

Barnsley PRU

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134055
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	381597
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Keith Massett

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Michael Sanderson
Headteacher	Josie Thirkell
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Massett
Marian Thomas

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to inform planning for the inspection. Inspectors visited six provisions and observed 13 teachers or teaching assistants teaching 13 lessons and part lessons, one of which was a joint observation with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed one-to-one support for an individual pupil and undertook learning walks. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Management Committee and pupil referral unit staff including senior managers. The inspectors observed the unit's work and looked at a number of documents, including the development plan, safeguarding policies and minutes of the management committee meetings. They listened to pupils read, observed reading activities in classes and analysed 40 parents' and carers' questionnaires. They also analysed other questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Since the last inspection Barnsley Pupil Referral Unit has experienced major restructuring and development. The Building Schools for the Future programme enabled the unit to move to new accommodation within Springwell Community School and it now supports pupils from the age of four. Provision for pupils up to the age of 11 is at the community school site. Secondary aged pupils are dispersed in specialist centres of the unit located within each of the borough's secondary schools. Six centres are currently open and there will be an additional three by September 2012. Pupils are admitted from across the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley. Pupils who attend the unit have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and are at risk of exclusion from school. The unit also provides for anxious and school-phobic pupils and some special interventions for teenage mothers. The executive headteacher leads the Community School and the unit's provision. Pupils are predominantly White British and include eight children in the care of the local authority. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. The unit works closely with a wide range of agencies and providers.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good pupil referral unit. It secures marked improvements in pupils’ social, emotional and academic development. This results in positive changes in attitudes to education. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development support good gains in personal development. Provision in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, as well as for anxious or school-phobic pupils, is often outstanding but it is less well embedded in the more recently established dispersed of the unit’s provisions.
- Pupils’ achievement is good. Prior to joining the unit many have experienced periods of disruption to their learning and are working at levels much lower than those expected for their age. They settle quickly, make faster than expected academic progress and are successfully narrowing the gap between their levels of attainment and national age-related expectations.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe. Pupils feel secure because good arrangements exist to assure their safety. Pupils, staff, parents and carers say behaviour is generally good and inspectors agree. Where standards of behaviour slip, this is managed very effectively. Attendance and punctuality improve rapidly for most pupils.
- Teaching results in good learning, with some exemplary practice evident. Support for pupils with complex behavioural or medical needs is outstanding. Pupils thrive in lessons where teaching is based on an accurate understanding of their needs, the curriculum is adapted and there is effective use of accurate assessment information. The very best practice is not yet embedded across all provisions, resulting in some variations. Teaching assistants provide skilled support for learning.
- The executive headteacher has provided the vision and inspiration for the strategic restructure and change of the service. Leaders at all levels work effectively as a team. The management committee has broadened its membership and provides appropriate challenge and support. Self-evaluation is highly accurate and there is very good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more good and outstanding teaching, particularly in the newly established dispersed provision's teaching, and hence further improve pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that teaching and the curriculum are adapted to meet individual pupils' needs and result in rapidly improving outcomes across the different provisions
 - ensuring strategies to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are consistently applied
 - further reducing the small proportion of pupils who do not attend regularly and who are persistently absent
 - developing partnerships with secondary schools to increase opportunities for pupils.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are of the view that pupils achieve well and make good progress. Inspection findings support this view. Where the unit's practice has had more time to develop and embed the progress for pupils it is often outstanding. Although attainment is low overall when pupils leave, they achieve well from their individual starting points. Pupils, including the disabled and those with special educational needs, settle quickly, make faster than expected academic progress and are successfully narrowing the gap between their levels of attainment and national age-related expectations. Pupils on short-term intervention programmes and those on longer-term placements achieve equally well. Gaps in reading, writing, communication and mathematics are identified early although pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 remains below the expected levels for their age. Staff set appropriate learning targets for pupils and the majority make good progress towards these. Older pupils gain a variety of externally accredited level 1 and level 2 awards and qualifications. Pupils leave with a wide variety of accreditation and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Lessons observed during the inspection confirmed pupils' learning is good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils respond well to the 'Elements blended curriculum', designed by staff to specifically meet the needs of the pupils at the unit. Topics and the use of story-telling and narrative is at its centre and there are many opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills whilst learning through this highly relevant and interesting curriculum. In one lesson observed at the Community School, Key Stage 2 pupils made outstanding progress in their understanding and use of bar charts. In another, at Highfields, pupils were thoroughly absorbed by the 'strikes and riots' topic. The teaching and resources brought the topic alive and pupils not only made outstanding progress in learning about the topic but also in developing and practising their literacy skills.

Strong partnerships with post-16 providers ensure appropriate progression routes are available for all leavers. Some pupils shared their high aspirations with inspectors and explained how they were on track for the entry requirements for college courses. The percentage that do not access education, employment or training when they leave has reduced significantly since the last inspection.

Quality of teaching

The good and sometimes outstanding quality of teaching is reflected in pupils' largely good learning and progress. This enables pupils to improve their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. Skilled staff are enthusiastic, hard-working and knowledgeable about the children in their care and the subjects they teach. They successfully engage and enthuse pupils, many of whom have become disillusioned with education. Staff have high standards, expect a lot from pupils and they develop excellent relationships with them. Pupils, in turn, grow in confidence and become more able to both work independently and work with others or as part of a team. In the best lessons some pupils make outstanding progress. In these lessons teachers plan lessons conscientiously and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Strong relationships, built on trust, have been established. The unit's curriculum, learning objectives and success criteria are adapted to ensure they are well matched to pupils' needs.

Assessment is accurate and used as a tool to help pupils understand how to improve their work and for staff to gauge pupils' understanding and learning, and to refine their teaching when necessary. High-quality resources engage the learners. In these lessons behaviour is often outstanding, as the pupils are fully engaged in the learning. The planned curriculum ensures that there are many opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to support pupils' social and emotional development. However, the best practice is not yet systematically embedded across the service, with greatest variations seen in the dispersed provisions. Consequently, the extent to which lessons are challenging and well matched to pupils' specific needs can vary, as does the consistency with which strategies to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are applied. The management of pupils with complex behavioural or medical needs is excellent and, as a result, the majority of pupils show good attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning, often delivering lessons well and making effective interventions with individual pupils. The new, high-quality facilities make a significant contribution to learning. However, some of the new provisions do not have access to the full range of technology, such as interactive whiteboards, in all teaching areas. The majority of parents and carers agree with inspection findings that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers agree that pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils who arrive with identified emotional and behavioural needs often make great strides in managing their behaviour. High expectations, alongside the supportive and empathetic approach of all staff, help to reduce interruptions to learning in the classroom. Pupils say behaviour is good for the majority of the time and are well aware of what to do if they encounter difficulties with others. They say they feel safe and the majority have a good understanding of, for example, right and wrong, and the needs of others. Instances of any type of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly. All the parents/carers who returned questionnaires agreed that their children feel safe and that any cases of bullying are effectively dealt with. Pupils' attendance improves rapidly and this is sustained whilst at the unit so that, for a large majority, attendance becomes broadly average in comparison to the national average. A small proportion of pupils do not attend regularly and some of these are persistently absent. They respond exceptionally well to the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The unit has made a significant contribution to the reduction of permanent exclusions in the local authority to virtually nil. Since the last inspection behaviour records indicate fewer recorded incidents of poor behaviour and a decreasing number of fixed-term exclusions. One parent commented that 'this is the first school where my daughter has felt safe and happy'. Others commented about 'supportive staff' who are 'welcoming and friendly' and who help children to 'settle quickly' by showing 'considerable support and empathy'.

Leadership and management

The highly effective leadership of the executive headteacher and senior leaders has driven the unit forward during a sustained period of restructuring and development. Leadership and staffing structures continue to be adapted as the dispersed provisions open. Throughout this period of significant change good outcomes for pupils have been sustained. Professional development for teachers and support staff has been used effectively to ensure staff are well prepared to support these new developments and continue to improve attainment. Systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have been improved since the last inspection. Central recording systems ensure consistency of practice across the different sites. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used well to inform development planning. Plans are clear and ensure all staff know what is needed to raise attainment further. This demonstrates clearly the unit's good capacity to improve further.

The management committee has broadened its membership and has effectively supported the restructuring programme. The committee has strong links with the governing body of the community school and some members serve on both bodies. Leaders, managers and the management committee ensure policies and procedures for safeguarding are met and that practice is of a good standard. They have ensured that the unit is a safe and cohesive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within the unit are good and, as a result, successfully eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. Leaders have built highly successful partnerships with a range of organisations which benefit pupils. Links with the secondary schools in which the dispersed provisions are based are beginning but are still relatively underdeveloped. The unit is extremely successful at engaging parents and carers who agree that it responds well to any concerns, helps them to support their children's learning and keeps them well informed.

The curriculum is well matched to individual pupils' needs. It is good overall but in Key Stage 1 and 2 where there has been time to trial and fine tune, it is outstanding. The breadth and balance of the curriculum ensures it is extremely successful in contributing to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. The innovative Elements curriculum and other high-profile events, such as the film festival and opportunities for music, support staff in raising the self-esteem and aspirations of pupils.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barnsley PRU, Barnsley, S71 2AT

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). It was good to meet you all. It was also good to hear how so many of you value the unit and how the staff help you. We want to send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us during our visit and told us so many things about the unit. We agree with those of you who told us that you think your school is good. These are just some of the things we particularly enjoyed:

- the improvements most of you make in your behaviour and attendance
- the way in which staff help and care for you so that you feel safe
- the good quality teaching that helps you make good progress in lessons
- the interesting curriculum and range of learning activities.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to do some things to improve the unit even more:

- improve teaching further so that there are more good and outstanding lessons
- ensure strategies to improve literacy and numeracy are consistently applied
- ensure that teaching and the curriculum are always adapted to meet your needs
- improve the attendance of those who do not attend regularly
- improve partnerships with secondary schools to increase opportunities for pupils.

We hope you will help by attending regularly and always trying your best in lessons.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Massett
Lead Inspector

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