

Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102562
Local Authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	335926
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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 of pupils on the school roll	16
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Trevor Sykes
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. He visited six lessons and observed four teachers. The inspector also held meetings with a member of the management committee, staff and outside agencies, and talked with students. The inspector observed the work of the pupil referral unit (PRU) and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, development planning, management committee minutes and students' work. The inspector also scrutinised questionnaires from staff and a sample of students, and two questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the PRU's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which the flexible curriculum is raising levels of achievement and getting students more involved in their learning
- the accuracy with which the PRU measures its own effectiveness
- the influence of the management committee on the PRU's direction and capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Malden Oaks PRU provides alternative education for 16 students in Years 7 to 11, who have had a managed transfer to avoid permanent exclusion. A significant proportion of students have not attended their mainstream schools for a considerable period. The PRU serves the needs of students, whose the length of stay varies from one to 14 months. All students have emotional and/or social needs but none has a statement of special educational needs. Students have regular access to a range of other professional support services, including the local mental health team. Currently, almost all students are from families of White British heritage and the gender balance is predominantly male.

The PRU has achieved the National Healthy Schools status. Malden Oaks is part of a federation and the headteacher shares his leadership role with a PRU nearby. Several staff also share their time between the two sites.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Malden Oaks is an effective PRU. An outstanding feature is the extremely supportive environment, which places a high priority on enhancing students' self-esteem and in developing their confidence. The PRU achieves its success through the determination of loyal and committed staff under the skilful and resourceful leadership of the headteacher. Together, staff show a resolve to develop the highest quality provision and gain the best possible outcomes for all students and their families, within a very caring and nurturing environment. Parents and carers are very supportive of the PRU's work and indicate that they welcome the impact it is having on their children's attitudes and academic progress.

Students benefit from outstanding teaching and excellent care, guidance and support. As a result, they make outstanding progress in developing their self-esteem. Such an improvement transforms students' attitudes and helps them to establish a firm base from which they gain the confidence to make up for substantial deficits in their education. Consequently, students make good gains in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, in preparation for reintegration to mainstream education, enrolment at college or employment. Most students in Years 10 and 11 reach attainment levels that are broadly average. This represents good progress because, in a relatively short period, the PRU successfully transforms students' attitudes and makes up for deficits in their educational history. It is an indicator of the PRU's success that attendance rises dramatically and the great majority of students are keen to attend and arrive on time, with some having undergone long journeys on public transport.

Teaching is outstanding because staff know each student, including their needs and backgrounds, extremely well and use detailed information to help with planning. Individual targets are used very well by staff to pay particular attention to each student's personal needs and their academic progress. Students say that they feel very safe and secure in a supportive environment and the trust developed between students and staff is the foundation of this success. As the students themselves report, 'There is less stress here and everyone supports you. You're given time to talk about things that matter.' The flexible curriculum is underpinned by a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education; students benefit from a very well-constructed, personalised learning programme. The curriculum takes full account of subject planning in mainstream schools and is extremely well suited to the needs of students. The careful balance of core skills and the development of students' creative and performing skills make the learning experiences relevant and meaningful. However, the school knows it must do more to help students develop a better understanding of people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the United Kingdom and globally.

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The school has rigorous systems in place to monitor the progress of students. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff have a clear picture of where the PRU is now and of the improvements needed. However, the PRU recognises the need to develop its management systems so that information can be shared more efficiently among the different agencies and schools with which it deals. Very knowledgeable management committee members ensure that policies are systematically reviewed. The PRU is well placed to move forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a management system where information can be transferred efficiently between the PRU and different providers.
- Extend the PRU's strategy for community cohesion by creating more opportunities for students to appreciate and value people from a wide variety of backgrounds and communities nationally and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

There are very convincing signs that the PRU's sustained efforts and well-informed support are making a substantial difference resulting in students' good gains in academic work and outstanding personal development. Students improve their self-esteem and independence substantially and learn to interact positively with one another and the adults with whom they work. These positive developments increase students' interest in and enjoyment of education. Students' attitudes and confidence improve as they experience the PRU's nurturing and highly supportive learning environment. Their willingness to participate in learning, as seen in mathematics and science lessons, reflect good learning. Students also show satisfaction in getting the tasks right and explaining the reasons behind their answers, in mathematics, for example. As a result of the PRU's determination to encourage enterprise, work experience and courses related to life skills, older students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Students demonstrate high levels of emotional and/or social needs, which typically have resulted in lengthy periods of absence from school. Consequently, students enter the PRU with large gaps in their skills and knowledge and with a negative view about themselves and towards education. The amount of time students spend at the PRU varies, but the rate of progress is such that the majority of students are successful in making up for some of the lost time and overcoming a number of the significant barriers they faced when they started. As result of this good progress, younger students leave the PRU ready to return to mainstream education. In 2009, the proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 who gained GCSE passes, or equivalent, was broadly similar to the national average for mainstream schools. In addition, all students gained other accreditation in English and mathematics and a number of vocational courses. Current progress data show that students are on track to make similar gains this year.

Students make very strong progress in learning about themselves and improving their

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self-esteem because of the sensitive and individualised support provided by staff. Students learn to respond well and this represents a substantial change when set against the personal challenges they have faced in the past and with which they continue to struggle. Students say they feel very safe and like attending an environment where their views are valued and clear expectations are consistently applied. Although relationships are often fragile, students are polite and usually talk with staff and visitors in a mature and respectful manner. Students' positive attitudes towards activities, including art, have led to them taking a greater pride in their work. Students' substantially improved attendance reflects these changes to their approach to education and improved confidence. It is the first time they have attended school on anything like a regular basis.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Particular strengths in the highly effective teaching lie in detailed planning based upon a thorough knowledge of each student and the collaborative approach taken by teachers. They work very effectively as a team and provide closely tailored support for each

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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student. The teachers' sensitive approach helps to raise students' self-esteem in the first instance. Skilful questioning is used well to probe students' understanding carefully, help adjust the pace of learning and coax them into contributing to discussion and doing their best. Lesson objectives are made clear to students to ensure, for example, that they understand what skills they will develop during the lesson. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used particularly well to help with explanations and involve students in a range of interesting activities. Assessment is closely tied to individual targets and continuously shared with each student.

The curriculum is exceptionally well-matched and modified to meet the needs of students. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) underpins the curriculum and forms a significant part each student's personalised learning programme. The range of learning experiences provides a carefully constructed balance between basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the development of creative and performing skills in subjects such as art and music. Particular strengths lie in the curriculum's flexibility and its ability to offer students individualised support and learning experiences at the PRU, while they attend their mainstream schools for a part of each week. Joint curricular planning ensures that, where appropriate, students are reintegrated seamlessly into mainstream education. The breadth of the curriculum is also made possible by the different range of activities offered at colleges and by local businesses. There is a balanced and realistic approach towards students following courses leading to GCSEs and opportunities for them to achieve external accreditation in, for example, skills related to the building and motor industries and hair and beauty trades.

The outstanding support for students' personal development and pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents and carers. One parent/carer's comment represents the positive response made by others: □The staff have been amazing at getting him back into a learning environment and engaging him. I wish he did not have to leave!' Students have a good understanding of their targets for personal development and appreciate how the consistent and sensitive support helps them to gain self-confidence and strengthen their social skills. Students are extremely well known by staff who show great resolve in ensuring that students are exceptionally well cared for and supported. Staff are very alert to the fact that no two days are alike and students can arrive on any day with varying levels of interest and willingness to engage. Attention to students' health and well-being is reflected in the provision of healthy food and health-related courses. Progress, both academic and personal, is very closely tracked and monitored.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with strong support from the management committee and a committed staff, has established a provision that places a high priority on developing students' self-esteem, building their confidence and lifting levels of achievement. The PRU promotes equality and tackles any form of discrimination exceptionally well. Teamwork is a real strength and enables excellent communication with a wide range of partners and outside agencies, which hold the PRU in high regard. Documentation indicates that the PRU has a secure understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. However, to avoid delays and ensure greater consistency, the headteacher recognises the need to develop an electronic management system where information can be transferred more efficiently. Staff, who have realistic expectations of where they want their students to be, demonstrate a good capacity for moving on.

The management committee is supportive and the chair works closely with the headteacher, giving well-considered guidance and advice. Knowledgeable and very experienced committee members challenge the effectiveness of the PRU's development within the federation and ensure that policies are systematically reviewed. Attention to students' safety is integral to the PRU's work and safeguarding procedures are systematic, continually reviewed and very firmly established.

Community cohesion is well promoted within the PRU and partnerships with outside agencies are used exceptionally well to enhance the well-being of students. The PRU reaches out to parents and carers, who are given very good opportunities to give views on the provision and benefit from regular contact. However, the PRU knows it must do more to help students gain a better understanding of people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the United Kingdom and globally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money**2**

Views of parents and carers

Two parents/carers returned questionnaires for this inspection. However, a greater number completed a survey sent out by the school earlier in the year, which included similar questions. The responses to all these questions were extremely positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the provision. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the provision. The inspection team received two completed questionnaire by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 16 pupils registered at the PRU.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit, Kingston Upon Thames, KT2 5QY

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited Malden Oaks PRU. I enjoyed talking to you, sitting in your lessons and listening to your interesting views. You told me that the PRU helps you to build up your confidence and improve your attitudes to learning. It is clear that you value highly the life-changing opportunities that the PRU offers you.

This letter is to tell you about some of the things I found while I was with you. It's a good PRU where you feel very safe and secure and enjoy taking part in the interesting and meaningful activities. Supportive staff have consistently high expectations of you and provide clear guidelines for you to follow.

Here are some important things about your PRU.

- The PRU is well led and managed.
- Very effective teaching helps you to make good gains in your learning.
- You achieve well when account is taken of your starting points when you join the PRU.
- All staff take extremely good care of you, and make sure you have a thoroughly good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and a healthy diet.

This is what your PRU has been asked to do to make things even better.

- Improve the systems used by the PRU to exchange information with your mainstream schools and other agencies.
- Help you to understand more about people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of this country and around the world.

I wish each one of you every success in your future education and work and hope that you continue to help yourselves to make things better.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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