

The Forum Centre

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131827
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	381411
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2012
Lead inspector	Mick Megee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil Referral Unit
School category	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Kim Rickford
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Park Road Blandford Forum DT11 7BX
Telephone number	01258 455202
Fax number	01202 886947
Email address	K.Rickford@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Age group	5–16
Inspection date(s)	30–31 January 2012
Inspection number	381411



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Mick Megee

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited eight lessons and observed eight teachers. All observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Discussions were held with a range of groups including parents and carers, pupils, members of the management committee and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the centre's work, and looked at information about pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching, development planning and pupils' work. The inspector analysed questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and nine parents and carers.

Information about the centre

The Forum Centre (formerly called the Wimborne Learning Centre) is an average-sized pupil referral unit. Almost all of its pupils are White British. Although the centre sometimes admits a very small number of pupils of primary school age, none was on roll at the time of the inspection. Pupils join or leave the centre, often to be reintegrated into their local schools, at any time during the school year; mobility is high. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the average for similar centres. Pupils who attend the centre have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from their mainstream or special schools. Most pupils stay on the roll of their mainstream school while attending the centre part time. At present, there are no permanently excluded pupils. Most of the pupils have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, although a significant minority have physical or mental health difficulties, which may mean that they are educated in their homes. The centre moved to a new site in January 2010 in Blandford Forum. The senior leadership team now has two deputy headteachers who job-share. A new management committee was established in September 2010 to replace the previous committee that was shared with the other centres in Dorset.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good, orderly and calm centre. Pupils' achievement and behaviour are good and this represents a considerable improvement for almost all pupils following their admission to the centre.
- All groups of pupils have achieved well over the last two years. Pupils with more complex needs, such as autism or mental health difficulties, make similarly good progress.
- English and mathematics lessons are taught well. Most, but not all, teachers ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- An exceptional feature of teaching is the very warm relationship that exists between adults and pupils, which ensures pupils' safety and gives pupils a feeling of security and confidence when learning. In most lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and well judged, but occasionally lesson activities move on a little too slowly so that learning is not as quick as it could be.
- Marking is good in most, but not all, classes. Occasionally, teachers give too little guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work further. Teachers make use of individual learning targets, but these are not always sufficiently specific and are not always emphasised well enough in lessons.
- The centre promotes all aspects of personal development well, so that most pupils are highly engaged and motivated in lessons. Teachers' close relationships with the pupils enable them to forestall quickly emerging behavioural difficulties. Specific strategies for improving individual pupils' behaviour are not communicated effectively to all staff.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and leaders have established good systems that have helped teachers to teach better. The centre checks efficiently on the quality of teaching and the extent to which pupils make progress from their varying starting points.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that less is satisfactory and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the pace of all lessons is fast enough to retain pupils' interest and bring about rapid learning
 - ensuring that marking in all classes gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve further.

- Raise attainment and accelerate the progress that pupils make in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that all pupils have individual learning targets, developed alongside the pupils, that are specific and measurable
 - ensuring that staff frequently make checks and give feedback to pupils about their progress in meeting individual targets so that pupils and their parents and carers have a clear understanding of the next steps in learning.
- Improve the arrangements for managing pupils' behaviour by:
 - tracking improvements in behaviour to discover whether any individuals or groups are improving more slowly than others
 - ensuring a more streamlined and structured system for communicating individual strategies to support pupils' behaviour to all staff.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

By the time pupils leave the centre, their attainment is broadly average, including standards of reading. However, attainment fluctuates from year to year as there is a wide range of individual attainment, particularly for those few pupils who have specific literacy difficulties. Many pupils arrive at the centre lacking self-confidence and traumatised by their recent educational experience. Centre staff are very skilful in getting pupils back on track, making learning enjoyable again and helping pupils to develop as independent learners. As one parent, typical of many, wrote, 'The staff really understand our disillusioned youngsters. We have had more smiles from our son when he gets back from the centre than we have had in a long time.' The centre's data and lesson observations show that all groups of pupils achieve well. Parents and carers agree that pupils' progress overall is good. As one parent, typical of many, put it, 'The move to the centre has been the best decision for my child – he is coming on leaps and bounds.' Pupils with additional complex needs, such as autism and mental health difficulties, make good progress in their lessons because staffing and curriculum arrangements are flexible and well matched to their individual needs. A typical comment from a parent was, 'The teacher's positive attitude, adaptability and perseverance are very much appreciated at a time when my daughter's health is a major barrier to learning.' Learning is typically good in lessons, with good concentration and motivation, because of the positive relationships and, often, relevant and interesting contexts. For example, in a discussion on voluntary euthanasia, Year 11 pupils became intensely engaged as they debated the topic with sensitivity and maturity, reflecting well with understanding and many seeing both sides of the argument. Progress slows when the pace of lessons is not sufficiently brisk, and when pupils do not have a clear idea of their next steps in learning.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers agree that teaching is of good quality. Pupils, too, say that 'Teachers are ace!' and 92% of the pupils' questionnaires praised teaching. Centre leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and have brought continuing improvement through tight monitoring and

helpful professional feedback. In lessons, classroom staff provide excellent role models and consistently insist on good manners and polite behaviour from pupils. By setting constant, firm boundaries, the teaching effectively supports the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils learn about resilience and perseverance, responding positively to the activities and getting on with their work with enthusiasm and without fuss.

Teachers make good use of resources, such as new technology, to extend and support pupils' learning. At the beginning of one science lesson, for example, Year 10 pupils started with a video clip that effectively settled them down and drew them into the practical experiments. In the best lessons, teachers require pupils to focus on what they need to achieve higher grades and invite them to suggest their own strategies for improvement. In an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, for example, a pupil, when asked, accurately assessed his current performance and pointed on his checklist of activities to what he needed to complete to achieve a high grade. In many lessons, the pace is fast and pupils are swept along with the teacher's enthusiasm, such as in a Year 11 mathematics lesson where they were clearly taking calculated risks in responding to questions and learning quickly. In the occasional satisfactory lesson, checks on learning are not as effective, holding back progress.

Each pupil has a small number of academic targets representing the next important steps they need to take in their learning. In a few cases, the targets are not specific enough to be easily measured. One example seen was, 'To try to concentrate more in lessons'. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that they emphasise individual targets within the activities they plan. In a few cases, teachers overlook these targets when supporting the pupils who are not then clear what they need to do next to gain success. Opportunities to practise basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are built into a range of subjects. A few teachers do this less well than others. In response to the relatively weak results in science in 2011, a new science teacher has been appointed and early signs are that pupils' progress in science is improving. Marking is mostly good but occasionally it fails to give sufficient help and errors continue. The planned curriculum gives good support to teachers by allowing them the flexibility to match lesson activities accurately to the differing needs and capabilities of all the students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The centre is an orderly and calm learning community. Responses to questionnaires from parents and carers, and discussions with them, indicate that there is a very high degree of satisfaction with the behaviour and safety of pupils. Many comments were received from parents and carers about the transformational effect the centre has had on their children's behaviour. One typical comment was, 'When my daughter first started at the centre, she was out of control. She has gone from being one of the worst students to one of the best, and this is due to the individual attention and support she receives on a daily basis from the staff.' Pupils, too, all say that their behaviour has improved markedly over time and that they feel very safe at the centre. The centre's records show no evidence of prejudice-based bullying or harassment, and all new pupils are treated with openness and respect by other pupils. Girls say that boys treat them with respect, and throughout the inspection

pupils were invariably courteous, and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Parents and carers believe that the centre deals effectively with any incidents that occur. Attendance has improved and is now around average, but this hides often massive individual improvement after pupils join the centre. Punctuality is good. All staff model good behaviour, deal quickly with even mildly offensive remarks and no swearing was heard by the inspector.

Leadership and management

Under the conscientious, energetic leadership of the headteacher and her senior colleagues, ambition to improve at the centre is embedded at all levels. Leaders have introduced good systems to track academic progress and attendance, although the tracking of behaviour is not as effective. The evidence from the centre's own monitoring and external reports confirm the centre's continuing improvement. The quality of teaching, in particular, has improved through astute monitoring and good quality professional development programmes. Senior leaders have achieved the commitment of all staff to rapid improvement. All staff who returned questionnaires were very positive about the leadership and achievements of the senior staff. The recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed well. The centre has clear capacity to improve further.

The strong links with parents and carers, other schools and agencies reflect a high level of trust in the headteacher's judgement. These strong links have been of immense benefit to the pupils, as reflected in the high success rate in reintegration back to their local schools and to mainstream life. The centre has fostered and developed its relationships with other agencies, including health, social services and careers, so that pupils and their families receive very high-quality 'wrap-around' support.

The management committee has a good understanding of the current position of the centre, and confirms that the centre is moving forward and continuing to improve outcomes for pupils. It ensures that all statutory requirements, including those related to safeguarding, are fully met. A recent safeguarding audit by the local authority found the centre's procedures and policies to be exemplary. Equality is promoted effectively; there is little difference in the achievement of different groups.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets the needs of pupils of different abilities particularly well. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) are promoted well throughout the day so that there is good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and particularly social development during lessons. A specialist behaviour support worker works individually with pupils who are continuing to experience behavioural difficulties in lessons, although the system for communicating her recommendations is not always effective. The good curriculum effectively provides opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility and cultural awareness, through student elections, celebration of National Days and 'buddy' support for new pupils.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Forum Centre, Blandford Forum DT11 7BX

Thank you for the help you gave me when I visited your centre and to those who completed the questionnaires. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you, as well as observing some of your lessons. Your school is a good school, as you told me. It is led and managed well, so that you feel safe and can get some of your confidence back. I was impressed at how polite and courteous you were to me, to each other and to the staff. Your work shows that the centre has helped almost all of you to get back on track with your education and you are now making good progress. Your attendance has improved very well and is now in line with that of most schools. Well done to you and your parents and carers for working hard on your attendance.

I agree with you that teaching is good, although I have suggested to the centre staff that they make sure that all the teachers give you lessons that are quick-paced. When teachers mark your work, I have asked them to make sure that they include some guidance on how you can improve even faster. Some of you had only a hazy idea of your individual targets, so I have asked the staff to make sure that you know your targets well. All these recommendations are to help you to learn as independently as possible.

Your behaviour was very good when I was at the school, and you told me that it is always calm and quiet like that. I have asked the staff to look more closely at how much your behaviour has improved since you joined the centre, so that they can do an even better job of supporting you.

You can all help too by carrying on trying hard and keeping up your much-improved attendance. I wish you every success in achieving your very best.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email**