

The SMART Centre

Canterbury Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 6PT

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Good leadership and management, including by the management committee, have improved the centre's work to successfully support the students.
- The centre has been especially successful in rapidly improving the rate at which students at Key Stage 3 are helped back into mainstream schools.
- Teaching is mainly good and occasionally outstanding. Its great strength lies in the individual work programmes that teachers regularly prepare for the students.
- The many students who have gaps in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics are helped effectively to make up lost ground.
- Good links with local schools, external agencies and other providers mean that students can learn in a range of settings.
- Students achieve well. All Year 11 students gain worthwhile qualifications that enable them to go on to further study or training.
- Behaviour throughout the centre is well managed. Students report that they feel very safe and supported.
- The cultural mix of students is used well within the school to promote tolerance and understanding of traditions other than their own.
- The centre promotes well a strong community spirit with a successful emphasis on the students' moral and social development.
- The centre maintains strong partnerships with the students' families and does its best for them as well as for the young people in its care.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is mostly good, it does not always make enough use of practical resources and new technologies to enhance students' understanding of their work.
- Although all students make real strides in improving punctuality and attendance, their attendance is still too low, and some students find it difficult to get to school on time.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection covered the provision provided by the centre on its two main sites.
- Inspectors observed nine part lessons, eight of which were joint observations with a senior leader. There was also a number of short visits to classrooms and other activities before school and during breaks. One inspector visited the assessment centre and one of the providers of work-related learning.
- Informal discussions were held with students and a recent survey of students' views was considered. There were discussions with the Chair of the Managing Committee and two fellow members as well as with a number of the staff, including the headteacher.
- There were no recorded submissions to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took account of the unit's own exit surveys for parents at the end of the last academic year. Questionnaires from 20 staff were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own data on students' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sheila Nolan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Cliff Walker

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The main aim of the SMART Centre is to provide individually-tailored programmes that will enable students to return to mainstream education or employment with accredited qualifications and workplace skills.
- The centre caters mainly for students at Key Stage 4 who are either permanently excluded from mainstream school, who have a placement bought by a mainstream school, or who are new arrivals to the area with no permanent school place. The few students at Key Stage 3 are regularly re-integrated into mainstream schools or other special settings. The centre also provides for home tuition and for students with medical needs in a range of settings.
- The youngest students currently at the centre are in Year 8, although the centre does provide for one Year 4 student with medical needs in another setting. It also, currently but unusually, makes provision for a Year 12 student in a secure medical unit.
- All students have complex needs. These include behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and medical needs. A number of the current students follow a restricted timetable. Students join and leave the centre at various times of the school year.
- The centre only receives the pupil premium, additional funding provided by the government, for those students who are in the care of the local authority.
- Only one student has a statement of special educational needs, but 11 others are undergoing statutory assessments. All students are deemed to be at school action plus. Numbers known to be eligible for free school meals vary significantly but this is a growing proportion of the students, currently almost a third.
- A high proportion of the students spend part of their week on work-related programmes, all of which are checked by the centre and approved by the local authority.
- For those students studying GCSE courses, there are occasional early entries when appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the existing good teaching so that there is more that is outstanding by:
 - making better use of interactive whiteboards to show ideas and concepts and to explain how solutions are reached
 - using practical equipment and resources regularly so that students can more readily see the information presented to them
 - doing more to foster students' excitement and wonder in learning.
- Raise the students' rate of attendance so that it at least matches 90% for all groups of students by:
 - strengthening the existing good links with parents so that they better understand the importance of regular attendance
 - providing worthwhile rewards for those who have the highest attendance
 - sharing the good practice within the work-related learning programme where attendance is running at 99.9%
 - reviewing the curriculum for some groups at Key Stage 4 so that there is more scope for practical courses.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most students have starting points that are much lower than those expected for their age groups. Reading ages, for example, are often up to three years below their chronological age. This is usually the result of interrupted schooling.
- The attainment of the students varies yearly in line with the cohort's starting points. Almost all students, however, make good progress whatever their learning programmes. Almost all gain recognised qualifications that lead on to further education, training or work.
- Students studying GCSE courses generally make good progress. In 2012, an early-entry project in modern foreign languages built successfully on students' home languages, resulting in four A*/A grades and one grade B. Early entry for qualifications is used well by the centre to ensure that students moving on to other provision achieve worthwhile accreditation from their time at the centre.
- Effective reading and writing support enables students to access examination courses and make up the lost ground from earlier years. By the end of Year 11, almost all students achieve level 1 or 2 qualifications (adult literacy and numeracy) in both English and mathematics.
- Staff keep a close eye on individual students' progress to check on the impact of one-to-one or small group programmes to help them catch up. They are quick to revise them where there has been too little success. Despite this good practice, the time taken between reading assessments is still too long. This means that up-to-date information on reading ages is not always to hand for staff when planning lessons.
- Those few students in the care of the local authority, for whom the centre receives additional government funding, achieve as well as others of similar starting points as a result of the additional support they receive. The longer these students attend the centre, the faster their rates of progress. Most proceed well to the next stage of education and training.
- Progress in lessons is generally good. This is particularly so where students are involved in practical activities, such as a food technology session where even beginners managed the task well enough to take pride in the results. There is good progress in communication skills in English and other subjects such as business studies. Year 11, for example, was successful in considering the life cycle of electronic products and relating them to the ages of likely users. The students were able to explain confidently the reasons for their choices.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and there are pockets of outstanding practice. The impact of this regularly good provision is seen in the students' gains in learning, which far exceed their previous achievements.
- Students are keen to reach their individual short-term targets. Teaching successfully engaged students in striving to improve their work in all lessons visited. This good attention was fuelled by earlier success and rewards for concentrated learning.
- Students understand well that they are at the centre to learn and prepare themselves for the next stages of education and training. This is because teachers act as good role models and build positive relationships with students over time. The effective team work between teaching and support staff shows students how to relate to each other and to the adults helping them.
- Teachers generally use their subject expertise well and work is carefully planned, not only for the next steps in students' learning but also to assess how well students understand what they are doing. Support staff are well used in this respect as work is suited well to the individual student. They encourage the students' perseverance and engagement so that students end sessions with a genuine sense of achievement. One student was able, for example, to relate the skills of measuring in baking fruit scones with the processes involved in plastering a given area

because of the help of the teaching assistant.

- All staff are very successful at managing behaviour. They are able to diffuse rapidly any awkward moments so that classrooms are generally peaceful and promote learning. Students enjoy the individual attention they receive from one or other adult in the classes.
- The main weakness in teaching is that there is not enough use of practical resources and new technologies. Teachers do not yet make best use of the existing good resources to help students understand new ideas and concepts even better. Teachers also do not celebrate beauty, excitement and wonder in areas of learning, such as in the Year 11 work in mathematics on Pythagorean triples. Here, too, teaching did not consider the cultural and historical aspects of the topic.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are generally polite in lessons and most behave well, both in class and around the school sites. This is because of skilful guidance by all staff, including the site manager and the safer-schools officer. Students make rapid progress in managing their behaviour and in building up positive relationships.
- Within the centre, students feel very safe, not least because they understand better than previously that respectful relationships between each other smooth daily living. Safeguarding arrangements on the part of adults are very rigorous and students feel secure that they can always get help from a member of staff. This confidence continues when they leave the unit. Students regularly return for support and guidance as well as to bring news of their successes.
- Students are well informed about the different types of bullying and about the dangers of belonging to gangs. The centre does much effective work with students to help them understand the effects of cyber bullying. Racial incidents and episodes of bullying are rare within the centre, but those that do occur are carefully recorded. More often than not, incidents outside of the centre are the main concern of the students. A former student, now on the staff, does much through evening youth club sessions to maintain continuity of support for the students at risk.
- Only a very small number of students are prevented from attending school for a short period because of poor behaviour, and this figure is decreasing. A strict sanctions policy applies within the centre so that students fully understand that 'actions have consequences'.
- The majority of students improve their attendance greatly over their time at the centre. Nevertheless, attendance as a whole is still too low, even when the absences of those with medical conditions are excluded from the figures.
- The centre has had great success with students on the work-related programme. This group has had a 99.9% attendance rate. Those students who are dual registered also have a rate of attendance above that of the national figures for secondary schools. The attendance of other groups remains below expected figures for special schools, but the figures mask the real success story in getting students who have been out of schools for lengthy periods to engage once more in education. The centre has identified that it can still make greater use of effective rewards to encourage good attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The SMART Centre has gained greatly from the continuous leadership of the headteacher, in post since the last inspection. Despite the shifts in the nature of the student groups attending the centre, there has been sustained good practice by a changing staff and sustained good provision for the students. The driving force has been the headteacher's dogged insistence that students are here to learn as well as to take steps to improve their personal development. The impact is seen in the good outcomes for many of the students and in students' success in the next stages of education and training. Almost all of the students from the 2012 Year 11 cohort

secured a placement either in work or in training.

- Senior leaders and the management committee have a thorough and accurate awareness of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Some middle leaders are new to their roles and are working enthusiastically to gain the skills to manage confidently the areas for which they are accountable. The performance of staff is monitored carefully and well-considered training takes place both within school and through outside agencies. Staff are encouraged and well supported to gain further qualifications. For example, a member of staff is now in the third year of his degree course, having studied alongside the students at GCSE. Some teaching assistants and instructors are following courses that lead to qualified teacher status. Visits to mainstream schools are used well to keep staff abreast of good practice and current developments in technology. However, not all staff appreciate the range of resources readily available currently in mainstream classes.
 - All students are given an equal chance to make progress in a full range of subjects, just as in mainstream schools. A choice of options is available to students, depending on their starting points. Local schools point to the high success rate in integrating Key Stage 3 students back into mainstream schools. Those students capable of doing so follow GCSE courses, whilst others follow more practical and work-related routes to qualifications. Senior leaders are well supported by all staff in striving to ensure equality of opportunity for all students. The centre tackles any discrimination immediately, whether inside or outside its education programme.
 - The management of teaching is a strength of the centre and staff respond well to the expectations of senior managers and are keen to know how to improve. At all levels, safeguarding is treated very seriously and all statutory requirements are rigorously enforced.
 - Partnerships with parents, with local mainstream and special schools as well as with other external agencies, are very well developed. The centre appreciates that without support from families for its young people there is only a limited amount staff can do for them.
 - The centre has been well supported by the local authority so that it employs a family liaison officer who is working closely with groups and individuals to involve families much more successfully in the students' education. The SMART Centre is very much part of the local schools' network. These good links contribute much to its success in helping the students return to mainstream schools.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the management committee provide outstanding support and challenge for the centre and, in particular, for the headteacher. They make sure that the headteacher is set rigorous targets to improve her work even more. They also keep a close eye on the performance of the staff and know all about the strengths of teaching as well as the areas for its further development. Salary progression for staff is clearly linked to the successful achievement of agreed targets. Reports from the headteacher are supplemented by regular visits to the centre to gather information. Members are fully involved in the future direction of the centre and in encouraging the strong partnerships with other special and secondary schools. They have a good overview of the centre's finances to drive its priorities forward. This includes directing appropriate funds for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium to make sure that individuals are supported in their learning. The safeguarding of the students is given high priority, with their care at the heart of the committee's work. Members of the managing committee are well trained and experienced in the processes of safer recruitment and apply procedures scrupulously when appointing staff.
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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	133754
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	402583

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Sandy Waugh
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2012
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