

# Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	136676
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	385889
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Keith Massett

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Fintan Bradley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tony Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	The Oakley Centre West Street Crewe CW1 2PZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 685626
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Massett

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with four days' notice. This is longer notice than is usual for inspections as the unit was not open on the proposed inspection start date. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by six teachers and another six lessons in shorter visits to classrooms. He met or held telephone conversations with students, members of the management committee, senior managers, staff and other key partners such as headteachers, training providers and school improvement professionals. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at the school's data on students' current progress, lesson observation records, behaviour records, development plans and school policies. The inspector considered questionnaires from four parents and carers, nine staff and 13 students.

## Information about the school

Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit was opened in April 2011 and serves the whole of East Cheshire. The current headteacher took up post in September 2011. The unit was originally located on two sites but was consolidated to a temporary single site in September 2011 and will relocate to permanent accommodation in 2013. The unit caters for students who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school. Students in Year 7 to Year 9 usually attend for about 12 weeks before returning to mainstream school. Older students stay longer and often undertake periods of vocational learning with training providers. The majority of students are in Years 10 and 11. There are considerably more boys than girls and almost all students are of White British heritage. Approximately 30% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory unit. The headteacher has established a shared vision that has successfully brought together, and raised the aspirations of, staff and students from a range of provisions. It is not yet good because achievement is satisfactory and, while teaching is improving, some inconsistencies in practice remain. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment is below average for students aged 16 but because most students successfully re-engage in learning they are effectively prepared for their next stages of education, training or employment. Younger students make significant improvements with personal development which supports their return to a mainstream school. Progress is satisfactory overall but with more students now making good progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but improving. Good teaching is seen when teachers use all the available information to tailor lessons to students' interests and needs. There is inconsistency in teachers' use of oral and written feedback and marking of work so that some students are unclear about how to improve. Strategies to manage behaviour in lessons are not always applied quickly enough.
- Students' behaviour is typically satisfactory in lessons and around the unit. When lessons are well matched to their needs most work well. Students know how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is low but improving.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement planning and the leadership of teaching are linked with robust systems for managing teachers' performance. Curriculum leadership is less well developed and there is some variation in how well subject leaders monitor and evaluate students' progress across the curriculum. Not all policies are implemented consistently and opportunities for students to follow accredited courses are limited.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to improve students' achievement by:
  - ensuring all teachers use the full range of information, including assessment data, to plan learning activities that engage students and meet their individual needs
  - providing students with more specific guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve their work
  - ensuring teachers are consistent in the application of agreed behaviour management strategies.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring all leaders, especially middle leaders, are more accountable for the strategic development and monitoring of their areas of responsibility
  - making sure that all leaders, including the management committee, are more consistent in the application of agreed policies
  - improving the monitoring of outcomes for different groups of students
  - providing more opportunities for accreditation of students' achievements within the curriculum.
  
- Improve attendance, aiming to achieve the unit's targets of 90% by December 2012 and 92% by April 2013, by:
  - ensuring consistent application of the full range of strategies that have been established to encourage good attendance
  - establishing robust systems for monitoring the attendance of alternative-curriculum students.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is below average. Although attainment is low overall when they leave, achievement is satisfactory because, during their time at the unit, students re-engage with education. They make at least satisfactory and increasingly good progress from their individual starting points. Appropriately challenging learning targets are set for all students and more students are starting to achieve them. Many of the older students re-engage with learning and are able to gain externally some accredited awards and qualifications. They are well supported and prepared for the next stage of their education. Younger students usually attend for 12-week intervention programmes. All of these students have places to return to mainstream school. Students on short-term intervention programmes and those on longer-term placements achieve equally well. All disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students.

Lessons observed during the inspection confirmed that students' learning is usually satisfactory and increasingly good. All students make significant gains in their personal and social development. Parents agree and one parent commented, 'Schooling has always been a problem for my son. Since being at the PRU he has settled in really well and actually enjoys school for the first time in 10 years.'

Partnerships with training providers contribute to raising aspirations and providing progression routes for leavers. Some students discussed their high aspirations with the inspector. One said, 'I don't know what I would be doing if it wasn't for this place.' Another explained how his work placement had led to him achieving the entry requirements for a college course next year. The number of students with plans to access education, employment or training when they leave has improved significantly.

### **Quality of teaching**

The satisfactory and sometimes good quality of teaching is reflected in students' largely satisfactory and sometimes good learning and progress. Parents and carers who returned a questionnaire agree that their child is taught well. In most lessons relationships between staff and learners are positive and support learning. Students work well together in small-group and paired activities, reflecting the school's good work in developing learners' social development. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to give clear explanations and use questioning to challenge perceptions or develop understanding. The best lessons are well planned to engage students from the very start; students are challenged and fully aware of what is expected. Activities are well structured to ensure pace and progression and to enable good progress. Teaching assistants are enthusiastic and make a good contribution to supporting students' learning, particularly disabled students and those with special educational needs. Communication skills are developed effectively and students are involved in reviewing their own and each other's work. In a science lesson where teaching was good students were learning about the forces that are harnessed to enable a plane to fly. Prior knowledge was quickly checked and applied to the practical task of making a paper plane and measuring the distance flown. Students were fully involved, worked independently and interacted confidently to discuss and apply changes to their designs. They were encouraged to take risks in applying their learning to their designs, challenge their own learning and, as a result, made good progress in the lesson.

Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not always use the full range of available information to plan interesting or challenging learning activities. Often, there is too much reliance on worksheets with prompts and scaffolds and this limits engagement and progress. Sometimes, not enough detailed feedback is provided orally or in marking to help students improve work. Occasionally, in lessons, behaviour management strategies are not applied appropriately.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students who arrive with identified social, emotional or behavioural needs often make great strides in managing their behaviour. Most students say behaviour in lessons and around the unit is good for the majority of the time, and they know what to do if they encounter difficulties with others. A few students disagree. All say they feel safe and the majority respond well to the high expectations of staff. Instances of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly. Students are able to describe different types of bullying and most confirm that they are not aware of any bullying of, or by, students at the unit. All the parents or carers who returned questionnaires agreed that their children feel safe and that any cases of bullying are effectively dealt with. The caring approach of all staff helps to support the different needs of students and reduces interruptions to learning in the classroom. Behaviour records indicate that behaviour for almost all students improves over time in the unit. Recorded incidents of poor behaviour and the number of fixed-term exclusions are

relatively low. There have been no permanent exclusions. Students have a good awareness of how unsafe behaviour can put themselves and others at risk. They understand how to take care of themselves in potentially dangerous situations.

Attendance is low but strategies and systems to encourage and monitor attendance have been developed and implemented. As a result, there has been improvement on previous attendance every half term since the unit opened. For many students attendance improves rapidly and becomes similar to the national average as they make a fresh commitment to education and their aspirations rise. A few students remain harder to engage. The system for monitoring attendance of the alternative-curriculum students is not as well developed as with the other courses in the unit.

## **Leadership and management**

The highly effective leadership of the headteacher has established a unit with a clear vision and raised the aspirations of students and staff. Leadership and staffing structures have been adapted and policies formulated and implemented as the unit has developed. However, staff expressed concerns that not all policies are consistently applied by all staff. The headteacher is well supported by a deputy and an increasingly effective staff team. Professional development and performance management for teachers and support staff has been used effectively to ensure staff are better prepared to meet the high expectations that have been established. Teaching is improving because teachers are gaining the confidence to adopt more effective practices and, as a result, students' progress and attainment are improving.

Systems used to track students' progress and set appropriate targets for learning have been developed. These systems are regularly monitored by senior leaders but are not yet used consistently by middle leaders to inform strategy or in all classrooms to check progress and inform practice. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used well to inform development planning. Plans are clear and ensure all staff know what is needed in order to raise attainment further. It is too early to evaluate the impact of recent actions but improving students' outcomes clearly demonstrate the unit's capacity to improve further.

The management committee has effectively supported the establishment of the unit. Alongside the senior leaders they ensure policies and procedures for safeguarding are met and that practice meets the appropriate standards. Child protection training is given the highest priority. The temporary accommodation has been established as a safe and cohesive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within the unit are developing but, as yet, there is not enough analysis of the performance of different groups of students. Leaders are building successful partnerships with a range of organisations which benefit students. Partnerships with the local secondary schools are strong. The unit is successful at engaging parents and carers, who agree that it responds well to any concerns, helps them to support their children's learning and keeps them well informed. All parents who returned a questionnaire would recommend the unit to other parents.

The curriculum is adapted and personalised to meet individual students' needs. Good opportunities for social and moral development are evident. A wide range of alternative provision is used to enhance students' development but, currently, there are insufficient accredited courses for the older students.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



29 June 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit, Crewe, CW1 2PZ**

Thank you very much for being so friendly and making me feel welcome when I inspected Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit. It was good to meet you all and read your questionnaires. It was also good to hear how so many of you value the unit and how the staff help you. I want to send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to me during the visit and told me so many things about the unit. I agree with those of you who told me that you think your unit is improving and that the staff listen to you and want to help you. I was particularly impressed by:

- the improvements most of you make in your behaviour and attendance
- the way in which staff help and care for you so that you feel safe
- the improving quality of teaching that helps you to make better progress in lessons
- how staff help you to return to school or move to employment or training when you leave.

So that teaching and learning improves even more, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- plan learning activities that are better matched to your individual needs
- explain in more detail how well you are doing and how to improve your work
- ensure all policies are applied consistently, especially the behaviour management policy
- improve the range of qualifications you can achieve
- improve attendance.

You can play your part in improving the unit by attending regularly, behaving well and doing your best in lessons. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Massett  
Lead Inspector

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