

Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 10 November 2005

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Management Arrangements for the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

Purpose of Report

1. This report updates the Committee on the existing and planned arrangements for the management of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

Background

Legal Background

2. PRUs are legally both a type of school and 'education otherwise than at school' (EOTAS). The key differences between PRUs and schools are: the management committee; dual registration of pupils in PRUs; premises requirements; and the curriculum, which need not be the full National Curriculum.
3. PRUs are intended to provide short-term support for pupils not attending school for reason of exclusion or otherwise.
4. PRUs' small size, rapidly changing roll and the type of pupils they teach mean that they are not subject to all the legislative requirements that apply to mainstream and special schools. A PRU must, however, have an SEN Policy, behaviour policy and appropriate Child Protection procedures.

The Management Committee

5. DfES Circular 10/99 states that a PRU must have a multi-agency Management Committee. Management Committees need to offer PRUs the support and challenge necessary to ensure the highest possible standards of provision. They also have duties that are prescribed in regulations and are outlined below.

6. A single Management Committee may cover two or more PRUs to ensure better co-ordination of the education of children out of school. Members of a Management Committee might include headteachers, Council officers with knowledge or experience of working with young people with behavioural difficulties, the teachers in charge of the PRUs, parents, school governors and elected Members of the Local Authority.
7. The Management Committee has a role in the PRUs with regard to admissions, attendance, discipline, curriculum and post-inspection action.

Admissions and attendance

8. The Council, with the Management Committee, sets the admissions policy for a PRU. Enrolment in a PRU may be suitable for some young people who are not on the register of any school and not receiving suitable education and subject to a school attendance order.

Staffing

9. PRU staff must be qualified teachers, unless they are suitably qualified instructors. Teachers in their induction year, licensed and student teachers should not be employed in PRUs.
10. The teacher in charge of a PRU is for legal purposes the headteacher, whether or not formally employed as a headteacher. This gives them autonomy to take necessary action on site, for example about health and safety issues and pupil behaviour.

Curriculum

11. PRUs should offer a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

Assessment and reporting

12. Assessing attainment and progress is crucial. PRUs do not have to assess pupils at the end of each Key Stage, but should consider in individual cases whether assessment would be useful.

Premises

13. The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1996 (see DfEE Circular 10/96) apply to PRUs with certain modifications; for example PRUs do not have to provide a headteacher's room, playing fields or staff accommodation for teachers to use for both work and social purposes.
14. The Directorate of Children's Services will ensure that PRU accommodation meets health, safety and fire regulations, and that it is suitable for education. The Management Committee are jointly responsible for the use of PRU premises outside school hours.

Discipline

15. The teacher in charge of the PRU is responsible for maintaining good order and discipline, subject to any general principles laid down by the Management Committee. All PRUs should have a behaviour policy which should be reviewed annually, and should promote effective discipline and high expectations of pupils, and cover how the PRU will deal with bullying.

Inspection

16. OfSTED inspects PRUs using the framework of inspection for schools, adapted for PRUs. Following an inspection, the Teacher in Charge will prepare a written action plan, consulting the Management Committee and the relevant School Development Adviser.

Management of PRUs in Dudley

17. Dudley currently has four PRUs, three 'behaviour' PRUs and the Home and Hospital Service, each of which had evolved in isolation of the others. In 2003 the four existing disparate management committees were amalgamated into a single committee. The primary objectives of this development were to seek consistency of standards and management and provide economies of scale across the PRUs.
18. The following year (2004) a 'Preventing Exclusions Strategy' was developed which included a review of the function of the PRUs (appendix 1). This resulted in a re-focussing of the role of the 'behaviour' PRUs, by extending their remit of working with excluded pupils only, to include making provision for pupils at risk of exclusion. The role of the Home and Hospital Service

remained the same, that is, to make provision for children who cannot attend school for short-term medical reasons.

19. In order for the effective management of such a system a re-structure of the PRUs was agreed that adopted a 'school type model' whereby a PRU Manager (new post) would assume responsibility for the management and leadership of all the PRUs through the direct line management of the respective teachers in charge. In accordance with the 'school model' analogy, Teachers in Charge were appointed on the leadership scale, effectively as Assistant Headteachers, and the Management Committee adopted a role similar to that of a governing body.
20. The above re-focussing and reorganisation of the PRUs is underway. We are currently advertising for the PRU Manager, and phase 1 (Key Stage 1/2 PRU preventative support) of the Preventing Exclusions Strategy has been implemented. Phase 2, developing preventative support at Key Stage 3/4, has commenced and is scheduled to be fully operational by April 2006.
21. In parallel with the above structural changes more appropriate sites are currently being sought for the Key Stage 3 PRU and the Home and Hospital Service, which are presently based in accommodation which is not fit for purpose.

Finance

22. There are no specific financial costs associated with this report. PRU resource budgets are met from the Schools Block and capital work is carried out through the Council's capital programme.

Law

23. Section 19(2) and Schedule 1 of the Education Act 1996 is the primary legislation relating to Pupil Referral Units.
24. The main statutory provisions relating to Exclusions are contained in sections 64 - 68 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and DfES Circulars 10/99 and 11/99, 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support'

Equal Opportunities

25. The specific work of PRUs supports the inclusion of this group of vulnerable children and young people and helps to narrow the gap in achievement.

Recommendation

26. It is recommended that the Committee note the content of this report.



John Freeman
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Background Papers

None

Proposed Reorganisation of DELL PRUs (1)

