

Reach

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133178
Local Authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	360459
Inspection dates	23-24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Adrian Simm

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Lawrence Morris
Headteacher	Lorna Matley
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
School address	Piggott Grove Bucknall Stoke-on-Trent ST2 9BS
Telephone number	01782 235646
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Age group	Error! Reference source not found.11-16
Inspection date(s)	Error! Reference source not found.23-24 May 2011
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed eight lessons and discussed with teachers in detail the quality of their work. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of students, management committee representatives, staff and with a good number of professionals involved in the support of the students. The inspector scrutinised a broad range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the pupil referral unit's self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors scrutinised the views of staff and students and analysed 23 questionnaires from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Students who attend Reach have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their home schools. Depending on age and need, they attend on either a full-time or part-time basis with some short-term placements at Key Stage 3. Those who attend part-time are dual registered, remaining on the roll of their home school. Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students are taught on different sites a short distance apart. Full-time students are mainly at Year 11 although there are a growing number of students at Key Stage 3 who have been excluded from their home schools. Students come from across the local authority. Reach operates an extensive student-focused outreach service including sessional opportunities to students of maintained secondary schools.

The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is extremely low. No student has a statement of special educational needs, although all have behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. No student is in the care of a local authority. The proportion of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals is high.

Reach has achieved Healthy School status and gained a number of awards, the most recent being the Eco Schools Bronze Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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	1
Achievement	1
Teaching	1
Leadership and management	1
Behaviour and safety	1
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is an outstanding pupil referral unit. All staff and other professionals involved in the students' education have a very clear sense of purpose focused fully on students' needs. As a result, students are prepared extremely well for returning to their home schools or for the next stage in education, training or employment. Gaps in their attainment which have built over time in the past lessen considerably.
- Staff have a very robust and effective focus on students' personal development and academic achievement which are outstanding. High expectations of what students can do spearhead the drive to ensure that improvement in students' behaviour, attendance and achievement is significant. Discussion with students and an evaluation of the questionnaires they completed for the inspection, points to them thoroughly enjoying their time in an extremely supportive and caring environment. They behave extremely well and make an outstanding contribution to a safe environment.
- Teaching is outstanding and delivered by subject specialists who also fully understand how to enthuse students and encourage their self-confidence. A full-time, relevant, interesting and accredited curriculum is taught, which includes literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The pupil referral unit is relentless in improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum. For example, senior managers recognise that accreditation for sport is not fully in place and music does not feature as significantly as it could within students' options or regular menu of learning.
- The headteacher, staff team, management committee, local authority and other professionals play their full part in ensuring very high outcomes for students.

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There is an extremely strong partnership with parents and carers. Strengths are celebrated and weaknesses are clearly identified and overcome. For example, drawbacks with the current accommodation have been taken into account in plans for the new premises which are being built.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give students an even broader curriculum that is fully accredited by:
 - timetabling music regularly at Key Stage 3
 - offering music as an option at Key Stage 4
 - ensuring music and sport are fully part of the package of accreditation.

Main report

All staff are skilled in their roles. They are enthusiasts who care passionately that the students receive the best possible teaching and support. Staff are self-critical and constantly strive for improvement. This is in no small part due to the headteacher who has pulled together an extremely strong team of support staff, teachers and administrative staff who operate very effectively across a broad range of settings. For example, the Key Stage 3 base, the Key Stage 4 base and the outreach and transition teams. Everyone 'pulls in the same direction'. The relentless and successful drive for improvement is not, however, at the expense of a happy and supportive community.

Whether full-time or part-time, students' needs are at the heart of everything that happens. Students' self-confidence flourishes and their progress in lessons builds rapidly. This is because subject specialists teach personalised curriculum packages across all subjects but also understand what is needed to support fully students' behaviour and personal development needs. For example, in an English lesson at Key Stage 3, boys excluded from their home schools, and who had not been on roll for long, focused intently on understanding and replicating in discussion and writing, some features of genre. The students' willingness to cooperate, take advice from the teacher and the 'colour and content' of their writing were remarkable. They had the confidence already to evaluate each others' work.

Given that cohorts are small, standards for Year 11 students, while below average overall, are rising considerably year-on-year. In 2010, students gained at least one GCSE grade A* - G, 14% gained five A* - C including English and mathematics, and 28% of subject passes were at C or above. In 2011, a good number of students on highly structured and personalised programmes are studying for around eight GCSEs or equivalent including BTEC, with at least one aiming for more. Year 11 students only start full-time in the September of each year and from low starting points on arrival succeed in a very short time. All students are assessed carefully on entry. The highly effective use of performance data to set challenging targets, including for the

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younger and part-time students contributes significantly to their improvement in attainment.

Permanent exclusions do not feature in the ethos of the pupil referral unit, fixed period exclusions are extremely rare and levels of attendance have grown considerably over the last few years. Attendance levels have now reached 93% overall at Key Stage 4, 90% for the full-time students. Across both key stages, levels of attendance are far higher for students than when they were in their home schools and for Year 11's in particular, very close to the national average for mainstream secondary schools. Students' achievement, behaviour and safety, personal development and improvement in attendance are outstanding and have a very positive impact on students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. These high academic and personal development outcomes are the same for both male and female students and regardless of the severity of individual student's behaviour needs on arrival. The gap between the outcomes for these students and their peers in mainstream closes considerably due to their time at the pupil referral unit. In 2010, all students leaving at the end of Year 11 went onto employment, education or training.

For students who previously experienced behaviour difficulties in their home schools, teaching regularly finds the right balance between high academic challenge and pastoral support. Detailed entry assessments and regular collection and analysis of students' academic progress and personal development enable teachers to pitch lessons at the right level for individual students. As students come to realise that they can succeed, their confidence grows and this results in learners who mature and want to cooperate and achieve. Very good staffing ratios enable teachers to give students good levels of individual attention particularly when immediate support and feedback are necessary to prevent students' confusion or concern arising in lessons. The broad and rich curriculum significantly underpins this process. Students appreciate staffs' subject expertise, and the understanding and support they offer; they talk openly about how staff have helped them turn their lives around. As a result, students too become part of the team and show care and consideration to others. Bullying is not acceptable and current students consider they have not witnessed any. In comparison with when they start, students are confident, independent learners. Parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire are unanimous that their children are safe and behaviour is good. They praise the leadership and staff.

The headteacher has moulded a team where enthusiastic staff support fully the pupil referral unit's mission for:

- successful supported transitions into education, employment and training
- building capacity for universal settings, and
- working in partnership with families, providers and other agencies.

The unit has recently gained the Inclusion Quality Mark; the promotion of equality and tackling discrimination is at the forefront of everything staff strive for. Staff thrive on their responsibilities in teaching the students, and in leading subjects or

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other strands of the unit's work. They contribute extremely well to monitoring and evaluating the success of the students' work and their own performance. For example, the sports coordinator recognises rightly that to strengthen provision further, appropriate accreditation of students' successes is needed and is not currently fully in place.

Ambition and the drive for constant improvement is part of the team ethos. All leaders and managers lead by example. The management committee is part of the team and individual members take on different responsibilities which allow them to gain first-hand information and contribute to further improvement. They are acutely aware the unit's strengths and ensure areas for improvement are developed effectively. Recently, this has included improvements in teaching where this was necessary. Staff work hard to overcome some drawbacks of the current accommodation although specialist provision for music has yet to be introduced to widen further the creative curriculum. However, the building of new accommodation is underway and music is already on the agenda for development. There is an extremely strong capacity for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Reach 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 inspector received 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 23 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	22	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	21	91	2	9	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	19	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	22	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	19	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	19	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	19	83	3	13	0	0	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	20	87	2	9	0	0	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	18	78	5	22	0	0	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	21	91	2	9	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 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



25 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Reach, Bucknall, ST2 9BS

I write to thank you for your warm welcome when I came to spend two days with you recently. I agree with you that you are progressing extremely well in your work and in how you get on with others.

Thank you to the group of Year 11 students who found time to talk with me. Our discussion was extremely interesting and helpful. You were very clear in your views about a broad range of things but overall, extremely supportive of the staff and what they have helped you achieve. I hear that the examination you took on the afternoon I finished was quite difficult but I hope when all of the results come out, you can move on to the college or training placements which you have identified for yourselves.

Reach is excellent in how it helps students return to home schools, start at other mainstream schools, or move on to college education, employment or training. Staff work very closely with your families, alternative education providers and a broad range of other professional and agencies which help tremendously in your success. But without your own hard work, cooperation and the respect and confidence which you build in yourselves, this would not be possible. Well done to each and every one of you.

I have talked with your headteacher and some staff who I know are keen that you receive accreditation for all of the sports options you carry out. I have recommended also that music is introduced into your timetable at Key Stage 3 with an accredited option at Key Stage 4 so that you can experience more creative opportunities than at the moment.

All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Simm
Lead inspector

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