an effective PSHE programme that focuses on their social and emotional skills, such as self-awareness, which are essential to good learning. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation, and to attend work-related training. Although there is a good outdoor education programme, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils, particularly girls, to achieve well in physical education. The PRU enriches the curriculum well during the school day, although there are few activities beyond the school day, such as clubs or residential opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The PRU staff are effective in encouraging pupils to talk about their lives, to re-evaluate their priorities and to regain their belief in their own abilities. Pupils say that they would and do confide in any member of staff if they have a personal problem. There is a strong partnership with parents, who are very supportive of the work of the PRU. Parents receive frequent feedback on how their children are doing, both formally and informally, which they appreciate very much. The PRU works effectively together with other schools and agencies, such as Connexions and Children's Services, to ensure that there is a coherent strategy to bring the pupils back on track as quickly as possible. The PRU sets specific individual academic targets for pupils in each

subject, but there are too many of them. As a result, pupils do not always know what they are or what they have to do next in order to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The PRU receives good support from the local authority through the Behaviour for Learning Partnership and the management committee, which provides the PRU with effective challenge and critical friendship. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and have devised an outstandingly good system for tracking and analysing information about the progress of pupils. This gives the leadership team and the management committee the very high quality information they require in order to make effective decisions for the future. The PRU's judgements about its own success are mirrored exactly in the findings of the inspection. This very effective self-evaluation allows the headteacher, with her quiet yet inspiring authority, to set out a clear-cut vision for all the staff. In this way, the leadership team has gained whole-hearted commitment and support for the work ahead.

The tracking system has been in place since September 2008, so it is still too early for the full impact to be reflected in higher achievement across all areas. Nevertheless, there are already very positive outcomes arising. For example, the system includes full details of pupils' backgrounds, and has been used to demonstrate quite clearly that pupils who are fully excluded from their schools achieve less well than those on 'school support' who remain on the school roll and receive assistance from the PRU. Senior staff from the mainstream partner schools are full members of the PRU's management committee, and have successfully used this convincing evidence to persuade their own schools to take up this more effective and far less traumatic, alternative approach to exclusion. As a result, permanent exclusions have fallen dramatically in all the partner schools in the area. Within this positive picture, there are some weaknesses that the leadership team has yet to resolve. For example, individual target setting is not yet fully effective, and the PRU's curriculum is not sufficiently enriched.

The school promotes community cohesion well, as illustrated by its success in developing strong and positive relationships between pupils and with its partner schools. Similarly, the PRU is also successful in helping pupils who have become marginalised to avoid further marginalisation and to be supported back quickly into mainstream education.

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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 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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	3
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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**

21 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Carrick Pupil Referral Unit, Truro TR1 3AY

You may remember that I came along to inspect your unit recently. Can I say thank you for helping me with the inspection, particularly to those of you who came along to tell me how good your unit is, and how helpful you have found the staff.

This is what I found out about the unit.

- You make good progress in your studies because the staff are skilful, and understand your educational needs.
- You make good progress personally, especially in behaviour and attendance.
- Your teachers do a good job of teaching you and making lessons enjoyable.
- The curriculum is sound, and tailor-made for each of you.
- Staff care about you, and give you lots of support.
- The headteacher and her deputy lead and manage the school well.

To make things even better I have asked the school to do these three things.

- Make sure you don't have so many targets, so that you remember the most important ones. The teachers will help by reminding you of your targets in lessons.
- Give you more opportunities for PE, especially the girls, and more by way of after-school clubs.
- Help you to be more independent in learning by sometimes taking a step back and letting you sort out problems for yourselves before offering you help.

Perhaps you could help by making an effort to remember your targets and by reminding your teachers if they forget. Those of you who smoke might like to try very hard to give up or at least cut down.

It was a pleasure working with you all, and I have no doubt you will all make a great success of your lives. I really hope so.

Best wishes

Mick Megee Lead inspector