

Pace

Derbyshire Hill Road, St Helen's, Merseyside, WA9 2LH

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make at least good progress in their personal development and as a result re-engage with learning. This means that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress overall in literacy and numeracy. This is because their learning needs are carefully assessed and well met.
- Teaching is good. Senior teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils try hard to live up to the high expectations of behaviour and attitudes set for them and, as a result, behaviour is usually good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and cared for well. This is because staff ensure that each pupil's individual needs are met very well.
- The school is led and managed well by the senior leaders. Staff are a cohesive team, all with the same aspiration to enable every pupil to achieve their potential and do their best.
- Staff are helped to improve their teaching and benefit from extensive training. This is supporting continuous development of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- The management committee makes a significant contribution to the school's leadership because members use their expert knowledge to hold the PRU to account for the quality of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards and progress in writing are not as high as in reading and mathematics.
- Marking does not always provide pupils with precise information about how to improve.
- Monitoring and the management of staff performance does not always have a sharp focus on pupils' progress in school subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed several lessons and one-to-one sessions with members of staff.
- The inspector looked at pupils' individual learning and behaviour plans.
- Meetings were held with the head of service, the PRU teacher coordinator, pupils, two members of the management committee and members of the support and teaching staff.
- The inspector took into account 18 questionnaires from staff. There were two responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on pupils' and teachers' performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the management committee and school policies.

Inspection team

Pauline Hilling-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The vast majority of pupils are on the roll of their mainstream school as well as the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Typically, 30 pupils attend the PRU each year.
- The average length of stay is two terms.
- The PRU is one of two PRUs which form part of the Behaviour and Inclusion Improvement Service of the local authority. They share the same overarching management committee. This service is lead by a local authority senior officer. The headteacher, who was absent during the inspection, leads three PRUs.
- There are more boys than girls.
- All pupils have special educational needs. A few have a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of being formally assessed for a statement.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- An acting teaching and learning coordinator was appointed from the classroom staff with effect from November 2014. A supply teacher has been appointed from the same date to fulfil the classroom role.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all pupils make good or better progress in writing by making sure that:
 - marking gives pupils precise information about what they need to do to improve their work, and they are always given the opportunity to respond to that information
 - teaching provides more opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that strategies for monitoring pupils' progress are developed and widened further
 - sharpening performance management procedures.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- This small PRU is considerably enhanced through being part of the Behaviour and Inclusion Improvement Service. The highly respected senior officer has a clear vision about how to move this well-coordinated provision forward together for the benefit of all the PRUs and the service. The staff are a cohesive team and work extremely well together, ably led by the new acting teaching and learning coordinator.
- The small number of teachers usually all have leadership roles and support school improvement effectively. They are considerably helped by the senior teaching assistants.
- The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders use data to analyse the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils; clear plans identify the need to present information in different ways about pupils' progress so that pupils can make even more progress in writing.
- Monitoring of teaching is effective in improving the quality of teaching. School leaders use the observation of lessons and data to set targets for teachers and continually improve teaching practice. However, monitoring is not yet sharply focused on pupils' progress in school subjects, particularly writing, which means that targets set for teachers have had limited impact on writing as yet.
- The curriculum is extensively enriched by opportunities to be involved in horticulture, extensive opportunities to listen to live music and to meet visitors. It meets the needs of the pupils well because there is an emphasis on personal development as well as basic skills. The pupils are also helped to develop a clear understanding of equality, tolerance and the values of modern Britain.
- Partnership with parents is good. Partnership with other providers and mainstream schools is very strong and makes a significant contribution to achievement.
- The local authority values the work of the PRU and supports its development well by, for example, recently securing the services of a school improvement partner with expert knowledge of the role of PRUs.
- The PRU does not receive the primary school sports funding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee receives good and appropriately detailed information about the work of the PRU and the achievement of pupils. Members have a clear understanding about the quality of teaching. Minutes of meetings show that they use this knowledge well to challenge and support the leadership about all aspects of the PRU's work.
 - Members review spending decisions carefully and make good use of the now fully delegated funding.
 - Members are rigorous in annually reviewing the performance of the leadership group of staff, and receive information about the performance targets set for teachers and the link to salary progression.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There is a strong and secure working atmosphere throughout the school based on secure and firm relationships.
- Each day pupils earn points known as PACEOs which are recorded for them on a daily certificate. These points can be exchanged for goods from the school shop or can be saved up to exchange for special experiences. As a result, pupils are mostly polite and try hard to live up to the high expectations set for them by staff.
- All staff ensure that pupils are given clear information and full explanations about the consequences of their behaviour at any one time. This means that pupils' self-esteem is raised or they have the opportunity to modify what they are doing.
- Pupils usually behave well in lessons and at lunchtime when they have the daily opportunity to discuss and reflect on national and global issues, for example, civil wars in other countries and the plight of refugees or the homeless. This promotes British values and tolerance effectively.
- Pupils increasingly learn to control their own behaviour. This is because staff are well trained in how to manage behaviour. Staff are skilled in setting and communicating clear, consistent expectations.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. There is little bullying and pupils say that there is always someone to talk to if necessary. Pupils reflect, share and celebrate good news during the daily circle time. The pupils enjoy contributing bricks to building a wall to block out the bullying mascot BOB when someone acts to prevent

bullying occurring.

- The work of the PRU is much valued by other schools in helping to improve behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Safeguarding practice is well understood by all staff. Any concerns which arise are promptly notified to the appropriate agencies. Staff have a very good understanding of the individual needs of each pupil.
- Pupils are aware of the different risks posed when they behave poorly. This is because staff explain patiently what could happen if certain behaviour, such as kicking a wall, does not stop.
- Records show that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are recorded in detail and monitored meticulously, and robust action is taken as a result.
- All policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. This means that everyone is very clear about procedures.
- Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that full checks on the safety of premises are regularly undertaken and acted upon.
- Attendance improves rapidly when pupils start at the PRU.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good; it helps pupils get back on track with their learning and helps them make good progress.
- Teachers have expert knowledge in the nurture and teaching of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Teachers swiftly modify their teaching to match the learning needs of the pupils.
- Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work to be completed by pupils in a given time. Pupils usually start work promptly and meet these expectations.
- A particular strength of the teaching in the school is the skill with which staff make suggestions, question and encourage, and this makes a positive impact on the quality of the pupils' learning.
- The impact of teaching on learning and achievement in communication, literacy, reading and mathematics is good because teachers ensure that pupils read and apply their mathematical skills in all subjects. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to write at length and, as a result, staff have less experience in assessing achievement in writing.
- Teachers and all staff never give up explaining patiently how well each pupil is learning and the consequences of this for everyone.
- This results in a positive climate for learning in lessons.
- The skills of the senior teaching assistants are considerable and make a good contribution to pupils' achievements. The personalised approach of the assistants who support individual pupils addresses their learning needs well.
- The teaching of phonics is effective, particularly for younger pupils. Older pupils benefit from a carefully planned programme of reading activities which matches their needs very closely. As a result, they achieve well.
- Verbal feedback is very effective. It ensures that all pupils are very clear about what they need to do. However, although stronger in Key Stage 1, marking does not always provide pupils with precise information about how to improve.
- The most able pupils are always challenged to reach the highest levels or deepen their knowledge and understanding as a result of careful tracking of progress.
- Staff reflect on the quality of their teaching, including what has worked well with an individual pupil. They share this with other staff. As a result, teaching is improving continuously and pupils learn and achieve well during their time at the PRU.

The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils start at the PRU at various times during the year, their attainment is usually below that typically expected for their age. This is often because their special educational needs have disrupted the smooth flow to their learning in the past. Once in the school, pupils rapidly begin to re-engage with learning and their progress accelerates.

- Pupils make at least good progress in their personal development. They are able to do this because they make good progress in learning to control their behaviour. Progress made by each pupil in personal development is tracked in detail and data is used very well to ensure that what is planned for each pupil is exactly right.
- Arrangements for transition back to their mainstream school are very successful. This is because no time is wasted and the expectations of a swift return are high. The majority of pupils begin to re-integrate after just two full weeks at the PRU.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and who do not return to mainstream but go on to another placement benefit from a careful assessment of their needs, resulting in them moving on to the most appropriate provision.
- Although numbers are very small and the pupils arriving at the end of Key Stage 2 vary greatly, school data for 2014 shows that pupils achieved broadly average standards overall. This represents good progress from their starting points.
- In 2014, data shows that all pupils make accelerated progress, especially in reading where over a third of pupils make twice the expected rate of progress. However, it is slower in writing where only half as many pupils as in reading make more than expected progress.
- Case studies show that pupils with higher ability achieve well during their time at the PRU. This is because their talents are quickly identified and what is planned for these pupils enables them to deepen their understanding.
- Because of the small numbers of pupils in the school, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally. However, inspection evidence from observing learning in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils shows that, generally, disadvantaged pupils make at least equal progress to other pupils in English and mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104757
Local authority	St Helen's
Inspection number	447919

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Prescott
Headteacher	Irene Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2012
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