

Gloucester and Forest Pupil Referral Service

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135330
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	381874
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2012
Lead inspector	Denise Morris

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The Local Authority
Chair	Malcolm Bride
Headteacher	Paul Holroyd
Date of previous school inspection	February 2009
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Morris

Additional inspector

Graham Pirt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 18 lessons jointly with the senior leaders, taught by 17 different teachers over a period of ten hours. Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the management committee, staff and pupils. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the work of the pupil referral unit, and looked at teachers' planning, curriculum documents, minutes of recent management meetings, pupils' projects and assessment information. The inspector received 14 responses to the inspection questionnaires from parents and carers. Several staff and pupils also completed questionnaires which were taken note of.

Information about the school

This pupil referral service (PRU) provides for pupils who have been excluded from their mainstream schools either on a permanent or fixed-time basis. Provision is also made for pupils with long-term attendance issues and for pupils who move into the county awaiting special school placement. The PRU also support pupils on a short-time basis who are at risk of being excluded. The majority of pupils have behavioural and social difficulties. About 20% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of White British and a few pupils receive support to learn English as an additional language. One in every ten pupils are in the care of the local authority.

The three learning centres that together make up the PRU cater for different age groups. Russet House in Gloucester caters for long-stay pupils (over 20 days) at Key Stages 3 and 4. The Raikes Centre in Gloucester caters for short-stay pupils of less than 20 days at Key Stages 3 and 4 and for fixed-term exclusion at all key stages. This centre also caters for long-stay pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2. Joy's Green Centre in the Forest of Dean caters for long- and short-stay pupils of all ages. There are 68 pupils who are single registered at the PRU and are on one of the sites. Within the centres there is a mixture of single- and dual-registered pupils on either a full- or part-time basis. The dual-registered pupils spend some of their time based at their local schools and receive outreach support from staff at the PRU.

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 service. It has improved since the previous inspection because there is now an accurate system to assess how well each pupil achieves in the short time they are at the PRU. The PRU is not outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding and as a result pupils are making good rather than better progress.
- The vast majority of pupils, including those with a statement for special educational needs, achieve well. They make good progress in communication, literacy and numeracy and younger pupils achieve well in reading from often low or very low starting points. Progress in reading and writing are improving because of the sharp focus on the use of phonics (matching letters and sounds) and the use of appropriate reading and writing tasks, linked to their interests for older pupils.
- Teaching is good across the three sites. Mostly teachers are skilled at managing behaviour and all pupils have equal access to an exciting range of learning opportunities that meets their needs and abilities well. Occasionally questioning is not used well enough to extend pupils' skills and, as a result, the pace of their learning dips and their progress is lessened. Assessment procedures are good but are not always used to plan the next steps in learning.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have good attitudes to learning. Pupils are well cared for and parents, carers and pupils overwhelmingly, and rightly, say that all the sites are safe and secure. All pupils have behaviour targets and most know what they need to do to improve.
- The headteacher and other leaders have created a supportive ethos in each centre that enables pupils to flourish. Leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. The rich curriculum supports pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is outstanding so that pupils are able to make excellent progress in their learning by:
 - ensuring all teachers make effective use of the assessment system to plan pupils' next steps so that tasks are closely linked to individual pupils' abilities

- ensuring that teachers' questions are clearly focused and pupils are given enough time to respond to them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers say that their children achieve well. Inspection evidence supports this view. Attainment is well below average, often because of disruptions to pupils' education because of past social, emotional and behavioural needs. However, pupils across all three centres make good progress from their low starting points in the short time that they are at the PRU. Pupils make the best progress in their personal development because of the caring and supportive ethos that the PRU provides. This ensures that pupils can concentrate on their learning and gives them opportunities to catch up on past lost time. Younger pupils make good progress in reading because of the high levels of attention and the appropriate reading materials provided. They use their phonic skills well to read unknown words and show good enjoyment of books. This was evident for pupils in Years 2 to 6. They clearly enjoyed looking at books in a literacy lesson, for example when finding information about the Ancient Greeks. They noticed that they were using donkeys and buffalo to pull carts. One pupil likened this to modern day Greece, where he had been on a visit; 'They still use donkeys,' he said. Older pupils regularly use books to find information for their topics. They also use the internet very well to search for ideas and knowledge to support their work. They benefit from the good quality curriculum topics which are closely linked to their interests. These engage their imaginations and ensure that they want to learn more.

Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards their accredited qualifications. They benefit from the very good partnerships that the PRU has with its mainstream partners so that work is often prepared and passed between the schools. Staff at the PRU are skilled at supporting learning at this level and, as a result, GCSE passes are improving year by year. Three pupils in Year 10, for example, were observed working very well on their own individual history tasks about the Second World War. The tasks were linked well to their previous learning in their own schools. Each undertook independent research on their topic that they could feed back to the others. As a result, pupils built on their prior learning, used different sources very well and benefited from extended questioning to seek even more knowledge. Pupils have good opportunities to undertake other qualifications such as entry level courses and have some vocational experiences. All pupils do well in art and design during their time at the PRU and many have been involved in 'Big Art' projects where they have explored differences between Indian and African art.

The effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that they make good progress in managing their own behaviour and improve their personal development during their time at the PRU. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour rapidly decrease when a pupil returns to a mainstream school after a period at the PRU.

Quality of teaching

Teaching across the school has improved because lessons are exciting and usually engage pupils well in their learning. Teaching is almost always good. Parents and carers are right when they say their children are well taught. Most teachers ensure that the fast pace of learning results in pupils making better than expected progress given their starting points. This was exemplified well in a Year 8 English lesson where very good questioning extended their understanding of the difference between similes and metaphors. In a few lessons, teaching is less successful because teachers do not make the best use of assessment information about each individual pupil to plan their next steps. As a result, tasks are then sometimes too easy or too difficult. Questioning is a major strength of the most successful lessons. This helps to challenge the more-able pupils and encourage the least able so that they can all find answers. Occasionally, teachers' questioning is not focused well enough on improving individual pupils' skills and in a few lessons pupils were not given enough time to answer.

Teachers make very good use of the creative curriculum to design their lessons, matching tasks to pupils' needs and extending their abilities. Homework is regular and targets are well known by pupils. Those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are well supported enabling them to make the same good progress as their peers.

Teaching effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the use of projects in which pupils search for information and complete small-scale studies during their time at the PRU. These activities foster pupils' awareness of social responsibility and how to know right from wrong, and prepare them well for their futures.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers consider that behaviour at the school is good and that their children are kept safe. 'I cannot praise the school highly enough. There has been a significant improvement in my son's behaviour since he started. They have done wonders in improving his self-esteem and making him feel valued,' wrote a parent. Pupils agree that behaviour at the PRU is good. In discussion, pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and that there is no bullying at the school. Most pupils respond well to the school's strategies to promote their behaviour and safety. Older pupils, for example, say they understand the dangers of smoking, taking drugs or alcohol and that the PRU gives them clear guidance about staying safe. Pupils say that staff deal with any behaviour or safety incidents quickly and fairly. A few older pupils say they would like more freedom but are aware that they need to earn this by showing that they can be trusted.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through the rich curriculum. Regular trips help to extend pupils' awareness of their local area and the wider community. Their understanding of different cultures is fostered well through small projects such as in Year 7 science, where pupils were finding out about the foods in other countries. The teacher used pupils' own knowledge

successfully to extend understanding of how people in different cultures could have balanced diets. Pupils say they enjoy their time at the PRU and this is evident in the dramatic improvement in most pupils' attendance once they start there. As a result, overall attendance is average and improving rapidly.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the PRU. Together with other senior leaders and the management committee, he has embedded his ambition and driven improvement through rigorous training and monitoring so that he is fully aware of the PRU's strengths and areas for development. There is a good track record of successful improvement since the last inspection, demonstrating the capacity for further improvement. An example of how the PRU has moved forwards is the very effective assessment system which ensures that each and every pupil's performance can be measured even when they attend for a very short time. This helps to raise their self-esteem and provides a reason for them to be proud of themselves. Performance management has been high on the agenda, supported by effective professional development, resulting in good teaching and learning across the different centres, ensuring that pupils' achievement improves rapidly from their starting points. The management committee are proactive in ensuring that school leaders are rigorously challenged about their decisions and about pupils' achievements.

Leaders promote equality well and rigorously tackle any discrimination through the exciting curriculum. All pupils, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, have equal access to the many activities provided. They value the behaviour system and work hard to achieve their points. Each centre promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through stories, visits and small projects. The school works well with other schools to promote re-integration where possible and to find placements for pupils when they are ready to return to mainstream. A sign of the PRU's success is the rapidly decreasing number of pupils who return to the PRU for a second time. Parents and carers are very pleased with the PRU's work. 'They have been very supportive for me and my son, who receives all the help and support he needs. All the staff are approachable and caring,' wrote a parent. Safeguarding procedures at each site are rigorous, fully meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



11 July 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Gloucester and Forest Pupils Referral Service, Gloucester
GL4 0RQ**

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you. It was kind of you to tell us about the work that you do and show us your books. We were pleased to learn that you enjoy your time at the PRU. We can tell this because your attendance is improving quickly. Well done!

We found your PRU to be good. This is because you make good progress in your lessons, due to mostly good teaching. We enjoyed looking at your work and listening to some of you reading your books. Your reading skills are improving. We were impressed by the way that older pupils work hard to achieve their exam passes. There are lots of other good things at your school, such as the way you know your targets and that your behaviour is improving. We are pleased that you try to continue to improve when you return to mainstream schools.

Your leaders look after you and keep you safe. We are asking them to make the PRU even better by ensuring that there is a greater proportion of lessons providing you with outstanding learning opportunities. We would like teachers to make sure that they question you carefully to ensure you understand your learning. We are also asking teachers to make better use of the assessment system so that they plan tasks that are linked closely to your individual abilities. This will help you do even better and build on your skills.

We hope you will help by continuing to attend regularly and work hard in your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Denise Morris
Lead Inspector

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