

# Stafford Pupil Referral Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132997
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	320834
<b>Inspection date</b>	7 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Charles Hackett

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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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>	5-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	7
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vacant Position
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Spensley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	The Stables The Hollis 120 Newport Road Stafford ST16 1BY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 241784
<b>Fax number</b>	01785 241839

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Stafford Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) takes students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or in danger of being excluded because of behavioural difficulties. Its aim is to return successfully students in Years 9 and below to a mainstream school. For those students in Years 10 and 11, it seeks to provide a different curriculum from that in a mainstream setting but that enables them to continue in education until their official leaving date. At the time of the inspection, four students were in the care of the local authority. When the PRU was inspected in September 2006, it was judged to require special measures.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the pupil referral unit no longer requires special measures.

Stafford is now a good PRU that has become highly regarded by the local authority and its secondary schools. Leadership and management are outstanding. Under the determined and astute leadership of the headteacher, the PRU has been successfully transformed from the inadequate provision it offered less than two years ago. It has set itself and achieved challenging targets for improvement. Because of its success, it now plays an important role in meeting the needs of students for whom attending a mainstream school has been very difficult, if not impossible.

Students, whether they have been previously excluded permanently from education or are at risk of exclusion, all achieve well. Because teaching and the curriculum are good, they make good progress in both their studies and personal development. Students enjoy their time at the PRU, which leads to big improvements in their attendance and behaviour. Teachers plan very well to meet students' individual needs, although slightly different approaches can result in a few students not always responding equally well to all staff. Nevertheless, because of their improved behaviour, many of those in Year 9 and below can return successfully to a mainstream school.

Excellent links with other services, such as Connexions, youth offending teams and mental health departments, contribute to the good care and welfare of students. This contributes to them being safe and knowing to whom and where to go for help. Regular assessments of their learning and monitoring of behaviour enable staff to have good records of students' achievements and be in a position to work closely with them. Procedures to do this include weekly mentoring meetings, where targets are set for improvements. These help students focus on appropriate aspects but are not always achievable and therefore not as effective as they might be.

The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 includes a good range of experiences that are very beneficial for students' personal development, for example, enabling them to develop the skills they need to behave well in many different situations. Good opportunities also exist to pass external qualifications, although for the few more able these do not include GCSEs.

Since the last previous inspection, the management group has been very effective, together with the senior staff, in addressing the issues identified at that time as being in need of improvement. Good progress has been made in all of these, particularly in relation to the school development plan, which now includes a robust set of improvements linked to the PRU's own accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. A very good emphasis is put on showing how developments will bring about improved outcomes for students.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Implement opportunities for the few more able students to take and pass GCSE.
- Ensure that improvement targets set for students are achievable and can be used to measure progress.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students' good progress is demonstrated by the results of the termly assessments, especially in English and mathematics. Progress in science is satisfactory. The good progress students in Years 9 and below make means that they are in a good position to return to a mainstream school successfully. One parent confirmed the effectiveness of this by commenting, 'The PRU has been marvellous... (her son) has been signed off the PRU and is now in mainstream and not even in the special unit.'

Students' good progress is also reflected by the achievements in passing a range of external tests. These include Young Leaders and Sports Leaders awards and nationally recognised units of achievement certificates (AQA units). Opportunities for the few more able students to take and pass GCSE are not available, although this is now being considered by the PRU.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Good progress in their personal development means that, for many students, they are able to re-engage in learning. They clearly enjoy being at the PRU and this is demonstrated by their improved attendance, particularly in participating in the many opportunities to be involved in physical activities. They recognise the importance of healthy eating, choosing to avail themselves of the fruit available and to discuss the benefits of different foods. For example, on the day of the inspection one student was heard telling others about the importance of eating pasta that evening in readiness for a football tournament the next day.

Students know staff listen to them and the half termly school council meetings give them a chance to contribute to the development of the PRU. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A few students can be reluctant in lessons to respond appropriately but overall they display good improvement in their social skills and behaviour. As a result, they are able to use an increased range of external facilities such as the gym at a local school. Students have a good understanding of the skills important for their future economic well-being through the improvements in literacy and numeracy and the excellent partnership with the Connexions service.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good because of the emphasis staff put on supporting individual students in ways that enable them to learn. Regular assessments in English, mathematics and science ensure that teachers know how well students are achieving. They use this information effectively to plan the work they expect students to complete.

Typical features of lessons include careful attention to students' different needs, good use of praise and quiet encouragement to stay on task. Learning support assistants play an important part in this. Up to date marking of their work encourages the students to try their best. Students' behaviour is usually managed well although, on a few occasions, this is not always consistent and can cause some differences in the responses of students.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Much thought has been given to developing a curriculum that appeals to students and, as a result, students participate and enjoy almost all their lessons. For students up to Year 9 the emphasis on core subjects and personal, social and health education prepares them well for a return to mainstream.

Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the alternative curriculum available. They enjoy and achieve well in courses, such as a 10 week programme based at Wolverhampton Football Club and Young Leaders and Sports Leaders awards. A weekly one day course with the Fire Service is another popular and effective course. Opportunities to take external examinations exist but currently there are no courses leading to GCSE.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Excellent links with other specialist agencies and services contribute greatly to ensuring that students are safe and very well cared for. This has a very positive impact on the personal development of all students, including those in the care of the local authority.

Regular group meetings give students the chance to put forward their views and know that there is always someone to whom they can talk. A parent commented how much difference this has made to her daughter's confidence and chances to be successful when she leaves school, noting, 'This is a really good place where children build a bond with staff.' Weekly assemblies give students the chance to celebrate the success of others. The targets to which students agree are given appropriate prominence by being displayed on the front of their workboxes but are often too general to be effective in recognising a student's progress. For example, a target to stop swearing is not being achieved so is repeated for the next few weeks, when in reality the student may well have made some improvement by reducing the extent of his swearing.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Through outstanding leadership and management, there have been considerable improvements made to the PRU's effectiveness in a relatively short amount of time. The headteacher, management committee and staff have all shown a strong commitment to addressing the weaknesses apparent at the time of the last inspection and ensure that the PRU now provides the best it can for its students. This has led to a number of improvements, such as students now attending regularly, the curriculum being extended, and effective procedures to support students.

The PRU has an accurate view of its effectiveness. Its excellent development plan shows how it wants to make an impact on students' achievements, their enjoyment and aspects of their personal development, for example their safety, understanding the importance of being healthy, ability to contribute to their community and their future economic well-being. The management committee has been very prominent in its support. Regular meetings and clear monitoring systems enable it to have an accurate view of the quality of provision being offered. The

improvements made mean that the PRU is quite rightly regarded by the local authority as a vital part of its provision for its disaffected students.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Stafford Pupil Referral Unit, Stafford ST16 1BY

Thank you so much for making us very welcome when we visited the PRU recently. A special thank you to those of you involved in cooking and serving our lunch. It was a real pleasure to spend time with you.

We believe your PRU is now good, which is a big improvement to when it was last inspected. You have played your part in this with your improvements in attendance and behaviour. Your headteacher has played a key role in this in her determination to ensure the PRU provides the best it can for you. The teaching, curriculum, care and support you receive are all good. As a result, we feel you make good progress with your learning.

We do think, though, that the PRU could help you improve even more if your improvement targets were more helpful in showing you more clearly how well you are progressing. We also think the PRU should give you the chance to take GCSE courses if you want to.

By the time you read this letter you will have competed in the football tournament. We do hope it went well and, even if you didn't win, you enjoyed the experience.

Best wishes. Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett Lead inspector

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