

Complementary Education

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121789
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359085
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Bobbie Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
School address	County Office Cromwell Centre, Northampton NN1 3EX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited each of the centres, observing 12 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the centre's leadership team, groups of teachers and representatives of the management committee. In addition to observing the centre's work, inspectors looked at: plans for continued improvement; policies concerned with ensuring the health and safety of pupils; information about pupils' attainment and progress; and statistical information about attendance. They also considered the responses contained in 96 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Questionnaires returned by staff and pupils were also scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively are students involved in setting targets for their progress and how aware are they of the progress they are making?
- How well does teaching meet the needs of potentially higher attaining students and those who are recognised as being gifted and talented?
- How the centre keeps parents and carers informed about pupils' progress?

Information about the school

Complementary Education provides for pupils from across Northamptonshire. The majority of pupils have special educational needs, mainly behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and have been permanently excluded from their mainstream or special school. The centre also provides for school-aged mothers. A small number of students have statements of special educational need. These pupils are not educated in the centre but follow individual learning programmes, including, for the older pupils, some college placements. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, having risen steadily over recent years. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also broadly average, with a small number within the early stages of learning English. Pupil mobility is very high, with the majority starting or leaving the unit at other than the expected times. The unit holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Artsmark Silver Award.

Students are taught in seven different pupil referral units located across the county.

Northampton: Cromwell for boys; Overleys for school-aged mothers

Wellingborough: Fairlawn for girls

Corby: Forest Gate for boys and girls; Oaklands for school-aged mothers

Kettering: London Road for boys; the William Knibb Centre for boys and girls aged 11-14.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Complementary Education provides its pupils with an outstanding education. In 2010 it was voted Northamptonshire's school of the year. The centre is highly regarded by parents, carers and the community, and many pupils say they are proud to attend. Excellent links with parents and carers are a key feature of the centre's work. This ensures that parents and carers are very well informed about their children's academic and personal development. One parent, among many positive comments made by parents and carers said, 'This centre does an excellent job for my child, they never give up on anyone.'

Outstanding teaching and an excellent curriculum at each centre captures pupils' interests and challenges them to do their best, resulting in them making exceptional progress. Attainment, compared with the national average is low. However, many pupils achieve significant success and the percentage gaining five or more A* to G passes in GCSE examinations is very high compared with that found in similar centres, as is the proportion who gain City and Guilds vocational qualifications. There is a remarkable consistency in the timetable and range of activities that pupils receive at each of the seven centres. Staff make certain that each pupil is treated fairly. They ensure that each one is able to benefit fully from the individual knowledge that staff hold about every aspect of their academic and personal development. For example, the challenge set for higher attaining pupils and those who are recognised as being gifted and talented meets their needs exceedingly well. These pupils achieve exceptionally well and their attainment is above average. Pupils are also very well informed about the progress they are making and about how to improve their work. For lower attaining pupils and those who sometimes struggle, teachers take a careful approach when sharing information about progress, with the intention of not damaging pupils' self-esteem or enthusiasm, especially when they might only attain low grades. Even so, there are times when students are not involved sufficiently in evaluating their own progress, which sometimes limits their awareness of what they need to do to improve further.

Pupils make remarkable strides as their behaviour improves. Many apply themselves exceptionally well during lessons and other learning experiences. The behaviour of those who return to mainstream schools and those who leave to enter the world of work is exceptional. Promoting good attendance for all pupils is an ongoing challenge. However, there is compelling evidence to show that at all centres attendance is improving. Attendance, although low overall compared with the national average for all pupils of secondary school age, improves significantly for each pupil, beyond that when they previously attended mainstream schools. A significant and increasing number of pupils have attendance that equates with and in some cases exceeds the national average. Even so, there remain a small minority of pupils who still do not attend as often as they should.

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Underpinning the centre's work is the excellent leadership provided by the management committee, senior leaders across the seven centres and, in particular, the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. Since the centre was last inspected, when it was judged to be good, attainment has continued to rise. Attendance has also improved and the proportion of pupils who successfully return to mainstream schools is higher. The number of leavers entering further education, accessing training or gaining employment has also risen. This successful track record provides a clear indication of the centre's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the concerted effort to improve the attendance of the small minority of pupils whose attendance remains stubbornly low.
- Ensure that all pupils are involved more in the self-assessment of their progress and in identifying what they need to do to improve their work further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The careful match of courses to pupils' learning needs and skills and the excellent teaching they receive result in pupils making outstanding progress and achieving exceptionally well. There is a well established year-on-year pattern of around half of the students who leave at the end of Year 11 attaining five or more A* to G GCSE passes. A small, but relatively high proportion compared with similar settings, of very able pupils gain five or more A* to C GCSE passes. The progress seen during lessons, the work in pupils' books and a scrutiny of examination work affirms that this trend in attainment and progress is being maintained in 2011. Pupils who have additional learning needs, those in the care of the local authority and the rising number who speak English as an additional language also make outstanding progress from their various starting points. Pupils are proud of their academic achievements and of the vocational qualifications, for example City and Guilds, they attain.

Pupils are very aware of how to stay safe and healthy. They have a clear understanding of the dangers posed by the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and make great strides in understanding the importance of having a healthy diet. An increasing number regularly take exercise. Pupils apply themselves exceptionally well in lessons, often showing great enthusiasm for their learning. Occasional disruptions are handled skilfully by staff, and pupils are soon back on track and focused on their learning.

Pupils make a remarkable contribution to their own and the wider community. The displays of their art work in a variety of community settings is appreciated and valued. It also does much to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. In turn, the confidence they gain enables pupils to take greater responsibility for their own actions, to provide support for others and to assume leadership roles. For example, pupils are involved in interviewing prospective members of staff. Pupils have made a film of life at a local day care centre and tidied up a nearby street that had been subjected to vandalism. Every year, pupils identify a local and a national charity to support. Pupils also raise substantial funds to provide toilets for families in Burundi. They enter into these fund raising projects with great enthusiasm.

Excellent acquisition of the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology mean that pupils are prepared very well to return to

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mainstream schools or to enter the world of work. Only a small percentage of pupils, on leaving, do not go on to further education, training or employment. There are many success stories of former pupils going on to run their own successful businesses as a result of the skills and qualifications they acquire at Complementary Education. The centre explores every avenue to help pupils to improve their attendance and in many instances is successful. For example, when pupils start at the centre they all receive an alarm clock in their welcome pack. The alarm clocks have the centre's website address on them and pupils are increasingly using the intranet to communicate with their teachers and to access work projects.

Pupils' pride in the high quality of their art work, poetry and music making serves to illustrate their enhanced spiritual development. They increasingly show respect for each other and willingly offer support for their peers at times of challenge or personal difficulty.

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	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

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?

Teaching and the use of assessment have a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress and, combined with the outstanding curriculum, are they key factors underpinning pupils' exceptional progress. All lessons are dedicated to promoting pupils' personal as well as their academic development. The purpose of learning activities and what pupils will gain is always made clear. The in-depth knowledge that staff have of each pupil enables teachers to make a precise match of activities to the learning needs,

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interests and stage that each pupil has reached. Teachers also respond promptly and skilfully to any change a pupil's mood or attitude. Consequently, pupils apply themselves well, are enthusiastic learners and invariably sustain their interest. This was particularly notable during the inspection for a group of Key Stage 4 pupils involved in a boat building project and for a Year 9 pupil who spends part of her week at a local equine centre. The attitudes and skills acquired during activities of this type lay the foundation for pupils to apply themselves during other learning activities.

Assessments of academic and personal progress are accurate and frequent. Staff hold daily meetings during which the outcomes for each pupil, whether positive or negative, are shared and evaluated and the next steps in learning are identified. However, sometimes opportunities to involve pupils, especially the lower attaining ones, in evaluating their own progress are sometimes missed.

The curriculum is exciting, rich and varied. It is particularly successful in preparing students for the world of work. Close and very effective partnerships with other providers, such as the local college and training agencies, mean that activities can be tailored closely to pupils' learning interests. Pupils benefit greatly from an excellent range of enhancement activities that help them to prepare for adult life and to become increasingly independent. There are annual visits to an outdoor activity centre in Wales. School-aged mothers make a residential visit to London which includes seeing a West End show and having a meal in a restaurant. They also take their babies along to the hotel where the centre arranges crèche facilities using its own staff.

Almost all pupils, because of their circumstances, are at times potentially vulnerable. Staff are excellent at making sure pupils have the care they need and respond promptly to any sign of anxiety or crisis. Pupils are full of praise for the support they receive and have confidence that staff will always do their best on their behalf. In this respect, liaison with parents and carers and with partner organisations and services is very effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Self-evaluation is accurate and all staff are involved fully in formulating plans for improvement. Suitably challenging targets for attainment are set. No one is in any way complacent and there is a powerful focus, to which everyone subscribes, on making things as good as they can be for every pupil. Staff have access to some excellent training opportunities, hence the outstanding quality of teaching and use of assessment. These opportunities are focused on meeting pupils' needs in the most effective way possible.

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Much of the centre's effectiveness and success is based on the drive and dedication of the headteacher, who is at the heart of everything the centre achieves. At the same time, she gives colleagues opportunities to take responsibility, which they embrace with enthusiasm. Her work is greatly valued by staff, pupils and parents and carers. One pupil, who was by no means alone in what she said, commented, 'Our head is brilliant, she always does her very best for us.' Links with parents and carers are developed exceptionally well, as are those with partner providers who contribute to pupils' development and well-being and to the excellent range of learning opportunities to which they have access.

The centre is also fortunate to benefit from the support of an excellent management committee. The committee members are rigorous in holding the centre to account for the quality of its work, but they are also great advocates who make sure the community is aware of the centre's many qualities and successes. The committee fully meets its legal obligations for safeguarding and for promoting community cohesion. This results in pupils making an excellent contribution to the community at every level and in outstanding care, guidance and support.

The office staff do an excellent job in ensuring the efficient day-to-day running of the centre. Resources are used wisely and the management committee, headteacher, and senior staff work very effectively to ensure the centre provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The percentage returns of the parent and carers questionnaire far exceeds that usually found for pupil referral units and is representative of the very positive views that parents and carers have about the centre's work. In all but one question the level of positive response is higher than that found at other similar settings. A very few parents and carers

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expressed concern about the extent to which their children enjoy their education. During their visit, inspectors found that pupils enjoyed their learning. This view is supported by the opinions expressed by pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Complementary Education 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 96 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	25	54	56	13	14	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	48	50	44	46	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	70	26	27	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	36	47	49	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	54	39	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	54	40	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	43	50	52	2	2	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)	43	45	49	51	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	46	46	48	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	55	37	39	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	53	42	44	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	54	40	42	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	57	35	36	3	3	1	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Complementary Education, Northampton, NN1 3EX

First of all, I must thank all of you who took the time to talk with us about your work and share your views about the centre. We know from what you said, and from the comments of your parents and carers, that you are delighted with the quality of education provided for you. The inspectors agree with you. We think your centre is outstanding.

You receive excellent teaching, which helps you to achieve your potential. You benefit greatly from a wide range of activities which engage your interest really well. The inspectors were very impressed not only by your boat building and horse riding abilities but also by your poetry and art work. Brilliant! The staff are always seeking to do their best on your behalf, take care of and make sure you are safe. We also noted that you do your part by behaving well and working hard. Well done.

Even though your centre is outstanding, Mrs Kelly, the management committee and the staff are always looking for ways to make it even better. With that in mind we have asked them to consider doing two things. Firstly, they can involve you more in evaluating how well you are progressing and in deciding for yourself how you can improve your work. Secondly, while the staff do all they can to support you in attending regularly, a few of you do not attend often enough. You can help Mrs Kelly and the staff considerably by attending as often as possible. Many of you already do exceptionally well, but by attending as often as you can you have the potential to do even better.

I wish all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector

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