

St John's Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130984
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	341078
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Steph Halliday
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors saw eight lessons in whole or in part, observed all the teachers, held meetings with two members of the management committee, spoke with headteachers of four client schools, the area coordinator for the Behaviour Support Service, the school improvement officer and the linked local authority advisor. They looked at data the school has on pupils' progress and analysed documents and policies. They scrutinised four questionnaires and spoke with two parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effective the curriculum is in meeting pupils' individual learning and their additional needs in preparing them for return to mainstream settings
- how well teaching helps all pupils with their learning, including improving their attitudes to education
- how effective the care and support arrangements are in meeting the learning and other needs of pupils and their parents and carers
- how effective leaders are, including the management committee, in ensuring that the unit fully meets its role as designated by the local authority.

Information about the school

St John's is a smaller than average pupil referral unit. It provides part-time six-week placements for pupils who have had difficulties in controlling their emotions and behaviour and for pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream primary schools. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs and have been at the unit for longer than six weeks. The unit serves the 89 primary schools located in the City of Worcester and the southern area of the authority.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St John's is an outstanding pupil referral unit that prepares pupils very well for a successful return to their mainstream settings, or for a small minority, to special placements. One parent said, 'The unit is fantastic. It has given me my son back and he is looking forward to enjoying his learning again with his friends.'

When pupils enter the unit, they attain at levels generally below those expected for their age. This is, mostly, as a consequence of failing to control their emotions and their behaviour well enough to make the progress expected of them in their home schools. At the unit, they make outstanding progress in their learning and in taking greater control of their behaviour. They quickly realise that the unit is a caring and supportive place and they develop very strong and trusting relationships with staff. The individualised curriculum means that pupils learn what is right for them and the small size classes allow the teachers and teaching assistants to provide effective help as soon as pupils need it. Pupils enjoy their learning, some for the first time, because they are better able to accept the routines and disciplines associated with successful learning and the linked expectations for behaviour. Having pupils enjoy their learning is the strength of the unit. Pupils, and their parents and carers, are thrilled with the progress they are making. Headteachers of the client schools speak very favourably of the improved behaviour, better attitudes to learning and the marked raise in standards in the core subjects of their pupils when they return full time to their schools. Most returning pupils go on to prosper, both as learners and young people.

Teaching is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils very well and their precise planning ensures that lessons are made up of tasks that closely match the interests and capabilities of each pupil. Lessons are designed so that pupils achieve success and experience the enjoyment of working hard to do well. As they take greater control of their emotions, they become socially more confident and mature and gain a greater understanding of what is right and wrong. This is seen in their improved behaviour and in the respect they show to staff and to other pupils. They build well on their knowledge of a healthy life style. Visitors to the school, and their visits to local places, for example religious centres, are effective in extending their awareness of different religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Pupils say they like being at the unit. They attend regularly, feel safe and comfortable there and know that it is a good place for them. One said, 'This is the best school I have ever been to because staff are really nice people and understand and help me with the difficulties I have in learning and in always behaving well.'

Leaders have built successfully on the very high quality provision recognised at the last inspection. Day-to-day management is outstanding. The careful monitoring of procedures ensures that the unit is a calm and well ordered place that provides the rich

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base from which pupils are able to flourish. Since the last inspection, the improved use of assessment information, in recognising what pupils know and can do, and the routine use of this information in planning lessons has made teaching and learning more effective. This development, together with maintaining the high quality of the provision seen at the last inspection, shows that the capacity for continued improvement is outstanding. Over the last few years, the composition of the management committee has changed and the new committee is not yet fully meeting its remit to the unit, especially as this applies to checking the quality of its work. Senior leaders use assessment information very well in driving up the achievement of individual pupils, but this information is not being used well enough to judge the overall performance of the unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine self-evaluation by making greater use of performance data in judging the unit's effectiveness and ensuring that the management committee checks the work of the unit more closely.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils' behaviour improves dramatically over their time at the unit and this means that they are able to attend more effectively to their learning, and for increasingly longer periods of time. In lessons, they behave outstandingly well, routinely work hard and enjoy the experience of learning. They are thrilled when they achieve success and especially so when this is relayed to parents and carers through a 'good news' telephone call. Over a six week spell at the unit, on average, pupils gain seven reading months and six spelling months and they make similarly impressive gains in mathematics.

Irrespective of their history of schooling, their skills and knowledge in the core subjects when they enter the unit or the severity and cause of their additional difficulties, all pupils, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make outstandingly good progress against their targets for learning and in improving their social skills and behaviour.

Pupils quickly appreciate that staff are there to help and support them. One pupil said, 'This is a good place for me because the staff understand me and are always ready to help me.' Gaining increasing control of their emotions and behaviour helps them to interact well when they are in small groups and to make a start in becoming friends with other pupils. When one or two pupils come off task briefly or lose concentration, staff respond promptly and apply the unit's rules for improving behaviour consistently and fairly. The link with a school in Beijing helps pupils to gain an increased awareness of cultural differences, as does joining for social events, such as the upcoming picnic, with a nearby school with an ethnically mixed population of pupils. The unit effectively builds on the work of the home schools in helping pupils understand the requirements and the advantages of a healthy life style and of the importance of making the right decisions to stay safe. Their good attendance is clear testament to the positive feelings pupils have

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for the unit. Being at the unit makes an outstanding impact on their future chances.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The two most important contributors to the outstanding progress pupils make in their learning are the clear and precise targets for learning in their individual education plans and the small size of the classes. Carefully planned targets mean that lesson tasks match exceptionally well with pupils' learning needs, as well as linking with what is being taught in their home schools. The small number of pupils in lessons means that teachers and their assistants provide help, advice and support quickly and effectively. As a consequence, pupils are rarely off task and have little time to let other events, or their insecurities, drive their behaviour. Lessons are purposeful, friendly and often fun events that are enjoyed equally by pupils and staff alike. Headteachers of the client schools take pleasure in confirming that the positive attitudes to learning developed when their pupils were at the unit carry over when they return full time to their mainstream settings.

Close contact with the pupils in their client schools before they enter the unit provides

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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clear information on what each pupil should be learning during their time there, and how the unit can help their social and emotional development and improve their behaviour. The targets for learning in pupils' individual educational plans direct their learning experiences and ensure that what they learn at the unit is relevant to them. The outstanding progress they make in the core subjects and the very high proportion of successful returns to their original schools or to other schools is testament to the effectiveness of the individualised curriculum.

The procedures for securing the care and well-being of pupils are central to the unit's work. Pupils say they feel safe and comfortable at school, both as learners and as young people. Parents and carers confirm this. The experienced and skilled staff meet many of the additional needs pupils present with exceptionally well, especially when these have to do with the control of anger or behaviour. When more specialist help is required, both for pupils and their families, it is quickly gained from the many agencies and support services that link regularly with the unit. One parent said, 'I think I would have gone under without the help I have had from the unit, and if I had gone under I do not know what would have happened to my child.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and all staff are proud of the achievements of the unit and, collectively, they have worked hard in maintaining the very high quality of the provision seen at the last inspection. In this, they have been successful. And, they have improved the provision further through the sharper use of assessment information in providing bespoke curricular experiences. Management is outstanding and ensures a well organised and ordered environment in which pupils are able to work hard to excel as learners and in developing the skills, attitudes and confidence that underpin their successful return to school.

The local authority has a clear vision for the work of the unit and has provided good support and advice in helping unit staff work toward fully meeting meet the remit. The management committee has undergone a period of change. The 'new' committee is not yet fully meeting its responsibilities to the unit. Some procedures do not operate well enough, including those for checking on the quality of the work of the unit. Senior leaders have developed very effective procedures for using assessment information to identify the most relevant developments to support the learning experiences of

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individual pupils, and to recognise the progress they make. However, they are not using this performance data well enough in judging the overall quality of the unit's work. Safeguarding procedures are thorough as the school has adopted best practice. The smooth operation of all procedures and policies to do with care and risk is ensured through regular and rigorous monitoring. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion and to links with the local community by building on pupils' experiences in their other schools. Having a student from a German university take part of her training at the school extended pupils' awareness of European matters and the link with the school in Beijing school does the equivalent for their wider international awareness. There is no discrimination of any sort. All pupils gain equal access to all that the unit offers and all pupils receive the same level of outstanding guidance and support. The systems for giving parents and carers information about the unit work outstandingly well and the relationships many have developed with staff are solidly based on trust and respect. One parent said, 'Thank goodness for this unit, I don't know where I would be, or where my son would be, without it.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The small number of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire or who talked to an inspector were fulsome in their praise for the work of the unit. One judged the unit to be 'fantastic and brilliant' and another said that the unit 'is a sanctuary that has given my son back to me.' They like all aspects of the unit, but especially the way in which staff are 'always there to help' not only with matters to do with their children but

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in supporting them as parents and carers. They especially like the 'good news' telephone calls that provide information on the achievements of their children and the daily home-school sheets that give details of their children's learning and well-being. Inspectors agreed with parents' and carers' very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's Pupil Referral Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received four completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are nine pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



16 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Pupil Referral Unit, Worcester WR2 5AX

It was lovely for me and my colleague to meet and talk with you when we visited your unit. We found that it is doing an excellent job and preparing you outstandingly well for your full-time return to your home school or your move to your next school. We liked many things about your unit but especially:

- the great gains you make in dealing with your emotions and improving your behaviour
- the outstanding progress you make in reading, spelling and mathematics
- the strength of your relationships with the staff, which helps you to enjoy your lessons, even to enjoy working hard to do your best
- the very effective way your senior leaders, with the help of all staff, make sure that the unit is a calm and friendly place where you say you feel safe and secure
- the way staff are always ready to help you, and your parents and carers, in dealing with issues that trouble you.

There are two things I have asked to be made better. Firstly, I would like the committee that manages the unit to be more effective in supporting your senior leaders, as well as challenging them to maintain the unit's very high standards. Secondly, I would like your senior leaders to make better use of the information they have on the progress you make in judging how good the unit is overall.

You can help too, by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and by always working as hard as you did over the time of our visit. I wish you a very successful return to your home school, or to your next school.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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