

The Secondary Education Centre

Naylorsfield drive, Liverpool, L27 0YD

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- When students arrive here they have usually been working well below the standards expected of them. Many will have had high levels of absence and shown poor behaviour. Nevertheless, within the few months of their stay here, most successfully join in with education, enjoy lessons and rapidly improve their reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students' good achievements result from the good teaching and other work of adults in caring for them. For some, particularly in reading, progress is outstanding.
- Through good staff support, students quickly learn to trust the adults. Strong relationships are established which lead to rapid improvements in students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- Students' behaviour is good and is often outstanding.
- They say they feel very safe here and this is confirmed by parents and staff.
- Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural developments are outstanding because of the great gains that they make in their personal developments.
- Most make such good progress that they quickly prepare for return to mainstream education or move on to other schools.
- The leadership and management of the Centre at every level are at least good and are rapidly improving teaching and students' achievements. Some leadership, such as in English and mathematics, is outstanding.
- The local authority and the management committee are supportive. They have recently moved the Centre to better premises and provided plenty of resources and funding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not always make the best possible progress because teachers do not always make it clear what they are expected to learn; and teaching assistants are not always shown how to provide them with the best support.
- Some students do not make sufficient improvements to their attendance and a very few never attend at all.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons, one jointly with the Head Teacher. A number of short visits to classrooms were made to look at students' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior team, teachers, other workers, the Chair of the Management Committee and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with students during lessons and in other places in the unit to gain their views and opinions.
- There were insufficient responses available on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the Lead Inspector to be able to access them. The inspection took account of the unit's own surveys of parents' views. Questionnaires from staff were examined as were the views of other local schools with which the unit works.
- The work of the unit was observed and important documents concerning planning, self-evaluation, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the progress of students were looked at.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Secondary Education Centre was previously known as the Pars Service. Since the last inspection it has changed its location twice and is now placed towards the south eastern edge of Liverpool. The most recent move was three months before this inspection took place.
- It now occupies the premises of a previous primary school and has ample space and resources inside and out.
- The unit admits students from all areas of the city and some travel independently for over an hour on public transport to attend.
- The unit provides short-term full-time education for boys and girls who are at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded from their mainstream schools. Almost all are Key Stage 3 students. At the time of the inspection 36 students were registered but this can change daily to a capacity of 56.
- Most stay for a period of around three months and then either return to mainstream schools or move on to special schools following the unit's assessments of their needs.
- All students are considered to have special educational needs during their stay but rarely do any have a statement of special educational needs, and at the time of the inspection there were none.
- The local authority provides funding for each student in excess of that which would otherwise be available under the pupil premium. All students, regardless of entitlement, receive a free school meal.
- The unit is not part of any formal federation or partnership and there is no alternative provision because of the very short period of time that students attend. However, on occasions, informal arrangements are made for staff from the unit to support students in mainstream school. No support was being provided at the time of the inspection.
- Since the last inspection a new Head Teacher and new members of the senior team have been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The local authority must, as a matter of urgency, provide the necessary personnel and resources required by the Centre to work with the hardest to reach students and encourage them to attend more regularly.
- Enable students to make the best possible progress in lessons by requiring teachers to:
 - make it clear what students are expected to learn in lessons by setting small-step targets for them
 - manage the work of teaching assistants so that they always provide appropriate and well-matched support.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Through good teaching and the highly effective behaviour management operated by staff, students quickly gain success in their learning. Their self-esteem grows rapidly as they gain the confidence to take part in lessons. Their progress is good.
- Excellent relationships between the staff and students help trust to build. Students take part in new areas of learning and they rediscover the joy of a good education. Many enjoy reading aloud to others in the group and boys and girls were keen to read to the inspector. They are proud of the progress made in reading in such a short time.
- Their gains in literacy and numeracy help them in all of the subjects studied. For example, they were seen using numbers properly in the kitchen when weighing ingredients and measuring liquids; in a science lesson students worked out the harder words for themselves and used specialist language to identify the parts of the body.
- Their progress in all areas is good and for some, especially those who attend very regularly, their rate of learning is outstanding. Students are encouraged to do well in the more academic lessons of the mornings through having choices about their activities during afternoon sessions. Some stay after school for table tennis and other clubs.
- The rapid improvements of boys and girls in learning, particularly in English and mathematics, helps to ensure that most quickly return to mainstream education or move on to more specialist schools.
- Achievement overall is not outstanding because students are not always told exactly what is expected of them in lessons and what their targets for learning are. This slows their learning and prevents them from knowing exactly how well they are doing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is almost always good or outstanding. The Centre's records indicate that the quality of teaching is rising rapidly. This was also the view of an adviser who knows the work of the Centre well. However, a very small proportion of teaching requires improvement because students do not make sufficient progress in some lessons.
- Since the last inspection leaders have ensured good improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers are keen to get the best from their students and are supportive of the senior team. Morale amongst the staff is high and a common sense of purpose is evident.
- In the best lessons classrooms are exceptionally well organised. For example, an English teacher has set up four separate learning areas in the classroom so that teaching and learning styles can be quickly changed. These 'zones' include a formal teaching and learning area, a more-comfortable place to share information, a quiet corner for reading and individual computer stations. In the outstanding lesson observed here the 'zones' were used to great effect to help students keep up the pace.
- Where lessons are not as effective it is because the work of teaching assistants is not managed properly by teachers. In these lessons students make slower progress in their learning and miss some chances to improve because teaching assistants do either too much or too little to support them.
- In almost all lessons students are expected to be polite and welcoming. Therefore, they get on very well together and with the adults. Students support each other, for example, when they read aloud and in discussing their behaviour. They show high social and moral standards. These very positive attitudes to learning are the key to students' successes. They carry these new successes with them on their return to mainstream so that very few ever fail again. Having made up the ground through the good work of the staff, most leave the Centre and go on to gain recognised qualifications in their new placements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students rapidly gain self-confidence and self-esteem here because they enjoy learning and experience success in lessons. Positive encounters with staff and others encourage them to respect people and the code of conduct. They develop a better understanding about right and wrong. Thus, their spiritual, social, moral and cultural gains are outstanding.
- Many students have previously had very low levels of attendance at school. Following enrolment here the attendance of most improves rapidly and is maintained. Some achieve rates of attendance well above the national expectations for all schools.
- However, for others, the rates of attendance improve too slowly or not at all. A very few students never attend. For these who refuse to attend, the chance to gain success in education is being missed and they are running out of time. The Centre fully understands this and is now negotiating further support from the local authority to tackle the problem.
- Students report that they feel very safe here and that bullying and harassment are unknown. This is largely due to the efforts of the staff in always being present to prevent any situations from developing.
- Students also say that they gain confidence from each other and that this encourages them to attend. One said that she had felt extremely worried before starting at the Centre where she know nobody, but within a few hours the other students had made her feel very welcome and secure.
- The Centre managers seek the views of parents when their children leave and the evidence of these written responses also indicate that students are happy, safe and secure here. Overall, students' behaviour is good and often in lessons it is exemplary. The high standards of behaviour help students to remain at their work and to concentrate. Therefore, good behaviour contributes to students' good progress.
- On the few occasions when behaviour slips it is because the things planned for them in lessons are not very well matched to their personal needs and interests.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good with much that is outstanding. Examples of high quality practice include the management by the Head Teacher of the recent very smooth relocation to the present premises. Generally, the leadership of the headteacher is inspirational.
- The excellent leadership of English and mathematics ensures that students learn to use the basic skills gained in these key areas to help them to read, write and use numbers in other subjects.
- Very effective systems have been put into place to help staff successfully manage any difficult behaviour.
- The headteacher reviews the work of the staff and provides opportunities for them to further develop their skills to the benefit of students. For example, they have all trained to teach reading by examining the sounds that letters make (phonics). This has resulted in staff using a common approach in the teaching of reading. Consequently, students make greater than expected progress in literacy.
- Leaders and managers have set up good systems to find out more about what is happening in the Centre. These include methods to help them gather information from teachers about students' progress. Managers can now see if any are falling behind. Where this has happened managers have quickly acted to support students so that they can catch up again.
- Since the last inspection managers have made good use of plans for development. As a result, teaching has rapidly improved and students now make a great deal more progress. Behaviour and attendance are better for the majority and most students return to mainstream education within months.
- Programmes of work have been completely redesigned with more emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Each student has a personal timetable so all are included in learning and none are left out. During the afternoons students make choices about their lessons. This motivates them

and acts as a reward and sanction system.

- The Centre is greatly valued by the local authority and by the schools with which it works. Many reported strong support for the Centre at the time of the inspection.
- For some students the rates of attendance are improving too slowly. Consequently, the local authority has indicated that it will help managers to work with the hardest to reach families so that every conceivable effort is made to bring these very persistent absentees back into education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local authority and the management committee run the Centre well with much general work delegated to the management committee. Nevertheless, the local authority has been extremely supportive in relocating the Centre to the current premises and in providing good resources. The management committee challenges the local authority on behalf of the Centre. For example, in issues relating to staff redeployment. Now managers have much better control over the appointment of staff and this has had a positive effect on teaching. Members of the management committee scrutinise the work of the Centre, they check that the headteacher undertakes annual performance management and ensure that all legal requirements are met including those for the safeguarding of students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135656
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	402730

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	36
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Head Teacher	Debbie Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	November 2009
Telephone number	0151 2331406
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