

The Hollies Pupil Referral Unit

120 Newport Road, Stafford, ST16 1BY

Inspection dates 28 February–1 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in English and mathematics because they are taught well.
- Teaching is mainly good and occasionally outstanding. Its great strength lies in the individual work programmes that teachers regularly prepare for students.
- The excellent relationships between students and staff make lessons calm and purposeful. Students feel very safe in the unit.
- The progress students make in their personal development is outstanding, improving both their behaviour and attitudes.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the unit and in the community is outstanding. As a result of this students develop a new enthusiasm for their learning and begin to catch up quickly with their work.
- Parents and carers value the work of the unit's staff because they can see rapid improvements in their children's behaviour and attitudes to their learning.
- Good links with local schools and other places students go to study, together with agencies that provide support, mean that students are able to learn in a range of settings.
- The headteacher leads the unit well. She is ably supported by her staff. The correct actions have been taken to raise the quality of teaching, which is rapidly improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers miss opportunities to reinforce students' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Staff do not always give students enough opportunities to learn for themselves.
- Students are not always given sufficient help to understand how well they are learning and be sure what they need to do next to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, three of which were joint lesson observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, The Chair of the Management Committee, a representative of the local authority, The Chair of the District Referral Panel, representatives from external support partners and two parents.
- The inspector observed the unit's work, and looked at a range of documents including those concerning safeguarding, records about attendance and behaviour, data on students' attainment and progress, figures about how many students have been re-integrated into schools, planning and monitoring documents and samples of students' work.
- The inspector spoke to students during the lessons and held a meeting with a group of students to gain their views and opinions.
- A visit was made to one alternative provider (where students go for some courses) and the university gym where students were participating in an enrichment activity.
- Phone conversations were held with three alternative providers.
- The inspector took account of a set of parental questionnaires issued by the school, as there were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Questionnaires from 15 staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Kathy Yates, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Hollies Pupil Referral Unit is a small school for students aged 11 to 16.
- It provides for up to 66 students who have either been, or are at risk of being excluded from their mainstream schools.
- A small number of students have a statement of special educational needs; these relate to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. All other students are supported at school action plus.
- There is much higher proportion of boys than girls.
- Students in Key Stage 3 usually stay at the unit for 1 term.
- Students take a number of courses through alternative provision. The alternative providers include: Stafford College, Nova Training, Greenwood Studios, Independent Learning Centre, The Horse Project and Safeguarding Against Aggressive Anti-Social Behaviour through Sport (SAAAB).
- An above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding from the government for students in local authority care those whose parents are in the armed services, and those known to be eligible for free school meals. There are no students in the unit with parents in the armed forces.
- Most students are White British. A below average proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers take every opportunity to reinforce students' literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons
 - teachers consistently enable students to understand precisely how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve their work
 - students are encouraged to work increasingly independently as they grow in confidence.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students join the unit with skills in mathematics and English below the levels expected for their age. This is usually due to disruption to their previous learning and often poor attendance.
- Achievement over time is good. Although standards in mathematics and English remain below average by the end of Year 11, the overwhelming majority of students speed up their progress so they begin to close the attainment gap with students in mainstream.
- Students make similarly good progress in subjects taught at The Hollies or by alternative providers. This good progress is because students' rapidly improved personal development enables them to behave exceptionally well and have very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Students achieve well in a range of academic and vocational courses on offer because they find the work interesting and appropriately challenging. The success of this was seen during the inspection in a student who was delighted when he achieved his Level 1 numeracy qualification.
- In 2012 all Year 11 students achieved national qualifications. Eight students gained GCSE grades in both English and Mathematics. Generally students in Year 11 are not entered early for GCSE.
- Small classes help to ensure every student is involved in discussions, in turn promoting better communication skills. However, there are missed opportunities in a range of subjects for supporting students reading, writing and numeracy skills. For example teachers sometimes read the work for the students or spell the words for them.
- Students' skills are assessed on entry to the PRU, and at regular intervals until they move on. This information is used well by teachers to provide additional support if necessary, and to plan work which helps fill in gaps in students' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The vast majority of students who left last summer took up a college course or gained a placement with a training provider. This shows that the unit was successful in preparing them for the next stage in education, training or employment.
- There is no difference in progress between different groups of students. This includes boys, girls, students with who have different special educational needs, students from different ethnic minorities and student in receipt of the pupil premium.
- There are too few students who are in the care of the local authority to report on their achievement separately from students known to be eligible for free school meals, as individuals might be identified. Students eligible for pupil premium achieve grades in mathematics in line with other students. In English, in 2012 they achieved about a third of a grade below other students at the unit. The gap in achievement has closed for students in receipt of pupil premium for both English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and occasionally outstanding. Lessons are well planned, challenging and successfully engage the students.

- Staff are keen for students to succeed. Students make good progress because staff are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge, which engages and interests them in their learning.
- Teachers in most lessons have high expectations. They use questioning effectively to help students deepen their understanding. For example in an English lesson good questioning enabled a student to strengthen his knowledge and reflect well on a poem.
- In outstanding lessons observed students knew exactly how well they were learning and how they could improve their work to achieve the next level. This helped students to make faster rates of progress. This is not the case in all lessons.
- The most effective teachers succeed in encouraging students' to work on challenging tasks independently. They successfully encourage students to work and think for themselves. On occasions where the quality is less good, it is because teachers talk too much and are inclined to provide the answers.
- All adult are good role models and this contributes well to the students' eagerness to learn. Behaviour is consistently well managed and all staff are very skilled at quickly improving students' confidence so that they try hard, enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well.
- Students enjoy and value lessons and activities that teach life skills and wider practical activities such as going to the university gym.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is part of the daily experience of the unit. Students have frequent opportunities to improve their personal skills, particularly those that involve interactions with others. This underpins the success the unit has in improving students levels of engagement with learning and allowing many students to successfully re-integrate back into school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is outstanding in the unit. Students are fully involved in their learning and they participate exceptionally well both in the unit and when attending alternative placements, for example on the bricklaying course.
- Students were exceptionally polite and pleasant during the inspection. They showed developing social skills and the confidence to engage in conversations about their learning and progress.
- The behaviour of students in class is outstanding because lessons are planned effectively to engage and interest them in their learning.
- Records show that behaviour improves dramatically throughout students' time at the unit because staff support students effectively to understand what good behaviour means and enable them to apply this to their learning.
- Students spoken to during the inspection said they feel very safe. They know how to stay safe; this is helped by the excellent range of activities in personal, social, health and emotional education. They include teaching about understanding the dangers of smoking alcohol and substance abuse.

- Students confirm there is no bullying at the unit. They say they 'are always listened to, treated fairly and enjoy being at the unit'. They recognise that this has made a big difference to their attitudes towards their learning.
- Parents have exceptional confidence that their children are safe at The Hollies. They say that their children have been very well supported to quickly improve both their behaviour and attendance. One parent commented that their child 'has made tremendous strides in their confidence and in being able to get on with others'.
- Students' attendance typically improves rapidly during their time at The Hollies. For most students the different learning environment and the support for them as individuals give them the incentive to improve their attendance and make good progress in their learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's determination and vision for the unit has created a welcoming and calm environment. She has been well supported by the deputy headteacher in rapidly improving the quality of teaching over the last term.
- Leaders and managers challenge teachers through performance management systems that ensure teachers reach expected national standards. Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. Where any weaknesses are identified teachers receive good feedback and support to improve. Recently this support has improved the quality of marking across all subjects.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements and exceptional ongoing partnership work with parents, carers and professionals ensures vulnerable students are kept safe.
- The good range of subjects and activities provided by the Hollies are effective in engaging students and helping them to improve their skills. Senior leaders ensure they participate in all activities and that there is no discrimination. At Key Stage 4 students study for a good range of qualifications, helping them to move onto college or work.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and is supported effectively by all subjects. For example in a Citizenship lesson observed, students were learning and understanding about human rights in different settings in the community.
- There are exceptionally effective partnerships with local schools and external agencies, which make a strong contribution to students' good progress and well-being. This improves the chances of students returning to their mainstream school.
- The local authority has provided good, regular support for the unit's work. This has included supporting The Hollies to effectively monitor the quality of the work by alternative providers that students attend.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is made up largely of the centre's partners and stakeholders. The members know the strengths and priorities for improvement at The Hollies and keep a close check on how well the unit is doing. They rightly judge that the unit offers a good education to its students, and that students make excellent progress in their personal development. The Chair of the Management Committee visits regularly and provides good support and challenge to the headteacher. The members make sure that performance of staff is checked effectively

and that performance is linked to teachers' salary progression. They check regularly on the units' finances, including the direction of the pupil premium funding, to make sure that individual students are helped and supported in lessons.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	132997
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	402561

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	58
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Phil Smith
Headteacher	Jane Spensley
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2010
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