

# Broom Cottages

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113992
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	357463
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alastair Younger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lynne Gregory
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Karen Summerbell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Broom Road Ferryhill County Durham DL17 8AN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with senior staff, the chair of the management committee (who is also the representative of the local authority) and a small group of parents and carers. Informal discussions were held with many pupils and members of staff. Inspectors observed the unit's work, and looked at documentation relating to unit improvement, self-evaluation and the safeguarding of pupils. Many testimonials from referring schools and past pupils were read. The views of the 19 parents and carers who responded to a questionnaire circulated before the inspection were taken into account, as were the views of pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the unit's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Whether the attainment of pupils rises significantly during their stay in the unit.
- The balance between pupils' academic progress and their personal development.
- The quality of transition arrangements throughout the unit.
- How well the different strands of leadership, management and governance complement each other.

## Information about the school

This pupil referral unit serves the whole of the local authority. It is slightly larger than many such units. It provides for pupils who are either at risk of exclusion from their mainstream school or who have already been permanently excluded on account of their misbehaviour. The large majority of pupils are in Years 9, 10 and 11. There is a small group of primary-aged pupils and last year there were also two Reception- age referrals. Nearly all pupils are White British. About half are known to be eligible for free school meals. There are almost four times as many boys as there are girls. For pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, the aim is a full-time return to school within a period of between one and two terms. Many Key Stage 4 pupils are admitted midway through Year 11, when a return to school is unlikely. For these pupils the main focus of the unit's work is to help them to remain engaged in education and training and secure accreditation that has value in the post-16 context.

The timing of the inspection coincided with a pre-planned week of cross-curricular and mixed group activities for pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 on the theme of 'Our Place in Space'.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

'My daughter has become a different child since attending Broom Cottages, it's fantastic'. This sums up the views of many parents and carers and the pupils themselves. Many past pupils have kept in touch with the unit and expressed a depth of gratitude that is both touching and sincere about the way the unit changed their lives.

This is a solidly good unit. Self-evaluation is perceptive, informative and accurate. Morale among staff is high and the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers demonstrate outstanding leadership and management qualities, complementing each other very well, embracing and managing change while preserving the unit's many innate strengths. At all stages the 'big picture' is kept in mind, with the result that improvement is continuous without the need for radical or unsettling change. The unit's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

Outcomes are good. Pupils achieve well, often from low starting points. Behaviour is good. This represents tremendous progress when taking into account the reasons for pupils' initial referral. Teaching is good and rapidly improving because of the outstanding leadership and management of teaching and learning to which most, but not quite all, teachers respond, especially in relation to the degree to which they follow guidance as to how they should plan lessons and allocate time to different activities. The curriculum is good and rapidly adapting to the growing range of pupils being admitted. Relationships between the unit's senior staff, the local authority and the management committee are productive and good but there is a blurring of the line between the roles of the latter two because every member of the management committee is in the employ of the local authority.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the unit is outstanding. Contributing factors are the exceptional relationships the unit forges with parents, carers and the many other agencies and schools that contribute to pupils' well-being and safety. All pupils share the view that they feel safe. Parents and carers share the same feeling with just cause.

Defining the outstanding ethos of the unit is the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The unit thrives under what it describes as the 'audacity of education' and the way it can change pupils' lives by being daring and bold in its approach.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers plan lessons with a clear focus on what they expect pupils to learn, rather than what they intend to teach and leave enough time at the end of lessons to check what pupils have learned and remembered.

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- Broaden the scope of recruitment to the management committee to make it more representative of the community it serves and to provide a more independent voice in negotiations between the unit and the local authority.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

In lessons, pupils behave well and show commitment to learning. They pay attention to staff, respect one another's views and try hard to achieve their best. They take care in the presentation of their work and show pride in their achievements. In many of the lessons observed during the inspection there was a palpable sense of enjoyment and good humour.

Attainment on entry is often low but by the time they leave it has nearly always risen and as a result, is broadly average. Because they are well taught, pupils nearly always learn well and make good progress. Increasingly, they are making outstanding progress due to ongoing improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

The progress of different groups is closely monitored. It is always good. This is clearly demonstrated in the ways in which older pupils successfully complete accredited courses, often including GCSE. Also, it is evident in the way that the vast majority of pupils return successfully to mainstream education or are found more appropriate provision in special schools. These positive outcomes relate equally to boys and girls.

Attendance is broadly average. This is a significant achievement for provision such as this. It is the norm for pupils in the unit to improve on their attendance patterns in previous settings. This improvement is often rapid. Attendance has improved over each of the last three years. During the inspection, the attendance of Key Stage 4 pupils matched the national average; that for primary-aged pupils exceeded it and Key Stage 3 pupils fell only slightly short of expectations.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is exceptional. Pupils develop a grand perspective of life as it can be, rather than what it appears to be; they enjoy the discovery of facets of their personalities that are to be admired rather than decried. They very quickly develop an understanding of the balance between their rights and responsibilities in any situation and an acute awareness of the consequences of their actions. There are no signs of prejudice; pupils make friends and many become sufficiently socially confident to talk lucidly and honestly with visitors. Pupils frequently revel in the novelty of discovering things about cultures other than their own, both past and present.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and rapidly improving. Perceptive and accurate monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior staff over the past year clearly demonstrates this, with an increasing number of lessons crossing grade boundaries, either from satisfactory to good or good to outstanding. The evidence of inspection supports this view and expands upon it. Almost a quarter of the teaching observed was outstanding. This included instances when Key Stage 4 pupils entered wholeheartedly into role-play situations demonstrating the do's and don'ts when being interviewed for a job. A Key Stage 3 information and communication technology lesson was outstanding also. Pupils responded particularly well to a range of challenging and engaging activities involving teamwork and problem-solving skills as they explored the complexities of plotting courses for spaceships. Good relationships between staff and pupils often provide the key to success. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and demonstrate a deep understanding of the personal problems that pupils face. Classroom teams work effectively together, with teachers nearly always making good use of skilled support assistants. Where teaching is slightly less effective it is when teachers do not clearly identify the learning gains they expect of pupils and when they are imprecise in their allocation of time for different activities with the result that insufficient time is left at the end of lessons to ascertain what pupils have learned and remembered.

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The curriculum serves pupils well. It is sufficiently well matched to a mainstream school curriculum to enable pupils to return there successfully, yet it is different enough to help pupils to overcome the obstacles that have resulted in their referral. Younger pupils follow nearly all of the National Curriculum and pupils approaching leaving age are helped to complete their accredited courses successfully. Care is taken to ensure that all activities are educationally valid and that teachers can explain this validity. This extends to the many stimulating and enjoyable enrichment opportunities presented to pupils such as a visit made by pupils to Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall. Pupils' enthusiasm and excitement could not fail to be noticed by all visitors attending the fort and settlement. These opportunities often make an outstanding contribution to the personal development of pupils, broadening their horizons through providing opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual, social and cultural experiences they would otherwise have missed out on.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding because unit staff do not work in isolation but recognise the invaluable contribution made by parents, carers and partner organisations. Every pupil is recognised as an individual, with special qualities and unique circumstances. Care and support extend to parents, carers and to pupils long after they have left the unit. Pupils are given exceptional support as they move between different forms of provision. Support continues almost indefinitely when pupils return to school in order to ensure that the gains pupils have made during their stay are not subsequently negated. This is one of the reasons why only a very few returning pupils are subsequently permanently excluded from school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

This is an extraordinarily happy and optimistic unit. Staff share a common sense of pride and purpose in their endeavours to make pupils' lives better and further their future prospects. Under the exceptional leadership of the headteacher the extent of mutual support between staff has thrived. Professional dialogue between leaders, managers and staff ensures staff have a growing awareness of how to improve even further, despite current teaching quality already being good. Reflection on one another's practice is becoming increasingly commonplace. These are all contributory factors to the outstanding management of teaching and learning.

The local authority, in its role as the appropriate authority, is very supportive and appreciative of the unit's work. The management committee totally fulfils its role, for instance in its contribution to safe recruiting and the safeguarding and protection of pupils. There is a minor weakness in that all management committee members are

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employed directly or indirectly by the local authority. Therefore, they are not fully representative of the community the unit serves nor can the committee provide a totally independent voice in negotiations between the unit and the local authority such as in resolving a current situation where the unit wishes to have more control over that small part of its budget set aside for consumables.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. There is no discrimination. The adoption of a uniform, enthusiastically supported by pupils, and worn with equal pride by staff, is an example of the way the unit seeks to promote equality by removing any prejudice about how people are dressed and what this says about their circumstances.

Pupils are safeguarded well. Procedures are thoroughly underpinned by policy. All statutory requirements are met. The unit's exceptionally close working relationship with parents, carers and support agencies contributes enormously to the effectiveness of procedures.

The unit makes a considerable contribution to promoting community cohesion. It comprehensively analyses the context within which it operates. Internally, it operates as hugely cohesive, happy and harmonious community. It is a major and influential player in the community's drive to improve behaviour in schools in general and reduce anti-social behaviour. In a region that is predominantly White British the unit excels in the way it broadens pupils' horizons and makes them aware of other communities and cultures. Activities at a national level include presentations to conferences which help the broader community to understand the necessity of the unit's work and further the public understanding of the reasons why some young people choose not to conform.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the unit. About a quarter responded to a questionnaire circulated before the inspection. This was a good response for a setting such as this.

Many parents and carers took the opportunity to praise the unit and to express extreme gratitude for the way it has changed and improved the lives of their children and themselves. The inspectors agree. This is a good pupil referral unit.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Broom Cottages to complete a questionnaire about their views of the unit.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the unit.

The inspection team received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 92 pupils registered at the unit.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	26	14	74	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	63	7	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	42	11	58	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	53	9	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	53	9	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	47	9	47	1	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	47	10	53	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	63	7	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	47	10	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	58	7	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Broom Cottages, Ferryhill, DL17 8AN**

It was a pleasure to visit your unit the other day, to listen to you, to observe you in class and just to stand back and enjoy the experience. Thank you.

We visit places like Broom Cottages on a regular basis. Your unit is a good one.

You made it very clear to us that you like the unit and feel safe. It was reassuring that many of you made the link between your feelings of safety and the behaviour of other pupils. That's a hugely important lesson and I hope that you will remember it when you return to school or start work.

You do well in the unit. You make rapid progress, behave well and develop some outstanding personal qualities that, so long as you do not neglect them, will stand you in good stead in future life.

You are well taught and enjoy a stimulating timetable. You are exceptionally well cared for, guided and supported.

You told us in no uncertain terms that your headteacher is something special. Maybe it is because you know that she is 'fighting your corner' on most occasions but lets you know also when you overstep the mark. It is called trust.

We have made two suggestions that we feel could improve the unit. The first one is very important and relevant to your learning in lessons. We are asking all teachers, rather than most of them, to pay more attention to what they want you to learn and to check out what you have remembered by the end of lessons. The second suggestion is about the management committee and the way in which it could be more representative of the community in which the unit is set. The abiding memory of my visit will always be the sense of enjoyment you shared with me. My colleague shared the same experience. We wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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