

The Primrose Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135253
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	360709
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Davies
Headteacher	Kitty Bentley
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He observed, in part or in whole, seven lessons and two teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Management Committee, a representative from the local authority who has responsibility for the pupil referral unit (PRU), staff and a group of pupils. Policies, document and assessment data were scrutinised. Ten parent questionnaires were returned and analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following.

- How effectively does the PRU enable pupils to return quickly to mainstream schools?
- How well the management committee and local authority measure the effectiveness of the centre and hold it to account?
- Whether pupils of all abilities are making enough progress, based on their starting points, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- How well do pupils gain an understanding of wider cultural issues?

Information about the school

The Primrose Centre is a smaller than average PRU, which educates pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream primary school. It also offers a 35-day package for behaviour intervention to prevent exclusions. The centre serves the whole of Sandwell and pupils come from differing social backgrounds. Nearly all pupils are boys and nearly three quarters are eligible for free school meals. One pupil has English as a second language. Ten pupils have a statement of special educational needs mainly for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and some also have learning difficulties.

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

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the Primrose Centre is good. It provides a good standard of education for its pupils. It has improved in many important areas since the last inspection. The centre does what an effective PRU should do. It provides short term help, intervention and support for pupils, which enables them to return to mainstream schools swiftly. The short focussed packages are extremely successful in either preventing permanent exclusions from other schools or helping pupils to return rapidly to a different school.

Staff work hard to provide a calm, purposeful atmosphere and pupils respond well to this. They demonstrate positive attitudes and are keen to participate in lessons. Plentiful opportunities are provided for pupils to collaborate with each other in lessons and pupils learn to co-operate well with one another in a range of different situations. Their behaviour improves vastly and is generally good.

There are strong pastoral systems for pupils' welfare which ensure that they settle quickly and gain confidence. The positive and supportive relationships promote pupils' personal development very effectively. Sometimes pupils are reluctant to leave but they are equipped with skills and support to move on to their next phase of education. The support to help pupils reintegrate successfully is outstanding and is carefully thought out. The head teacher enjoys the confidence of staff, pupils, parents and carers. One parent commented 'I am quite happy with my child's progress at school'. Through home visits, the centre encourages pupils to improve their attendance and many make substantial improvements. However, for a few pupils, their attendance is still inadequate and this affects their overall progress.

Teaching and assessment are good. Assessment is used very effectively to identify gaps in learning when pupils first start at the centre and then in lessons. Good teaching, which is personalised to meet the needs of every individual, results in pupils making good progress, often from low starting points. Pupils' progress in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT), while satisfactory, is limited. This is because these subjects are linked to other subjects and some important elements, such as using spreadsheets on screen or developing an understanding of other faiths and cultures, are not taught systematically enough.

The centre has been successful in promoting community cohesion at a local level and is a very harmonious place, where pupils respect one another. However, links with global and national communities are limited and current links have not been evaluated to ensure they provide pupils with sufficient knowledge of different religious and ethnic groups in wider Britain.

Leadership and management are good and, since the last inspection, have resulted in significant improvements in the provision of the centre. The leadership team recognises

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there is further work to be done in planning for the promotion of community cohesion, aspects of the curriculum and higher pupil attendance. Self-evaluation is well grounded and accurate. Effective leadership has brought about improvements. Good management ensures the centre runs smoothly and that high expectations are widely shared by staff. The management committee and school improvement partner have provided a good level of support and challenge. Given all this, the centre has a good capacity to make further improvements to the quality of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' attendance to 94% over the next 12 months.
- Improve pupils' progress in ICT and religious education by ensuring that these subjects are taught systematically.
- Strengthen the planning for community cohesion by:
 - evaluating its current links to ensure they take account of different religious and ethnic groups
 - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most pupils enter the centre with low attainment compared with their peers nationally due to gaps in their education and because of their social, emotional and behavioural needs. Some pupils also have additional learning difficulties. However, pupils make good progress regardless of their background or need. This is because their learning needs are identified quickly and accurately and teaching takes account of this. Pupils benefit from the small groups and good staffing levels; work is well matched to their abilities. The majority of pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy over a short period of time and a few make outstanding progress. For a few pupils, poor attendance hinders their progress. A key indicator of the good progress pupils make is their swift and successful return to mainstream schools.

In lessons, pupils take an increasing responsibility for their learning and know their learning targets. In a personal, social and health education lesson, Year 2 and 3 pupils understood the concept of jealousy and learned how to manage their feelings appropriately. Pupils consistently show an enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning and an eagerness to work hard, indicating improved positive attitudes and behaviour, which help their return to school. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of planned physical activities such as games, swimming and outdoor pursuits.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their social

- and moral development is a strength and they have a good knowledge of their local community and culture. However, opportunities for pupils' spiritual reflection and for them to develop their understanding of the wider cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain are limited.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ 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?

Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and any instances of pupils' misbehaviour are dealt with sensitively and in such a way as to minimise any disruption to learning. Classrooms are bright, stimulating and promote high expectations of both academic and personal development. A key strength of teaching is how assessment is used to inform planning and this enables learning to be highly personalised with work pitched at the right level. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and this clearly shows their improvements over short periods of time. Pupils know their learning and behaviour targets and this helps them to improve their progress. ICT, such as the interactive whiteboard and laptops, is used well to support learning across a range of subjects and to enliven learning. Teachers make ample opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in lessons such as those in physical education, literacy and design and technology. This does much to promote pupils' social and emotional development.

The curriculum rightly focuses on equipping pupils with the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and enables them to return to school successfully. The centre has recently introduced a residential experience which has led to a widening of new experiences for many pupils. A nurture group has also recently been started, but it is too soon to review the impact of this initiative. Many aspects of the curriculum are taught through a topic approach and this increases pupils' enjoyment of learning.

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Pupils benefit from the good levels of care, guidance and support they receive from staff. The ethos of the centre is positive and supportive for pupils and they start to thrive in the calm and purposeful learning environment. The transition arrangements to aid re-integration are superb with staff accompanying pupils and then phasing out their support. The headteacher is aware that attendance is too low for some pupils and has strategies to improve attendance including contacting families on the first day of a pupil's absence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She provides a strong and comforting presence to pupils. There is a clear drive and ambition for improvement and she is proactive in ensuring that teaching is effective. The management committee is knowledgeable, supportive and committed to securing further improvements. An effective cycle of self-review is in place and the committee measures the work of the centre against key indicators which include pupils' performance, attendance and exclusions.

The headteacher works hard to engage parents and carers through regular contact. The centre works closely with a wide range of outside professionals and support agencies, which contributes strongly to pupils' achievement. The centre has a strong commitment to equal opportunities and tackling discrimination; every pupil is valued as an individual and learning is personalised.

The centre has been successful in promoting community cohesion at a local level, such as being involved in the local eco-park. The headteacher and management committee are aware that links to promote pupils' understanding of different religious and ethnic groups in wider communities are in need of development. Safeguarding of pupils' welfare is taken seriously and policies and procedures are robust.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over half the parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Of those that did, the vast majority is pleased with the work of the centre. They are pleased that their children enjoy learning and make good progress. They have confidence in the way the centre is led and managed and find the staff approachable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Primrose Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspector received 10 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 17 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	60	3	30	1	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	70	2	20	1	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	50	4	40	1	10	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)	6	60	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	30	6	60	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	80	2	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	70	3	30	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



Thursday 21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Primrose Centre, Smethwick, B66 1QN

I enjoyed my recent visit to your centre and meeting and talking with you. The education you receive while at the Primrose Centre is good. It was clear to me how quickly you settled into school and how much you enjoyed the lessons and especially your outdoor residential trip. The teaching you receive is good. Teachers and support staff are good at making your lessons interesting and enjoyable and this helps you to make both good academic and personal progress. Many of you learn how to manage your feelings better and recognise when you need to take some time out to calm down. I particularly liked how you are given lots of opportunities to work together in different situations. The headteacher, her staff and the people responsible for the centre have worked very hard to make the centre a good place to be and it is improving all the time.

You are looked after very well and this helps you to do your best and to return to other schools quickly. Some of you told me that you always felt safe in this school and that you liked the staff and many of the activities on offer.

To make things even better, I have asked the headteacher and staff to do three things. The first is to improve attendance, as a few of you do not attend often enough. Secondly, I have asked the staff to make sure that religious education and information and communication technology are taught more regularly. Thirdly, I have asked the school to make sure you learn more about different groups and communities in wider Britain and how they live.

You can help by attending every day and continuing to work hard.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price

Lead inspector

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