

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit

Pit Lane, Front Street, Cramlington, Northumberland NE23 7EB

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 May 2025

## Outcome

Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils grow and feel safe in this welcoming school. Staff strive and succeed in putting pupils back on the path to engaging with education. Pupils settle quickly into the positive atmosphere that exists in classrooms. They are supported well by staff to do so. Strong relationships between staff and pupils mean pupils feel understood and supported. Pupils know adults are available to help them. Staff have regular check-ins with pupils, which contributes to their engagement with the ambitious learning on offer, so they achieve well.

The school has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to meet these. They actively contribute to the open and respectful culture that exists throughout. This is despite the past disruption that almost all pupils have experienced in their education. Pupils establish and display positive attitudes to their learning, particularly through their written work.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities, which broaden their horizons. They are helped to consider a wide range of careers, including apprenticeships. Pupils' talents and interests are nurtured well. They benefit from the school's 'experience passport' and the rewards they receive, which enhance each week for them. Pupils particularly enjoy the cooking and sporting activities they get to participate in.

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

The school has clear transition processes to help pupils both enter and leave this short-stay setting well. The school ensures that it understands as much as possible about the pupils before they start. Pupils' needs and starting points are carefully assessed. They can arrive with unrecognised or unmet special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A

wide range of possible barriers to learning are considered, including reading ability and any possible SEND. The school works well to support pupils effectively to succeed in their learning.

Teachers have immensely positive relationships with pupils and praise them regularly for their efforts. The school has put in place an ambitious curriculum for all. For example, in mathematics the learning is carefully structured to allow all to succeed. Gaps in pupils' prior knowledge are addressed swiftly. Pupils are supported well to engage with their learning on an appropriate level.

Reading is central to the pupils' experience in school. Leaders have rightly prioritised this and it forms a crucial part of daily lessons for pupils of all ages. Teachers deliver this well to help pupils secure new knowledge and enrich their understanding of the world. Pupils engage with a range of literature and develop their love of reading. However, the support for pupils at the early stages of reading has only recently begun. This means that some have not received the help they need to learn the phonics knowledge they need to become confident and fluid readers.

A recent increase in the pastoral support available has helped pupils greatly. When they are struggling, pupils are given space to reflect and self-regulate. The school uses a '4 R's' (Respect, Responsibility Resilience and Rewards) structure to develop pupils' understanding of positive behaviour. Through this, staff help pupils understand the value of their own positive actions. Pupils' attendance increases over time. The school is doing what it can to secure improvements in attendance from what are sometimes very low starting points with a dynamic group of pupils.

The school has structured its approach to personal development carefully. The school works effectively to ensure it gathers all relevant information about its pupils. This informs lessons and a range of other support. For example, the impact of the intervention programme and daily adjustments are considered thoroughly. The school has strong connections with wider agencies used to help pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think about their future. They have opportunities to consider a full range of possible post-16 options through visits to local colleges and employers.

Senior leaders and members of the management committee are accurate in their view of the school. They recognise the challenges of working in this complex environment and are consistently focused on the pupils receiving the best provision. Staff speak highly of working in the school. They know leaders will listen and support them actively with their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although the school has recently introduced support for pupils at the early stages of reading, some pupils have not yet received this help. This means those pupils are not learning to read with confidence and fluidity as well as they should, and this poses a barrier to their successful learning across the subjects. The school should ensure that all pupils with gaps in their reading ability are supported effectively to become fluent readers, which will enable them to succeed more in their future learning.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132130
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10346392
<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	56
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Carr
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.pru.northumberland.sch.uk">www.pru.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit is a pupil referral unit (PRU) that caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. Pupils are referred to the PRU for differing lengths of time.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the structure of the school. The provision for key stage 2 has been removed and key stage 4 has been added.
- Pupils who attend the school are either on the school roll or dual-registered.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspectors held discussions with the local authority representative, the school improvement partner and members of the management committee, including the chair.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum and spoke with leaders.
- The inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and attendance.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils, as well as responses to Ofsted's survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

## Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Milligan

Ofsted Inspector

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