



Stafford Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132997
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 294043
Inspection date 22 September 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Megee

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	The Stables
School category	Pupil referral unit		The Hollis, 120 Newport Road
Age range of pupils	11–16		Stafford ST16 1BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 241784
Number on roll (school)	7	Fax number	01785 241839
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Jane Spensley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	22 September 2006	294043

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Stafford Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) opened two years ago to serve the Borough of Stafford. The PRU provides education on its own site for pupils in Years 7 to 9 who have been excluded from Stafford schools. It also provides support within other schools for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are at risk of exclusion. All the current pupils are boys, and almost all are of White British heritage. Since it opened, the unit has had five temporary or permanent headteachers, the most recent of whom took up her post two weeks before this inspection. The unit has been closed twice for substantial periods because of staffing or accommodation difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the Stafford PRU requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the unit are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the unit.

The Stafford PRU is not effective predominantly because there have been serious failures in leadership and management which have resulted in pupils being unable to attend sufficiently. While the unit was closed, pupils received little or no teaching and, even now it is open, they have very limited timetables which have been frequently changed or cut. For example, at the time of the inspection, although the unit was open no pupil was able to attend for the full week, and full-time attendance is not planned to begin until later this term. This has taken its toll and resulted in unsatisfactory achievement and personal development for all the pupils, whose academic standards are already very low. Pupils have not been able to develop the basic skills they need for their future. Many aspects of the unit have been badly affected, attendance has been poor, staff have become demoralised, the curriculum is unsatisfactory, and the management committee has been unable to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

The unit has some positive features. Pupils like to come to the unit where they know they enjoy good relationships with the staff and will receive individual attention. The unit makes good arrangements for reducing risk and ensuring pupils' safety. As a consequence, pupils feel relaxed and secure. Teaching is satisfactory, although assessment and the process of setting targets are not good enough. Staff successfully manage any difficult behaviour without fuss, and so pupils conduct themselves well. The new headteacher is under no illusions as to the task ahead and has a good understanding of what is required. Since her arrival, there are indications that the confidence of staff has been restored and that the unit can now begin to turn its performance around.

However, the legacy of the last year or two is that there are no systems for monitoring pupils' progress or teachers' performance. There are no plans or targets for improvement agreed with all the stakeholders, or milestones by which progress can be measured. Thus, self-evaluation and the capacity to secure improvement are inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and increase the amount of curriculum time offered to pupils.
- Devise and implement a realistic development plan for all aspects of the unit's provision, with targets and deadlines that are agreed by all stakeholders.
- Introduce robust procedures to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and to monitor pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' standards are exceptionally low for their age because of their special educational or medical needs and because of significant gaps in their schooling caused by exclusions or non-attendance. Once registered at the PRU, pupils are not able to achieve as much as they should because they do not have sufficient opportunity to attend. This problem was particularly serious earlier in the year when the PRU was closed for many weeks and little or no alternative provision was made available to the pupils. This was the second time this has happened within two years. Parents report that they were very worried that their children would fall behind even further and the inspection confirms that their concerns are fully justified.

When pupils have been able to attend, progress in lessons is generally satisfactory. However, timetables have been chopped and changed frequently, so that neither staff nor pupils have known what is to be taught or even who is expected to attend. This means that pupils' progress has been erratic as well as limited. During the year, it has only been possible to return a few pupils to mainstream school within two terms, which is the unit's aim.

Achievement against individual targets is unsatisfactory because targets are often not written down or are too vague to be effectively evaluated. Any progress made has not been clearly recorded and then built upon.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being are unsatisfactory. Parents say that they have confidence in the staff who create a calm atmosphere and have time for the pupils. Despite the difficulties, one parent wrote that 'My son is slowly getting back to being a happy, sociable little boy.' Attendance is poor, but this is not because pupils do not enjoy learning. Pupils say that they really want to come in full time so that they can get back to a mainstream school as quickly as possible. There are very few pupils in the unit at any one time. Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to learning because, with the low numbers, staff work mostly with individual pupils and consequently know them very well. Pupils feel secure and act in safe ways because of the high degree of vigilance afforded to them.

The pupils generally make healthy choices in what they eat. However, because of the varying patterns of attendance, not all of them have sufficient opportunities to undertake physical exercise and this limits the extent to which they keep fit and lead a healthy lifestyle. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although the development of social skills is hampered because individual social targets are not always sufficiently precise or regularly reviewed. Pupils learn about life in multicultural Britain through their citizenship programme.

When pupils are in the unit, they contribute satisfactorily to their own and to local communities by, for example, taking care of the environment and fundraising for local

charities. They feel they can express their needs as individuals, although there is no pupil council for them to express their views as a group more effectively. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing the basic skills that would contribute to their future well-being and important external agencies such as Connexions are too little involved.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together and this results in good relationships and effective management of behaviour. Consequently, there is a calm and productive atmosphere throughout the unit.

Teachers have adequate knowledge of the narrow range of subjects on offer. Planning of learning is based on an intuitive understanding of each pupil's needs and pupils work on tasks that are demanding and varied. This works satisfactorily with very few pupils attending at any one time. However, there is no formal whole-school system for assessment or setting of targets to enable more pupils to make much faster progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The pupils do not have access to a full week of enjoyable and purposeful learning opportunities. Up until a few weeks before the inspection, the timetable varied from week to week, and pupils, parents and staff were confused about what was on offer on any particular day. Even now, with a set timetable established, pupils are being offered various activities well short of five full days a week. This has led to a lack of balance in each individual's programme and has hampered their achievement and personal development. There is very little enrichment of the curriculum apart from the opportunity to play table tennis.

The recent turmoil has weakened the links with external agencies, such as Connexions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are unsatisfactory. Risk assessments, checks on the backgrounds of staff and child protection procedures are secure and all pupils are kept safe. Pupils at the unit are well supported through the behaviour management procedures, so that there are very few exclusions. Parents are kept informed, especially through telephone calls and meetings with staff. However, the closures and poor management have meant that the pupils, who already had many gaps in their education, have spent and continue to spend a considerable proportion of their time at home. This, in turn, means that they have received too little in the way of guidance and

support, undermining the progress and personal development which they have been able to make.

The unit has no formal tracking and recording system. Academic targets and individual social targets are not always precise enough. Consequently, it is not easy for staff to judge if the pupils have been successful or to give clear guidance on what pupils need to do next in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The unsatisfactory achievement and personal development, poor attendance and inadequate curricular provision and guidance are the result of weak leadership and management. During the past two years, key management systems have not been maintained. There is no improvement planning, no regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and no performance management. The management committee has not received accurate information about the unit's targets and performance, making it impossible for them to monitor progress, even to the extent that they were unaware of the closure of the unit by previous headteachers at very short notice. Information has not been collected and analysed in a way that gives a clear picture of pupils' achievement.

The new headteacher has begun to carry out an analysis of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. She is beginning to draw up plans for priority actions. Staff are feeling more settled and have a clearer picture of their roles and responsibilities. However, without a long-term plan or vision which is shared by the leaders, staff, parents, management committee and other stakeholders, the unit shows insufficient capacity to improve.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

¹ Grade 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Stafford Pupil Referral Unit The Stables The Hollis 120 Newport Road Stafford Staffordshire ST16 1BY

23 September 2006

Dear Pupils

- Thank you for meeting me and helping me with the inspection. This is what I found out about the unit:
- Your behaviour is good because there are plenty of staff around to help you if you get into difficulties.
- You like coming to the unit and wish you could be there for a full day every day.
- When you do come in, you feel relaxed and secure.
- The unit has not given you a good education over the past year and this has prevented you from making as much progress, both socially and in your studies, as you might have done. The new headteacher and the management committee will need some help in making sure that the education you receive is better than it has been so that you can make much faster progress. They need to:
- Devise a plan to improve things as quickly as possible.
- Know more about what is taking place in the classrooms, so that problems can be identified and dealt with.
- Arrange for you to have lessons throughout the week. They will need you and your families to help them get things right and I hope you will make your own suggestions about what they could do. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mick Meggee Lead Inspector