

17 June 2010		ITEM 4
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Report on the Inspection of the Pupil Referral Unit		
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Diana Hale – Portfolio Holder for Education		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Head of Service: Jay Mercer – Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson – Corporate Director of Children, Education & Families		
This report is public		
Purpose of Report: For information		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Thurrock Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was judged by Ofsted to require special measures as a result of the section 5 inspection on 11th March 2010.
- This report outlines reason for the PRU being subject to Special Measures and describes the actions taken to date to secure improvements in the quality of provision.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 That this report is received and further reports are submitted to monitor progress of the actions to be taken as a consequence.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The Thurrock Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) serves pupils aged 5 to 16 who are unable to engage successfully in mainstream schools owing to social emotional and behavioural reasons.
- 2.2 The PRU is a local authority service. PRUs differ from mainstream schools in that several of the key functions that would be the responsibility of the governing body of a school are retained by the local authority. The governance of the PRU is provided by a management committee that has fewer responsibilities than a school governing body would hold. However, as the PRU provides education for pupils of statutory school age, it has a DFE number and is subject to Ofsted inspection as are all other schools. The DFE number relates to an 11-16 PRU, but the provision is actually for pupils aged 5 – 16. There is a secondary headteacher of the PRU, but a primary teacher in charge (TIC)
- 2.3 PRUs are designated as short stay schools. Their prime function is as a short term break from mainstream school with a reintegration programme from day one. The Thurrock PRU has been used in many cases as a long stay provision, with pupils at all key stages remaining within the provision for over a year and in some cases three years or more. This has been due to the difficulties experienced by the local authority in finding suitable provision for pupils with a statement for social, emotional and behavioural reasons.
- 2.4 In September 2008, a review of the PRUs was undertaken by two Principal Officers Pupil Achievement (POPAs) and the interim manager of the Pupil Support Service (PSS). This review concluded that the secondary PRU was satisfactory, but the primary PRU was at risk of a poor Ofsted inspection. The key advice was that the primary premises were unfit for purpose and suitable premises were required.
- 2.5 The interim manager took steps to restructure the staffing arrangements, including the identification of an interim primary teacher in charge and a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) with significant PRU experience.
- 2.6 In December 2009, the Head of Service asked the POPA Inclusion to carry out a further review of the primary provision following concerns raised by the outgoing interim PSS manager and staff at the primary PRU.
- 2.7. This review report concluded that the current provision was unfit for purpose owing to the inappropriateness of the premises and the inappropriate placement of pupils.
- 2.8 The Head of Service, as a response to the report and in the light of the absence of a manager for Pupil Support Services, changed the strategic management of the PSS service to the POPA leading on inclusion in order that he could take a lead in improvement.
- 2.9 This arrangement began in mid-January 2010 with the POPA supported by a part time consultant to begin restructuring of the PRUs.

- 2.10 Following an evaluation and the identification of a number of safeguarding issues the POPA was seconded to take on the direct leadership of the PRUs in February 2010. The PRU SENCO was given the role of interim teacher in charge of the primary department as she had extensive PRU experience
- 2.11 On 5th February, the POPA reported that the Primary PRU was not safe. The Head of Service visited the site and the Director of Children, Education and Families made the decision to close the premises at short notice. Accommodation was secured for the primary pupils at Abbots Hall Primary School and in the Deneholm Children's Centre.
- 2.12 A series of training sessions was developed for staff and a review of planning, curriculum and the reintegration process was started. Tudor Court School was identified as a training partner to enhance teaching.
- 2.13 New premises were identified in March 2010 at Corve Lane and planning for the move to a fit for purpose site was started. However, Ofsted inspected the school in the split provisions.
- 2.14 The inspection found that the secondary PRU was satisfactory, but that the primary required intervention. Because there had never been a split between the DFE number for the primary and secondary PRU, the whole 5-16 provision was deemed inadequate.
- 2.15 The Primary PRU was relocated during the Easter break and now offers a fit for purpose learning environment.
- 2.16 The curriculum is under review and a new development plan is being linked to finances so that clear accountability can be established through the local authority and the Management Committee
- 2.17 A full reintegration programme is in place with four new integration programmes established. Referral criteria are under review as part of a wide ranging review.
- 2.18 Staffing structures are under review as are infrastructural issues to develop effective leadership and management and long term sustainability.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 3.1 To secure sustainable high quality provision and to remove the service from its Ofsted category by December 2011.
- 3.2 To develop the PRU in the context of a clear authority-wide strategy for inclusion to ensure all pupils receive their entitlement.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 Overview and scrutiny

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

5.1 Not applicable.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Yannick Stupples-Whyley**
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There are no direct financial implications within the report.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Andrea Kelleher**
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Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) are a type of school, set up and run by local authorities to provide education for children who cannot attend school.

Local authorities have a duty under section 19 (1) of the Education Act 1996 to provide suitable education for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend school.

Placing pupils in PRUs is just one of the ways in which local authorities can ensure that they can comply with this duty.

Although local authorities can meet their section 19(1) duties through establishing and maintaining Pupil Referral Units they are not obliged to do so. A few local authorities do not have any Pupil Referral Units. Education can be provided by voluntary or private sector “alternative provision” providers to supplement more general Pupil Referral Unit support or in some cases as an alternative to local authorities running a unit.

Some local authorities have a small proportion of children educated under section 19 in Pupil Referral Units while commissioning places for the majority from external providers.

Pupil Referral Units are subject to regular inspection by Ofsted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 and are treated similarly to other schools. The central principles for recognising and judging the quality and standards of schools apply to schools of all types and sizes.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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The LA plan for the PRU within the proposed Strategy for Inclusion and SEN will take full account of Thurrock's policy for Diversity and Equality, including race equality and gender equality. The curriculum, learning and progress, leadership and performance management policies will ensure that adults and pupils acknowledge and respect the differences between individuals and groups. Each pupil will develop an understanding of diversity and disability, recognising the valuable part everyone plays in the life of the community. All provision will secure fair and inclusive access so that each individual is able to participate and contribute to the PRU and wider communities. The strategy will include specific objectives that provide universal, targeted, and specialist services to meet the wide range of needs. The intended outcome is for each individual to play a full part in their community, reducing the risks of isolation and falling into anti-social and criminal behaviours.

The pupil referral unit provides support for very vulnerable young people including in particular boys of white British background whose educational outcomes are a cause for concern nationally and in Thurrock. There is an urgent need to very high quality provision to maximise the chance of success for this group.

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