

The Rowan Centre

Estate Road, Rawmarsh, Rotherham, S62 7JD

Inspection dates 13–14 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

- The forward-thinking headteacher has brought about significant improvements to all aspects of the unit's work. Furthermore, alongside senior leaders, she has successfully managed the move to new premises with minimum disruption to learning.
- Achievement is good. The skills of most students arriving at the unit are well below those typical of their age because many have a poor record of attendance and a poor attitude to education. Once settled in, this quickly changes and all leave with a range of nationally recognised qualifications, including in English and mathematics. Students achieve especially well in child development, home economics and practical parenting.
- Teachers are confident in the subjects they teach and in working with pregnant schoolgirls and school age mothers. They provide very good opportunities for students to improve their English skills in all subjects.
- Students say becoming a mother has changed their behaviour and attitude to education. They want to succeed to give their child and themselves a better future. They have a good understanding of keeping safe. As mothers, they are fiercely protective of their children and very good at spotting potential hazards.
- The well-thought-out curriculum is carefully matched to each student's individual needs. The teaching of careers education, and for personal, social and health education, is outstanding. It prepares the girls exceptionally well for motherhood, for the next stage of their education, and for life after school.
- Students receive outstanding care and support from the unit staff. The help and advice provided by Barnardos staff is of a high quality.
- Senior leaders have a strong presence around the unit and lead by example. They have made very good progress in tackling weaknesses and in improving teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers miss opportunities for students to reason their answers, to use information and communication technology (ICT), and to develop mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The system used to keep a check on students' progress is relatively new. While it is used well to identify gaps in students' learning, it is not always easy to interpret the progress students make.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in six lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities.
- The inspector looked at the work students are completing for their qualifications.
- Discussions were held with students, members of the management committee, staff, including senior and middle managers, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met some parents and took into account the responses to the school's own survey. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including the school's own data on students' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Katherine Halifax, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The unit offers support and full-time education for pregnant schoolgirls and school-age mothers throughout the Rotherham Borough. The girls attend from the 20th week of their pregnancy. They remain on the roll of their home school.
- The unit is run in partnership with the children's charity Barnardos.
- The unit moved to new premises 18 months ago. The building is also used by a group of Post-16 young mothers. This is managed and run by a local college and was not part of this inspection.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium varies considerably from year to year but is, overall, well above average.
- The unit is funded for up to 15 students; three Year 11 girls were on roll at the time of the visit.
- All students have special educational needs and are at school action plus because of their social and emotional needs.
- For this school year, the headteacher is working four days each week for the local authority. During this time the day-to-day running of the unit is managed by the two deputy headteachers.
- The nursery, which houses the girls' children, was inspected in September 2011 and was judged to be good. The report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The unit has retained Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups to talk about their work and deepen their understanding
 - providing more opportunities for students to practise and improve their mathematical skills in other subjects
 - making better use of information and communication technology (ICT) to aid learning in all subjects.
- Keep a more focused check on students' progress by:
 - refining the system used to track students' progress and check for gaps in their knowledge
 - ensuring the system used records students' smaller steps of progress
 - making arrangements for leaders to formally discuss the results of the checks on students' work with subject teachers each half term, so that the set work helps students to make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

Good

- As the result of the much improved range of qualifications available, and a change of students' attitudes, standards are rising. The majority of students gain more qualifications than predicted by their home school. All leave with nationally recognised awards, (including GCSE) in English and mathematics, as well as a range of other subjects. Though the average stay in the unit is a year, some students attain GCSE levels in as little as three months.
- Students make good progress in lessons because of good teaching and a much improved curriculum. They extend their literacy skills well in other subjects. For example, in science by writing a letter to their local member of parliament raising concerns about the damage humans are unwittingly causing to the environment. In the letter, students used appropriate punctuation and imaginative language.
- While students make good progress overall in mathematics lessons, opportunities are missed to further their understanding by, for example, solving problems and applying their mathematical knowledge in other subjects.
- Though the unit does not receive funding for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, leaders keep a check on the achievements of all students. There is no significant difference in the achievement of these students and any other group. Indeed, in the 2012 examinations, the three highest attaining students were from this group.
- At the time of the last inspection none of the students went on to further education or employment. Now all students continue their studies, some working towards A levels or additional GCSEs, while others embark on courses in, for example, childcare, animal care, beauty therapy or business studies.

The quality of teaching

Good

- The positive relationships and respect between students and staff are instrumental in raising students' confidence and in improving achievement. Teachers make sure that work is pitched at a level to give students success as well as making them think carefully. As a result, students who had judged themselves as 'rubbish' have developed a 'can do' attitude and are rising to the challenge.
- Teachers plan their lessons in detail and make sure students are clear about the knowledge and skills they will acquire in each lesson and the different steps they need to follow to achieve their best. Because students are working at different levels, much of the work is individual. While this encourages pupils to work independently, opportunities are missed for pupils to discuss work and draw on each other's ideas and knowledge.
- Though students mostly work individually, lessons are conducted with a sense of urgency so the pace of learning is good. Skilled support staff are used effectively to check students' understanding, for students to bounce ideas off, and to ensure no time is wasted by students waiting for the teacher to explain the next activity.
- Some teachers are confident using computers and technology to motivate students and to support their learning. For example, one teacher used an interactive whiteboard very successfully to improve students' spelling and awareness of garden hazards to young children. On other occasions, however, opportunities to use the technology to explain teaching points were missed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

- Parents and students report a remarkable change in attitudes and behaviour since attending the unit. Students who admit to previously refusing to do work in their home schools have produced

a good volume of neatly presented work. Despite being uncomfortable in the latter stage of pregnancy, they knuckle down in lessons and are determined to gain qualifications.

- The reason behaviour is not yet outstanding is because, on occasion, students can be grumpy and find concentrating difficult when they have had a sleepless night with their child. Furthermore, while attendance has improved significantly, despite all the efforts of the unit staff, some students still take the odd day off. Leaders recognise that students have unforeseen absences due to problems in pregnancy, and illness in their children. This is carefully watched and followed up with 'catch up' sessions or, in the case of longer absence, work at home.
- During break times, students conscientiously attend to their child's needs, often taking them out for a walk at lunchtime. They say they enjoy this special time and are amazed at their child's development, for example, the first time their baby smiled or grasped their finger. Students report they find the 'bumps and babes' sessions in the nursery really helpful for giving them ideas of how to communicate and play with their child.
- During a tutorial period with a representative from a company that designs and creates outdoor play areas, students were delighted to see how the designer had interpreted their ideas for the outdoor nursery play area. Ever conscious of their child's safety, they thoroughly questioned the inclusion of a water feature, the height of fences and security features.
- Students freely confess, in the past they have taken risks and participated in unsafe practices. However, since attending the unit they say they are 'much wiser and nobody's going to take advantage of me again'. Through work with Barnardos staff and in lessons, they are far more aware of the dangers facing themselves and their child. Students, some of whom have been bullied previously, say that bullying is non-existent at the unit, but are clear what to do should it occur.

The leadership and management

Good

- Parents, students and staff say the headteacher has changed the character of the unit for the better. Responsibilities have been reorganised to match staff strengths. Morale is high and the ambitions of students, families and staff have shot up. Staff have received good training which is seen in the improved quality of teaching and raised achievement.
- Training has been carefully matched to the needs of individual staff and to the unit's priorities. Checks on the performance of staff are now more rigorous with individual targets linked to the subject taught, as well as targets in the unit's 'developing excellence' plan. The headteacher uses this information when deciding whether teachers should be paid more.
- Robust systems have been introduced to check on classroom practice. Senior leaders, and members of the management committee who hold senior posts in high schools, have been used effectively to observe lessons. As a result, all inadequate teaching has been eradicated. While the checks made on planning and students' work are done informally, leaders recognise this needs to be more structured.
- The headteacher is very well thought of by the local authority. They are currently drawing on her expertise in a review of the education of students who are out of school for whatever reason. Though working for the local authority, the headteacher makes excellent use of her day in school, keeping a close eye on what is happening at the unit and is kept up to speed by the capable deputy headteachers. Recognising the strengths of the unit and its leaders, the local authority has designated the unit as needing 'light touch' support.
- The assessment of students' progress takes place each half term and the results discussed in weekly staff meetings. This is useful in identifying and addressing gaps in learning. However, the way in which progress is recorded is too broad so on occasion it appears no gains have been made. When delving deeper into students' work, if the recording had been in smaller steps, the inspector identified good progress.
- A vast amount of work has been undertaken to provide a curriculum that is relevant, challenging, and matched to individual student's needs. In addition, it takes account of each

student's prior educational experiences and is adaptable to students arriving at any time of the school year. The range of awards has been extended, with higher attainers now working towards A* to C grade GCSE. The introduction of GCSE general studies is not only widening students' general knowledge but also encouraging them to think more deeply. High quality careers education and guidance encourages students to aim to study further and allows them to make the smooth transition to the next stage of their education. Visits and visitors are changing students' ideas. For example, following a visit to a university, students realised this is an option.

■ Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the unit's work. Partnership work with numerous health agencies and children's centres are exemplary. Links with the home schools enable students to complete GCSE courses that the unit is unable to offer, such as music. High quality arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect students and their children.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governance by the management committee is good. Many of the members are from health or education backgrounds and have a good understanding of the needs of the students and their children. Members of the committee use their knowledge well to hold the unit to account in meeting the educational, social and emotional needs of the students. They have an accurate view of the unit's performance. Having been in a deficit budget at the time of the previous inspection, the unit is now financially stable. Members of the committee are aware of the number of students who are eligible for the pupil premium. While they do not at present receive funding from the home schools, they ensure that these students are not disadvantaged and achieve well. Funding from various sources has been used successfully for example, for additional staffing, to support the transition to further education, and for a planned 'catch-up' after-school group with nursery support.

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	135743
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	402735

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	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Else Burton
Headteacher	Lorraine Lichfield
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2010
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