

# Gatland Education Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135432
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	329092
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Timothy Feast

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	12
Sixth form	1
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Stones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Coles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Gatland Lane Gatland House Maidstone ME16 8PF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 723631
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 723644

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Gatland Education Unit is a small medical pupil referral unit which was first registered in October 2007. It provides education for students who have been identified with complex mental health problems and who may also have additional medical needs. Some students can only attend on a part-time basis, due to their needs. Students remain on the roll of their secondary school. The unit shares a management committee with two other pupil referral units.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Gatland provides students with a good education, meeting the complex needs of its students well. Parents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the unit. A typical comment from parents is 'We are very pleased to see the needs of the child as an individual being acknowledged and provided for.' Students make good progress while at the unit in achieving good examination and tests results despite their personal difficulties, improving their attendance in many cases and in re-integrating back into mainstream schools or going on to further and higher education.

Students enjoy coming to the unit and mention activities such as tree-jumping as a positive experience which enables them to develop both their confidence and their team building skills. For such a small unit, the students are offered a very wide range of experiences which support their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well. Students enjoy their yoga sessions. One student commented, 'It relaxes me and makes me feel safe and OK. I have begun to use some of the breathing techniques when I struggle with my mental health.' Students show positive attitudes in lessons, although they are not always given sufficient opportunity to work independently. Students do make a positive contribution to the community, although this has not been focused through a formal student council. The improvements in their individual health and well-being and their success in their academic work equip them well for future education and training, and for the world of work.

The students make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. The small number of staff cover a broad range of subjects at three key stages and offer considerable subject expertise between them. They establish good relationships with the students and give them good guidance on what they need to do to improve. The curriculum meets the needs of the students outstandingly well and contributes strongly to the good progress they make in their personal and academic development. Students receive exemplary care, guidance and support from the full range of services they receive. As a result, nearly all students are able to be re-integrated into mainstream schools or have the confidence to go on to further or higher education.

The headteacher has been successful in establishing a culture of high expectations within an appropriately nurturing environment. The expectation is that students will do well in their external examinations and tests and that they will make good progress in resolving some of their underlying mental and medical problems. Resources are well used and there are excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies on and off site. There is a good understanding of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. The unit's management committee is beginning to act effectively as a critical friend and is increasingly strengthening its monitoring and evaluating role. Some of the tracking systems currently in use are too complex and do not make it easy to determine students' academic progress or improvements in their attendance, or to share information with students and staff.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

A low number of sixth form students have been enrolled in the unit since it was opened. The unit caters for both their academic and personal development well. Students make good progress resulting in above average standards and, as a consequence, are able to pursue their studies in further or higher education. The curriculum is a very good mix of externally accredited courses

and activities which are very effective in encouraging students to be more outward looking and to develop personal skills such as collaborative working. The academic guidance the students receive is a strength and complements the exemplary pastoral care and support they receive. One student commented, 'They put in that little bit extra that makes all the difference.' This ethos characterises the good leadership and management provided for these older students.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Adopt assessment and tracking systems which allow students' progress and attendance to be more easily monitored and made available to students, teaching staff and school leaders at all levels.
- Ensure that teachers plan activities which provide regular opportunities for all students to work independently

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students are usually admitted to the unit at short notice and at very different stages of their secondary education. Their attainment on entry is very varied. Students are encouraged and enabled to take a wide range of external examinations and tests, assisted by the very strong partnerships with their secondary schools. Standards are broadly average, with some students achieving average and above average GCSE results. Sixth form results are above the national average. Students make good progress in their academic studies and the great majority successfully re-integrate back into mainstream schooling or go on to the courses of their choice in further and higher education. All students achieve equally well. Their good achievement is due to good teaching and to the excellent and essential care and support provided, that meets students' mental health needs extremely well. Students make good progress towards challenging targets in their individual education plans.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students make good gains in developing their confidence and self-esteem. As a result of the strong focus on healthy living, they take big strides in adopting a healthier lifestyle. Students feel safe and, with the help of staff, adopt safe practices in relation to eating and exercise while at the unit. Although some students can only cope with part-time education, all make good progress in improving their personal well-being and self-esteem, and enjoy their time at the unit. These gains equip them well for future education and training and the world of work. Attendance is satisfactory, with some absences resulting from students' medical needs. Nevertheless, the attendance of many students improves while at the unit, supported by the help of the medical supervision they receive. Despite the absence of a student council, students contribute well to their community, as demonstrated by their work on decorating and furnishing the dining/common room.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is focused well on ensuring students make good progress through a combination of tackling new topics and working on materials provided by the students' secondary schools.

Teachers have a good understanding of course requirements and are able to pitch the work at appropriately challenging levels in classes which contain students of different ages and abilities. Students respond positively to these challenges. Their responses are effectively supported and encouraged because of the good relationships that adults quickly build up with them. These help to sustain their motivation and their interest in learning. Teachers provide good guidance to students on what they need to do to improve and work well in conjunction with the students' other teachers. As a result, students generally do well in public examinations and tests. On occasions, there are insufficient opportunities for students to work independently.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum has been carefully devised so that the students' self-esteem is raised and they enjoy attending the unit. Given students' mental health problems, their enjoyment of their learning is a very strong testimony to how well the curriculum matches their needs. Staff are very entrepreneurial in broadening the curriculum offered within a constrained budget. The provision of yoga is a good example of this, by providing a physical activity accessible to all students, including those for whom other types of physical activity are inappropriate. Such attention to detail has a very positive impact on academic results. There is a very good balance of activities on site and off-site visits. Students benefit from an extensive range of visits, from sporting activities to working with renowned dance companies. The curriculum is significantly enriched by the use of visitors to the unit, for example the local police force and fire brigade. Students enjoy and benefit from the use of 'cyberbabies' in sex education. These and other opportunities help provide excellent education for the health, safety and well-being of the students. The Chinese New Year is enthusiastically celebrated and students have innovative opportunities for work in music and art.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The students thrive in the unit as a result of the exemplary care and support they receive from a wide range of providers. Communication with parents and carers is very good. Staff know the students very well and great care is taken where appropriate with the handover of information on the students at the beginning and the end of the day so that appropriate planning can be put in place. Students' safety is paramount and the students are supervised very well while they are on site. There is excellent liaison with the nursing and other medical staff and, consequently, students' mental health needs are catered for extremely well. Safeguarding requirements are met fully and there is excellent consideration of child protection and risk management. The unit works well with Connexions to provide good guidance to the students at the appropriate time. Students receive good academic guidance and they know what they need to do next to make progress and obtain the grades that they need.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has established excellent relationships with a wide range of specialist organisations. These partnerships have enabled her to put in place an education provision of good quality which is effective in dismantling the barriers to these students' engagement with education. This has been achieved while undertaking until very recently a considerable teaching

commitment. The unit's capacity to improve has been strengthened by the appointment of an additional part-time class teacher which has enabled the headteacher to focus her efforts more strategically. This improvement has had a beneficial impact. The headteacher knows the unit's strengths and areas for development well and has identified priorities for development. These priorities include, appropriately, implementing systems which enable key indicators such as students' progress and attendance to be readily available so that school leaders, including the management committee, can more effectively use challenging targets to improve the unit's effectiveness. The school acknowledges the shortcomings in current tracking procedures. The unit promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. It has gained a satisfactory understanding of the community context in which it operates, given its short time in operation, and plans some good activities. The unit has quickly established a deservedly good reputation with parents and students, and with the professionals from the other areas that the unit works with. As a result, there are substantial improvements in both the academic and personal development of these students with complex needs.

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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	16-19
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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>	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

20 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Gatland Education Unit, Maidstone, ME16 8PF

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your unit. I enjoyed talking with you and seeing you at work and at recreation. Gatland is a good unit and supports you well with both your academic studies and helping you to get better. You enjoy coming to school, your attendance improves and you feel safe. You like the wide range of activities that you can do. I think your attitudes are good but that there are too few opportunities for you to work independently. I think the staff look after you really well. I think that you make good progress in relation to your targets and with your external examinations and tests. Most of you do manage to go back to mainstream schools or go on to further and higher education. I think that the unit is well led and that you benefit from good teaching.

I have asked the unit to plan more opportunities for you in lessons to work more independently. I have asked the headteacher to put in place assessment and tracking systems which will help both you and unit staff to see more clearly the progress that you are making and to set you appropriate challenges while you are at the unit.

Yours faithfully

Tim Feast Lead inspector