

# New Leaf Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	134523
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	381688
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Frank Price

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>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sharon Tott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	January 2009
<b>School address</b>	EDC Pelsall Lane Rushall Walsall WS4 1NG
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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	15–16 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	3381688



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Price

Additional inspector

Debby McCarthy

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Nearly six hours were spent observing 11 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Many aspects of the alternative provision used by the centre were also visited. Discussions took place with a range of students, members of staff and the Chair of the Management Committee and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the centre's work, and looked at its self-evaluation documentation and improvement plans. Inspectors also took account of four parental questionnaires, as well as questionnaires completed by staff and students.

## Information about the school

The New Leaf Centre is an average-sized pupil referral unit for students with significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who have been permanently excluded from school, or have been previously missing from education, and those at risk of exclusion. Students can join the centre at any time. The centre formed from a merger of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 provision in January 2010. The headteacher took up her post in June 2011, following a period of instability. Seventy two per cent of students are designated as having special educational needs, although none has a statement of special educational needs. The centre uses alternative off-site provision extensively and there are three satellite centres based at local secondary schools, which act as a springboard for the reintegration of students into mainstream education. The majority of students are White British. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. A small number of students 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- The New Leaf Centre is a good pupil referral unit. Following a period of considerable change and instability of leadership, it has made rapid improvements over a short period of time. It is not yet outstanding because, for some students, attendance is too low and this limits the progress they make, and the level of challenge for the most able students is not ambitious enough.
- Most students make good progress because the centre is successful in re-engaging disaffected students in education. As a result of an effective induction programme, students get off to a good start and the centre makes good use of a wide range of alternative placements. Strategies to develop key skills ensure that students achieve well in literacy and numeracy.
- Students' behaviour is generally good and their attitudes to learning improve markedly. Many students make vast improvements in their attendance, but there are a few students whose attendance is too low. Students report that they feel safe and enjoy their time at the centre.
- Teaching is good. Relationships between staff and students are supportive and positive and this does much to get the best out of students and inspire them to be motivated. However, not enough teaching is outstanding and on occasions, teaching is not challenging enough to enable more-able students to achieve at higher levels.
- Systems to monitor and improve the performance of teaching are robust and have been crucial to the rapid improvements of the centre. The headteacher has tackled obstacles to improvements unflinchingly and has transformed the ethos, teamwork and morale of staff, so that the centre is a calm, positive and purposeful establishment in which staff are keen to improve further.

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

- Raise students' achievement by:
  - increasing the amount of outstanding teaching, by ensuring that the challenge in all lessons fully meets the needs of more-able pupils
  - using more ambitious target-setting to ensure that more students achieve higher-level qualifications both in the on-site and off-site provision
  - improving students' attendance by 20% so that it is closer to the national average, by July 2013.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students have varied educational backgrounds and many have well below average levels of attainment on entry. Although attainment remains below average overall it is typically closer to average by the time they leave the centre. Gaps in learning are quickly identified on entry and effective interventions put in place; consequently students make good progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress and the centre is vigilant in identifying and addressing their needs very effectively. For example, students with dyslexia use coloured overlays and special glasses to help them to decipher print; consequently they made good progress in developing their confidence in reading and writing. The poor attendance of a few students impacts negatively on their learning and prevents them from making the progress they are capable of. Currently, not enough higher-attaining students achieve higher-level qualifications, as target setting and some teaching are not ambitious enough.

Students thrive in the highly positive and supportive environment both on-site and off-site. Most are keen to engage and develop their self-esteem well. For example, in food technology, students were confident in making a chicken curry and using a range of spices. In a mathematics lesson, students gained a good understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes and, in an off-site vocational setting, one student talked with pride about how he could change filters, tyres and oil on a car and had gained accredited awards.

Students receive an appropriate balance of vocational and academic courses at training providers, colleges or schools and, consequently, their good progress is typically across a broad range of subject areas. This includes good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills, which the centre promotes vigorously. Students display confidence in tackling unfamiliar words and consequently reading skills develop well. Catch-up sessions have helped to improve their achievement; for example, four students have been able to gain GCSE grades within five months. The

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satellite centres provide an effective halfway house between the centre and schools and enable students to transfer quickly back to secondary schools. A measure of the effectiveness of the centre's work has been the reduction in the number of students who are not in education, employment or training after leaving the centre. Students' good achievement is acknowledged by the small number of parents and carers who completed the parent questionnaire.

## Quality of teaching

Teaching is good and there are many strengths. Teaching is effective in delivering a broad curriculum which includes a strong focus on developing functional skills in literacy and numeracy and helps to equip students with both academic and vocational qualifications. All students receive targeted help with their literacy and numeracy and this extends to those attending off-site provision. The positive relationships between staff and students help students to get back on track. Highly individualised lesson planning is mostly effective in promoting students' learning. However, on occasions the level of challenge and pace for the most-able students is not ambitious enough and this restricts their rate of progress. Staff know students well and quickly recognise when students are experiencing difficulties. They are skilled at de-escalating challenging behaviour, although this can mean that time is spent focusing on the personal needs of the student so that sometimes the pace of learning slows.

Teaching is informed well by the initial induction assessments, which identify students' current level of functioning, social and emotional difficulties, and set out targets for improvements. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is effective because staff build up an accurate picture of individual needs and provide appropriate support. Students are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive and say that they are given very good individual support. Teachers often give students good feedback in lessons and there are examples of high-quality marking, which sets out two points for encouragement and a clear development point. In this way, the student knows clearly how to further improve their work. Teaching is effective in delivering a broad curriculum which includes a strong focus on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are encouraged to try new experiences in lessons and through the enrichment programme, which provides opportunities for students to work with the local police on projects such as repairing stolen bicycles and gardening. At the end of each day, time is taken for students to reflect on what has gone well during the day and what could be improved.

Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is delivered enthusiastically. In an art lesson, students enjoyed making Greek Olympic artefacts in readiness for an event and were able to explain the techniques they had used to create certain effects. Literacy skills are taught effectively as students are able to follow up their interests. One student for example, researched the materials needed to repair a scooter and read his presentation to the headteacher and lead inspector with pride and confidence. Parents and carers recognise that their children are well taught and

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make good progress.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is good and they respond well to the high expectations of good behaviour and ethos of respect and tolerance which characterises the centre's work. Behaviour and attitudes have improved dramatically over the last 12 months and staff and students remark on the positive change. This view is also endorsed by parents and carers. Behaviour incidents are recorded and analysed to establish 'hotspots' and solutions found to address issues. Data show a reduction in exclusions and physical interventions, and positive behaviour is on an upward trend, with staff and student relationships being key to this continued improvement. Exclusions tend to be higher in the off-site provision but are reducing. The day gets off to a good start through the 'ready to learn' session which incorporates breakfast.

Many students have a history of poor attendance at their previous school, and most make vast improvements in their attendance at the centre. The centre has worked hard to drive up attendance, for example providing family support and stressing the importance of good attendance, but is fully aware that there is more to do to ensure that the attendance of all students improves. Students said that there is no bullying and that they feel safe, and parents and carers who responded agree. None reported any issues with prejudicial or cyber-bullying, and students acknowledged that if bullying did arise they would have confidence that staff would take effective action. Records indicate that bullying is not common. The promotion of students' social and moral development is good and permeates all aspects of the centre's work. Parents and carers rightly reported that their children feel safe.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides excellent leadership of the centre. The local authority and management committee have provided very effective monitoring of the centre. They identified critical weaknesses in the provision prior to the new headteacher taking up the post. A clear vision to set the centre on a 'journey to good' was implemented. This has been achieved in a short period of time. The monitoring group has continued to scrutinise the centre's effectiveness closely and set out key areas for improvement and held the centre to account well. The headteacher has responded well to the challenge and has transformed the fabric of the building, staff morale and the ethos of the centre. This has resulted in higher expectations of students, and improved teaching, learning and behaviour, which are well established. The centre is well placed to move forward with clear capacity to improve further.

The off-site alternative provision used by the centre is extensive. The headteacher, in conjunction with senior staff, has developed an exemplary quality assurance framework to measure the effectiveness of its alternative provision, which ensures the outcomes for students are closely monitored. Providers who fail to meet the centre's criteria without sufficient improvement are no longer used. The headteacher is aware that there is still variability in the quality of some provision and is working

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effectively to ensure that outcomes for all students are good.

Professional development of staff and regular monitoring of teaching have ensured that teachers are able to improve their practice. The curriculum is based on an appropriate balance of academic and vocational studies and is enriched through themes and projects-based learning. Students' personal development is promoted effectively through the curriculum, which develops skills valued in the workplace, thereby promoting students' self-esteem. Links with mainstream schools, colleges, outside agencies and families are effective in supporting students to move on successfully from the centre. The centre is vigilant in seeking to ensure that any form of inequality or discrimination does not arise and the outcomes for all groups of pupils are carefully analysed to inform planning. The centre acknowledges the need for a renewed focus on those with low attendance and the need to provide greater challenge for more-able pupils. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements; for example the centre has developed excellent procedures to ensure students' safety in the range of alternative provision that it uses.



## 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](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.

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.**



17 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of New Leaf Centre, Walsall WS4 1NG**

I enjoyed my visit to your centre and talking with many of you. Thank you for contributing to the inspection through completing questionnaires and sharing your views with me.

The centre ensures you receive a good education. You make good improvements in your behaviour and attitudes to learning and most of you improve your attendance, although a few of you do not attend frequently enough either at the centre or in some of your off-site placements. I was impressed by how hard you try in lessons. The teaching you receive is good and, as a result, you make good progress with your work and this helps you to be able to return to school or to other providers. You told me you feel safe and enjoy the good variety of lessons and activities which are offered by the centre. The headteacher and staff have worked hard to improve your centre. I have asked those leading your centre to do the following things.

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching you receive, by making sure that teaching fully meets the needs of those of you who learn quickly
- Encourage more of you to achieve higher-level qualifications both in the on-site and off-site provision by giving you more ambitious targets
- Improve the attendance of those of you whose attendance is too low.

You can help to improve your centre by always attending regularly and working hard. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price  
Lead inspector

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