

# Maidstone and Malling Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135465
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	341650
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Ellis HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	45
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Macdonald
<b>Headteacher</b>	Adrian Young
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2009
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector spent five hours observing learning, including the observation of six teachers in six different lessons. He held meetings with staff, students, the School Improvement Partner, the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority. He observed the Pupil Referral Unit's work, and looked at a range of documents relating to leadership and management, safeguarding of students, and the quality of teaching, assessment and the curriculum. He also analysed questionnaires from one parent, six staff and 11 pupils.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the PRU's work including the impact of the curriculum and care, guidance and support on students' personal development and achievement. He looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the development of management information systems to track students' progress and monitor the work of the PRU
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in addressing issues from the previous inspection and demonstrating a capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

Maidstone and Malling Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit provides for young people who are disaffected with the education system, and often with wider society. The PRU opened on 1 January 2008 following reorganisation by the local authority of services for excluded pupils. Students attend one of three full-time education provisions in Maidstone that are commissioned by the PRU under contractual service level agreements: Kings Reach, UP2U Kent Safe Schools (UP2U) and Maidstone YMCA/Maidstone ARC (ARC). The majority of students who attend the PRU have been excluded from mainstream schools. Most of the students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly relating to their behavioural, emotional and social needs. Six students have statements of special educational needs. The large majority of students are of White British heritage and most are boys. No students are at the early stages of learning to speak English.

The PRU was inspected in January 2009 and was given a notice to improve, as significant improvement was required in relation to the leadership and management of the PRU.

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

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Outcomes for students have improved and progress is accelerating.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of the PRU are in place and leaders and managers have an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development.
- Good partnerships have been developed with outside agencies, for example the Connexions service, to promote students' learning and well-being.
- The PRU has a very inclusive ethos and effective action has been taken to promote equality of opportunity; consequently, all the different groups of students are able to make similar progress.
- The management committee has been strengthened and has begun to hold the PRU to account for tackling evident weaknesses. However, it has had too little impact on outcomes for some students.
- Regular assessment is in place but the use of assessment to inform planning is not consistent and does not always ensure that tasks and activities are closely matched to the needs and interests of all students.
- The headteacher has worked hard to improve provision and there have been some notable successes. However, centre leaders do not make a significant contribution to evaluating the work of the PRU and driving improvement.
- Improvement since the previous inspection and secure systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate progress demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on improvements to the management committee to ensure a good balance of challenge and support to improve outcomes for all students.
- Embed the use of accurate assessment information to inform planning and teaching and so enable students to make rapid progress in all areas of learning.
- Develop the role of centre managers so that they are enabled to make a greater contribution to evaluating the work of the PRU and driving improvement.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

Students join the PRU with attainment that is well below average, due to the impact of previous disruptions to their schooling and the significant proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Observation of lessons and the PRU's tracking data

show students make satisfactory progress, although standards generally remain below average.

All students gain a range of accreditation and those who are entered for GCSE examinations generally achieve pass them. Work seen during the inspection demonstrated that students are making satisfactory progress, and a few students have a good chance of achieving a grade C in some of their GCSE examinations.

Students say that they feel safe and that they are treated with respect by staff.

Most students attend regularly and their attendance is higher than in their previous mainstream schools. There have been some significant successes in re-engaging students with their education. A small minority have very poor attendance and consequently overall attendance is low.

Good relationships between the students and the adults that they work with are evident and behaviour is satisfactory. Students understand what is expected of them and know about keeping safe and how to lead healthy lifestyles. Most students welcome the opportunity to participate in regular physical activity.

The emphasis placed on improving behaviour and overcoming emotional and social barriers to learning helps prepare students for their future lives, which ensures that the large majority go on to education, employment or training when they leave the PRU.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4

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

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

<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>
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### How effective is the provision?

Teachers work hard to create a positive learning environment. The lessons are planned to include a range of activities but these do not always sufficiently motivate and engage the students. Assessment information is increasingly used to inform teachers' planning but there remains some variability in the extent to which tasks and activities are precisely matched to students' interests and ability. Teachers generally have a secure knowledge of their subject and appropriate resources are used to support learning, especially information and communication technology. In most lessons, teaching is securely satisfactory or good and in these lessons, teachers make sure that students have the opportunity to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

However, in some lessons, teachers dominate proceedings and do not give students a chance to think for themselves and the pace is pedestrian so teaching is barely satisfactory. In these lessons, students are either restless and need constant prompting to keep them focused on their work or they are passive and uninterested in their work.

The curriculum is being developed so that it meets students' needs more closely and builds on their interests and aspirations. Because of developing good partnerships with other schools, local employers and other providers, the PRU is able to offer a wide and varied curriculum in Key Stage 4 that includes courses which offer accreditation in a range of subjects. Student timetables now include canoeing, bushcraft, hair and beauty, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and vocational courses. Personal, social and health education is integrated well into the curriculum and is incorporated into most lessons.

Accommodation at the ARC centre does not meet the needs of the students and there are plans to address this in the next year.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. The support and care for the most vulnerable students are good and the PRU works well with other support agencies. There are clear and effective arrangements for safeguarding students. Students get good advice and guidance in relation to their personal development but academic guidance is less well developed. Systems to monitor students' progress have been established and staff are now better placed to provide academic guidance and support. The PRU recognises that this aspect of its work requires further development.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>

**The effectiveness of care, guidance and support****3****How effective are leadership and management?**

The leadership and management of the headteacher is good and he has been successful in making the PRU a very inclusive establishment where all students, regardless of background or ability, are valued and given the opportunity to succeed.

Centre leaders are taking increased responsibility for leading improvements in their centres and they are being held accountable for outcomes in their areas of responsibility. However, they are at the early stages in leading improvements and being fully involved in driving up standards and achievement. The PRU rightly recognises that continuing to develop the role of centre leaders remains a priority.

The PRU knows its community and its needs, and promotes satisfactory interaction and understanding between students and the local community. This has had a positive impact within the PRU and the immediate community but there is only limited evidence of success within the wider community.

The lack of formal systems for leaders and managers to evaluate the work of the PRU that was identified by the previous inspection has been addressed. Regular assessment and rigorous and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning ensure that the headteacher is well informed about the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that students make. Improvement planning is based on an accurate analysis of monitoring information and identifies appropriate key priorities for improvement.

Leadership of the management committee has been strengthened by the appointment of a new chair and the committee has an informed view of the PRU's strengths and weaknesses. There is insufficient evidence to show that the management committee's monitoring and evaluation of the work of the PRU has had sufficient impact on the outcomes for students.

The positive impact of the actions taken since the previous inspection demonstrates that the PRU has adequate capacity for further improvement.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

There was only one response to the inspection questionnaire. This response was generally positive.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maidstone and Malling Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received one completed questionnaire by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 45 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	1	100	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)	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



1 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Maidstone and Malling Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit,  
Maidstone ME14 1AF.

Thank you for the warm welcome and for helping with the inspection. I would particularly like to thank those of you who took time to talk about your experiences and those who completed the inspection questionnaire. When the PRU was last inspected, there were a number of things that needed to be improved. I am pleased to tell you that the PRU has improved and it is now satisfactory.

Many of you said that you feel safe and well cared for. The staff at the PRU are helping you to overcome your difficulties and most of you are now making satisfactory progress in your learning.

Here are some of the things you do best.

- Most of you get on well with each other and with the adults who work with you.
- You are very well looked after and given the support you need to help you to develop as responsible and well-behaved young people.
- The adults who are responsible for running the unit are better informed about how well you are doing and they have some good ideas about how to improve the PRU further.

Here are the things that need to be improved.

- A good start has been made on improving how the PRU is led and managed at all levels and I would like to see this continue so that the next time the PRU is inspected it can be judged to be good or better.
- I would like your teachers to make sure that they assess how well you are doing and use the information to plan work that is interesting and at exactly the right level so that you can make good progress.

I am sure that you will want to play your part by working hard and helping your teachers with these and other improvements. I hope you will find time to read the full report.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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