

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

The Priory Centre is a part-time pupil referral unit for secondary aged pupils at Key Stage 4 within the recently formed unitary authority of Herefordshire. Pupils between the ages of 14 to 16 years may be referred to the unit at any time during the year, although this is often by the January of Year 10. There are places for 30 part-time pupils who are taught in up to three groups, during each morning and afternoon session. Most pupils receive 12 ½ hours of teaching per week, although some attend a local college on a Wednesday morning and receive 15 hours tuition per week. Currently there are 8 girls and 14 boys on roll all in Year 10 and 11, of which 14 pupils are dual registered, while the remaining eight are registered only at the unit. The majority of pupils, stay at the unit until the end of their compulsory education, although a few do re-integrate back into mainstream schools. Most pupils at Year 10 are school refusers and few have been excluded from their mainstream schools, although the majority of Year 11 pupils have been excluded. Pupils do not need a statement of special educational needs to attend the unit, although three pupils do have a statement. At present no pupils have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The Priory Centre has undergone recent and significant change and is making good progress. The quality of the unit's leadership is very good, while the quality of teaching and the curriculum is good. This creates an atmosphere that is calm, supportive and encouraging to pupils, who make good progress with their learning and very good progress with their behaviour. The unit makes efficient use of its staff and its learning resources and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the unit does well

- The quality of leadership and management by the headteacher is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good and as a result pupils learn with confidence and enjoyment.
- Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for their work are very good.
- The quality of careers education and guidance and the variety of work experience placements are very good and offer pupils the opportunity to make an informed choice about their future.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils themselves are very good.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good which has a significant impact on their learning.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their moral and social skills are very good.

What could be improved

- There is an urgent need for the Local Education Authority to clearly identify the budget available for the unit and provide appropriate training for the headteacher and administrative assistant.
- The quality of the information received from some schools referring pupils is inconsistent and does not provide the unit with a clear indication of pupils' needs.
- The quality and use of assessment to support pupils' learning is inconsistent and does not aid future planning.
- Although the curriculum is appropriate to pupils' needs, there should be more emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy skills.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the local education authority.

HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the unit's first inspection.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors’ judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

Progress in:	By age 16	Key	
English	B	Very good	A
Mathematics	C	Good	B
Science	C	Satisfactory	C
Personal, social and health education	C	Unsatisfactory	D
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	Poor	E

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Pupils are learning effectively in English, information technology and art. Pupils’ learning in mathematics and science is less secure which is in part due to the curriculum offered and the frequency of lessons. Pupils make very good progress with their behavioural targets.

PUPILS’ ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Very good, most pupils enjoy attending the unit and are keen and enthusiastic to learn. Some pupils have chosen to attend the unit at additional times in order to complete their GCSE coursework.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond extremely well to the high expectations of staff to behave well in and around the unit.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils’ personal development is very good, as are their relationships with staff and each other.
Attendance	Although satisfactory overall, many pupils have significantly improved their attendance since starting at the unit. However, there are still a few pupils who refuse to attend on a regular basis despite the best efforts of the unit.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. ‘Satisfactory’ means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall and occasionally very good in English and information technology. As a result pupils listen carefully to staff and learn with interest and enthusiasm. Overall, teaching is good or better in 72 per cent of lessons, and in 33 per cent it is very good. Literacy skills are taught well, although there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to extend

their numeracy skills. Many pupils have well developed information technology skills and these are increasingly used across a number of subjects. Although many pupils are provided with appropriate tasks that match their needs and ages, this is not consistent across all subjects. Learning resources are used very well and are readily available. Positive aspects of teaching which contributes particularly well to pupils' learning include: stimulating and challenging lessons; enthusiastic teaching that includes a clear understanding of pupils' needs; high expectations of pupils to produce good quality work and behave well, and lessons that are taught at pace. The careful ongoing assessment of pupils' needs and the use of this information to plan suitably challenging tasks that match their individual needs could further improve the quality of teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, and the quality of the unit's careers education and guidance is very good. The subjects taught at the unit have been carefully chosen to support pupils' learning, particularly their literacy, information technology and creative skills through art. At present, insufficient attention is given to developing pupils' numeracy skills and there are no opportunities for pupils to participate in any physical education activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, teachers ensure that pupils with additional special educational needs have appropriately planned tasks that match their needs including assistance from support staff.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' social skills are very well developed through carefully planned activities, including personal, social and health education. The unit has a strong moral code and pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Opportunities for pupils' to develop spirituality are improving, although there are few multi-cultural images within the unit.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good overall. All staff provide high levels of care and support for their pupils. The procedures to monitor and improve pupils' attendance are very good and this is having a significant impact on the attendance rates of most pupils. Although procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory the use of this assessment to inform future planning is less than satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the teacher in charge and other key staff	The headteacher leads and manages the unit very effectively and is acutely aware of what needs further improvement. He is well supported by staff, the Local Education Authority's designated officer and headteachers from the other pupil referral units.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	The management committee, although formed and with appropriate draft terms of reference, have yet to meet. It is important that this group meets to oversee the work of the unit and the development of the Local Education Authority's service, especially during the current period of change.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of how the unit is performing and what needs to be improved to make it better.

The strategic use of resources	The unit uses its limited finances very well and learning resources have been carefully purchased to support the curriculum.
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The headteacher and the Local Education Authority’s designated officer have a clear vision for the future of the unit and that of the service, such as, a commitment to provide 30 full time places at the unit by 2002. In an effort to improve standards, the headteacher has started to informally monitor, the quality of teaching and pupils’ learning, and close attention is being given to extending the range of accredited courses available to pupils. Despite having very limited finances available to the unit, spending decisions are carefully considered and learning resources are purchased with the principles of best value in mind.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are happy with the provision offered by the unit and say their children enjoy attending. • Pupils’ behaviour is good, as is the quality of teaching. • The unit is well lead and parents believe they are kept well informed about their child’s progress. • Parents believe the unit sets high standards enabling their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like to see more homework set. • A few parents feel there is a lack of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors endorse parents’ very positive comments about the unit. Although the headteacher agrees with parents’ concerns regarding homework and is looking at ways of improving this, most teachers do set homework for pupils, which is regularly completed. There is a lack of activities outside of lessons but as pupils only attend the unit part-time and most travel great distances it is very difficult to provide additional activities. However, some pupils are involved in their own Enterprise activities outside of the school day and this is to be commended.