

# Children's Support Centre, Heybridge

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132205
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	360397
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Kell

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>	44
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Yvonne Locker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Heybridge Centre Colchester Road, Maldon CM9 4NN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed, taught by eight teachers. Discussions were held with senior staff in the centre and on the Braintree site. Meetings with local authority officers and groups of students also took place. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at documentation including assessment data, safeguarding records and feedback from schools supported by outreach staff. The five questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by staff and students.

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

- The procedures for evaluating students' progress and achievements and using this information to set challenging individual targets.
- How effectively provision meets the personal and learning needs of a range of students with very different educational needs and learning difficulties.
- Students' attendance and how it is monitored by leaders.
- The effectiveness of outreach staff in encouraging inclusive practice and the influence that this has on promoting community cohesion.

## Information about the school

Significant changes have taken place since the previous inspection. At that time, the centre admitted pupils from Reception to Year 11 and it comprised five bases over a wide geographical area. Local re-organisation merged the local integrated support and the secondary behaviour support services to create Mid Essex Children's Support Service. Heybridge Centre is the pupil referral unit for secondary aged students within this area service. A team of staff that the centre refers to as field provision use the centre as a base to teach and reintegrate students with recognised medical and mental health conditions. These students are out of school for variable lengths of time but remain on roll at their mainstream school. At the Braintree site, the outreach service supports schools to manage students' behaviour.

There have been changes at senior level since the last full inspection of the centre, in 2007. The headteacher left shortly after the last inspection and a new appointment was made before the centre was monitored in 2008. That headteacher left in May 2010. After a period of temporary administration, an interim executive headteacher took up post at the beginning of the current term.

Students attend the centre either full-time or part-time and have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. Most students are boys and the vast majority are of White British heritage. A few students have a statement of special educational needs.

**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?**

**4**

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

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this centre requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The centre is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures, elements of leadership and management and students' attendance. The centre also requires significant improvement in relation to the quality of target setting and action planning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The headteacher has been in post for only a short time, but parents, staff and students agree that she has already made a significant contribution to improving provision. In particular, she has dealt quickly and decisively with the key issues that had to be addressed if the centre was to improve. Consequently, teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Students' attainment is broadly average and the vast majority make satisfactory progress. However, the few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not progress at an adequate rate. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in their behaviour, attitudes and other features of their personal development. Although the absence rates remain high, the measures taken by the centre to promote attendance have been effective, and as a result, attendance rates have improved.

Students follow a good curriculum. They receive very good support in some respects, such as through inter-agency working, but the overall quality of care, guidance and support is inadequate. Ineffective safeguarding arrangements and the inadequate support offered to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have resulted in this aspect of provision being ineffective.

Despite previous weaknesses in management, some features of leadership and management remain strong, such as the outreach service and field provision. The input of these teams is valued highly by schools and parents as their work contributes significantly to the centre's good links and partnerships and its satisfactory contribution to promoting community cohesion. Self-evaluation processes are satisfactory but improving, and action planning now focuses on key priorities. The centre's effectiveness declined during a period of relative inactivity by both the local authority and management committee. The local authority accepts that it has to work closely with the new management committee to effect change, and officers recognise what needs doing to raise attainment. The headteacher has a very clear vision and knows the management systems that have to be in place for this to be achieved. Consequently, the centre has a satisfactory capacity to achieve its goals through a sustained programme of development and improvement.

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

- Establish clear, organised and structured procedures for recording safeguarding concerns and evaluate the effectiveness of the relevant policies and practices.
- Ensure that the appropriate authority and the management committee become effective by
  - fulfilling their statutory responsibilities
  - challenging and supporting the work of the centre through regular evaluation of the impact that it has on improving outcomes for students.
- Increase the rate of progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities through sharply focused and challenging targets in action plans that are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- Further increase the level of students' attendance.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Students' attainment is broadly average when they join the centre despite many having had a disrupted education because of exclusions or non-attendance. The vast majority make satisfactory progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge, particularly in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Those who attend the centre during Year 11 achieve satisfactorily in the good range of accredited courses that they follow either within the centre or with partner organisations, such as local colleges or alternative education providers. Some students achieve GCSEs at grade A\* to C in subjects such as science and mathematics.

The very small minority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not progress quickly enough because their personal learning plans are imprecise and not evaluated rigorously. Learning targets lack a sharp focus and criteria against which success can be measured are vague. Consequently, the targets are of limited value to staff when they plan lesson activities and this reduces the quality and pace of learning. Other students' absences reduce the extent of their achievements. Most students attend the centre regularly in comparison with going to school, but overall, attendance remains low. Despite this, the work-related learning programme prepares students satisfactorily for leaving school. Most leavers move into education, employment or training.

Students make satisfactory progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They know the difference between right and wrong, engage well with each other, and many comment on how well their communication skills have developed. Students know about staying safe and they understand the importance of healthy eating and about threats to their health. They behave satisfactorily in class and around the centre. A few students' immature response to challenge slows their learning but most make great strides in taking responsibility for their behaviour. One student exemplified this with the comment: 'I used to be a bully but now I realise that it's silly hurting people who wouldn't hurt me.'

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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>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</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?

Despite being satisfactory overall, some aspects of teaching are good. Relationships are generally positive and staff have good subject knowledge. Therefore, in most lessons they provide activities that are interesting and offer a good level of challenge. Teachers promote students' speaking and listening skills well and also encourage written work. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and improving. As the procedures are more robust, staff assessments of students' performance are more accurate, as well as the evaluations of students' progress. As a result, the targets set for students with no additional learning needs now have more value in focusing and accelerating learning.

Students have a good range of learning opportunities and the vast majority receive the appropriate amount of taught time. Where this is not the case, it is because staff are still finalising individuals' work experience and college placements. The centre optimises the spacious accommodation and staff's specialist skills to offer a rich curriculum that is supported by a good personal, social and health education programme. This ensures that the few students with a statement of special educational needs receive their curriculum entitlement, and it allows students to pursue a good range of accredited courses. Off-site facilities extend the curriculum well. They are used to good effect to supplement the centre's vocational and work-related learning programme in Years 10 and 11.

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because of inefficient safeguarding procedures and ineffective learning guidance offered to the few students with special educational

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needs and/or disabilities. However, there are some positive elements within this overall judgement. All students benefit from the integrated approach to their pastoral support and guidance that results from good liaison between centre staff and colleagues in other agencies, such as social care, the youth offending team and Connexions. Staff make good use of National Curriculum levels in their subjects to support learning by clarifying with students what they are already capable of doing and to explain what they need to do next to improve their standard of work.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<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>4</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

In the spring of 2010, the local authority identified that weaknesses in leadership and management had put the centre in a vulnerable position. This led to a local authority review and as a result, officers and consultants were commissioned to offer support. A new management committee was established, although it has not yet met. The previous committee had a very low profile and questionnaires reveal that most staff either did not know about the committee or felt that its work was ineffective.

Even though the provision for the few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has significant shortcomings, the centre has a satisfactory commitment to equality of opportunity because of the work of the outreach and field staff. For example, they promote inclusive practice very effectively by maintaining students' placements in their local schools. These teams also contribute significantly to the centre's satisfactory promotion of community cohesion. Staff know students' backgrounds and they offer opportunities to develop their understanding and experience of the wider community. However, the centre does not have a structured action plan to support this work. Safeguarding policies and procedures are inadequate because they do not fully meet statutory requirements.

The new headteacher has been the driving force in bringing about change. She has been instrumental in improving staff morale, embedding ambition, raising expectations and enthusing students. Staff follow this lead willingly and so they, too, are responsible for driving the emerging improvements. Comments such as, 'There is now a sense of purpose and direction' and 'There has been a massive input by the new headteacher and I feel we are progressing at a very fast rate' indicate that staff have a clear understanding of the headteacher's vision for future improvement.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

So few questionnaires were returned that they do not alone form a sound basis for judging the views of parents and carers. Surveys that the centre itself had carried out and parents' comments from planning meetings and other consultations indicate that they are satisfied with the service's work, both within the centre and through the outreach and field teams.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Children's Support Centre, Heybridge 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 inspection team received five completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	40	0	0	2	40	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	1	20	3	60	1	20	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	20	1	20	1	20	1	20
The teaching is good at this school	1	20	1	20	1	20	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	20	0	0	1	20	1	20
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	20	1	20	2	40	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)	1	20	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	20	0	0	3	60	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	20	1	20	0	0	1	20
The school is led and managed effectively	2	40	2	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	20	2	40	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.**



24 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Children's Support Centre, Maldon, CM9 4NN**

Thank you for welcoming us into the centre when we visited. We spent an interesting two days with you. You make satisfactory progress in your work. You have a good variety of subjects in the centre and interesting opportunities to learn off-site. Lessons are satisfactory but, just occasionally, learning slows down because a few of you lose concentration and misbehave. Staff work well with people from other organisations, such as Connexions and colleges, to support and help you to develop as learners and young people. This prepares you satisfactorily for leaving school. You have an adequate awareness of a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Your headteacher has done lots of things in a short time but there are some important improvements that need to be made as the centre is not doing as well as it should. We have judged that your school needs additional help and for that reason we have given it a 'notice to improve'. All of the people who run the centre want to improve the provision and we have given them some things to do. These include:

- checking that every one of you is as safe as you can possibly be.
- making sure that they get the support that they should have from people who are not on the staff but who have some responsibility for the centre's work.
- helping those of you who find learning more difficult to make more progress by setting better targets for you.
- encouraging more of you to attend the centre more often.

Inspectors will visit your school again soon to check that things are getting better.

Thank you once again and I hope that every one of you will attend the centre as much as you possibly can. I wish all of you every success in the future, especially if you are hoping to return to school in the near future or if you are in Year 11 and leaving next summer.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell

Lead inspector

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