

Gloucester and Forest Pupil Referral Services

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135330
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	329081
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascal

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	185
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Paul Holroyd
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Russet House 35 Russet Close Gloucester GL4 0RQ
Telephone number	01452 309510
Fax number	01452 306135

Age group	4–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Service was established in 2007. It is a three site pupil referral unit (PRU) with two learning centres in Gloucester and one in the Forest of Dean. The 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 centres cater for a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities including pupils who are referred because of medical reasons and mental health issues. The majority of pupils however have behavioural and social difficulties. Twenty two per cent of the present cohort have statements of special needs and the service is in the process of statementing a further thirteen per cent. The majority of pupils are of White British background and there are no pupils receiving support to learn English as a second language. Nine per cent of the service's cohort are children in care. As a result of gaps in pupils' education and of learning difficulties and/or disabilities standards on entry are well below average.

Over the last two years the PRU has had three children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). These children are in the PRU for a very short space of time before returning to a mainstream setting. At present there are no children within the EYFS attending the PRU.

The 3 learning centres cater for different age groups as outlined below:-

Russet House, Gloucester – Years 7,8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) and fixed term exclusions for Key Stages 3 and 4. The Raikes Centre, Gloucester – Reception to Year 6 (Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1 and 2) and Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) Joy's Green, Forest of Dean – Reception through to Year 11 (all key stages)

Two of the centres, Joy's Green and Russet House, have been through a period of disruption having had to move to new sites in September 2007 and 2008. There have been recent disruptions to staffing at Russet House because of staff illness.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving PRU. Much has been achieved over the last sixteen months through the strong leadership of the headteacher. He has established a senior management team that is clear about its roles and responsibilities. Together with the centre managers, the headteacher has successfully developed effective systems to support the care and welfare of pupils. Staff place considerable importance on the welfare of their pupils and, as a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development. Parents are extremely positive about the PRU and the support they have received from staff. They greatly value the commitment of staff and the very good level of communication with the centres.

A strength of the PRU is the very good links with mainstream schools. This close working relationship has enabled schools to make best use of the skills of PRU staff in successfully preventing a large number of pupils from being excluded from their mainstream schools. Because of the good support for pupils' personal development the PRU has also been successful in working with those pupils who have been excluded from their schools, enabling many of them to go back into a mainstream or special school setting. Pupils feel that the PRU has done a great deal to help them. They recognise how much they have increased in confidence and this is supported by many parents who comment on the raised self esteem of their children.

Whilst the majority of pupils make good progress in their learning, achievement is only satisfactory overall. Pupils in the EYFS and in Years 1 to 6 make good progress due to good teaching. For those pupils who attend regularly in Years 10 and 11, progress is also good due to good teaching. However, despite satisfactory and often good attendance across the centres for younger pupils, attendance for those in Years 10 and 11 is too variable. Where attendance is poor it is preventing these pupils from benefiting from the strong teaching and a significant minority leave school with no external accreditation. Progress for many pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good, enabling the majority of pupils to return to mainstream. For the very small number of students with statements in Years 7, 8 and 9 who have been attending the centre for a long period of time, progress is unsatisfactory because they are not receiving sufficient taught time in the centre.

There are strengths in the satisfactory curriculum that enable it to support learning for the majority of pupils. It is particularly effective for those pupils of primary school age and for most students of secondary age. Most pupils are set targets to support their behaviour and learning. Although there are examples of some targets being effective, this is not consistent across the centres. The learning targets are not always specific to each individual or sufficiently amended when progress is not evident.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Clear direction and good team work have brought about a range of improvements. However, whilst staff have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre, self evaluation processes lack rigour. Senior managers are aware that data concerning pupils' achievements is not sufficiently well used to identify precisely where improvements are needed. As a result, a new recording system is being introduced to resolve this. Senior managers recognise that there is a need to set more challenging and measurable targets by which they can measure the centre's effectiveness accurately. The commitment of staff, strong leadership by the headteacher and the support of parents and local schools ensure that the PRU has the capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Through good leadership and management provision for the children in the EYFS is well-organised and relevant. Although a very small number of children attend the centres, planning for them is well thought through and resources well established to enable staff to support those in their care. As a result, children make good progress whilst attending the PRU. Staff work very closely with parents and the child's mainstream school. They quickly identify the areas where support is needed and set targets that will enable the child to develop the skills to return to school. Through this good quality provision, the majority of children successfully return to their mainstream setting. Whilst there is good practice in ensuring children's records go to their school, the manager is looking at ways of retaining records of progress for future reference.

Through a good range of activities EYFS children develop their skills well. Good recording and constant monitoring of targets ensures that children make rapid improvements. Key strengths are in the focus on children's personal development and communication skills which are often barriers to their ability to succeed in mainstream. Photographic records show children's delight when involved in activities such as visiting a farm. Staff establish very good links with other agencies and ensure that the children's safety and well being are a priority. Good attention is paid to health and safety and staff are constantly reviewing aspects of safety.

Good monitoring and team work have been effective in establishing a well qualified team who meet the needs of children well. There is a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the EYFS. The manager though recognises the need to improve success criteria for developments to make them easier to measure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' attendance in Years 10 and 11 so that more can gain external accreditation before leaving school.
- Improve the progress of those pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 who have statements of special educational need by ensuring that they receive their full entitlement of taught time.
- Ensure that data concerning pupils' progress is used to identify the PRU's strengths and areas for the development and so set challenging and measurable targets.
- Improve the quality of learning targets so that they are more specific to the individual needs of each pupil.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards remain well below average due to the disruption in pupils' education that many experienced before joining the PRU and to pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils in the EYFS and in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in their learning which enables the vast majority to return successfully to mainstream or special school.

For a number of pupils achievement by the end of Year 11 is good and many, particularly at the Raikes centre, gain a number of GCSE passes. Pupils also achieve passes in adult literacy

and numeracy courses and entry level accreditation. However, over a third of pupils last year left with no qualifications, often because they have chosen not to attend the centres or complete course work.

Disruptions in the teaching of English for Years 7, 8 and 9 have affected pupils' progress over the last term. However, the recent appointment of a temporary English teacher is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and they are now making good progress in lessons. It is too early to judge the long term impact of this on pupils' achievements. For those pupils with statements of special need who have not moved on to a special school placement, progress is unsatisfactory. They are not receiving sufficient taught time and this is preventing them from achieving as well as they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Many pupils talk positively about the PRU and how it has helped them to improve and so return to mainstream. They value the way they are treated by staff and how hard staff work to make sure their needs are met. Younger pupils like the fact that the centres are 'fun' and that they feel 'well looked after'. Pupils appreciate the high expectations of staff and many respond positively, completing homework and concentrating well throughout lessons.

There is good awareness of healthy living and both older and younger pupils show a good understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy. Cookery lessons for older pupils are clearly enjoyed and one pupil talked enthusiastically about the tuna rice he had made. Younger pupils like all the fruit they are given and are knowledgeable about the dangers of drugs. Most enjoy the opportunities to participate in sport and pupils like the fact that they can go to the local leisure centre. Younger children enthusiastically take on responsibilities. For example, they discuss the importance of composting and whose turn it is to be compost manager. There are fewer opportunities for older pupils to be involved in decision making. Their involvement in their own and the local community is developing as the centres establish themselves in the area.

Behaviour is generally good. Pupils say they feel safe and feel they can talk to staff where they have concerns. It is very good for younger pupils in the primary classes who work together well and mix well at break times. They show care and concern for each other and are learning to deal with the fact that everyone is different. Behaviour at the Raikes centre is good and new systems at Joy's Green have resulted in a more settled environment. Behaviour at Russet House is satisfactory rather than good. There have been a number of incidents involving a minority of pupils who have been aggressive and un-cooperative.

Many pupils in Years 1 to 9 improve their attendance from their previous settings and this, together with improvements in their personal development, prepares them well for life when they leave school. However too many of the older students in Years 10 and 11 do not attend the PRU enough. As a result, they are making satisfactory rather than good progress in acquiring relevant basic skills and work place experience.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are many strengths in teaching, particularly, in the way good subject knowledge is used to make lessons interesting and relevant. Clear explanations help pupils to understand how to multiply decimals or empathise with characters ranging from Romeo and Juliet to Crooks in 'Of Mice and men'. Good team work enables support staff to be aware of what is expected of them. For example, in a maths lesson a younger pupil, having been involved in the start of the lesson, worked well with a support assistant to help him understand 'more than and less than'. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary, for example, in science pupils are encouraged to use technical language when talking about equipment, whilst in English, pupils are challenged to use words such as 'discriminated' and 'vulnerable' when describing a character. English teaching for Years 7, 8 and 9 has improved as a result of the temporary appointment of a specialist teacher. Work is more challenging and is building pupils' skills in a more consistent way through following a clear programme of study.

Whilst teachers usually ensure pupils are aware of the focus of the lesson they do not always ensure that pupils know what skills they will develop. This makes it difficult to assess how much has been achieved at the end of the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The PRU is rightly proud of its successes in supporting pupils on fixed term and permanent exclusions and its increasingly active role in preventing exclusions. It is successful in this because the curriculum is well focussed on improving pupils' personal and social skills.

The EYFS curriculum and that for primary school aged pupils is good and well organised. Considerable importance is placed on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and close liaison with mainstream schools ensures that pupils have a very personalised curriculum. The curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 is improving. Much work has gone into establishing a themed approach but opportunities are missed to ensure work such as in art is linked to other subjects. Through no fault of the PRU, too many pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 with statements of special educational need stay on the centre's roll for too long. The Russet centre has struggled to meet the needs of these pupils and is not providing a broad enough curriculum and sufficient taught time to enable them to make sufficient progress in their learning.

The provision for Years 10 and 11 is developing and the use of alternative providers is generally good. Despite the best efforts of staff, not all pupils are taking advantage of the range of courses on offer and are leaving with no form of accreditation. There is a good choice of GCSE and entry level qualifications and centre managers are looking more closely at introducing a wider range of vocational qualifications to try to attract pupils' interest.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and welfare of pupils is given a very high priority by the PRU and the systems and procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are very good. Much has been achieved through the excellent links with parents and with a range of agencies. This enables staff to support

pupils and families extremely well. The procedures for child protection and health and safety are effective and staff are well trained in these aspects. Behaviour management systems are consistent throughout all three centres and pupils value the rewards they can earn through good behaviour. The PRU is aware that behaviour for a small number of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is only satisfactory and is taking action to address this. Staff are re-evaluating the behaviour recording systems to enable pupils to have more opportunity to evaluate their own behaviour.

The PRU has established a system for establishing targets for pupils to enable them to improve. These are focussed on behavioural and social targets and are reviewed weekly with each pupil and their mentor. There is evidence of good practice in setting pupils' targets to ensure that they are based on each individual and are relevant, but this is not the case in all of the centres. Teachers have developed an appropriate range of systems for assessing pupils' progress but are not always providing pupils with guidance about what they could do to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has been successful in leading the establishment of each centre, overseeing the move of two to new centres and ensuring that, through all of this, staff have remained upbeat and committed. Communication is a strength between staff because there is a clear structure in terms of their roles and responsibilities and regular meetings between all the different departments.

The headteacher, through regular monitoring, has been successful in bringing about improvements in teaching. Most centre managers are clear about areas for development within the centres and there are examples of good practice in providing feedback and setting targets for staff where monitoring does take place. The PRU has established a recording system to enable senior staff to have a better overview of pupils' progress. They are aware of the need to have a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of provision across all three centres. At present, improvement planning is not sufficiently well focussed on improving achievement and enabling senior leaders to set challenging and relevant targets for success. Senior staff are establishing criteria for judging progress in order to have a more accurate picture of the PRU's effectiveness. Currently, the PRU's evaluation of its effectiveness is over positive, although it rightly recognises its key strengths.

The very successful partnership with local schools is a credit to staff and has enabled the PRU to play an important part in reducing exclusions in the area. Because of this the PRU is now looking to take on a more proactive role and be more involved in working in schools with mainstream staff to prevent any form of exclusion taking place. The PRU is well supported in this by the management committee. Although fairly new, it has a good representation from the community and is very clear about the role it will play in the PRU's development. Links with community as a whole are developing as the PRU becomes more established. Open days, and the good range of links with local agencies, are enabling the centres to become more involved in the local communities and so promote community cohesion.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gloucester and Forest Pupil Referral Service, Gloucester, GL4 0RQ

Thank you for making Alan and myself so welcome during the inspection. We enjoyed the opportunity to talk to you during the two days we were in the centres. You were very positive in your comments about the PRU, as were your parents and carers. The PRU provides you with a satisfactory education and you make satisfactory progress in your learning.

Here are some of the most important findings of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- Teaching is good and teachers use their subject knowledge well to help you learn.
- You are learning how to manage your behaviour well and develop a good understanding about how to stay healthy.
- Many of you improve your attendance and are keen to return to mainstream schooling.
- You have good relationships with staff and work hard in lessons.
- Staff have very good links with your parents and carers and work closely with other agencies to help you.

- In order to make the PRU even better we have asked staff to:
 - Improve the attendance of those in Years 10 and 11 so that they can gain more accreditation before leaving school.
 - Improve the progress of those pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 who have statements of special educational need by ensuring that they receive their full entitlement of taught time.
 - Ensure that information about how well you do in lessons is used to identify the PRU's strengths and areas for development and so enable staff to set the PRU challenging and measurable targets.
 - Improve the quality of your targets so that they are more specific to your needs.

I wish you well for the future and hope those of you who are struggling to attend will give staff the opportunity to support you in your learning

Yours faithfully

Sarah Mascall Lead inspector