

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

St. David’s is a pupil referral unit for pupils with a wide range of difficulties. It provides for up to 36 Key Stage 4 pupils, although only 16 can be accommodated on site at any one time. It forms part of the provision of Herefordshire’s Medical and Behavioural Support Service (MBSS) drawing pupils mainly from the south of the County, complementing a similar provision in Leominster. There have been significant changes to its character and population in the last 2-3 years and further changes are planned to enable it to provide for up to 50 full-time pupils by 2002. The pupil group includes those who are permanently excluded in Key Stage 4, pupils with medical, including psychiatric, difficulties and pregnant schoolgirls. There is also provision to support pupils from high schools on a ‘respite’ basis and pupils on fixed-term exclusions over 15 days.

There are currently 37 pupils on roll, evenly distributed between year groups and between boys and girls. At present 22 pupils are ‘dual registered’, although effectively the unit provides their only access to educational facilities. Pupils attend part-time for up to 18 hours a week, with an average offer of 14.5 hours. They arrive with a broad range of prior attainment, but this is generally below average as a result of their previous experiences. An increasing number have statements of special educational needs, of which there are 6 at present. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The unit aims to create an environment that enables the pupils to manage their own behaviour, reach their academic potential, improve their feelings of self-worth and learn to socialise appropriately with their peers and with the staff. In order to improve its ability to do so, it has adopted a relevant range of priorities for development.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The unit is very effective in enabling a group of pupils with significant adjustment difficulties to achieve success in their academic, social and emotional development. Within the very severe constraints imposed by the inadequate premises and the limited resources, good teaching supports a range of accreditation which pupils would otherwise not have the opportunity to achieve. The clear educational direction, the effective management and the very good ethos promoted by a united staff with a coherent and unified vision all contribute well to the overall effectiveness. In terms of what it is able to offer, the unit provides satisfactory value for money in spite of the severe constraints on its work and the limited attendance of a significant number of pupils.

What the unit does well

- It addresses its core objectives well and enables the pupils to become confident successful learners.
- Good teaching largely compensates for poor facilities and inadequate resources.
- Consistently good relationships with a good balance between empathy and challenge promote learning well.
- Teachers’ detailed knowledge of individual pupils’ needs and circumstances enables them to support pupils through their emotional and social difficulties.
- Very good resources for information and communications technology are very effectively used.
- The unit has made good progress in developing an alternative vocational curriculum for some of its pupils.
- Very good links with other services are well used to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils.
- The unit has established very good links with parents that contribute significantly to pupils’ achievement.

What could be improved

- Accommodation is poor; it is inadequate and inappropriate for the curriculum needs of the pupils.
- Resources in most subjects are inadequate to support the full range of National Curriculum requirements.
- Procedures for identifying and assessing special educational needs are under-developed, especially where needs arise from medical or psychiatric problems.
- Pupils who could make use of full-time education with a broader curriculum do not have this opportunity.
- There is insufficient attention to individual planning linked to individualised learning objectives in lessons.
- Provision for pupils’ physical development is inadequate.

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

The unit has not previously been inspected

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	B	satisfactory C
personal, social and health education	A	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*

Although pupils receive part-time education only, they make satisfactory and, in most subjects offered, good progress. They arrive often with attainment depressed by their inability to make use of mainstream school provision and for some this is marked. About a half gained GCSE passes in one or more subjects last year with a total of 50 passes, averaging 3.5 passes each, mainly in the range from grade D to G. In addition to these, a significant number of pupils obtain the Certificate of Educational Achievement (CoEA), usually with merit or distinction. More general achievement is recorded through the Youth Award (bronze level) and Basic Skills Scheme where, last year, seven pupils obtained nine passes including one distinction and one merit. In general, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress within the limited curriculum but, for those with statements, progress is unsatisfactory, as they do not receive the provision specified in their statements.

Good progress is made in English and science; many pupils enter with attainments well below expected levels but make sufficient progress to achieve GCSE. There is also good progress in information and communications technology (ICT), which pupils use effectively in other subjects. Striking progress is made in PSHE and the knowledge pupils acquire is applied well in gaining accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme (ASDAN).

PUPILS’ ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Pupils who attend the unit are keen to do their best and apply themselves well. They value what the unit offers and demonstrate a compliant commitment to their work. They speak positively of what it has helped them to achieve. They show a responsible, independent attitude to their studies.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times, mature and often thoughtful. Pupils show sensitivity and respect towards others. They treat visitors, including each other’s parents, with appropriate respect.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils attending the unit demonstrate confidence and increasing self-belief. They form very good relationships with their peers and the staff, and this makes a significant impact on standards of achievement
Attendance	The attendance rate is very low, consistent with the problems associated with these pupils, and a number of pupils are persistently absent. Nearly all absence is authorised

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.

Teaching is good overall; it is at least good in five out of six lessons and very good in one sixth. This quality is achieved in spite of the poor accommodation, which severely limits what teachers can offer and the unsatisfactory resources for most subjects. Teachers know the pupils very well and demonstrate a very good balance between empathy for their personal difficulties and a determination to present challenging targets for achievement. They consistently and successfully pursue good relationships, which provide a secure basis for pupils with a wide range of difficulties to come to terms with and, in many cases, make progress towards overcoming these difficulties. The consistent and sympathetic management of pupils through high expectations of work and behaviour ensures that lessons take place in an orderly and supportive atmosphere. In a number of subjects, the knowledge and understanding teachers bring to bear is secure and sufficient to support pupils to GCSE level. In those subjects where they are less secure, the ethos which is created in lessons enables satisfactory learning to take place, with pupils taking a significant level of responsibility for their own learning. At times, the pace of lessons is reduced and, overall, there is insufficient planning to address individual targets. In spite of this, the high quality of the rest of the lesson ensures that teaching is always at least satisfactory.

For most pupils who attend, teaching supports progress towards GCSE and other accreditation; for those pupils with basic literacy and numeracy needs, additional support is satisfactory. The unit meets the needs of most pupils well, but for those with statements of SEN, there is inadequate provision to meet that specified in statements.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall and largely meets the requirements for pupil referral units. It is significantly enhanced by very good quality PSHE and effective provision for careers and vocational education. It is least effective in providing regular opportunities for physical development, as arrangements are unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The curriculum for many pupils with SEN arising from medical or psychiatric difficulties is unsatisfactory because their needs are not properly assessed in order that appropriate curricular, including National Curriculum provision, can be made. Pupils with statements of SEN do not receive the provision specified, as the unit is unable to make it.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The cultivation of pupils’ personal development is very effective, especially in the promotion of their spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory and within the curriculum it is good.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	The unit provides very good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils and monitors well pupils’ academic achievement and personal development. Generally pupils are cared for well, but the accommodation hinders adherence to all health and safety regulations.

The unit works very well in partnership with parents. Parents receive very good information about the organisation of the unit and are kept closely informed about their children’s development. These links make a significant contribution to pupils’ achievement.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The LEA and the teacher-in-charge have a clear view of the future of the unit and the unit meets well most of its aims.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	There is no management committee. The LEA meets all the legal responsibilities relating to pupil referral units except with regard to accommodation and facilities.
The unit’s evaluation of its performance	The manager of the service has close and frequent contact with the unit but there are no formal evaluative mechanisms in place. Appraisal does not involve the direct observation of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The unit uses the accommodation, staff and resources available to it very well. The spending of funds for training and initiatives, for example in information technology, has been planned well.

Teachers and assistant staff are sufficient for the current demands made by low numbers and a restricted curriculum. The accommodation is poor; it lacks sufficient space in every aspect and many facilities, for example a staff room and separate lavatories for pupils and staff, do not exist. Resources for learning are insufficient in many subjects and unsatisfactory overall, although very good in information technology. The leadership and day-to-day management of the teacher-in-charge are good; there is a widespread commitment to high standards and good attention to administrative detail. The unit is careful to obtain the best value it can from its limited spending opportunities.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge teachers have of their children’s needs. • The supportive environment and level of caring. • The success that pupils have in examinations. • The way pupils are prepared for the next stage of life • The way staff listen to their concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for full-time provision in the unit. • The accommodation and facilities.

The inspection team agreed with parents that the unit makes very good supportive provision for their children. The accommodation and facilities were found to be woefully inadequate. Inspectors shared the view of some parents that their children should have access to a fuller curriculum and more teaching time in this setting, and that it is unsatisfactory that pupils who could make use of full-time education are not receiving it.