

Ashdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134346
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	366219
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson 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	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Brunton
Headteacher	Mr Iain Hutcheon
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who observed eight lessons or parts of lessons. Altogether, seven different staff were seen teaching. There was one joint observation with the manager responsible for improving teaching and learning. Discussions were held with the head of the complementary education service, the deputy teacher in charge, the School Improvement Partner, the Chair of the Management Committee, a representative of the local authority, and students. The teacher in charge was absent at the time of the inspection. The inspector observed the centre's work and looked at students' work, records and policies, particularly those linked to safeguarding arrangements. This was the fourth monitoring visit to the centre since it was subject to special measures.

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

- Has the centre been able to sustain improvements to attendance?
- Are exclusions continuing to decline?
- Has behaviour in lessons continued to improve and if so, why?
- Is attainment rising quickly across a range of appropriate subjects?
- Is self-evaluation of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement more robust and does it lead to actions for improvement?

Information about the school

Ashdale caters for students who, in the main, have been permanently excluded from school and a few who are at risk of exclusion. A very small number are dual registered at the centre and their schools. A new site was opened in November 2010 as part of the Building Schools for the Future initiative. The centre is co-located with the local authority's Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit. The centre is jointly managed by the head of complementary education and a teacher in charge. They took up their roles in October 2010. A high proportion of students in Year 11 follow work-related courses at the local college or with work-based training providers. Almost all students are of White British heritage and about two-thirds are boys. A small number of students are in public care. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average and so is the percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities; almost all of the latter have behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. Many students have a history of poor attendance at school. Three students have statements of special educational needs. When the centre was last inspected fully, in December 2009, it was made subject to special measures. The school holds the Healthy Schools award.

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

3

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.

The centre's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. The local authority provided good support to the centre so that the necessary improvements were secured and it is now in a satisfactory position to move forward independently. In particular, significant improvements have been made to attendance and behaviour. Students' attainment has also improved, but remains low, particularly in English and mathematics. Effective behaviour management means progress in most lessons is good. Teaching and learning in food technology, art, physical education and citizenship are consistently good and sometimes outstanding because teachers personalise learning to match students' prior abilities and needs. Weaknesses remain in a minority of subjects, where planning and the use of assessment are too complicated and lack focus. Therefore, learning is sometimes not matched to a concise assessment of individual students' needs. Most students who attend Ashdale have been identified as having special educational needs. They make good progress in developing their reading and writing skills. Some students with more complex needs attend as a result of exclusion from local special schools. They are well cared for but sometimes transition arrangements lack long term targets and do not identify how students will have their special needs met. Most students leave Ashdale and move successfully into further education or training. Reintegration back to mainstream school remains a relatively rare occurrence but recently there have been more examples of success. Some students join Ashdale after having spent time at the Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit. There is a lack of clarity whether re-integration or further assessment is a target for this group.

Ashdale provides good pastoral support. Students say they feel safe in the centre and appreciate the improvements which have been made to discipline since the previous inspection. The introduction of a school uniform has had a beneficial effect because students now see the centre more clearly as a place of learning. Students are proud of their work and the new building. Almost all improve their attendance when compared with their previous school. The overall attendance rate, although much improved, remains below average because of the number of persistent absentees. Ashdale is still seen as an option of last resort for students who have a long history of persistent absence and transition arrangements do not enable staff to set precise targets or new strategies to help these students. Ashdale has developed good partnerships with specialist support agencies and providers of vocational training. It plans to improve the curriculum by working more closely with the local college to ensure a broader range of more challenging options are available.

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Leaders and managers have been very successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. In particular they have brought about changes to behaviour management which have had an impact on many areas of the school's life. However, they recognise that more needs to be done to ensure the curriculum and initial assessment are developed to meet the needs and interests of individual students. Teaching and learning is regularly observed but sometimes observer records place too much emphasis upon what teachers do rather than what students learn. An additional manager has been recruited to lead on this work, but it is too early to see the impact of her work. Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies general areas of strengths and weakness. A system has been established to measure individual students' academic progress, however it requires further refinement if it is to become a useful tool in evaluating the effectiveness of the centre as a whole. The development plan identifies an ambitious vision and actions for improvement. However, targets and success criteria are not always precise or measurable, making it difficult to identify the impact of actions taken.

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?

- Continue to improve students' learning to raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - - ensuring that lesson plans are simplified and always focus on individual students needs
 - - sharing good practice between teachers more widely
 - - developing a curriculum which is tailor-made to meet the needs of individual students.
- Continue to improve transition arrangements for students' by:
 - - ensuring that success criteria for students who have a history of persistent absence are clearly identified so that their attendance improves
 - - clarifying the support arrangements for students with statements of special educational needs, particularly those who have been excluded from special schools
 - - identifying which students referred from the Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit will have a target of returning to the mainstream and those for whom further specialist education is necessary.
- Strengthen the centre's capacity to improve by:
 - - ensuring development plans contain specific and measurable criteria through which success can be measured
 - - improving the use of progress data to enable leaders and managers to draw upon more robust evidence when evaluating success
 - - developing the lesson observation system to focus more precisely on learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

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Students enter the centre having had unsuccessful experiences in their secondary education and so their attainment is low. The reason for this often stems from their previously poor behaviour. A combination of good behaviour management and a personalised approach enables effective learning to take place. The large majority of students develop very good skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Despite this, by the time they leave, attainment often remains low, especially in English and mathematics. This is because of the large amount of ground students have to make up, particularly those who have been persistently absent from school. All groups, including girls, boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. The good rapport between staff and students helps build social skills, confidence and self-esteem. The number of exclusions has been greatly reduced and students who misbehave are now expected to attend extra catch-up sessions rather than be sent home. Conflict between students still happens but effective support usually enables them to forgive and reconcile differences. Students who attend the centre or local providers of vocational training enjoy lessons and become increasingly motivated to learn and value education. They understand the need to make a contribution to the community because of effective citizenship lessons. Students' spiritual and cultural understanding is less well developed. Students are consulted informally about their views as there is no school council and they make a valuable contribution. They demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning is usually good and sometimes outstanding. Class sizes are very small. In the best lessons teachers personalise learning to suit students' prior ability and needs. Teachers manage behaviour extremely well and most students enjoy learning. Marking and feedback at the end of lessons often reinforce the progress students have made, but sometimes advice does not focus on how they can improve their work. Lesson plans are overly bureaucratic. The information recorded is often unnecessary and does not add to the quality of teaching or learning.

The centre has developed good partnerships with mainstream schools and this enables them to place students on suitable courses so that they can gain accreditation and progress to further education or employment. Plans are in place to extend opportunities for students beyond foundation level through an enhanced partnership with a local college. Visits, residential trips, lunchtime activities and opportunities for online independent learning are much appreciated by students but remain limited in breadth. Food technology is a significant strength of the curriculum and students often prepare healthy lunches which are enjoyed by all.

Good pastoral care in conjunction with a wide variety of specialist support ensures students are well supported emotionally and socially. Personalised careers guidance ensures students have appropriate opportunities when they leave the centre. Reintegration rates back into mainstream school are low but have improved. Overall absence rates remain below average because despite the best efforts of the centre some students are persistently absent. The centre accepts students who have been excluded from special schools and have a statement of special educational needs. Although centre staff try hard to meet the special needs of these pupils often transition information and targets for improvement are insufficiently detailed. Parents and carers are kept well informed of their children's progress and the small number who responded to the centre's recent questionnaire were very positive about the support their children receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

Although some weaknesses remain, there has been sustained and significant improvement to outcomes for students and the quality of provision which has been brought about by leaders and managers. Staff work well as a team and their expectations of students have risen. Overall management has been good and has resulted in significant improvements particularly in the application of a consistent behaviour and rewards policy in the

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classroom. However, some teachers do not plan lessons and use assessment information as effectively as they should. Observation of teaching and learning takes place frequently but too much emphasis is placed upon teaching and not enough on learning.

The management committee and the local authority support the centre well. They recognise that more work is necessary to improve their ability to evaluate the work of the centre. A parent representative has recently been recruited. Good care is taken to promote equal opportunities. As a result, no particular group of pupils is performing significantly differently from any other. Policies and procedures to safeguard students meet government requirements. Staff have taken part in extensive training and know what recommended good practice is. Students are made aware of how to avoid unnecessary risks and what constitutes a dangerous situation. Safe recruitment practice is followed well.

Accurate self-evaluation and planning have led to improvements; however, the centre recognises that it needs to simplify its use of data when evaluating achievement. The school operates as a harmonious community on a day-to-day basis but there is limited evidence of success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school. Leaders and managers are aware of this and are extending opportunities, for instance, by planning to entertain elderly residents from a nearby care home.

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	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	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

Views of parents and carers

An inspection questionnaire was not distributed as this was initially a monitoring inspection. The centre's own evidence indicates that parents' and carers' views of the centre are positive.

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.



23 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Ashdale Pupil Referral Unit, Middlesbrough, TS3 8RD

Thank you for making me welcome when I inspected your school recently. During this fourth visit, I judged that the centre is much improved and is now satisfactory. It is no longer in need of the additional help called 'special measures'.

There have been some important improvements since the last inspection. Your behaviour is much better and rates of attendance have improved. There are far fewer exclusions. Teaching is good and staff take good care of you to give you a good start to the next phase of your education or employment. You make good progress in lessons and this was not always the case in the past. I was very impressed by your skills in many subjects, including food technology. I particularly enjoyed sampling the cornflake tart and chocolate Swiss roll when I spoke to you!

I think the new building is a big improvement and I was pleased to see how well you look after it. The new school uniform is very smart.

I have made some suggestions to help the school to become even better. I have asked staff to continue to try to improve standards and learn by sharing their ideas. Also, I think it is very important that all students have clear targets especially when they first join the centre. I have asked staff to make it clearer how they set targets and measure improvements both to you as individuals and to the centre as a whole. On a final point I have asked leaders and managers to try to reduce the amount of paperwork staff have to complete particularly when planning lessons.

I hope you will do your bit by continuing to work hard and attend school as often as you can.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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