



# The Thurrock Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114702  
**Local Authority** THURROCK  
**Inspection number** 300802  
**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Alan Lemon

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit	<b>Education Centre address</b>	Daiglen Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community		South Ockendon
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16		Essex RM15 5RR
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 853781
<b>Number on roll (education Centre)</b>	72	<b>Fax number</b>	01708 853267
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Roberts-Egan
<b>Date of previous education Centre inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over two days.

## Description of the education Centre

The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) has provision for primary and secondary pupils. The primary and secondary units are housed in separate buildings on one site. The majority of pupils are of secondary school age. There are no girls in the primary provision and they are a minority in the secondary unit. Pupils are referred to the PRU as a result of being permanently excluded from school, for failure to attend school or because they are awaiting transfer to a new school. Pupils have had difficulties sustaining a place at school mainly as a result of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many also have additional learning difficulties with literacy in particular. A minority have statements of special educational need. Nearly all pupils are White British. The large majority experience considerable social and economic disadvantage.

The last inspection found the PRU had serious weaknesses in aspects of its provision and in areas of pupils' achievement. Subsequent monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate has shown the PRU has made good progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses.

The PRU recently changed name from Culver Education Centre (Pupil Support) to The Thurrock Pupil Referral Unit. Pupils from the nearby Tilbury PRU have also joined with those of the Culver Centre and are now educated in The Thurrock PRU.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the education Centre

### Grade: 3

The PRU's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Teaching and learning, pupils' personal development and their achievement are satisfactory.

The PRU's effectiveness is satisfactory and it is providing value for money. It has made good progress in eliminating serious weaknesses in standards and provision found during the last inspection. The PRU is carrying on with a substantial programme of developments, based on its good self-evaluation, and out of this it has achieved some considerable improvements in key areas of its work. This underlines a good capacity for further improvement. A sea change in leadership and management, which is now good, accounts for the success. The neighbouring primary school's headteacher, acting as the PRU's strategic manager, has rapidly established the expectations and direction to raise standards and improve provision where these were recognised as weak. As a result of key leadership and teaching appointments, the primary unit has been transformed. The warmth, welcome and concern for each pupil's well-being ease the most apprehensive of them into a trusting relationship and the motivation to succeed in learning and return to school. Their confidence and self esteem build well and personal development is good. Primary pupils are taught effectively, enjoy learning and, as a result, achieve well.

Among the PRU's current priorities is to achieve a similar transformation of the secondary unit. Here, leadership and management have had a satisfactory impact on standards and provision. Key appointments to take the unit forward are being pursued. The provision for secondary pupils is adequate and they achieve satisfactorily. The range of work and activities is being broadened, particularly by drawing on external resources to provide a variety of work related learning. Pupils appreciate these opportunities, which help them towards further training and employment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are prepared to cooperate and behave well but learning is not always challenging and engaging enough for them to be enthusiastic workers. While positive relationships with adults help with their personal development, limited opportunities for responsibility and independence are restricting pupils. Effective monitoring and evaluation within the PRU means the shortcomings of teaching and the strategies to remedy them are understood. However, tackling these areas is at an early stage.

The PRU has made substantial headway on developing its partnerships and networks of support. Links with health and children's services means help for pupils and their families are more comprehensive and well coordinated. The work of the PRU is being integrated fully with all of the schools it serves. In particular, through constructive partnership with schools, effective ways of supporting pupils and the avoidance of placing them in the PRU are now being used. The scope for pupils to return to school has increased and rates of return have improved. Confidence in the growing effectiveness of the PRU is shared by schools and the local authority to the extent that considerable financial resources are being invested in its development.

## What the education Centre should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in the secondary unit particularly, by providing effective opportunities for pupils to work independently and take greater responsibility for their own learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards across the PRU are below average because pupils' education has been disrupted and many have learning difficulties. Most settle reasonably well into the PRU's routines and expectations and begin making progress. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Primary age pupils make better progress because all of the provision made for them is at a more advanced stage of development compared to that for secondary pupils. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties is understood and as these pupils are supported effectively they progress well. Good support for primary pupils in improving behaviour and attitudes raises their confidence and self esteem. Effective teaching and learning means primary pupils achieve well in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Secondary age pupils make satisfactory progress, but the quality of teaching and learning is too variable. While most pupils are cooperative, their lessons do not always engage them well or encourage their efforts.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The PRU develops pupils' confidence and self esteem satisfactorily and primary pupils' personal development is good. The majority, who are the secondary pupils, are not as positively motivated, although their behaviour is good. Attendance is high among primary pupils and lower for secondary pupils. There has been a modest improvement in the attendance of secondary pupils.

The extent to which pupils adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles is good. Pupils' contributions to the community are satisfactory. They voice their views through the school council and influence life in the local community through, for example, the work of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet. Overall, secondary pupils' personal qualities, satisfactory progress in learning basic skills and experience of vocational courses prepare them soundly for their life beyond school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. As a result of the good expertise and effective team work in the primary unit, teaching and learning are good. Teachers and assistants know pupils and their needs particularly well, using this information effectively to plan work and approach activities in interesting and engaging ways for pupils. Relationships are good, despite this being a difficult area for some pupils. Behaviour, which can sometimes be challenging, is managed well so that lessons proceed uninterrupted and they make good progress. Pupils who experience difficulties are helped to get quickly back to work.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the secondary unit. Some lessons are well prepared, with pupils' learning needs in mind and careful thought given to the use of resources. While lessons are planned with clear learning objectives, these features are not always put to good use to promote learning. At times pupils are not enthused about learning as activities are controlled predominantly by the teacher. As a result, too much of pupils' time is spent in listening or carrying out undemanding tasks. Pupils are gaining too little enjoyment from learning as a consequence and their efforts are sometimes minimal.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The PRU is adapting and improving its programme of work and activities to meet pupils' needs. This has been largely achieved in the primary unit, where learning opportunities are good. Across the PRU the balance between subjects is satisfactory and there is appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills, such as in reading. In the secondary unit the main approaches to learning do not encourage pupils enough to use initiative and to be effective at solving problems. The PRU is currently engaged in improving the range of academic and vocational learning opportunities available for secondary pupils.

Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is satisfactory. All secondary pupils receive guidance on sex and drug education and how to deal with bullying, which contributes to them being safe. Through its improving links with external agencies, pupils are soundly made ready for life beyond school. Most secondary pupils spend two days a week at college or on a long term work experience placement. Some pursue the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or work for the rangers at a nearby outdoor centre.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Pupils and parents speak highly of the care provided by the PRU and their confidence is well placed. It works successfully to raise pupils' attendance. The PRU is developing its links with community organisations and has established some strong partnerships. Links with a local college and the careers service are improving. The Employability Programme is equipping pupils with many skills including managing money, writing job applications and handling interviews successfully. The number of pupils returning successfully to schools has increased significantly.

While most of the PRU's health and safety procedures are secure, it still has some work to do to improve the administration of some aspects of its work. A system for tracking pupils' academic progress has been in place for just over one year. Teachers in the primary unit make good use of the information gained from the assessments of pupils' progress to plan their teaching. Primary pupils' views are that their lessons are challenging and very interesting. In the secondary unit, assessment information is not used as well and here pupils said that a lot of their work is unchallenging.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The PRU has moved forward considerably by improving and developing key aspects of provision as a result of the determined and skilled leadership of the strategic manager and her team. The provision for primary pupils has improved well, as have partnerships with schools. This is resulting in effective work by the PRU and schools in maintaining pupils in schools. The links between the primary unit and the neighbouring primary school have been hugely productive.

The management committee has played an effective role in supporting and guiding the PRU in its development. Monitoring and evaluation of the PRU's work is good, although some systems are still fairly new, such as tracking pupils' progress. While a clear grasp of the PRU's strengths and areas for development are understood, which has helped transform Key Stages 1 and 2, work on improving provision in Key Stages 3 and 4 is at an early point. The strategy for improvement here is clear although the impact of developments so far have not had time to make teaching and learning more consistently good.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>Education Centre Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the education Centre work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the education Centre's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this education Centre require special measures?	No
Does this education Centre require a notice to improve?	No

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

17 January 2007

Dear Pupils

The Thurrock Pupil Referral Unit, Daiglen Drive, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 5RR

We thoroughly enjoyed the two days we spent with you during the recent inspection. We thank all of you for your friendliness and special thanks go to those who took the time to share their views about the PRU with us.

These are the things we most liked about the PRU.

- Most of you enjoy the PRU because it is a friendly place and staff are always helpful.
- Your attendance is improving, especially in the primary unit.
- While a few of you have difficulties that occasionally require the staff's help, your behaviour is good.
- You are all making progress, more so in the primary unit where teaching and the support for you are good.
- Many of you are succeeding in getting back to school permanently or, if leaving school, going into employment, training or college courses.

This is what we have said needs improving to make the PRU better:

- teaching and learning in the secondary unit, especially by making more opportunities for you to work independently and be more responsible for your own learning. This should make lessons livelier for you, as those we spoke with thought lessons were sometimes dull.

Once again, many thanks for the pleasant time spent with you.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector