

Children's Support Centre, Heybridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132205
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	381455
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Cate Hollett
Headteacher	Philomena Cozens
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 10 lessons taught by 10 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, staff and representatives of the management committee and local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including: safeguarding policies, procedures and records; records of students' progress; curriculum planning; plans for and records of students' learning and development, and documents relating to management, care and support. Eight inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, along with others returned by staff and students.

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

- The rate of re-integration back into mainstream school.
- The effectiveness of assessment for learning in lessons.
- The provision for students with statements of special educational needs.
- The progress of the school, particularly whether the rapid rate of improvement noted in the monitoring visit of May 2011 has been maintained.

Information about the school

This pupil referral unit serves one of the four divisions within the county of Essex. It has recently been reorganised to take over full responsibility for what was previously the Braintree behaviour support service. Staff teach in a range of other locations, including a hospital and local schools. The majority of students attending the Heybridge Centre have been, or are at risk of being, permanently excluded from mainstream school. Other groups of students are also supported, such as those who refuse to attend school and those with anxiety or medical needs. Most students at the Heybridge Centre are boys and the vast majority are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs has quadrupled in the past year and these students form around one third of the Centre's roll. The school was led by an interim head teacher during the last academic year and a substantive headteacher took up post at the beginning of September 2011. The Centre was given a notice to improve in its previous inspection and received a progress monitoring visit in May 2011.

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

Heybridge Children's Support Centre is a good school. It has improved significantly in the year since its previous inspection when it was given a notice to improve. The notice was with particular reference to safeguarding procedures, the work of the management committee, students' attendance and the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Outstanding progress towards addressing these weaknesses was noted at the monitoring visit. Almost all aspects of leadership and management, provision and students' outcomes are now good and a few are outstanding. Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The improvement has been brought about by the concerted effort of the interim headteacher and senior managers, together with the now outstanding work of the management committee. It has been supported fully by the staff, who are committed to providing the best for the students. Robust self-evaluation this term, under the leadership of the new headteacher, has led to a refreshed view of the school's strengths and areas for development. A number of innovations have already been instigated. They include a wider range of off-site provision available to pupils in Key Stage 4, stronger arrangements for the students' voice to be heard and strengthened tutor times to allow for academic and behavioural mentoring. Several other systems designed to improve students' outcomes and the provision have been developed, but these have not all yet been implemented fully.

The management committee provides outstanding support. For example, it has commissioned advisers and advanced skills teachers to support teachers' subject expertise and teaching, and members have provided training. It has also been involved in devising the new procedures to assess and track students' attainment and progress. That has led to a much clearer view of what individuals need to learn in order to make progress. Teachers feed the information back to students continually, so that the students know what they are striving for. As a result, teaching, learning and students' outcomes are now good. The progress tracking system shows clearly the rapid rate of progress made by most individuals. However, the information is not analysed to provide a picture of different groups' progress, such as those with anxiety, or a comparison of progress in different subjects. It is, therefore, not used well enough to inform management decisions. The improved quality of teaching and assessment of learning in subjects means that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress now to their peers. That is a

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considerable improvement. However, the small-step targets set on the students' individual education plans are often not clear enough to determine whether or not they have been achieved, so that further support can be provided. Examples include 'to build independency' and 'to improve phonological awareness', both of which are too open-ended and not helpful in promoting further progress. In addition, sometimes, insufficient opportunity is given in lessons for students to work towards targets, such as 'to speak in full sentences'.

The weaknesses in safeguarding identified in the previous inspection were rectified quickly and procedures are now good. All students, parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires agree that students feel safe in school. That aspect is now outstanding. Students' low attendance was also tackled robustly. It is now promoted strongly and individuals' attendance is tracked closely and supported. Attendance has improved significantly as a result, although it is still low in comparison to the national average for secondary schools. However, the Centre does not yet formally use an analysis of students' progress in relation to attendance to improve attendance and progress further.

The students enjoy their time at the Heybridge Centre. They benefit from the good curriculum, care, support and guidance, all of which are enhanced by the Centre's outstanding partnerships. Taking into account the Centre's rapid progress in the past year, the newness of the senior leadership team and arrangements to manage the outreach service, together with the strength of the management committee, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve progress and attendance further, use performance data to:
 - track the progress of different groups of students
 - track students' progress in different subjects
 - correlate progress with attendance in order to improve both.
- Improve the precision of the targets written in students' individual education plans so that:
 - students and staff can be clear whether they have been achieved
 - progress towards them can be tracked more easily and further interventions arranged, if necessary
 - staff can include more opportunities for students to work towards the targets in lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' outcomes are good. Most students' academic progress has been adversely affected by difficulties in their mainstream schools, including poor behaviour and low attendance. Consequently, their attainment on admission ranges widely, but it is

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broadly average overall. The great majority enjoy attending the Centre and achieve well. Progress tracking data show that students of all ages make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. That allows the majority to return to mainstream school and maintain their place. Progress information shows also that many individuals make outstanding progress, for example in English at Key Stage 3, in mathematics in Year 10 and in English, mathematics and science in Year 11. Students in Years 10 and 11 study for GCSEs and results show an improving trend.

The students’ personal development is good. Their behaviour is good and often exemplary in class. Generally, students show respect for staff, each other and the environment. Some students are highly reflective and recognise how the Centre helps their personal development and self-esteem. One student wrote, for example, ‘I’m so grateful they have given me a future.’ The Centre has a peaceful, productive atmosphere and students therefore learn well in lessons. They are usually interested in their tasks, contribute to lessons and discussions very well and are pleased and proud of their work and rewards. On occasion, the students’ application and learning are exceptional. That was seen in an art lesson on mono-print making. As the teacher explained and demonstrated how to roll out ink, the students leaned further and further forward on their stools with interest. Then, they followed the instructions precisely, remembering the appropriate hand movements so that they were completely successful in their task. Students have trusting relationships with school staff and welcome support when they are troubled. They have an excellent understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation, such as one they might encounter on the internet. There are very few incidents of bullying or harassment and challenging behaviour is infrequent and dealt with calmly. In all, students are well prepared for their future education and well-being.

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	3
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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	4

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is now good and reflects the amount of support and training that has taken place over the past year. Some teaching is outstanding. These are some of the notable features of the most effective lessons:

- outstanding subject knowledge, which enables teachers to present, demonstrate and re-explain aspects in several ways to assure students' understanding
- outstanding use of subject-specific vocabulary, which is helpfully displayed on the walls of each classroom
- continual feedback to students on what level their answers and work are at and what they can do to raise their standards further
- interesting and varied content and tasks that engage students and meet their learning needs.

Occasional features of less effective teaching include the lack of opportunity for students to work towards the targets on their individual education plans, unclear questioning, so that students do not actually understand what is being asked of them, and too slow a response to inappropriate behaviour.

Assessment to support learning is good. The small groups of students enable staff to keep a constant watch on students' understanding and learning and to adjust lessons accordingly. Marking is helpful and tells students how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and relevant to students' needs. The Centre makes good use of its community partnerships to provide additional curricular activities. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education, all of which tend to be areas of difficulty which prevent students from thriving in mainstream schools. Students' academic and personal development are tracked closely. The core subjects are complemented by others such as art, horticulture, food technology, and sport, which give the students variety and help them engage in and enjoy school. Students in Key Stage 4 have a good programme of appropriate work-related learning and college courses. Students' work, including that of those in Key Stage 3, is accredited as far as possible, which raises their self-esteem and encourages them to do more.

Care, support and guidance are good. The Centre has outstanding partnerships with other professionals and agencies, which enhance this aspect of its work. Clearly targeted support is provided for all individuals whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. The home-school liaison worker supports individual students and families in need, for example, by linking them with appropriate external agencies and accompanying them on visits to professionals or court. After-school 'twilight' lessons are provided for students who, for whatever reason, have not been able to attend school or require further 'catch-up' time. Arrangements to return students to mainstream schools are robust and Centre staff support them for a while once they

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have returned. Most students manage to maintain their place. Good arrangements are made for students at Key Stage 4 to prepare them for education, employment or training after they are 16. Development of all aspects of the provision is continuous. For example, students’ language and communication skills have recently been supported by a new specialist teacher who works with individuals and provides advice to staff to help improve students’ speaking, listening and progress.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new senior leadership team forms an effective partnership that is working hard to improve and develop the school and its role in the community. Priorities so far this term have been the appointment of new, skilled staff, to bring the education and administrative staff up to number, and unifying the staff team following the reorganisation of the pupil referral unit and behaviour support service into one entity. Self-evaluation has led to the identification of developments to improve the provision and students’ outcomes further and some of these have already been implemented. Discussion with staff and the inspection questionnaire returns indicate that most are very happy with the direction the Centre is taking and their part in its improvement.

The support and advice given by the management committee and advisory services in the local authority are highly effective. Full use is made of management committee members’ skills and contacts to tackle identified weaknesses and improve the school. Members have taken the initiative on the Centre’s behalf and the work of the committee is now outstanding. All statutory duties are met. The committee holds the Centre closely to account for students’ performance by evaluating the impact of its work on their outcomes and providing constructive challenge and support. Safeguarding procedures are now good. All the required policies and practices are in place and evaluated regularly. The Centre goes beyond requirements, for example, by supporting families who may be experiencing difficulties. The Centre is working to improve its contribution to community cohesion. The work it does within the locality is excellent and highly regarded, but the promotion of community cohesion in a wider context is under-developed.

Information from the new attainment and progress and personal development tracking systems is used effectively to check on students’ progress and inform interventions if necessary. That ensures that all have equal opportunities for their learning and well-being needs to be addressed. However, it is not used well enough

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to underpin planning for wider-scale improvements to the provision or, for example, to correlate progress with attendance accurately. The Centre has good systems to deal with the rare incidents of bullying and racism and its engagement with parents and carers is sensitive and appreciated by them. The Centre fulfils its prime objectives successfully of 're-engaging young people with learning' and 'working in partnership with schools in a proactive and preventative manner with respect to all aspects of behaviour and attendance'.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Eight inspection questionnaires were returned by parents and carers, which is a lower-than-usual proportion. They show complete satisfaction with all aspects of the Centre's work. One respondent summed it up as follows: 'I cannot praise the staff enough, to see the difference they have made to my son. Whatever the future brings, I know that he has been given tremendous support and now feels more confident in himself. We will always remember how the Centre staff have helped him.' Inspection findings confirm parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at the Childrens Support Centre, Heybridge 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 eight completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 53 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	75	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	50	2	25	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)	6	75	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	63	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	75	1	13	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	6	75	1	13	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.



21 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of the Children's Support Centre, Heybridge, Maldon, CM9 4NN

Thank you very much for your welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, sitting in on your lessons and seeing how well you are all doing. We are delighted to tell you that the Heybridge Centre has improved significantly in the past year and is now a good school. These are some of its most notable strengths:

- the rapid rate of improvement since the previous inspection, due to the commitment of the senior leaders and staff
- the way in which the school safeguards you and helps you feel safe at school
- the work of the management committee, which has provided a great deal of help to improve the school
- the partnerships the school has with other schools, colleges, work places and professionals to support the curriculum and your learning and well-being
- your behaviour and personal development
- the teaching, curriculum and the care, guidance and support given to you
- the way that the school supports you, your parents and carers when needed
- the good rate of students' return to mainstream school, as a result of the Centre's successful provision and your hard work and good outcomes.

We have asked the school to do three things to become even better.

- Improve the analysis of your progress data to help you learn even better.
- Improve the way that targets are written on your individual education plans, so that you can tell more easily when they have been achieved and more help can be given if necessary.
- Improve your attendance by showing you how closely it is linked to your progress and opportunities for your future well-being.

You can help by coming to school regularly and continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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