

Midpoint Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134256
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	366816
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Morris-King HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Jo Wood (Consultant headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Her Majesty's Inspector observed seven lessons taught by six different teachers, and a short part of one other lesson. She observed the school's work, and looked at a sample of students' work across the curriculum, the school's data about students' attainment and progress, information about behaviour and attendance, the school's monitoring and evaluation records, and records of the actions that the centre has taken to meet the complex needs of a range of individual students. Meetings were held with the consultant headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the attendance officer, the chair of the management committee and three representatives of the local authority. Informal discussions took place with other staff and with students to evaluate the extent to which the centre had improved.

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

- It evaluated the progress that the centre had made since the previous monitoring visit in February 2011.
- It considered whether students' learning and progress is now accelerating as a result of the teaching and curriculum initiatives that have been put in place and the improvements in behaviour and attendance.
- It considered the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, and whether the centre has the capacity to continue to improve without termly monitoring by Ofsted.
- It evaluated the quality of the provision for students whose attendance is very low and for those with the most complex needs.

Information about the school

When Midpoint Centre was inspected in March 2010 it was found to require special measures. Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the centre on two occasions prior to this inspection to monitor the centre's progress. The consultant headteacher and one of the deputy headteachers were seconded from another pupil referral unit in the local authority in May 2010 to lead the centre. Midpoint caters for students, mainly boys, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of students have a statement of special educational needs. Many join the centre at the start of Year 10 having attended the neighbouring special school, which does not have Key Stage 4 provision. Others join at various points during Key Stage 4, having been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary school or through another referral route. Around 35% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. At any one time around 10% of students are looked after by the local authority. Around 40% of the students are from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection the centre had just been awarded the Black Country Quality Standard for work experience.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Midpoint Centre's effectiveness is satisfactory and improving. From the very start of her appointment, the consultant headteacher has set a determined and ambitious direction for the centre. Under her very successful leadership, the centre has developed rapidly over the last year. The deputy headteachers have worked closely with her to implement the many changes, and staff have responded well to the new demands. The centre is now an orderly environment in which students increasingly enjoy their learning and achieve success. The local authority's role as the responsible body for the centre has become more strategic, and the management committee is well led and supportive. The pace and breadth of these improvements, coupled with rigorous and accurate self-evaluation and the growing leadership being shown by staff at all levels, indicates that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The management of behaviour has improved considerably and is now more consistent and positive. The consultant headteacher has set clear expectations for students and given staff appropriate guidance. Staff use a firm, calm and pleasant manner with students, and place a growing emphasis on the importance of self-control and learning. The vast majority of students have responded well to these new expectations. As a result, learning time has begun to be maximised, staff and students have good working relationships and serious incidents have greatly reduced.

Alongside the better management of behaviour, teaching has improved and is now satisfactory with an increasing proportion that is good. When students join Midpoint they frequently have gaps in their learning as a result of previously disrupted education or low attendance. Baseline assessment and improved relationships with feeder schools have helped staff to set the students appropriately challenging targets and to plan their lessons accordingly. Although attainment remains low, it is improving strongly and rapidly, particularly for those students who attend consistently well, and overall achievement is satisfactory. Almost all students will leave the centre with a range of GCSE level accreditation this summer.

Some good practice in assessing students' work is emerging in different subjects. For example, video evidence is being used well in motor vehicles' work, and assessment in art is thorough and informative. The involvement of students in evaluating their own work is at an early stage of development. The school has rightly identified the need to share this good practice across the curriculum. The curriculum has improved over the last year and is satisfactory with some good elements, such as the range and quality of vocational subjects and enrichment opportunities. Importantly, lessons include a growing emphasis on developing students' literacy and oracy skills but this is not yet consistent.

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Midpoint works effectively with a wide range of agencies to provide students with good care, guidance and support to meet their often very complex needs. Staff know each student very well and strive to remove barriers to their learning, for example they work closely with the Youth Offending Team to help students to stay away from crime. Parents and carers increasingly appreciate the support that the centre is giving to their children and relationships have improved greatly over the last year.

Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection but remains low. However, the overall attendance figure masks some considerable individual successes and improvements. An increasing number of students are enjoying and valuing their time at the centre and many find the attendance rewards motivating. There remains a significant core of students with extremely low attendance. Often, when these students join Midpoint they already have a deeply ingrained pattern of poor attendance which is exceptionally challenging for the centre to reverse. The centre works tirelessly to challenge and support families, and this is increasingly effective. Staff are imaginative in finding ways to engage students for whom a standard school day is not suitable. Students are beginning to be more aware of the links between attendance and achievement as a result of the centre's recent emphasis on this aspect.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve attendance by:
 - establishing with each new student and their family from the outset the links between achievement and attendance and maintaining this focus throughout
 - maintaining a consistently tenacious approach to pursuing each incident of poor attendance
 - working with the local authority to ensure that Midpoint is a suitable placement for each potential new admission.
- Improve the students' oracy and literacy skills by:
 - consistently encouraging the students to articulate their thinking and explain their answers
 - developing the use of subject specific vocabulary in every subject
 - ensuring that all classroom environments promote literacy skills.
- Refine assessment across the curriculum by:
 - sharing and using the best elements of assessment practice from different subjects
 - involving students more in evaluating their own learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' progress is accelerating in response to the high expectations, improved teaching and calm environment, and as a result achievement is satisfactory. In lessons, students concentrated well and made steady progress. In practical lessons they worked well

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independently. They rose to the challenges presented by the staff and made a good effort to extend their understanding. All students have challenging targets to meet across the curriculum and are working well towards them. Many students who have poor literacy skills are now making substantial progress with their reading and writing. A small but growing number, including boys and girls, looked after children and students from different ethnic groups, are making good progress in a range of subjects. A few students do not achieve as well as they should, because their attendance is too irregular for them to benefit from the teaching and support that the centre offers.

The vast majority of students are making reasonable and sometimes good progress in improving their behaviour. Behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory and often good. Students display positive attitudes towards their work away from the school site, and have an appropriate awareness of health and safety. The centre's records show that students' behaviour is largely satisfactory, although the nature of their difficulties means that there are incidents of challenging behaviour at times. All students know that they can seek help if they feel unsafe or bullied and they do so as required. Exclusions are low. Although overall attendance remains low it is improving. Around three quarters of the students have better attendance this year than they did last year either at Midpoint or at their previous provision.

Students are responding increasingly well to the centre's good efforts to help them to improve their health. Their response to the 'discipline in sport' course is particularly positive. Students who attend work and vocational placements learn important skills for working life, such as responding appropriately to customers, handling money and working as a team. They also learn valuable skills for the future in both their vocational and academic subjects on site.

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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	3
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	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?

Teaching and the curriculum are increasingly well tailored to the students' needs. Thorough baseline assessments, particularly in English and mathematics, have provided an accurate picture of the students' skills and knowledge, which greatly assists staff's planning. Students often find it difficult to articulate their thinking and understanding. In the best lessons, questioning is suitably challenging, and staff not only give students prompts to help their thinking but also time to respond. This helps them to extend their answers. Carefully thought out practical projects in some subjects, for example building large bird tables, restoring an antique door, and re-building a motor bike help students to develop their resilience and to experience success over time. Support staff and teachers are working well as a team and support staff have become much more effective in supporting learning. Occasionally, lessons are too undemanding or staff do too much for the students.

Students are finding the new English curriculum motivating and their work is beginning to show accelerated progress. Students whose reading levels are very low on joining the centre are being given appropriate support, which is having a positive impact on their skills. Staff are working in creative ways with students who find it difficult to engage with a conventional curriculum or with other people. For example, they are using different venues, working with staff from other agencies or working one-to-one with students at the end of the school day. This is proving successful. Work experience and placements with

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off-site providers give students a range of engaging opportunities to work outside of the centre. Senior leaders' plans for the curriculum in September include qualifications at a higher level and more continuity of learning.

Care, guidance and support are highly personalised. All students receive good support to help them with transition to post-16 education or work. This summer the centre is arranging transition placements, such as extended work experience to short courses, for Year 11 students during June and July. The centre involves a broad range of agencies to support the students' very complex personal needs and often initiates and leads multi-agency work. The curriculum and new staff appointments reflect an appropriate focus on mental health. Action taken to improve attendance is robust and legal action has been taken with the families of several non-attenders.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the consultant headteacher's leadership, the centre has grown quickly in effectiveness and capacity. The consultant headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteachers, is very consistent in her emphasis on learning and determined that every student will succeed. Staff understand and support the direction in which the centre is moving and have a common desire to improve the outcomes for students at a rapid pace. This is translated into appropriate action. The much improved data about students' behaviour and attendance, together with the thorough tracking of their academic progress, is helping the school to tackle any inequalities robustly.

The improved deployment of staff is making more of the staff's talents and skills and the thorough plans for September are poised to improve this further. Relationships between the staff and the students are a growing strength. Staff recognise the need to challenge students to do their best and are willing to do this, even though this new level of challenge to students sometimes results in uncomfortable situations.

Transition arrangements for students joining the centre are much improved. In particular, there is now clear and regular communication between the centre and its feeder special school. The centre has worked closely with the school to agree the arrangements for the summer term which involve the new students and their current staff working at Midpoint for much of the second half of the summer term. The centre is effectively building positive relationships with parents and carers.

The centre's work on community cohesion has successfully enabled the centre itself to become a well-functioning community. The focus now is rightly on the local community,

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and includes an important emphasis on the impact of gangs, knives and guns. Safeguarding procedures are good. In particular, leaders and staff have a high level of awareness of child protection procedures and the frequent issues that arise are followed through thoroughly.

The management committee is well led and organised. Members are providing both challenge and effective practical support. The local authority is working with the consultant headteacher and other headteachers in the area to set the strategic direction for the authority's provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has resulted in a more appropriate number on roll and admissions policy, and further changes to the staffing and leadership structure of the provision are imminent. The local authority has provided an appropriate range of support to assist the centre's improvement.

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	3
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	3
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

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for an inspection conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



18 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Midpoint Centre, Wolverhampton, WV6 0UA

Thank you for talking with me and showing me your work when I visited Midpoint this week. As you know, this was the third time that I had visited. This time I found that Midpoint has improved a lot and no longer requires 'special measures' because you are now receiving a satisfactory standard of education. Congratulations. The staff have worked very hard to get to this point, and so have you. During this visit I saw how much your behaviour had improved, and how much better many of you are achieving in different subjects. I was particularly impressed with your art work, the improvements some of you are making with your reading, your work in motor vehicles, and the quality of your woodwork. It was good to see you tackling challenging work in lessons and not giving up. I also noticed that you were listening well to the staff, and conducting yourselves in a mature way. The staff have many ideas to make the centre even better. I have also asked them to do a few things to improve further.

Attendance is much better now and some of you attend well - but some of you still do not attend enough. I have asked the staff to make sure they constantly remind you that you need to attend in order to gain your GCSEs and other exams, and also to make sure your families are clear about this.

You all have good ideas and thoughts, but you do not always find it easy to explain them or to write them down, so I have asked the centre to help you to do this even more than they do now.

The staff have some good ways of assessing your progress, like the videoing in motor vehicles and the assessments on the wall in art. I have asked them to share these ideas with each other and to involve you more in evaluating your own learning.

Thank you again for your help with this inspection. You can help to make Midpoint even better by attending every day, doing your very best to meet all your targets with your work and your behaviour, and taking part as much as possible. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

S. Morris-King

Her Majesty's Inspector

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