

# Poplar Adolescent Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135778
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	341699
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Declan McCarthy

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	10
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Val Scott (Teacher in charge)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Rochfield Hospital Union Lane Rochfield
<b>Telephone number</b>	01702 538000
<b>Fax number</b>	01702 538221
<b>Email address</b>	val.scott@essex.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Five lessons were observed and three teachers were seen. Handovers between mental health and education staff, and community and goal setting meetings between mental health, education staff and students were also observed. Telephone discussions were held with a few parents and carers and meetings were held with groups of students, the chair of the management committee, a representative from the local authority (LA) and the unit manager of the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including students' records of achievement, safeguarding documentation, attendance figures, and joint planning meetings. No parental/carers questionnaires were returned, although staff and pupil questionnaire were analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the unit's data demonstrates the achievement of individual students, particularly, the more able, to determine if teaching and the use of assessment, challenge and support learning enough
- how the management committee forms its own view of the work of the unit and the steps it takes to develop the provision further
- how well the national and global dimensions of community cohesion are promoted and their impact on students' personal development are evaluated
- how effective the sixth form is and its distinctiveness within the unit.

## Information about the school

Poplar Adolescent Unit was established in February 2009 and this is its first inspection. It caters for up to 16 young people aged between 11 and 18 with mental health problems. The unit sits within Rochford psychiatric hospital, where students are almost exclusively in-patients. It provides personalised, short-term education and care to students with psychiatric conditions ranging from deliberate self-harm and attempted suicide to psychoses. Education staff work in partnership with medical staff, social services, therapists and psychologists as the education provision forms an integral part of the overall care programme. The unit also provides assessments for those whose diagnosis is unclear. Students are admitted as in-patients to a psychiatric ward within the unit for varying amounts of time, ranging from 72 hours for short-term assessments, up to a year. The average length of stay is 34 days, with a frequent turnover of students. The unit serves south Essex and the local authorities of Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Bedfordshire and Luton. Nearly all students are registered in both the unit and in their home schools. Most are White British, with a small percentage from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a high proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The unit is managed by Essex County Council's Children Support Service and governed by a local management committee. There is no separate provision for the sixth form students and currently no Key Stage 3 students.

**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

Poplar Adolescent Unit provides a good education for its students. The outstanding leadership of the teacher-in-charge has resulted in high-quality care, guidance and support for students' personal development. It has also given rise to excellent partnerships with medical staff, therapists and social workers within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and outstanding partnerships with the students' 'home' schools. As a result, students are extremely safe and secure, they learn to cope with their mental health issues and they re-engage quickly with learning and make good progress to succeed in their examination courses on return to mainstream schools. This was acknowledged by parents and carers, who praised the work of the unit. They confirmed that their children made good progress as a result of the commitment, energy and determination of staff in helping the children to overcome barriers to learning and re-integrate back into mainstream schools. Students' good progress in learning and personal development prepares them well for their futures in mainstream schooling and for further education and employment.

Students' good spiritual moral and social development is reflected in their rapidly increasing confidence, their good relationships with others, their above-average attendance, and their good behaviour. Students have appropriate opportunities to appreciate and celebrate different cultural backgrounds within the unit. Nevertheless, their cultural development is satisfactory rather than good, because there are insufficient planned opportunities to promote an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of cultures religious traditions and socio-economic conditions in Britain and other countries. Students have a good understanding of staying healthy, through the promotion of healthy eating, carefully planned opportunities for swimming and exercise in the local leisure centre and the strong emphasis on maintaining healthy habits and lifestyles as part of the extremely good Care Programme Approach (CPA).

Teaching is good and challenges students' learning. Teachers make good use of assessment to personalise learning for each individual student, so that activities are precisely matched to students' different learning needs. The good curriculum, developed in very close and highly effective partnerships with local schools, has a strong emphasis on the support for examination courses.

The management committee is well led by the experienced chair, who has ensured all statutory responsibilities are met and provides good support for the teacher-in-charge. Roles and responsibilities of other members of the management committee have yet to be defined in order that they may closely monitor various aspects of the unit's work, so they can form their own view of its quality. All staff have a strong drive and commitment to continuous improvement. They monitor students' learning and the impact of teaching

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and support carefully, through their weekly team meetings. They use the outcomes of the monitoring well in planning and for developing better approaches to teaching or the use of resources within subjects. Good monitoring of teaching and learning at all levels has contributed to accurate self-evaluation. The self-evaluation, together with good support from the local authority, has led to the rapid development of good educational provision within the unit and reflects the unit's good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Develop the strategic role for the management committee by:
  - assigning specific responsibilities for oversight of aspects of the unit's work to individual members
  - implementing a schedule of focused visits to check the quality of the unit's provision and the impact on students' learning and personal development
  - reporting back the findings of such visits to management committee meetings, in order to influence and support the unit's priorities for further development.
- Evaluate the impact of opportunities for developing students' understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures, religious practices and socio-economic conditions within the United Kingdom and other countries on students' personal development, based on:
  - an audit of the opportunities within all the subjects taught
  - the implementation of an action plan based on this audit.

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

Achievement of all pupils, including higher-attainers, those with complex mental health needs, and those who find themselves in difficult circumstances, is good and attainment is broadly average. Students are on course to meet their predicted grades in public examinations, with some set to exceed them. Students highlighted the outstanding care, guidance and support, with very effective links with their 'home' schools, as the most significant factors which enable them to make good progress. One parent/carer said, 'Since his short time in the unit, my son has returned to school with greater confidence and is doing much better than anyone expected; entering for GCSE in art.' In all lessons, learning and progress were good because work was closely matched to individual needs. For example, in a music lesson, a student sang 'Streets of London' to a guitar accompaniment with great expression and good timing, which visibly moved other pupils as they listened to it. Then two other students, who had composed the music and written the lyrics to a farewell song for a fellow student, performed this with feeling and expression. As a result, all students burst into spontaneous applause as they experienced a great sense of wonder and enjoyment.

Students make a good contribution to the community, through fundraising, carrying out responsibilities within the hospital such as distributing books to patients, and by producing their own magazine for the community, 'Poplar Press'. The latest, very

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high-quality edition was produced, with contributions by all students, within just one hour, during the inspection, and dedicated to a student who was leaving and celebrating her time and achievement in the unit. In discussion, all students said they felt extremely safe and could go to any member of staff at any time if they needed help. The safe handling of the internet was very effectively promoted, as was seen when students discussed the safe use of the internet, showing a deep understanding of the potential dangers of social networking sites. Students' good behaviour contributes positively to their learning and is a reflection of their good social and moral development. Students' celebration of the diversity of other's cultures was seen in their appreciation of the Ethiopian culture, when they compared the Oromo language with English, learned to count in Oromo and found out about Ethiopian geography, history, culture, customs and traditions such as dance and music.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

High expectations for learning, good use of resources, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), excellent relationships, brisk lesson pace and

<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.

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good management of behaviour are consistent features of the good teaching seen. Consequently, students enjoy their activities, remain focused on tasks and learn well. Accurate assessment of students' prior learning in their 'home' schools and their current progress informs the CPA, the outcomes of which are used to plan highly individualised learning programmes for each student, which match their examination requirements. Progress is reviewed weekly so that programmes can be quickly adjusted, as necessary, to students' changing needs. Personal, social and health education is another strong feature of the curriculum and permeates the life of the unit. This was seen in goal-setting and community meetings with health and education staff, where students set their own personal goals for the week ahead and also discussed matters of interest, such as the need for setting rules to maintain order within the community. Although there are no Key Stage 3 students at present, the planned curriculum for this key stage reflects the unit's approach to supporting work from students' 'home' schools and ensures a strong emphasis on the development of literacy numeracy and ICT skills. The unit also records progress and sets targets using National Curriculum levels to reflect the expectations of the home schools.

Outstanding care guidance and support was clearly seen at the handover meetings between health and education staff to ensure 'wrap around' care throughout the 24-hour curriculum. Each student's progress and any important issues taking place on the ward and the implications of any issues were discussed each morning and afternoon, before students left the ward for education. The discussion ensured absolute consistency of approach and the maintenance of a predictable and dependable environment where students settle quickly into their routines. The joint contributions to the CPA from the range of professionals, parents and carers and students have a very positive impact on students' learning and personal development.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The teacher-in-charge has been pivotal in recruiting a strong staff team who share the same ambition and drive in developing good provision, within a relatively short space of time. Together, they monitor the impact of teaching and support on each student's progress regularly and use this well to inform priorities for further improvement. The chair of the management committee has also offered good support, although there have been recent changes to the management committee which have meant that not all roles

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and responsibilities are clearly defined. The changes limit the management committee's ability to monitor each aspect of the unit systematically, through focused visits, and to form their own view of the unit's work, so they can make a more effective contribution to its development. The unit keeps parents and carers well informed of their children's progress and involves them actively in the setting and review of targets in their children's individual education plans. Staff liaise closely with parents and carers and listen carefully to their views, particularly of the support they can provide for learning. The careful listening by staff was reflected to the inspector in the positive views expressed by those parents and carers who were involved in telephone discussions with the inspector.

The unit's excellent partnerships with a wide range of professionals to ensure students' well-being and promote their learning are reflected in the regular and ongoing liaison between the teacher-in-charge and manager of CAMHS. This has ensured consistency of approach and highly effective mutual support for developments in provision and resources, such as new, spacious and well-equipped classrooms within the new hospital wing. Outstanding partnerships with schools, established through the careful and timely sharing of students' performance at the stage at which students are referred from and on transfer back to their 'home' schools, ensure a smooth transition, as well as continuity in preparing students for examination courses. The unit ensures that all students have good opportunities to participate in all aspects of provision and that any form of discrimination is tackled well. The rigorous vetting of all staff and visitors, the systematic methods of supervision based on four different levels of intensity according to individual needs throughout the day, the extremely thorough assessments of all potential risks and highly effective training which includes safe handling and procedures to adopt in an emergency, are characteristics of the excellent procedures for safeguarding. The school promotes community cohesion rigorously at a local level, but it has not evaluated the impact of students' understanding and appreciation of the different faiths, cultures and socio-economic conditions in the United Kingdom and other countries, based on an audit of provision within all subjects taught.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>2</b>

## Sixth form

Provision and its management for post-16 students is highly individualised and is of the same, good quality as the rest of the unit. Students receive education and support directly from the unit if they are well enough to attend, or, otherwise, within the ward. As a result of outstanding care guidance and support, students re-engage with learning quickly and are highly motivated to succeed. Consequently, they, at least, keep up with their coursework and are highly motivated to follow their A and AS Level courses on return to a mainstream school. This was seen, for example, when one student was applying for university placement during the inspection, discussing anticipated grades enthusiastically with staff. All students are on course to gain their predicted grades, with some expected to exceed them, as a result of outstanding support for their learning, good quality teaching and a good curriculum. Highly effective liaison between the unit and 'home' schools ensures high-quality lesson planning and use of resources to extend students' learning. Staff 'go the extra mile' to ensure that additional tuition is provided to meet students' needs fully, where this cannot be provided for in the unit.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Although parents and carers did not return their questionnaires, the sample of parents and carers spoken to on the telephone expressed strong support for all aspects of the unit's work. They all said that their children were making good progress as a result of the excellent support and guidance, the very close liaison with the 'home' schools and the strong teaching in the unit. They said that the unit was well managed and that communication between the unit and home was excellent. They said that they were all involved in reviews of their children's care and individual education plans and that they received regular reports on their child's progress. Parents and carers agreed that their children were very safe and that behaviour was good. Parents and carers expressed no negative views about the work of the unit. Inspection findings agreed with parents' and

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carers' views.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Poplar Adolescent 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 no completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 10 pupils registered at the school.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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](http://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"><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.**



14 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Poplar Adolescent Unit, Rochford, SS4 1RB

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me when I inspected your unit recently. This letter is to tell you what I found out about it. Poplar provides you with a good education. I was impressed with how well you get on with each other, which was particularly the case when you sang songs with great feeling for your fellow student who was leaving and burst into rapturous applause after the performance.

You said that you feel very safe in the unit and you are right, because your welfare and interests are safeguarded extremely well. The teacher-in-charge has developed very effective partnerships with your 'home' schools and all the staff and therapists on Poplar ward. You all receive excellent care, guidance and support, which helps you to cope with any problems you may have and to re-engage quickly with learning and achieve well. Good teaching ensures that you make good progress in all your lessons. You are well behaved and you have good attitudes to learning, as you remain focused on your activities and try your best. There are good opportunities for you to complete your coursework and prepare well for return to your 'home' schools and for your future examinations. The unit is managed well and ensures that you are all treated equally and fairly.

I have asked the staff to make just two improvements.

To ensure that the members of the management committee have clear roles so that they can check the quality of each aspect of the unit's work and make their own suggestions for improvement.

To provide you with more opportunities for you to learn about the different faiths, cultures and socio-economic conditions in the United Kingdom and other countries and check the impact of this on your personal development.

You can help by continuing to do your best. Good luck in your examinations

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead inspector

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