

Denewood Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122401
Local Authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	380463
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

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	7–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Chris Richards
Headteacher	Wendy Vincent
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed seven lessons and six teachers were seen. Meetings were held with: a group of pupils; one parent, the chair of the executive management committee; a representative from the local authority support service; and a range of staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, surveys of parents' and carers' views and monitoring and evaluation documents. Inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by three parents and carers.

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

- How accurate is the school's monitoring of pupils' progress during their time in the learning centre?
- How well do changes to the curriculum help to re-engage them in learning?
- How successful is the learning centre at reintegrating pupils back into school?
- How well does teaching meet pupils' needs and promote their achievement?
- How has the school's leadership raised expectations and standards especially with regard to the staffing changes since the previous inspection?

Information about the school

Denewood Learning Centre provides full-time education for pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3 who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. Its aim is to re-engage pupils in education and to successfully reintegrate pupils into a permanent school placement as rapidly as possible. Pupils come from a wide range of locations within the City of Nottingham but some may have been previously educated in a Nottinghamshire school. The majority of pupils travel independently to the centre. The learning centre also provides a smaller number of intervention places for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream school.

There are significantly more boys than girls in the centre. The majority of pupils on roll are of White British heritage. However, there has recently been an increase in the number of pupils from eastern Europe, particularly from the Roma and the Polish communities. The large majority of pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, with a minority having a diagnosis of needs relating to the autistic spectrum and various conduct disorders. Many of the pupils were not regular attenders at their previous school.

Since the previous inspection, there have been several important appointments to the staff. The previously acting headteacher is now in post on a permanent basis. A deputy headteacher and a special educational needs coordinator have also been appointed and specialists have been appointed to co-ordinate the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The management committee has also been restructured.

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?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Denewood Learning Centre provides a good standard of education. It has undergone many changes to staffing, including at leadership level, since the previous inspection and these have contributed to improvements in the quality of the provision. Some aspects of the centre's work are outstanding including: the curriculum; the promotion of equal opportunities; the care, guidance and support for pupils; and the engagement with parents and carers. The staff are tireless in their efforts to engage parents and carers who have not previously been involved with their children's education. They appreciate the daily telephone calls home and value the work of the centre in reintegrating their children back into a permanent school placement. It is clear that the core aim of reintegrating pupils is at the centre of all that the centre does.

When pupils come in to the centre, they often have attainment and social skills which are low, due to their disengagement from education and, in some cases, due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. During their short time in the centre, rapid progress is made in meeting their social and emotional needs and in their academic progress. The teaching is good in the majority of lessons, leading to good learning and progress. This is an improvement from the previous inspection and middle and senior leaders are now identifying areas where teaching can be improved further. Some pupils make outstanding progress and the centre is exceptionally successful in fulfilling its aim to re-engage pupils so they are ready return to a permanent school placement. This aspect of the centre's work is outstanding: all pupils have reintegrated into a permanent placement in recent years.

Changes to the curriculum have been very positive. The recent appointment of subject specialists has ensured that the core subjects of mathematics, English and science are taught with the expectations that any gaps in pupils' learning will be narrowed in readiness for their return to mainstream school. The staff quickly assess individual needs as soon as pupils become known to them and high quality, comprehensive plans are put in place.

Although attendance is low overall, there are clear improvements compared with the pupils' attendance at their previous schools. This is, in part, due to the centre's outstanding work with families to improve their children's attendance. This is a major factor for consideration when assessing pupils' readiness for reintegration. The centre's tracking of progress, nevertheless, shows a direct link between the pupils whose attendance is lower and slower rates of academic progress.

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Although only three parents or carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire, it is clear from the centre's own surveys and other documentation, as well as a face-to-face meeting with a parent during the inspection, that they value the work that it is doing. Systems for recording and monitoring pupils' progress have recently been reviewed and amended and are now more effective at monitoring the progress of pupils in a range of subjects. The school monitors the progress of different groups of pupils closely. The data show that there is no significant difference in the progress of different groups, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, the data has not been collected for a sufficiently long enough period to identify any patterns or trends over time. The centre's promotion of equal opportunities, and the high quality support given to all families, demonstrates outstanding work in these areas. The centre has a wide range of very effective partnerships to support pupils' learning and well-being. It promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well with exemplary strengths in social and moral development. Pupils also have a clearly improving awareness of other cultures. This is due to well-planned opportunities to learn about, and experience, other ways of life and an improving ability to socialise and interact during their time in the centre.

Leaders have a good awareness of where the strengths and areas for development are in the centre. The headteacher has been successful in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, including the significant staffing issues. The recent restructuring of the management committee has been well planned and its members have a clearer understanding of how the centre works as a result, but the changes have not had time yet to have a significant impact on its work. The recent improvements in the centre, including those to the leadership team, and the impact that these have had already show that the centre has good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and further improve pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - all teaching is consistently good or better
 - all teachers consistently use information from the new assessment procedures to ensure higher expectations and increased challenge for all pupils
 - the school works even more closely with parents and carers to ensure that overall attendance increases and persistent absences reduce.
- Develop the quality assurance role of the management committee, to ensure that all pupils continue to receive an education which fully meets their needs, challenges them and raises their aspirations, so that they are successfully reintegrated into schools.

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The recently improved monitoring of pupils' learning shows that pupils make better than expected progress overall, during their time in the centre. The good learning and progress made by pupils in lessons, including those seen during the inspection, is the result of the good teaching. The school recognises that in order for this level of improvement to take place, a lot of initial work has to be done to re-engage pupils and earn their trust after their previously negative experiences of education. The improvements in these areas through various initiatives, the teaching seen during the inspection and the use of data support the judgement that pupils' achievement is good, despite their overall attainment remaining lower than that found nationally. Pupils make impressive gains in their achievement in the time they are in the centre and they make significant improvements in their capacity to learn. However, a small minority of pupils whose attendance is poor do not make the same progress as those who attend more regularly. Equally, a small minority of pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the centre. The school prepares pupils for the workplace, by a wide range of open days, enterprise activities, a focus on literacy in all lessons and fundraising.

In the best lessons seen during the inspection, behaviour was good as pupils were fully engaged and keen to contribute to their own learning. This was seen when pupils were sampling a range of healthy fruit smoothies, in order to create and sell their own, and in an English lesson based on 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', when pupils were confident enough to read their work aloud and feel supported by their peers. In both lessons, and increasingly in all lessons, the development of literacy is a high priority and this helps to contribute to the good work on basic skills. Pupils are proud of their learning and the progress they make during their time in the centre. Some pupils were keen to share their work, and discussed it with the inspector, without prompting.

The school is a warm community into which new entrants and visitors are made to feel welcome. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good, which is a marked improvement on pupils' starting points. They improve significantly in their attitudes to learning and in their empathy, social and personal development through comprehensive and well-targeted plans and therapies. These improvements enable all pupils to successfully reintegrate into their new placements when they leave Denewood. The evidence shows that the large majority of pupils are successful in staying in their new placements after Denewood. Pupils participate in a wide range of physical activities including cycling, climbing and horse-riding: healthy activities which they would not normally experience. They are very aware of the dangers of smoking, drugs and alcohol as the centre provides opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of healthy lifestyles to an outstanding level. The work in the area of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) also helps pupils to develop empathy and other social skills to enable them to integrate successfully. Pupils feel safe in the school and parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and school surveys agree. This is shown in the increased attendance for individuals as they grow to see the school as a safe and positive environment where they can enjoy their learning. Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong and are given ample

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opportunities to develop awareness of themselves, and through increasing opportunities for collaboration, their peers and others.

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	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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The centre's work on re-engaging pupils and their parents and carers with the education system is outstanding. From the visits to the excluding schools, the relationships built up with schools across the city, the initial assessment, the induction period and the devising of an exit plan, pupils and their families are clear at all times where pupils are on their journey back to a full-time permanent placement. During pupils' time in the centre, all staff are aware of the pupils' contexts and how to successfully manage and challenge them in relation to their needs. This leads to pupils' increasing abilities to manage their own behaviour in a short time. The range of therapies available and the high quality partnerships with a range of agencies and schools helps pupils to overcome the causes of their previous permanent exclusions. The support and advice provided for families, including workshops on particular topics, open days and daily telephone calls are outstanding. High quality transition work ensures that pupils are well prepared for the move to their next placement.

The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good, and none was inadequate. This agrees with the school's own monitoring of the quality of teaching. Joint observations of lessons during the inspection also confirmed that leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. In the best lessons, support is well focused and directed by the class teacher to allow it to be targeted effectively

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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to support learning. The best teaching also makes learning thoroughly enjoyable and contributes significantly to increased engagement and improved attendance. Pupils are provided with good quality feedback during the lessons, and they are all aware what levels they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next level.

The improvements in teaching have been supported by changes to the curriculum. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils extremely well through a combination of discrete National Curriculum subjects, cross-curricular project work, alternative therapies and a range of physical activities. Project themes include the 2012 Olympics and the 'Around the World' project which introduces pupils to a range of experiences that they would not otherwise have. This approach to the curriculum has also resulted in increased collaboration between staff in planning and teaching subjects. Subject leaders have helped to ensure that the quality of the curriculum and learning opportunities are relevant to the pupils and help them to make good progress academically and to meet with an outstanding level of success in reintegrating into mainstream school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The headteacher, supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher, has established and started to build on a clear vision and climate for success which is shared, promoted and valued by the school community. Recent changes have led to increasingly high expectations for all staff as well as pupils. Senior leaders, with effective support from middle managers and the special educational needs co-ordinator, monitor progress well. They are developing assessment schemes so that pupils can be assessed closely and any at risk of underachievement identified early so that support can be appropriately targeted. The school already has clear evidence of how this approach has worked to improve the progress of pupils who were identified for targeted support, although it is still early days. The local authority provides satisfactory support through the work of the management committee and its support services.

School staff have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and the increased monitoring role of subject leaders is contributing significantly to this. Senior leaders and other staff have a good understanding of the strengths within the school and have clear plans for further improvement. The distribution of responsibilities among staff is clear and provides a sound basis for the school to be successful in its work.

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The monitoring of progress for all pupils and groups of pupils and the centre's approach to tackling discrimination, show that equality of opportunity is fundamental to its work and if any incidents occur which are contrary to this, they are confronted and dealt with robustly to prevent a recurrence.

The willingness of staff to update their skills and knowledge base has been an important factor in the improved outcomes evident during this inspection. They are also active members of several local partnerships and professional networks and their contribution is increasingly valued by fellow professionals who are able to seek advice about managing challenging pupils in their provisions. The majority of staff have taken on their new challenges with a determination that they can have an impact on improving standards in the centre. Safeguarding procedures and policies, including child protection, are good and show that all adults working with pupils are appropriately recruited and vetted. The range of policies and procedures rigorously cover all aspects of child protection and safety. Community cohesion is satisfactory as, although the school knows its pupils extremely well, and engages them and their families rapidly and effectively in the school community, it is currently at an early stage of widening its focus to the local community.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Although only a small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, these were overwhelmingly positive in all areas. The responses reflected the inspectors' judgements. No concerns were raised about the centre's work. The findings of the inspection support the positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Denewood Learning Centre 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 3 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 33 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	33	2	67	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	33	2	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	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)	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Denewood Learning Centre, Nottingham, NG8 3DH

On behalf of the inspectors who visited Denewood recently, I would like to thank you very much for making our visit extremely interesting and enjoyable. We found that the learning centre is good, with several areas which are outstanding. The headteacher, and other staff all work very hard to make your time in the centre successful so that you become ready for reintegration as soon as possible. Most aspects of your personal development are good with one outstanding area being how you adopt healthy lifestyles. Your behaviour and warm welcome made a positive impression on us. This was particularly impressive as most of you enter the centre having been excluded from a school for challenging behaviour. This shows a significant improvement in your attitudes. However, some of you need to make sure that you attend the centre more often. You work well and the progress you make in your lessons is good. The care, guidance and support which you receive are outstanding and help you and your parents and carers to become more involved in education. Your improving attitudes to learning show that a lot of work has been done to make the centre significantly better than it was at the last inspection. Your contribution to its work is good and is an important part of making the centre more successful.

We identified some areas to help make Denewood even better. I have asked the headteacher to improve the centre by helping you to learn more and make more progress by ensuring that all teaching is good or better. I have asked her to make sure that all teachers use information about you so that they have higher expectations about what you can learn, and to work with your parents and carers to ensure that your attendance improves further. I have also asked that the centre's leaders make plans to ensure that the management committee responsible for the centre works well within its new structure. This will help them to contribute more to raising standards and helping you to have successful futures.

Once again, thank you very much for the time you spent with us during the visit and we would like to wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector

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