

## The School's Context

### **Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit (P.R.U.)**

Northumberland P.R.U. is a resource available to mainstream schools to assist them in supporting children with behaviour which disrupts their learning and that of others. Younger and more vulnerable children are taught separately in a purpose-built nurture unit. This offers an exceptionally high level of support to children with complex needs and often quite extreme behaviour. Other children are taught in small groups by specialist teachers and support staff, using the National Curriculum. Again, the emphasis is upon blending support with appropriate challenge.

The P.R.U. is not an alternative to school. Although there are some important differences, reflecting the needs of the children who attend; the P.R.U. is very much run as a school and is clearly identifiable as such by the children who attend. As well as being taught by experienced teachers, pupils have skilled, systematic and sustained help to change their attitudes and behaviour at school. Without this kind of support, even children who want to change their behaviour are unlikely to be able to do so. Detailed behaviour profiles are prepared for each pupil. This builds up a picture of the child's perceptions, reactions in different situations and relations with other pupils and with staff. Using the profiles, which are updated throughout the placement, a set of bespoke support strategies are developed, trialled and modified. This approach also allows for SEAL and PSHE work to be targeted more accurately. A similar approach is used to tackle problems with academic performance; an Assertive Mentoring approach, which rigorously integrates target setting, tracking, mentoring & checking systems was introduced in December 2013 and is now implemented in each of the nurture groups. Individual programmes are used to highlight and tackle barriers to learning.

The school day at the P.R.U. is organised around familiar lessons: English, Mathematics and PE are taught discretely, whilst Science, Technology, Art and Humanities are integrated into a themed half termly topic. A variety of activities helps to motivate disaffected children: a mini-farm attached to the Unit, the regular use of out-of-classroom learning visits to contextualise what happens in the classroom and generous access to craft and cookery activities are examples. All children are taught in mixed-ability groups and use learning materials individually tailored to their ability and needs. At the same time, a great deal of attention is given to each child's ability to understand his or her social and emotional needs and to recognise those of others.

There is no fixed term or notional time limit for a partnership placement at the P.R.U. although there is a maximum stay of a year (39 'school' weeks). Commissioners identify reintegration criteria/objectives and regular reviews monitor progress against them. Ongoing assessment and profiling informs intervention planning and as the placement progresses, the emphasis moves towards preparation for moving on; usually this is via a supported reintegration programme into mainstream school. Some pupils enter the P.R.U. with exceptionally complex needs, and are unlikely to be able to return to a school without additional support. In these cases the P.R.U. is able to prepare detailed reports exploring aspects of the child's educational and social needs, together with details of strategies and approaches that have been shown to work in helping to manage behaviour. The P.R.U. is usually able to teach these children until a suitable long-term placement or additional support has been arranged.

Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit (P.R.U.) is the only P.R.U. in the County; it caters for girls and boys from Y2 – Y9. Analysis of LEA figures for fixed and permanent exclusion and historical P.R.U. data indicate a strong correlation between those placed at the P.R.U. and social deprivation. The P.R.U. serves the whole of Northumberland, with the majority of pupils coming from the South East and Central areas.

The PRU is base funded for 32 places.

There are four specific groupings of Pupils within the P.R.U. and commissioners are encouraged to identify and commission places within these groups:

- Year 2, 3, 4, (Nurture group). 6 places. Detached annex.
- Year 5, 6, (Nurture group). 8 Places. Main school.
- Year 7, 8, 9 (Nurture group). 9 Places. Main school.
- Year 9. (Nurture group). 9 places. Main school.
- Additional Nurture group – 8 places. Main school. (Funded from April 2015).

The LA, schools and academies are able to commission places at the P.R.U. providing they meet admission criteria:

- On admission, pupil age is within the range Yr2 – Yr9
- The information passport is completed in full

- All appropriate Child Protection information is shared with the P.R.U.
- Risk Assessment completed where risk cannot be managed with usual staffing/resources
- The pupil's needs are such that the P.R.U. has a reasonable chance of achieving stated objectives
- The Commissioner agrees to attend regular reviews
- The pupil's parent/carer is aware of P.R.U. placement and is committed to support intervention/programme
- The Commissioner to pay 'top up' funding monthly

**The Maximum placement Length should not exceed 39 weeks (1year) unless there are extraordinary circumstances. Where a placement is likely to be over a year it is discussed and agreed by the Management Committee.**

In extraordinary circumstances pupils may have 'statements'/EHCPs; this would usually be when the LA could not identify appropriate provision or if the LA or school/academy considered further assessment or observation appropriate or necessary prior to amending a statement or identifying appropriate provision. Requests for additional SEN support ('top up') or EHCPs are made for a large minority of pupils by either their schools or the P.R.U. following initial assessment or failure to respond or engage with the P.R.U. intervention.

The majority of pupils have significantly lower than average ability in Literacy, and this along with disrupted schooling, often impact significantly on access to and attainment in other curricular areas.

School registers and referral forms indicate pupils' education is often significantly disrupted by poor attendance, multiple exclusions, or moving schools (educational tourism).

Commissioners are able to 'reserve places' for their exclusive use. In these circumstances they act as their own 'admissions panel'.

### **Distinctive Aims of the P.R.U.**

Pupils at the P.R.U fall into two groups, dually registered pupils and single registration/permanently excluded pupils. The distinctive aims are:

#### **For permanently excluded pupils (EOTAS):**

- To provide education for permanently excluded pupils by day six.

- To identify behaviours that led to permanent exclusion and develop individualised learning/behaviour plans.
- To support and promote educational and social inclusion by re-engaging pupils with the educational process.
- To formulate and regularly review a personal education plan/ assertive mentoring log with agreed targets focusing on mainstream school or other appropriate placement integration.
- To assess pupil need and formulate personalised planning, support and intervention programs.
- To work with other LA officers and agencies to identify a new school / educational provision.
- To support and contribute to reintegration/ integration phase.
- To complete and process EHC plan request, providing comprehensive educational advice/assessment.

**For dually registered pupils (Schools / Academies):**

- To prevent permanent exclusion.
- To identify behaviours, attainment and barriers to learning undermining school inclusion and whole curriculum access.
- To formulate a personal education plan with agreed targets focusing on mainstream school reintegration criteria.
- To work with mainstream school, parents/carers, pupils and relevant agencies/stakeholders to successfully reintegrate pupils.
- To promote, support and contribute to pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development.

**For all pupils**

- To improve pupil attitude to learning.
- To formulate a curriculum and learning plan relevant and appropriate to the individual pupil's needs.

- To identify academic strengths and weaknesses and develop an individual education plan to accelerate attainment where appropriate (particularly literacy).
- To provide comprehensive diagnostic, behaviour, attainment and achievement profiles, reports and strategy/intervention prompts and advice at the end of each placement.

### **Specific contextual issues.**

**Since 2011 there has been a period of sustained and significant change.**

### **Changes include:**

- September 2010 - Changed admission age range lowering minimum yr group from Yr 7 to Yr2.
- September 2011 - Recruited new DHT.
- September 2011 - Set up primary nurture group.
- September 2012 - The PRU adopted a model similar to primary schools where pupils spend much of the time with one teacher and a support assistant.
- November 2012 - PRU capacity increased from 24 – 32.
- November 2012 - Additional Primary teacher and TA recruited to meet increased capacity.
- April 2013 - PRU receives delegated budget, like schools.
- April 2013 - PRU receives devolved powers.
- Sept 2013 - Primary nurture group teacher recruited.
- September 2013 - 'Nurture group principles' aspired to and adopted in all groups.
- December 2013 - Assertive Mentoring adopted and implemented in all groups. Goal Assessment stops.

- December 2013 - Management Committee agree to recruitment of an additional teacher to facilitate specialist PE provision, improved occupational therapy input and increased pupil 'intervention' sessions.
- September 2013 – to June 2014 primary teacher off – long term absence resulting in a number of supply teachers covering the absence. (Resigned June 2013).
- June 2014 - Additional primary teacher recruited on fixed term pending advertisement and recruitment of permanent post.
- April 2014 - Support Services manager resigns.
- June 2014 - Office Manager recruited.
- September 2014 - Primary teacher recruited to fill vacancy from resignation.
- February 2015 - Nurture group TA resigns.
- February 2015 – Management committee agrees to additional HLTA to facilitate intervention planning, Data collection and collation and liaison with SEN.
- March 2015 – Management Committee agrees to LA request to increase unit capacity from 32 – 40.
- March 2015 - 3 HLTA's recruited to fill vacancies and to support with additional group (8 pupils).
- April 2015 – 2 x primary teacher posts advertised.
- April 2015 - Internal building work to convert/ modify rooms to accommodate additional class (8 pupils).