

Burton Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134880
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	334187
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Morris-King HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Downey
Headteacher	Gareth Caldwell
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
School address	Church Hill Street Winhill Burton on Trent DE15 0HT
Telephone number	01283 239545
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

When Burton Learning Centre was inspected in June 2008 it was found to require special measures. HMI visited the school on two occasions prior to this inspection to monitor the school's progress.

This pupil referral unit (PRU) has a number of different aspects to its provision. This comprises:

- full-time provision for pupils who are registered solely at the PRU, because they have been permanently excluded from school, because they have complex medical needs, or because they are otherwise too vulnerable to attend mainstream school for a period of time. The time they spend on roll varies.
- part-time, short-term provision for pupils who are dual registered with the PRU and with their mainstream school, to help them to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion
- home tuition provision for pupils who cannot attend school or the PRU because of their physical or mental health.

Outreach provision, where staff go into mainstream schools to help them to avoid excluding pupils and to give advice on managing behaviour, is just starting to be developed. The PRU has three sites, two of which are in Burton-on-Trent just a few miles apart, with the third in Uttoxeter, about 20 miles away.

The majority of pupils are White British and a number of pupils of Asian heritage are also currently on roll. At any one time, the PRU has on roll several pupils who are looked after by the local authority. Several pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and a number of others have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but no statement. Almost all pupils on single roll at the PRU have had a severely disrupted education prior to joining, as have some of the dual roll pupils.

The leadership team, including the headteacher, have all joined the school since September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The overall effectiveness of the PRU is now good. Leadership and management are good and the headteacher's leadership is outstanding. During the last academic year, the headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and the more recently appointed assistant headteacher, has driven the PRU determinedly and effectively through a period of rapid and significant improvement. A continuous insistence on high standards of teaching, behaviour and attitudes permeates the PRU's work, and both staff and pupils have risen to this challenge. The staff have been re-energised and have created an environment in which pupils are expected to succeed, with the systems and structures to enable them to do so. Pupils thoroughly appreciate the range and extent of the improvements that have taken place over the last year. The PRU has a good capacity to improve further.

As a result of the positive ethos, the interesting and relevant curriculum, the improved teaching and the PRU's high expectations, pupils, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are now making good progress both academically and personally and socially. This is demonstrated by the range of qualifications which are being gained by Year 11 pupils and the rate at which pupils are successfully reintegrating into mainstream schools. It is also shown by the improvements in pupils' work across the curriculum, and the success which some pupils are achieving in the workplace. Pupils' progress has been assisted by their much improved attendance. A few pupils still find it difficult to attend well, but an increasing number of others have a record of 100% attendance. Standards remain well below national averages but are rising because of the improved education that pupils are receiving.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have embraced the opportunities they have been given to update their knowledge and enhance their skills. Because staff now teach at all the PRU's sites there is a high level of consistency in the expectations they have for pupils' learning. The PRU's ethos is thoroughly focused on learning: pupils attending each site arrive each day knowing that they will be expected to learn and willing to participate and do their best. Assessment is thorough, and generates a wealth of information. Senior leaders are now in a strong position to combine teachers' assessment with the information generated by tests to gain a complete picture of the progress pupils are making and to plan the next steps in their learning. Pupils take an increasingly active part in assessing their own learning, which demonstrates their much improved confidence and enjoyment. The curriculum is good because it engages pupils, enables them to achieve qualifications in a short period of time and prepares them well for the next stage of education, training or employment. Importantly, it has a strong focus on the development of personal and social skills. The plans for the curriculum from September for Key Stages 3 and 4 are excellent. There is some uncertainty within the local authority about the extent to which the PRU will be expected to cater for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils in the future, and whether they therefore need to plan to extend the curriculum to make it suitable for this age group.

Pupils are now benefiting enormously from the excellent care, guidance and support they receive from all of the PRU's staff. Each pupil has a carefully tailored academic and personal programme of support, the impact of which is rigorously monitored. The key worker system, in which each pupil has a personal tutor, is a pivotal part of this provision. For example, at the

end of each morning and afternoon pupils have a one-to-one tutorial to check on their progress towards their challenging targets. Pupils who spend some of their time off site receive an equally high level of attention and care, particularly those on extended work experience, and this has a tremendous impact on the success they are able to achieve. As a result of the outstanding support they receive, and the range of opportunities they now have, pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make good use of all the data available, including teacher assessment, to refine further the tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of challenging targets.
- Work with the local authority to:
 - determine the PRU's role with respect to Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils
 - ensure that there is a strategic approach to the provision for pupils of this age group if they are to join the PRU's roll.
- Embed and extend the current and emerging good practice in all aspects of the PRU's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils join the PRU on a single-roll basis they have almost always had a disrupted education, either due to a series of exclusions, poor attendance, physical or mental health issues, or a combination of these. As a result, pupils of all abilities have gaps in their learning, and the majority of pupils are working at standards that are very low in comparison to national averages. Because teaching and the curriculum are now good, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well given their starting points. Some have made rapid progress over the course of the last two terms, and several pupils in Years 8 to 10 in particular are starting to work at standards close to and occasionally above national expectations. Almost all Year 11 pupils, who have had a particularly disrupted education, are now on track to gain a range of up to nine relevant qualifications, including in English and mathematics. Several Year 10 pupils have already gained qualifications. Pupils on extended work experience placements are making good or outstanding progress, developing a range of academic and personal skills and being offered opportunities for future work or training. The PRU's increasing rate of successfully reintegrating pupils into mainstream schools is further evidence of the progress pupils are making, particularly with their personal and social skills. Pupils who attend the PRU on a part-time basis for a fixed period of time make good progress with their personal and social skills and their literacy and numeracy skills, which enables them to settle back into their mainstream schools well. The small number of pupils who receive home tuition sometimes make slower progress because of their complex needs, but staff's persistence and patience ensures that their progress is nevertheless satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond very well to the PRU's strategies to help them to manage their own behaviour. During their time at the PRU they become increasingly self-reliant and need less support and fewer reminders in order to behave well. Through the excellent Learning Beyond the Classroom programme pupils develop a good understanding of how physical activity can have an impact on health, both mental and physical. By participating in activities which extend and challenge

them, such as abseiling, or by patiently learning a new skill such as karate, pupils learn to be more resilient and to trust other people. As a result their confidence improves enormously. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe. While they may not always make safe or healthy choices outside school, many have improved this aspect of their lives, and all understand how to make good choices. While in the PRU pupils behave very safely, as demonstrated, for example, by their sensible attitudes and behaviour in food technology lessons and their safe use of tools in the motor mechanics course. Pupils have responded well to the emphasis that the PRU now places on healthy eating. Pupils at the Waterloo Street site took the lead in getting rid of their daily visit to the chip shop. Having researched possible sources for lunch, taking into account different religious and cultural needs, they chose one which could provide them with a range of healthy options including Halal food. Many choose to eat breakfast at the PRU. A number of pupils make good use of the PRU's well-equipped on-site gym after school to keep fit and to set themselves challenges, which include sponsored events. Pupils have taken a full part in transforming the learning environments, particularly at Waterloo Street and Uttoxeter. Some pupils benefit significantly from work experience, which the PRU is planning to extend. As pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop, they are being better prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have benefited from greatly improved professional development. This has included partnerships with mainstream colleagues, an effective coaching programme within the PRU, and good quality support and advice from local authority advisers. This has enabled staff to develop and hone their skills. Lessons are interesting and often capture pupils' imaginations, which motivates them to attempt tasks even when they find them difficult. Particular attention has been paid to assessment for learning techniques, which are now used well by all staff in the majority of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers are exceptionally alert to each response made by the pupils, and they fine-tune the next step in their teaching accordingly. When this happens it leads to an excellent match between the pupils' individual needs and the resulting input from the teacher, and as a result pupils make accelerated progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this gives pupils the confidence to take risks and therefore extend their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved significantly and is now good. The 'Pathways' approach to the curriculum has retained continuity and progression for long-term students while simultaneously developing a wide range of new, highly relevant courses and opportunities. A particular strength of the curriculum is its flexibility, which enables pupils who are at the PRU for only a short time to gain accreditation. Pupils find this highly motivating. At the same time, pupils who are attending the PRU for a longer period have a wide range of experiences, such as motor mechanics and trade skills, which retain their interest. This approach has had a significant impact on pupils' attendance. Importantly, there is an extensive programme of personal, social and health education, and a separate programme of sex and relationships education. In each centre, opportunities for an interesting and relevant curriculum have been greatly enhanced by the much improved learning environment and facilities. The accommodation at Winshill, to which

all the pupils have access, includes a food technology room, a science room and a well-equipped gym. A very small number of pupils who attend courses with an alternative provider have not received such a broad curriculum, though this has improved during the course of the year. There is an excellent strategic plan for the coming year to cater even better for the wide range of needs and abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the right balance of challenge and support are a pivotal part of enabling pupils to succeed. Staff continually model what they want from pupils, for example in the way they speak to pupils and to each other, and in their willingness to take risks, such as through outdoor activities. The PRU has established a thorough system of assessing pupils' academic abilities and needs as soon as they join the PRU. Combined with the admissions forms, which have been agreed with local schools and give the PRU a good level of information about the pupil, this ensures that pupils quickly receive a package of support which is well tailored to meet their needs. The PRU staff place a huge emphasis on building good relationships with parents and carers, even prior to the pupil being admitted. This leads to a highly effective partnership approach to helping the pupil to make progress. Pupils value the continuous communication between the PRU and their parents or carers, particularly the emphasis on their achievements. Two staff are leading a new and already effective programme of support for whole families at one site, which is about to be extended to the rest of the PRU. High-level attention is paid to keeping pupils safe. Pupils are given good, and increasingly outstanding, guidance about how to improve their work, through a high level of discussion with staff and effective marking. The excellent level of guidance given has enabled almost all Year 11 pupils to find a destination for the coming year which meets their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have approached this period of rapid improvement with energy and determination. They have a very clear vision for the PRU which is articulated well both verbally and in a clear action plan. At the heart of this vision is the commitment to making the PRU outstanding, so that it provides the best possible education for the pupils. Staff are committed to this aspiration, as demonstrated by what has already been achieved over the last year. Leadership at other levels is developing well and staff are taking increasing ownership of improving their own areas of responsibility. Self-evaluation by senior leaders is good, and leads to appropriate actions being taken to improve provision further. The headteacher has developed a good relationship with local schools and has worked in partnership with them to develop a good protocol for admission and reintegration. Outreach work is also developing well. The PRU has rightly focused its community cohesion work on bringing together the previously disparate parts of the PRU to create a harmonious community between pupils of different ages, faiths and cultures. This has been highly successful. The school is aware of the need to ensure that planning to develop the next steps of community cohesion becomes more strategic in seeking to promote pupils' understanding of modern Britain and international differences.

The management committee is both supportive and challenging. The chair, who is the headteacher of a local high school, has given the PRU's headteacher excellent, measured support through this period of rapid improvement.

The local authority has become gradually more strategic in its management role during the course of the year. Support given to the restructuring of the PRU's staffing was valuable, reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs are now completed on time, and the protocol for admissions is good. The local authority does not have a sufficiently strategic view on the placement or otherwise of Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils, and the PRU's role in this.

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
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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	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

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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

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?	1

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?	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**

26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burton Learning Centre, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 0DP

As you know, I have visited your centre three times over the last year. This was because it was in 'special measures' and needed some help to improve. I am delighted to tell you (although I'm sure you know by now!) that it is no longer in special measures – it has improved so much that you are now getting a good education. Congratulations on the important part you have played in helping Burton Learning Centre to improve so quickly.

One of the most significant changes, and one which you told me about on several occasions, is the curriculum. I know that you appreciate the many opportunities you have to challenge yourselves, such as through the Learning Beyond the Classroom programme, and to become more confident in taking risks. I am impressed with how quickly you have managed to gain new qualifications during this year; this is a credit to your teachers and to you. It was excellent to see Year 11 still in school, working so hard towards your final exams and coursework. You have developed excellent relationships with the staff. It is great to see how they always help you to succeed. They give you plenty of support when you need it but they do not accept any excuses! This has been very effective in helping you to improve your attendance and behaviour. It is great to see that some of you regularly achieve 100% attendance and this is something which everyone should aim for.

We have asked the staff to keep up all the good work they are doing, and to make really good use of all the information they now have about your progress in order to help you to do even better.

Thank you for talking to me and my colleagues on each of the inspections. It has really helped us to find out what has gone well and what needed to improve. You have always conducted yourselves in an extremely mature way, which has been impressive. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Morris-King Her Majesty's Inspector