

Link Education Centre (Mendip)

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique reference number | 134694 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 381716 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 May 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Charles Hackett |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Pupil referral unit |
| School category | Pupil referral unit |
| Age range of pupils | 5–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 29 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Head of centre | Gary Nancekievill |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 December 2011 |
| School address | St Dunstan's School Wells Road Glastonbury BA6 9BY |
| Telephone number | 01458 832425 |
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|---------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

Inspection team

Charles Hackett

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector visited seven lessons, observing five of the service's part-time teachers. Meetings were held with staff, the chair of the management committee and an officer of the local authority. Discussions were held with students about their work and their views of the school. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at students' work and information on their progress; safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires completed by three parents and carers, four staff and five students were scrutinised.

Information about the school

The Link Education Centre (Mendip) is a smaller than average pupil referral unit. The centre caters mainly for students who have short-term or long-term medical needs, some of whom have mental health issues. It also supports a few girls of school age who are pregnant or who have just become mothers. It is based in one classroom on the campus of a comprehensive school. Almost all students admitted are in Key Stage 4. Just under half of the students attend the centre for lessons, while others are educated at home or in other places such as local libraries. A few students are able to use a room about 20 miles away in Frome as a satellite centre for one day each week. A very few students with statements of special educational needs are admitted. The centre is led by a head of centre rather than a headteacher and all staff are part time. The management committee oversees the work of three pupil referral units.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key findings

- The Link Education Centre is satisfactory. It successfully re-engages students back into education after periods of illness and anxiety. It is not better than satisfactory because of weaknesses in teaching, and in the management of the performance of its staff team. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The most significant achievement students make is in starting to engage in learning again. Often, from not accessing education, they progress to attending the centre regularly. Many move on to make good progress in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT), and transfer successfully to further education. The extremely small number of students admitted with statements of special educational needs do not always achieve sufficiently well because the centre is not able to meet fully the resource requirements of their statements.
- Teaching is effective in rekindling the students' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to develop students' interests and skills. However, teaching is satisfactory overall because, while staff know students well, procedures to monitor their progress are not fully effective. Target setting and marking are not always helpful in assessing how well students have achieved and helping them know what they need to do to improve.
- Students' behaviour in the centre is good. Students are typically courteous and show respect towards each other and staff. This positive response helps create the effective learning environment that exists within the centre's classroom. Almost all make excellent improvements to their attendance.
- The head of centre has ensured, often through well-planned professional development activities, that the quality of teaching continues to meet its aims of re-engaging students in learning, achieving some examination success and being able to continue into further education. However, the monitoring and management of staff performance, while satisfactory, lacks rigour to ensure that all, including the home tutors, are performing with full effectiveness.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- For the start of the next academic year, develop more robust systems for the monitoring and tracking of the performance of all staff, including home tutors, to ensure that their work is having a maximum impact on the outcomes of students.
- During the next academic year, ensure that teaching is fully effective in supporting students to reach their maximum potential by:
 - establishing a more rigorous system of tracking students' progress from their different starting points to enable staff to know that students are closing the gaps, in their attainment, to nationally expected levels
 - setting students improvement targets that progressively build their skills and increase their achievements
 - establishing a consistent marking system that shows assessments of the quality of students' work and gives indication to them of what the next steps in learning should be.
- As soon as possible, make alternative educational provision for the very small number of students with statements of special educational needs admitted to the centre if the centre cannot meet their resource requirements.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Prior to joining the centre, many students have average or even above average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. However, for most, following lengthy periods out of secondary school, their attainment has dropped behind that of their peers and, by the time they join the centre, their attainment levels are below average. While at the centre, almost all students are able to make sufficient progress to narrow the gap with national expectations. Many leave the centre achieving average and, in some cases, above average, attainment levels in English, mathematics, and ICT. All make good progress in developing their literacy skills through the increased opportunities provided by the centre.

In lessons, students often work hard and respond positively to the encouragement of teachers and teaching assistants. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students enthusiastically extended their understanding of quadratic equations, with one student showing she had mastered the skill of factorising algebraic expressions during the session. Similarly, a student was able to recall in detail the characteristics of different Indian tribes he had recently researched. A small group of students in a religious education lesson showed they had developed a good understanding of different religious beliefs and of their impact on different cultures.

Students taught in their homes, or in small groups at the satellite centre, often

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achieve success in GCSEs in a small number of subjects. Many are able to increase their confidence to such an extent that they are able to come into the centre and experience education alongside others. This, in turn, increases their ability to successfully access further education placements, which for a few have included university. Parents and carers are rightly pleased with the progress their children make in re-engaging in learning. However, the centre is not in a secure position to know how well its students are achieving. The weaknesses in the processes to track progress means the centre does not know if all students are achieving their maximum potential. Very few students are admitted with statements of special educational needs but, when this does occur, they do not achieve as well as they should because they are not provided with the provision detailed within their statements.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is effective in encouraging students to engage in learning after, what, for most of them, have been lengthy periods out of education. Parents and carers fully acknowledge this and feel teaching is good. Inspection evidence shows teaching to be satisfactory rather than good because of a number of weaker aspects. Teachers and support staff show that they understand the emotional and medical needs of students well and make appropriate adaptations to accommodate the needs of the great majority of students. For example, students with obsessive conduct disorders are often encouraged to focus on their special interests alongside being able to extend their skills in other aspects. This was observed in an ICT lesson where students were making high quality presentations, many achieving the criteria for a distinction grade, based on their special interests. The overall aim of those home tutors who work with individual students is to successfully support them to become confident enough to leave their home and work with others in the centre. Case studies of present and former students show that many have been remarkably successful in doing this and then moving on to further education.

Teachers often work individually with students but there are some lessons in the centre where small groups of students work together. Where teaching is good, such as in ICT lessons, there is a structure to the lesson that shows what the aim of the lesson is and what progress students will make through completing the tasks set. This structure to learning is not always apparent in other lessons and this affects teachers' ability to be able to demonstrate the rates of progress that students are making. Teachers do not always take sufficient account of what students have learnt in prior lessons and improvement targets set lack sufficient precision to be useful in demonstrating students' progress. There is insufficient recording of students' achievements and written marking of students' completed work is inconsistent.

The quality of teaching of the very few pupils admitted with statements of special educational needs is of a similar standard to that for other students but, because the curriculum offered does not match that expected, its overall effectiveness is unsatisfactory. Effective support is provided within the curriculum to develop students' literacy skills, especially in increasing their understanding of key words for

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specific subjects. Students are encouraged to read a good range of fiction and non-fiction books to develop their interests. This approach helps promote their literacy skills, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are typically good. Parents, students and carers are also confident that behaviour and safety are good. Students are well behaved and hard working during their time in the centre. Each morning when they arrive they clearly enjoy the opportunity to mix socially with each other, engaging in card games and chatting. This gives them increased confidence and successfully promotes their social development. In lessons, their behaviour is such that, despite up to three different learning activities happening at the same time within the one classroom, everyone is able to focus on their learning rather than being distracted by any form of disruptive behaviour.

Behavioural records show that disruptive incidents seldom occur. There are some occasions when a few students show some reluctance to start their work but the non-confrontational approach taken by staff very effectively results in students quickly settling and starting their work. No incidents of bullying of any type have been recorded in recent years. Students, themselves, say that bullying is not an issue at the centre and that they always feel very safe when there. Their increased confidence allows them to enjoy the weekly enrichment activities off-site. These opportunities have widened their interests and experiences, and helped promote their cultural development well.

Attendance at their previous schools was, for most students, a serious issue. Once admitted to the centre, the attendance of almost all students improves significantly, with some current students demonstrating 100% attendance over the past year.

Leadership and management

This centre has maintained the positive features of its work highlighted in its previous inspection report. This includes the effective approach adopted by staff towards each student and their individual needs. The head of centre leads this by example, making initial home visits to help prepare students for joining the centre. Students, who are often in very fragile situations, are prepared well to re-engage in learning. Essential systems are embedded sufficiently well to enable the centre to maintain its effectiveness and provide a satisfactory quality of education, promoting equality of opportunity for students satisfactorily. Teachers are supported by good professional development opportunities and keep up to date with new educational initiatives. The curriculum is satisfactory. It supports students' literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, gives many students the chance to achieve examination success and prepares them well for moving on to further education courses. There are restrictions, though, on practical activities

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because of the limitations of the accommodation. The availability of just one classroom results in staff in the centre working very closely together. This means that on a regular basis the head of centre is constantly aware of the work of his part-time staff team and can ensure consistency in their approach. However, formal systems for the management and monitoring of their performance, including that of the teachers who work with students off-site, are limited. Procedures lack sufficient rigour to be fully useful in developing and promoting the performance of staff even further. Together with the lack of effective systems to track the progress of students, this restricts the impact of leadership and management on the centre's effectiveness so that it is no better than satisfactory. The centre, though, does have a good understanding of its effectiveness in re-engaging students in learning and has used this well to produce a clear school improvement action plan. This shows that the capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory.

Reports and the minutes of meetings show that the management committee has become more effective recently in its monitoring of the work of the centre. Head of centre reports now have more detail on the performance of students. The regular visits of the enthusiastic chair are also helping the committee monitor the everyday work of the centre. The inclusion of regular health and safety reports to the committee further adds to the school's arrangements for safeguarding, which fully meet statutory requirements and ensure that there are no causes for concern.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Floor standards | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



12 May 2012

Dear Students,

Inspection of Link Education Centre (Mendip), Glastonbury BA6 9BY

Thank you for being so helpful when I came to visit your centre. I can see you enjoy being at the centre. The success so many of you have in being able to settle back into learning and achieve examination success is good to see. I have judged the centre to be satisfactory. I can see that those of you who come into the centre usually work hard in lessons, and that your behaviour and the respect you show towards each other and the staff are good. I consider both your achievements and the quality of teaching to be satisfactory. The accommodation restricts practical activities but staff make the best of it and the curriculum is satisfactory. The staff clearly know you well but I consider they do not do enough to track your achievements to fully recognise the progress you are making. Students admitted with statements of special educational needs are not well supported because the centre does not always have the resources to meet their specific requirements.

The head of centre leads by example in making you welcome in the centre and ensuring that all staff are consistent in how they help you. However, the systems to manage the performance of staff, including tutors who support those of you educated at home, are not sufficiently rigorous enough to ensure that all of you are achieving your maximum potential. Therefore, to be even better, I have suggested the following to the centre:

- ensure that all teachers improve how they track your progress, set targets for you and mark your work
- ensure that those students admitted with statements of special educational needs are provided with all the requirements of their statements
- develop more rigorous systems to manage the performance of all staff.

I hope that you continue to work hard in your studies and that you are all successful when it comes to taking examinations.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett
Lead inspector

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