

Inspection of Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit

Hepscott Park, Stannington, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 6NF

Inspection dates: 6–7 February 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) has been through a period of change over the past 18 months. Since the appointment of an acting headteacher in September, pupils and staff say there has been a huge, positive change in culture and behaviour. The PRU is now a calm and friendly environment. Pupils are happy, safe and able to learn.

Pupils respond well to the positive relationships built by staff. Staff have worked hard to change the way they react and respond to pupils. This, along with the extra therapeutic work, helps pupils to be more in control of their emotions. Leaders say pupils' behaviour has improved significantly.

Staff ensure that routines are clear. They consistently implement the rules. They model positive relationships and respect to pupils. This ensures that pupils know exactly what they need to do. Over breakfast, staff gauge what support a pupil may need to settle into learning. Bullying is rare. Leaders act swiftly when online bullying affects pupils from the school. Pupils say they are not worried about bullying. They say this school is 'safer' than previous schools they have attended. Classes are small and pupils feel they build friendships. For some pupils, this is the first time they have developed this skill.

Teachers have high aspirations for pupils. Pupils leave the PRU to successfully transition to a mainstream school or specialist provision.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education at Northumberland PRU is good. Leaders and staff are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. There is clear adult support which enables pupils to be ready to learn. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, the information that pupils need to learn is well structured. This helps pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge and build on their skills. In other subjects, such as personal and social development education, the approach to organising what pupils learn is not as clear.

Teachers ask questions to check pupils' understanding of what has been taught. This helps staff to pinpoint the specific things the pupils are struggling with. Teachers then ensure that pupils have a wider background knowledge. For example, in English, pupils were learning about displacement and homelessness to support their reading of 'The Diary of Anne Frank'.

Leaders have focused on developing early reading and developing pupils' love of reading across the school. Pupils read books that are suited to their abilities and their age. Primary pupils enjoy adults reading to them, which they do with a variety of props, including a dragon hand puppet. In key stage 3, pupils read the class books that they would be reading in a mainstream school. Teachers are skilled at bringing these books to life. They help pupils understand the feelings and emotions behind what they are reading. The amount of time pupils read to an adult varies.

Records are not always clear about the progress made when pupils do read. This slows some pupils' progress as the adults do not always have a clear picture of what sounds to work on next. Leaders are in the process of resolving these issues.

Pupils behave well. Any poor behaviour in the classrooms is dealt with compassionately yet firmly. Staff say they are trained well to deal with the complex emotional needs of the pupils.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff consistently treat pupils with respect and tolerance. Pupils show these qualities when they are talking to their friends and visitors to the school.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. Pupils spoke confidently about how they are taught to keep themselves safe. This includes discussing topics such as drug misuse, healthy eating and railway track safety. They are also aware of how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils enjoy a range of off-site physical activities, including horse riding and swimming. This adds to the physical education they have in school.

The acting headteacher and newly appointed management committee are passionate about the school and its pupils. They have a clear vision for the remainder of the academic year and understand what is still to do. The management committee has the skills and ability to support and challenge the leadership about the progress being made. Leaders and the management committee are working closely with the local authority to determine the future plans for the PRU.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority. The leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are diligent and have strong knowledge of the local issues facing pupils at the PRU. Leaders work well with other agencies and make sure pupils get the help and support they need in a timely manner. Pupils feel safe and are safe. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable in this area. Staff spoke confidently about procedures relating to keeping children safe.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading curriculum is variable. Pupils read to an adult as and when there is a member of staff available. Records kept of these one-to-one reading sessions are also of a variable quality and do not provide the information which will tell the next adult what the pupil needs to work on. For example, the sounds that pupils are struggling with. Leaders need to continue to develop the curriculum for

reading to ensure that all opportunities for the development of reading are being captured. This will allow for more specific planning of intervention work which will aid the rapid progress of all pupils.

- Although the overall provision for pupils' personal and social development is strong, it is not fully developed as a curriculum subject. As a result, leaders are not building on pupils' previous knowledge to ensure that they make more rapid progress. Leaders need to ensure that work to develop the sequencing of the personal and social development curriculum continues to bring this subject into line with the school's curriculum as a whole.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	132130
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10112158
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	6 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair of management committee	Paul Sampson
Headteacher	Emma Blackburn
Website	http://www.pru.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit is a PRU that caters for pupils between the ages of six and 14. Pupils are referred to the PRU for differing lengths of time ranging from 10 weeks to over two years.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership. An acting headteacher was appointed, for the academic year, in September 2019. In October 2019, an assistant headteacher was seconded from Newcastle PRU. The management committee was reconstituted in October 2019.
- Pupils who attend the school are either on the school roll or dual-registered.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we had meetings with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff. We spoke with the chair of the management

committee and the director of children's services for Northumberland County Council.

- We spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- We considered one free-text response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, six pupil responses and 11 staff responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- We met with leaders responsible for safeguarding in the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation including policies and procedures, behaviour records and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. We spoke with pupils both formally and informally about their learning and behaviour at the school.
- As part of this inspection, we looked in depth at English, reading, mathematics and personal and social development education. We spoke to teachers and curriculum leaders. We visited lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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