

# Launchpad Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132033
<b>Local authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	381439
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eric Craven

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil Referral Unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil Referral Unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	53
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Karen Prescott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Irene Pritchard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 May 2009
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed nine lessons taught by eight teachers and one youth mentor. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the chair of the management committee and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work at each site and visited a vocational education provider used by the centre. They looked at planning documents, self-evaluation files, data on attendance and the progress made by pupils, reports to the management committee and from the centre's school improvement partner and they looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also analysed the five questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 19 completed by staff and 13 returned by pupils.

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

- How well the centre is tackling the low rate of attendance.
- The impact of care, guidance and support in helping pupils re-focus on education and training.
- How effectively the curriculum is used to re-engage pupils with their learning.
- The impact of the centre's pupil tracking system in ensuring they make sufficient progress and in identifying underachievement.

## Information about the school

Launchpad Centre is part of the St. Helens local authority's Behaviour and Inclusion Improvement Service. The pupils who attend are at risk of permanent exclusion and have a variety of needs including, behaviour and/or attendance difficulties, mental health problems and youth offending histories. It serves the whole of the local authority and is located on three sites. Its Key Stage 4 base is linked with all nine of the authority's secondary schools and its two Key Stage 3 bases are linked with four and five secondary schools respectively. Key Stage 4 pupils have timetables that place them with alternative vocational education providers for part or all of the week. At Key Stage 3, pupils attend their host school as well as Launchpad and most return full-time to mainstream schools within a year. Very few pupils are of non-White British heritage and none are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. One in five of the pupils are girls. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs. About half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and eight are looked after by the local authority.

**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

Launchpad Centre and its very effective partners provide a good education for its pupils. Pupils get back on track because of good quality teaching, an interesting and relevant curriculum and good care, guidance and support from staff who get to know them very quickly and well.

Their turbulent educational experiences and often poor attendance records mean that most arrive with attainment below that expected for their age. Their attainment when they leave remains low, but the majority of those who attend regularly make outstanding progress in re-engaging with education and as a consequence, begin to achieve well in their academic and vocational studies. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve equally well because of the in-depth knowledge staff quickly gain about their needs and the positive relations they have with staff. The staff are skilled at building relationships and are consistent in the management of behaviour, which results in most pupils learning to control their emotions and behaving well overall. Restorative justice is proving effective in helping them shape their responses. The rate of attendance has improved but remains too low. Moreover, it is further adversely affected by some intransigent pupils who refuse to engage. The centre is beginning to better marshal the data it holds on attendance and recognises the need to do this in a consistent way across the three sites. Pupils learn how to live healthy lives but despite the centre's best efforts their application of this knowledge is less strong. A hindrance is the lack of outside facilities at one of the Key Stage 3 sites and this restricts opportunities for pupils to get fresh air and use up physical energy. The centre has entered discussions about this with the local authority. Pupils know right from wrong and generally get on well together. They have shown they can reflect insightfully on the circumstances of others. They have some appreciation of other cultures but this aspect of their development is less refined.

The quality of teaching is generally good but a tranche remains satisfactory. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used consistently well and the best lessons use practical activities to engage pupils' interest. Assessment at a whole-centre level has improved but insufficient precision in planning for individuals leads to missed opportunities to provide the right levels of challenge. Marking tends to be supportive but too few subject specific pointers for improvement are given. The flexibility of the curriculum and a judicious balance of literacy, numeracy and ICT as well as personal and social skill development are good. Excellent use is made of the

centre's many partners to enhance the curriculum and meet the social and emotional needs of pupils.

Senior staff evaluate the effectiveness of the centre effectively, aided by a helpful monitoring calendar. Information from lesson observations and pupils' progress is gathered and examined but it is not yet in a format that enables it to be scrutinised as fully as possible and to set precise targets related to these areas in the centre's development plan. Recent enhancements to the management committee have established its good work in suitably holding the centre to account. The centre has made solid inroads into the areas for improvement from its last inspection particularly around the tracking of individual pupil's performance. It has a good capacity to improve further.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the rate of attendance by building on the embryonic systems for collecting and analysing data at a whole-centre level so that actions and resources can be well targeted and their impact measured.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by:
  - including specific targets for individual pupils in teachers' lesson planning in order to better match work to their needs
  - improving the quality of marking by including guidance on the next steps the pupils should take to improve their work further.
- Use data being gathered on the progress pupils are making along with data about the quality of teaching and learning from lesson monitoring to:
  - check on how well these areas are improving
  - inform the management committee
  - help set targets in the centre's development plan.

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

<b>2</b>
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In lessons, most pupils readily comply with teacher's requests and demonstrate resilience and focus on completing the tasks set for them. They are interested and can see why they need to knuckle down and are keen to do extremely well; they respond well to staff and enjoy the opportunities they are given. Occasionally, a pupil will become frustrated and off-task. However, other pupils tend to get on with their work and are not unduly disturbed. It is creditable that there has been an increase over the past three years in the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE and other external qualifications. There is a high percentage of pupils who move to further education, training or employment at the end of Key Stage 4. There have been few fixed-term exclusions and incidents of physical intervention and no instances of bullying or racism over the last year. Pupils respect the fabric of the centre and most often comply with the rules. However, there are few incidents of pupils swearing with this sometimes not being checked quickly enough by staff. Pupils make a good contribution to the centre and community with much charitable fund-raising and efforts to improve the environment. On the other hand, there are few formal ways for pupils to take on responsibility and express their views, for example, through a centre forum. The vocational opportunities given to pupils at Key Stage 4 serve them

well in preparing for life after school. In these placements pupils use their oracy and functional literacy and numeracy skills well, and apply them effectively. Pupils and their parents and carers say they are prepared well for the future. However, their development of workplace skills is judged satisfactory rather than good because of the drawbacks presented by the low rate of attendance.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, there was good quality teaching. The grouping of pupils according to their attitudes and needs leads to generally orderly classrooms. Teachers use ICT well to enhance learning through the use of visual cues, pupils undertaking research and for presentation purposes. The use of worksheets tends to be greeted with less enthusiasm by pupils. In the most productive lessons, teachers make their expectations very clear and move along at a brisk pace with a variety of activities to sustain pupils' interest. Questioning is most often used effectively but on occasion is not sufficiently directed toward individuals to sustain their focus or tease out their understanding.

External support has been usefully engaged to help staff review the curriculum. This has resulted in schemes of work at Key Stage 3 that can be effectively delivered by non-specialists and takes account of restrictions of the accommodation. Themed weeks such as 'My Money' and 'Roots and Shoots' add interest to pupils' learning and generate enthusiasm. The use of nine accredited alternative providers at Key Stage 4 enhances what the centre can provide, leading to a close tailoring of the curriculum to individual's strengths and needs. The very low rate of attendance for a few, means that in part the curriculum is still to provide sufficient interest to entice these pupils to attend regularly.

Transition into and out of the centre is carefully planned and leads to pupils being well prepared. The environment, despite some restrictions, is welcoming and highly

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<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

structured yet nurturing. Pupils spoken with and who responded to the questionnaire are very positive about the support provided. Typically, one reports, 'staff don't have a go at you or talk down to you'. Regular communication with parents and carers helps afford consistency of approach. There are good examples of highly effective one-to-one support for vulnerable pupils.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior staff and their line managers in the local authority know the centre well and a supportive yet challenging working atmosphere prevails. An atmosphere of team work among staff has been engendered. Staff members who returned the Ofsted questionnaire provided an almost unanimously positive response to all of the questions. One wrote, 'A great team to work with.' Clearly, staff feel valued and are aligned to the purpose and aims of the centre's work. Consultants from the local authority have been used well to help improve the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. Staff have been effective in creating a cohesive community and this valuably contributes to pupils' good moral and social awareness. Mainly because of the short time they are at the centre their appreciation of religion and ethnicity further afield is less strong.

Liaison with parents and carers is good and they are kept informed and good efforts are made to support them in helping their own children. A range of agencies work splendidly hand-in-hand with the centre staff to meet pupils' needs, not least mainstream schools and alternative vocational providers. This productive liaison helps to make the whole package of support pupils receive appear seamless. Pupils rightly feel safe as a result of the good arrangements to ensure their health, safety and security. The staff pay due regard to individuals and their analyses of information ensure a watchful eye is kept on any untoward differences experienced by individuals or groups of pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is tackled whenever it might occur.

The management committee has been bolstered by recent additions. The relevant educational and business backgrounds of some of the members have put the committee in a good position to probe the information it receives and to provide a strategic steer.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Just under 10% of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire. This small number gave an overwhelmingly positive view of the centre. The one parent or carer who disagreed with a small number of the statements in the questionnaire was at pains to point out that they felt the centre is doing a sterling job and the problems experienced were down to their own child. The centre's own exit questionnaires paint an equally positive picture from the parents and carers who responded.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Launchpad 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 five completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	40	2	40	1	20	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	80	0	0	1	20	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	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)	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	80	0	0	1	20	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 is 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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Launchpad Centre, St Helens, WA10 2EW**

Thank you for your warm welcome and the time you gave to chat with the inspectors when we inspected Launchpad this week. We value your views.

We have judged the centre to be providing you with a good education overall. Lots of the things we saw were good; teaching and learning, the curriculum; the care, guidance and support staff give you and the leadership and management of the centre. All this good work means that most of you achieve well, and for some of you your learning and progress is outstanding. This is shown by many of you at Key Stage 3 moving back full time to secondary schools and those at Key Stage 4 having alternative placements and then good experiences once you leave school. I say 'most' of you because there are some whose attendance is very poor and because of this they are not learning and achieving very well at all. Although you are taught how to live healthy lives I am sad that some of you don't put this knowledge into practice enough. It was pleasing to hear about the contributions you have made to various charities and other good causes – keep up the good work. We judged as excellent the way in which the centre works in partnership with other people, such as staff from secondary schools, the nine providers you use and other professionals. We feel this makes a really strong contribution to your development and the opportunities you have.

There are a few things we think need some attention in order for the centre to become better still and we have asked staff to tackle these as a priority. They are:

- use data better to help increase the rate of attendance
- improve the quality of teaching and learning further by having specific targets for you in teachers' planning and by giving you more helpful information in marking
- use the data the centre has about your progress and about the quality of teaching to check on how things are improving, to inform the management committee and to help set improvement targets for the centre.

Please help by turning up every day.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Craven  
Lead Inspector

