

Linhope Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131999
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	315898
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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 on roll	
School	112
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Jeffrey Lough
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2004
School address	Linhope Rd West Denton Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2LW
Telephone number	0191 2674447
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The unit provides education and support for pupils in Years 1 to 11 who have been excluded from mainstream schools. There are places for 98 pupils, although at the time of the inspection there were 112 attending with no pupils in Years 1 or 2. The great majority of pupils are boys and very few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over 70% are eligible for free school meals and many live in areas of high social deprivation. All pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and many have additional literacy and numeracy needs. Six of the pupils are in the care of the local authority. Significant numbers are involved in the criminal justice system. Prior to attending the unit many pupils have spent long periods out of mainstream school and have negative attitudes to learning. Eight pupils have a statement of special educational needs, although almost all had been identified as requiring additional support in their mainstream school. The unit has gained the Healthy Schools Award and Basic Skills Quality Mark. The local authority is currently reorganising provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and this is likely to have an impact on the organisation of the unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good pupil referral unit that provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The 'team around the child' approach ensures that the unit makes a significant difference to the life chances of pupils. It focuses on developing the personal, social and moral education of pupils and as a result, the behaviour and attendance of most of them improve significantly. Pupils begin to value themselves and regain their self-confidence and self-esteem. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools or move to appropriate special education. Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in reading, spelling and mathematics. When they leave Key Stage 4 over 80% of pupils go on to study at local colleges, gain employment or enter work-based learning.

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Teaching and learning are good because teachers are very skilled at managing disruptive behaviour. Most pupils work hard and enjoy their time in class. In the best lessons, teachers' feedback to pupils gives them a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In a small number of lessons there is too much whole class teaching and the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. In Key Stage 2 the curriculum rightly focuses on improving pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy and in art, design technology and information and communication technology (ICT). The unit recognises that some Key Stage 4 pupils stay in the unit for too long and is working with the local authority to find more suitable educational options. Some of these pupils successfully take part in a variety of vocational programmes, including construction, motor vehicle work, catering and hairdressing. Pupils who attend these courses are particularly well prepared for the world of work.

Pastoral care is very good. Most parents and carers are very pleased with the positive changes in the attitudes of their children. Despite the extremely disruptive behaviour shown by many pupils when they join the unit, most develop a good rapport with each other and with staff. Initial assessment is very thorough and good individual behaviour plans are drawn up. In spite of the best efforts of the staff, information from referring mainstream schools is not always as comprehensive as it should be and this can delay the allocation of academic targets and the monitoring of progress. Behaviour is checked meticulously and good behaviour rewarded. The atmosphere in the unit is usually friendly and positive, pupils report there is little bullying and when it does happen it is dealt with effectively. A small number of pupils take part in local charitable events and participate in school councils. The unit has appropriate policies and procedures to ensure child protection.

■ The headteacher has been very successful in building a strong committed team. Senior staff have developed many useful partnerships with outside agencies that have had a direct impact on the care and guidance of pupils. For example, attendance has improved due to very effective partnership working. Appropriate strategic direction has been set in the unit development plan and self-evaluation is accurate. However, targets in the plan are not always precise or measurable. There have been several improvements since the last inspection, for example the management committee has become much more effective in supporting its work. The unit demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of assessment in lessons, to accurately track progress and ensure all pupils are challenged by their work.
- Reduce the length of stay of a minority of Key Stage 4 pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good when the starting point of most pupils is considered. A high proportion of pupils enter the unit with standards that are well below those expected for their age. In Key Stage 2 and 3 most pupils make good progress with little variation between different groups. Pupils make the most rapid improvements in reading, spelling and mathematics in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 4 many pupils gain qualifications in literacy and numeracy and partial qualifications in ICT and a variety of other vocational subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as can be seen from their individual education plans. Many pupils develop a better attitude to learning, try harder to succeed and move on to further education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in their personal development and well-being. The attendance of the majority of pupils improves significantly; however, the unit recognises that there are a minority of pupils whose attendance is poor. Students' behaviour improves very significantly compared to their previous school. When they start at the unit, an increasing minority are volatile, verbally abusive and occasionally aggressive to staff. There are well established and effective systems in place to support these pupils. The majority of pupils eat healthy food at lunchtime and take part in popular physical education lessons. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Most pupils understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles; however a minority of older pupils smoke outside the unit. The improved quality of students' social and moral development can be seen through their good relationships with peers and staff. Bullying and racial abuse are rare and if it happens dealt with effectively. Pupils said they felt safe in the unit. Some older pupils feel the units' school council is not as effective as it could be in allowing them to make decisions about rules and regulations. The vast majority of parents who returned questionnaires were very positive about the unit. Their views are epitomised by one parent who commented, 'My child has made more progress at Linhope in two years than he's ever done in 11 years of mainstream school,' and another who stated 'Since going to Linhope, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel.' In Key Stage 4 pupils' economic well-being is developed effectively, as is reflected in their progression to employment or further education and the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because there is effective behaviour management. Lessons are interesting and well planned. Teachers build a good rapport with pupils and use questions to draw out pupils understanding and reinforce learning. Teaching assistants work effectively to

support pupils who are experiencing severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and this ensures that the majority of pupils can get on with their work. Class sizes are small. In the best lessons, effective use is made of assessment of pupils' previous learning. This ensures activities are matched to their individual abilities and all pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they can. In a minority of lessons there is too much whole class teaching, and assessment information is not used as effectively. Plans are in place to ensure good practice is shared across the unit. Marking is accurate and regular but it does not always give sufficient detail to identify to pupils and parents what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum at Key Stage 2 ensures that younger pupils are provided with a wide range of learning experiences, which closely reflect National Curriculum requirements. This enhances their successful return to mainstream school. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' reading, spelling and mathematical skills. Managers recognise that some Key Stage 4 pupils stay in the unit for too long and have responded well by adapting the curriculum to meet their needs and interests to and prepare them for the world of work. Managers have yet to consider the use of GCSE qualifications for the most able in Key Stage 4 who may return to mainstream education. The curriculum across all key stages has been extended well through the development of 'afternoon options' that enable pupils to access creative or sporting activities. Most pupils say they particularly enjoy these sessions. The very good partnerships with other agencies such as the Fire and Rescue service, leisure organisations, and charitable voluntary-sector groups helps pupils to build team-working skills, and develop a better understanding of the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Many pupils enter the unit angry about their previous school with little hope for their educational future. Staff quickly build positive relationships with most pupils and refuse to give up on the minority who continue to exhibit poor behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are tracked meticulously. The unit provides excellent pastoral support which is enhanced by a wide range of specialist agencies, including drugs and alcohol abuse agencies, psychology services, educational welfare and social services. Support assistants get to know their pupils very well and identify warning signs of misbehaviour. There is good identification and support for special educational needs that result in statements of need being produced. Guidance at the end of Key Stage 4 is good and there are very strong links with the Connexions service.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has created a very strong team. There is a common sense of purpose. Staff really believe they can make a difference and are very strongly committed to their work. The self-evaluation process is accurate because it takes a wide range of views into account and is based on extensive evidence. Many of the strengths and areas for development identified by the inspectors had already been identified by the school. Challenging targets are set to raise attendance and improve individual behaviour and attitudes. However, targets are less well defined when it comes to the numbers and levels of qualifications to be achieved, reintegration

rates and achievement and progression in Key Stage 4. A thorough system of observation of teaching and learning is in place which leads to accurate judgements and appropriate staff development opportunities. Equality of opportunity is at the centre of the work of the unit through its ethos of giving pupils a second chance. The unit is also beginning to develop work on improving social cohesion in the community it serves. The resources and buildings are well maintained and of a good quality. The unit provides good value for money. The management committee has become much more effective since the last inspection, it supports the unit well and there are plans to enhance its role even further by broadening its representation and its role in quality assurance.

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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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

19 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linhope PRU, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 2LW

Thank you for welcoming us to your unit. We enjoyed spending time with you and seeing what good progress you are making.

We thought that Linhope provides a good quality of education overall and the care and support it provides is outstanding. We came to this conclusion when we saw what you are achieving. Those of you who attend the unit on a regular basis make good progress, particularly in reading, spelling and mathematics. Many of the younger pupils move back into mainstream schools and many of the older ones move on to college, apprenticeships or jobs.

After you settle into Linhope your behaviour improves and you make really good strides in your personal development. Many of you gain useful qualifications. For most of the time there is a positive atmosphere and people get on well. You begin to realise that you must take responsibility for your actions and the consequences that result from them.

Lessons are interesting and most of you enjoy them. Staff work very hard and never stop trying to make a difference. They try to help you, no matter what problems you have.

I agree with the headteacher that there are a few things to do to make things even better. They are:

- teachers should make sure that everyone is challenged by their work lessons;
- more of the older pupils could be reintegrated back into mainstream education.

Many of you were unhappy at your previous schools and got into trouble there. Now you have a real second chance. This unit has proved that if you continue to attend regularly, cooperate and try hard then you will succeed.

With best wishes for the future

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector