

Wakefield District Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number131526Local AuthorityWakefieldInspection number360285

Inspection dates3-4 November 2010Reporting inspectorSara Morrissey HMI

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

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school Special

School category Community special

Age range of pupils 11-16
Gender of pupils Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll 44

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairMrs Nikki ShawHeadteacherMiss Vanessa JukesDate of previous school inspection12 September 2006School addressHigh Well Hill Lane

South Hiendley, Barnsley South Yorkshire S72 9DF

 Telephone number
 01226 718613

 Fax number
 01226 714183

Email address headteacher@felkirk.wakefield.sch.uk

Age group 11–16

Inspection dates 3–4 November 2010

Inspection number 360285

The Wakefield District Community School - The Felkirk

Output

District Community School - The Felkirk

Centre

Social care Unique Reference Number SC042204

Social care inspector Robert Curr

Age group	11–16				
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, one social care inspector and one additional inspector. Eight parts of lessons were observed and six teachers seen; short visits were made to two further lessons. Meetings were held with senior leaders and nominated staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, inspected residential accommodation and looked at assessment information, individual pupil progress files, procedures for safeguarding pupils, curriculum plans, data relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour management log books. Inspectors also scrutinised questionnaires from pupils, staff and one parent/carer who responded to the parental questionnaire.

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

- How effectively information about individual pupils is used to inform curriculum planning that secures more rapid progress and raises attainment.
- The extent to which a climate for learning has been established that promotes positive attitudes to learning and behaviour.
- How effectively teaching engages pupils so that gaps in their learning are closed.
- The extent to which leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate the capacity to contribute effectively to school improvement.
- How well the school uses its links with parents and carers to strengthen systems of care, guidance and support for pupils.

Information about the school

Wakefield District Community School, also known as The Felkirk Centre is a 48 place school with provision for up to 29 boarders in three residential houses. Five young people currently use the boarding provision on a part-time basis. Pupils attend from all parts of the Wakefield area. All but two pupils currently on roll are boys and all have experienced significant disruptions to their previous learning. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and many have a complex range of needs.

A local authority-wide review of special educational needs provision has resulted in changes to the school's structure since the last inspection. Until recently, the school was part of a federation; this is no longer the case. The school's boarding provision will close on 31 March 2011.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to require significant improvement and given a notice to improve. In June 2010, the acting headteacher, who had led the school since shortly after the previous inspection, was appointed to the substantive post of headteacher. The number of staff at the school has fallen since the last inspection to reflect changes made in the light of the local authority review.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Sharply focused senior leadership and good teamwork by all the staff have enabled key priorities identified at the last inspection to be tackled rigorously and effectively. Pupils make more rapid progress because the improved curriculum captures their interest and teaching engages them more actively in their learning. Behaviour has improved significantly and no longer presents a major barrier to learning in lessons. Consequently, pupils are catching up on ground lost in the past and their achievement is satisfactory.

Leaders have established a learning environment that is rooted in high expectations and the aim for each pupil to achieve their best. Consequently, pupils' attainment is beginning to rise from the low levels that reflect their turbulent educational histories. However, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics remains well below the levels that might be expected for their age. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving quickly as teachers gain confidence in using a variety of strategies, including the use of modern technologies. However, weaknesses in pupils' basic skills sometimes hinder the pace of learning. Furthermore, pupils do not always have the opportunity to reflect on their learning to identify for themselves how they can improve. The curriculum has been restructured and extended; although changes are quite recent, the range of opportunities are more appropriate to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs and interests. Pupils report that they 'enjoy lessons more because they are interesting' and value the opportunities offered by external providers. Pupils also make an increasing contribution to their school community through the student council and small groups have been nominated for the Mayor of Wakefield's Award for community service in recognition of their work within the wider community.

The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength of the school. Pupils' individualised programmes contribute well to building their self-confidence and promoting more positive attitudes to learning. Staff know their pupils very well; they are committed to enabling them to overcome barriers to learning and are skilful at anticipating and responding to pupils' changing needs. This has contributed effectively to their better behaviour which is satisfactory and improving. Pupils report that they feel safe; they are confident that any concerns will be dealt with promptly. Attendance at school has risen since the last inspection and staff work proactively with external agencies and families to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils who are persistently absent. Although the school has strong links with individual families, leaders recognise that different methods of communication, for example reports on pupils' progress, are not always effective in helping parents and carers to support their children's learning.

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

Leaders have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Interim Executive Board has worked very effectively with the headteacher and deputy headteacher providing good support and challenge to drive improvement at a brisk pace. Leaders have responded quickly to changes arising from local authority review of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the same time, staff teams have maintained their focus on school improvement and established firm foundations on which to build in the future. These improvements together with the secure and quickly improving outcomes for pupils, reflect the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress further and raise attainment, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - embedding the new curriculum so that it fully meets the needs of all pupils
 - improving the development of pupils' basic skills across the curriculum to increase their pace of learning
 - increase opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning so that they can identify for themselves, the next steps needed to improve.
- Improve engagement with parents and carers so they can better support their children's learning by:
 - ensuring that methods of communication with families match their needs and preferences
 - increasing opportunities for parents and carers to be more involved with their children's learning.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Although attainment remains low, changes to the curriculum have increased opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation on a range of courses that match their abilities and interests. Teachers' assessment information indicates that a higher proportion of the current Year 11 pupils are on track to gain GCSE qualifications or their equivalent in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.

The quality and pace of pupils' learning have improved securely and strongly since the last inspection because of improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Expectations and challenge have been raised so that pupils' learning is extended to catch up more quickly on ground lost in the past. Pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills in all year groups benefit from intensive and well-targeted strategies to close gaps in their prior learning. In lessons, pupils engage in their learning more readily because activities are relevant and capture their interest. For example, a group of more-able Year 11 pupils concentrated well to solve a problem in a mathematics lesson, where they needed to calculate the area of different circles and apply this to a garden design. Disruptions to learning have been reduced as a result of improvements in pupils' behaviour and

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

attitudes. Pupils report that it is easier to get on with work in lessons as everyone understands the behaviour code and its associated rewards and sanctions.

Warm and supportive relationships between pupils and adults are evident in lessons and around school. Pupils confidently turn to adults for help and feel that their views are taken into account. For example, the school council has helped to refurbish the common room areas and change the uniform code. Pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and have been consulted about changes to lunchtime menus. The daily breakfast club is a lively, social occasion and ensures that pupils have a healthy meal to start the day. Pupils' enjoyment of school has increased; their attendance has improved and the proportion of unauthorised absence has fallen. Personalised support helps to prepare pupils for the future. In 2010, all pupils leaving Year 11 embarked on further education, training or employment. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is satisfactory and improving. Small groups of pupils have worked with children at the local primary school on a project about safeguarding. Others have helped to improve the quality of the landscape in a conservation area in the school grounds and in the local churchyard. Increasing opportunities help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. During the inspection, an assembly on a religious theme united the whole-school community, providing an enjoyable and thought-provoking start to the day.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved because teachers' planning takes into account the detailed information available about individual pupils' learning needs. Teaching is satisfactory and the proportion that is good is increasing because teachers have good subject knowledge and use imaginative resources to support learning activities. In the best lessons, a good balance is struck between teachers' explanations about what pupils will learn and opportunities for pupils to work independently. For example, in a science lesson, pupils followed the teachers' demonstration accurately to prepare petri dishes for an investigation about microbe cultures. Questioning is used well to help pupils articulate their ideas and extend their thinking. Additional adults support pupils with their learning appropriately and, as pupils gain confidence, allow time for them to work independently on tasks. However, despite improvements, the impact of teaching on learning is variable. This is due in part to weaknesses in pupils' skills for learning and also the pace with which the lesson proceeds. On occasion, starter activities that include writing out the aims of the lesson do not engage pupils quickly enough in their learning. The quality of marking has improved; feedback to pupils in work books includes some helpful comments about what they have achieved and the next steps. Some opportunities are missed for pupils to identify for themselves, how they can improve their work further.

The curriculum provides a suitable and improving balance between academic and vocational courses. Links with external providers have extended the range of opportunities available and targeted strategies help to plug significant gaps in pupils' prior learning. Enrichment activities at the end of the day are popular with pupils and help promote their social and personal development. The quality of curriculum delivery has been strengthened as a consequence of staff restructuring. Almost all lessons are now taught by subject specialists and pupils are grouped by ability. Although improvements are recent, teachers are becoming more confident to deliver schemes of work effectively and ensure that there are appropriate levels of challenge and support.

School improvement is underpinned by good systems of care, guidance and support. Leaders provide greater emphasis on setting learning targets to raise expectations and develop a culture of achievement. Strategies to manage behaviour and improve attendance are well established and applied consistently. Staff work very effectively with external agencies and individual families to support pupils with complex needs and those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's aim to 'give pupils true life chances' is shared throughout the school and a cohesive community has been established. Every effort is made to identify pupils' different skills and talents so that their needs can be fully met. Effective teamwork has brought about significant improvement in all aspects of provision. For example, daily meetings enable staff to share good practice in teaching and learning and manage any behavioural concerns. Consequently, outcomes for pupils are improving securely and quickly.

Increasing opportunities are provided for pupils to engage other communities. For example, pupils have made contact with young people from Haiti who were directly affected by the earthquake. Good partnerships with a range of providers support pupils' academic and personal development well. For example, through the Safer Schools Partnership, pupils learn to make choices and understand better the consequence of their actions. This reflects the school's effective practice and procedures for safeguarding. The school and its partners are helping to minimise any potential disruption to pupils who may be affected by the closure of boarding provision.

Leaders have managed the reduction in staffing effectively and the smaller team of staff are quickly becoming familiar with their new roles. Self-evaluation is accurate and assessment information is used with increasing rigour to track pupils' progress and challenge staff to ensure all achieve as well as they might. A broad range of expertise enables the Interim Executive Board to provide good levels of challenge and support. Plans to establish for January 2011 a shadow governing body that includes parent governors are on track.

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	3
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	3
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	3

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

Boarding provision

The boarding provision is good. Young people enjoy warm and fruitful relationships with staff based on mutual respect. They are well supported in all aspects of their development. Some parents and carers declared their appreciation of the service and had every confidence that their children are well cared for. Improvements since the last inspection include the review of practice around medication procedures, further guidance issued on police involvement in the whole school and the introduction of comprehensive strategies to counteract the risk of bullying.

Good steps are taken to ensure that young people's health needs are met. The individual health and intimate care needs of young people are identified as part of the school's admission process, ensuring that their well-being and health are actively promoted. In addition, the school has a visiting qualified nurse with specific responsibility for promoting the health of young people. Policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication are firmly established and effective. The head of care takes full responsibility for ensuring safe medication practice and all staff receive training in this. The catering team has a very good understanding of what makes up a good balanced diet. Menu planning is directly influenced by the young people and integrates culturally appropriate food and encourages young people to try new dishes as part of a well-balanced diet.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded effectively through robust child protection procedures. All staff are subject to rigorous checks that ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Risk assessments are updated regularly for all aspects of safety. The privacy of young people is effectively maintained. Personal care is supported in a sensitive manner ensuring dignity and privacy. Staff follow clear policies which maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. Staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the houses and take action if bullying is suspected. Young people's concerns are taken seriously. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns raised by young people via the complaints procedure and house meetings. Staff draw upon their experience and training in managing challenging behaviour effectively.

Young people receive a high level of support and are very positive about their experiences in the residential house. Their valued relationships with family and friends are maintained through appropriate contact arrangements. The staff team values, promotes and encourages all of the young people to make the best of their educational opportunities. Staff share their own interests and enthusiasms to encourage young people to try out new activities. Young people's social skills are well promoted as they are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities within their school and local community through community action initiatives. Members of the school council stated that they are encouraged to share their views and influence the way the houses are run. This system is highly effective in ensuring young peoples decisions are valued.

Young people benefit from placement plans which set out how the staff will meet their assessed needs. They are encouraged to develop life skills that prepare them for adulthood and independence. Regular reviews ensure individual progress is carefully tracked. Opportunities within the service prepare young people well for the transition to independent living. One young person states that he is able to make more informed choices about his daily life and is beginning to feel empowered, motivated and more

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

confident. The commitment of the staff working in this area is commendable and prepares young people well for the future.

The residential setting is very well managed by the head of care. The houses are decorated and furnished to a good standard creating a safe and pleasant domestic environment appropriate to the age and cultural backgrounds of the young people. The business manager has a clear maintenance and repair programme and any damage is repaired promptly.

The residential team are competent, motivated and professional. Staff have successfully completed the national vocational qualification level 3 training and above in caring for children and young people. The staff group are well qualified for their task.

The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of the young people and there has been a consistent residential staff team in place for some time. This enables young people to receive consistent care from a very stable and skilled staff team, and to learn how to develop and experience positive attachments with adults. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board does not visit the residence or prepare a report as part of the overall monitoring of the school. This shortcoming means the Interim Executive Board does not enhance the quality assurance processes already in place.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

Arrange monitoring visits to the residential provision at least every half term and ensure a report is provided to the head of school within two weeks of the visit. (NMS 33.2)

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2	
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Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received one response to the parental questionnaire, which was very positive in relation to the support that the school provides for their child. One parent contacted the inspection service provider to express a concern about their child's transport to school. Evidence from the inspection indicates that staff take good steps to ensure that pupils are able to get to and from school safely.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wakefield District Community School 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 1 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	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	100	0	0	0	0	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	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	100	0	0	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)				
Type of school	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 lear	ոing,

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: 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.

■ 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.



5 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wakefield District Community School, Barnsley, S72 9DF

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your welcome during the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your experiences at school.

I am very pleased to tell you that your school has improved quickly over the last year and now provides you with a satisfactory education. This is because the staff know you very well and have been very focused on making the necessary improvements so that you get as much as possible from your time at school. We agreed with those of you who told us that lessons were more interesting and that behaviour had improved because everyone understand the behaviour code. You also told us that you enjoy the extra courses that have been provided for you and we found that this is helping you to make more rapid progress and achieve more in your work.

To help you make even more progress, we have asked the school to:

- work with you on the skills that will help you with your learning
- continue to develop courses that help you to achieve your best
- provide you with more chances to decide for yourself what your next steps in learning should be
- look for ways to involve your parents and carers in supporting your learning.

You have an important part to play in this process by attending regularly and getting involved in your learning so that you can achieve your very best.

Yours sincerely,

Sara Morrissey Her Majesty's Inspector

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