

Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131294
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	329245
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	16
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Noble (Service Manager)
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
School address	Brierton Hill Brierton Lane Hartlepool TS25 4BY
Telephone number	01429 265637
Fax number	01429 264959

Age group	7–16
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Inspection number	329245

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Following extensive reorganisation within the local authority the unit now serves a dual purpose. It admits pupils from Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 who have been permanently excluded from other schools. It also provides up to 12 places for Key Stage 3 pupils identified as being at risk of exclusion without additional support. These are known as 'guest pupils'. There are currently 6 permanently excluded pupils and 10 guest pupils. They usually come from families of higher-than-average social and economic deprivation and nearly all are boys. Nearly all are White British. There are currently no Key Stage 2 pupils on roll.

The unit is led by a service manager. Although working in this capacity since the start of the academic year, the post only became substantive two months ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the unit no longer requires significant improvement because it is now giving pupils a satisfactory standard of education.

Extensive reorganisation within the local authority has resulted in the role of the unit being radically changed. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Wise decisions have been made to transfer permanently excluded pupils with statements of special educational need reflecting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to a special school. The unit now focuses its energies on preventing further permanent exclusions. In this it has been successful over the past two terms, helped by increasingly good relationships with schools, parents and the many agencies involved in pupils' education and welfare. The impact of leadership and management in raising standards has yet to be fully realised, partly because the service manager has officially been in post for only two months, but also because the role of subject leaders is still evolving.

The main measure of pupils' progress is their successful return to school. Nearly all do this following one half-term attending the unit. This is because the slowing of their academic progress is stemmed and their behaviour improves, though standards usually remain below average. These factors combine to improve pupils' prospects in later life. Satisfactory improvements in behaviour contribute to pupils' awareness of how they can contribute more constructively to the community. Sensible conduct around the unit and the settled atmosphere demonstrate pupils' growing awareness of the contribution they can make to everyone's safety and enjoyment.

Satisfactory teaching results in pupils making enough progress to return to school without falling far behind their peers. The unit is not in a good enough position to quantify academic progress because procedures to check and measure their progress are not sufficiently developed. This limits the degree of academic support and guidance that can be offered to pupils. Progress is further limited by a few teachers who do not expect pupils to work as hard as they can throughout the whole of lessons. What often improves pupils' attitudes to learning are the good relationships staff build with them and the constant encouragement they are given to succeed. By supporting potential pupils in their own schools for half a term prior to admission, staff are in a good position to identify their needs and prepare suitable packages for their care, support and guidance. These ensure that pupils are provided with a curriculum that is suitably matched to their most pressing needs. This satisfactorily balances the promotion of basic skills alongside promoting healthy living and improving pupils' social skills, but does not do enough to promote their cultural development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly by ensuring teachers fill the lesson time productively and conduct lessons at a faster pace.
- Develop better systems for measuring pupils' academic progress.
- Provide more opportunities for promoting pupils' cultural development.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to include more involvement in monitoring standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Most students enter the unit with below average standards. Standards achieved are below average, not because pupils have any significant degree of learning difficulty but because many have had significant interruptions to their learning, either through non-attendance or misbehaviour that has resulted in periods of exclusion. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. Progress over the longer period is more difficult to ascertain because of the unit's underdeveloped assessment systems but nearly all pupils make sufficient progress to return successfully to school, having satisfactorily met most of their personal targets. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills improve satisfactorily, alongside their understanding of science and use of computers but they do not have enough opportunities to achieve more in aesthetic or practical activities because these are underrepresented on the timetable. Most of the pupils who have attended the unit for longer than others because they are permanently excluded and have no other school to go to make satisfactory progress, often through a growing range of courses provided away from the unit.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory but not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to learn more about their own and other cultures. Gains made in social and moral development are clearly evident in pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour, both of which improve to the point where successful return to school can be expected and, along with it, enhanced prospects of better futures for those concerned. Attendance nearly always improves and is average. Many parents point out that whilst their children have not enjoyed school in the past they are happier in the unit. Guest pupils are rarely absent without good reason but the habitual absence of some longer stay pupils in Year 11 lowers the overall rate of attendance. Pupils learn that if they air their views in a sensible manner they will be listened to. This helps them to contribute constructively to the unit community, for instance by promoting a review of the lapsed reward system. Although many pupils resolutely refuse to give up unhealthy habits such as smoking, they do develop a growing awareness of the importance of trying to live healthier lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory but widely variable in quality. The range of teaching from good to inadequate observed during the inspection reflects that seen by managers over the past term. Since the last inspection, teachers have improved the range of activities through which they encourage learning. The wholesale reliance on worksheet exercises has diminished and pupils are now being encouraged to contribute more to their own learning, for instance through greater participation in discussions. The best teaching is characterised by well prepared activities and enhanced through the use of stimulating resources, such as the judicial garb and police uniform in a personal, health and social education (PHSE) lesson relating to powers of arrest and personal rights. Teachers recognise that the promotion of good relationships and the development of trust are central to their effectiveness. Most balance these well with the need

to provide pupils with challenging and meaningful tasks but occasionally the balance slips towards informality with a resultant lack of focus on promoting learning. The main difference between stronger and weaker teaching is the variation in the pace of lessons and the care with which teachers plan activities to fill the whole of their time allocation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It focuses strongly on promoting the basic skills of numeracy and literacy alongside pupils PHSE but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore cultural and aesthetic avenues. Before admission, staff spend a half-term supporting guest pupils in their schools and planning how to match the unit's curriculum to that of the school so as to facilitate a speedy return with as little disruption to learning as possible. Most of the pupils who have been permanently excluded from previous schools are in Year 11. A satisfactory range of learning opportunities is available for these pupils, often incorporating courses provided by colleges, independent agencies and through extended work-placements. These contribute satisfactorily to preparing pupils for entering the workplace or continuing training elsewhere. A limited but growing range of popular activities outside of the classroom is making a satisfactory contribution to pupils' enjoyment of life in the unit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The physical care and protection of pupils are good. There are frequent health and safety checks, potential risk in activities is carefully assessed and arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Teachers develop a good understanding of each pupil's most pressing personal needs but they do not assess their academic progress with sufficient precision or rigour to ensure that gaps in learning can quickly be remedied or to set harder work when pupils can be seen to coping easily. The unit works closely with parents, schools and many outside agencies to help pupils to thrive and keep out of trouble. Parents particularly like the fact that, often for the first time in years, they get to find out about the good things their children are capable of as well as the errors of their ways.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The most significant achievement of the leadership and management has been the successful transformation of a unit that was inappropriately populated by permanently excluded pupils with statements of special educational needs, who had little chance of being returned to school. It now faithfully reflects the true purpose of a pupil referral unit by offering short-term placements and reducing the need for schools to exclude pupils permanently. This has been achieved through the clear and determined vision of the service head, the appropriate authority and the management committee. The changes have brought about satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, not least in the morale of staff. Admissions are carefully regulated to ensure that no pupils are now inappropriately placed. The management committee has been reorganised and comprises a good representation of the many parties that have an interest in pupils' lives and education. The service manager has a good grasp of where the unit's strengths and weaknesses lie but is hindered in accurate self-evaluation by the paucity of assessment information available. Subject leaders have produced plans to show what, when and how their

subjects can best be taught but currently play an insufficient part in monitoring or evaluating the effectiveness of these plans. Despite many changes for the better, teaching remains too variable in quality. This is why the unit has a satisfactory rather than good capacity for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

17 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit, Hartlepool, TS25 4AG

A few of you may remember my visit a while ago. Thanks for making me welcome, sparing a little time to talk and letting me look at your work.

I was not with you for more than a few hours but it was long enough for me to decide that life in the unit is improving. It has made the significant improvement that the last inspection said was needed and is now satisfactory. That still leaves room for further improvement but let's celebrate what's been achieved.

You are making satisfactory progress because most of you attend regularly. Most of you are quickly returning full-time to school, which means that you are not missing out too much or losing touch with your friends. The reason you are able to get back to school quickly is mainly because your behaviour is improving and you are working harder than you have at times in the past. You are being well looked after and the people in charge have some good ideas about how to make it better. I have asked the school to take action to bring about further improvements:

- to check whether the lesson time is used to best effect and if the pace of learning is fast enough
- to measure more carefully how well you are getting on and the progress made
- to provide more opportunities to learn in subjects such as art and music and to ensure you learn more about the different cultures of other people
- staff with responsibilities to become more involved in making checks in their subjects.

All the best and good luck for the future

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector