

The Connected Hub

Tilbury House, Florence Place, Brighton, BN17GU

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is not good because too many students do not attend the unit or their off-site placement as often as they should. This limits their opportunities to achieve to their full potential.
- The unit collects insufficient information on the progress students are making. This means leadership and management are not able to know how well it is helping them.
- Teaching is not good because it is not always clear how students' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is supported in the teaching of all subjects. The marking of their work is not always helpful.
- The strategies used by staff to promote regular attendance are not always effective; consequently, the attendance of a minority of students is poor.
- Although much has been done to improve the curriculum since the unit opened, students are able to study science only to a limited degree..

The school has the following strengths

- Some individual students have made at least good progress since their transfer to the Hub.
- Teachers use their excellent relationships with students to encourage many to become more interested in their learning than they were in their previous schools.
- There are good links with the local further education college and these are used well to help students successfully apply for courses when they reach school leaving age.
- Staff provide students with very good support to improve their behaviour and help them manage their emotions and deal appropriately with personal issues.
- The headteacher and local authority officer responsible for the unit have led and managed the unit well in overcoming many of the difficulties faced in the setting up of the unit in difficult circumstances. They have overseen improvements in teaching and the work of the staff team.
- The recent move to new premises has given the unit an increased capacity to meet its aims of providing all its students with a good final year in a school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited the Hub and three of the alternative sites it uses. The inspector observed teaching and learning in five lessons at the Hub, taught by the school's teachers and learning mentors. He also observed three parts of lessons taught by commissioned providers in sports development, catering and beauty therapy.
- The inspector checked on the behaviour of students in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. He also reviewed behavioural records.
- The inspector held meetings with members of staff and had informal discussions with some students. Meetings were also held with the chair of the management committee, the local authority officer responsible for overseeing the unit and the local authority's special education officer.
- The inspector looked at some students' work, teachers' lesson plans and achievement data showing students' progress in English and mathematics and last year's examination results.
- School policies were sampled and the recent management committee minutes reviewed.
- Four comments from parents and carers on the online Ofsted Parent View survey were considered.

Inspection team

Charles Hackett, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Connected Hub opened in January 2012 in two temporary buildings in different parts of the city. In November 2012, it moved into its present accommodation.
- The unit takes students in their final year of school (Year 11) who are struggling to engage in education in a secondary school. Many students had become non-attenders and a few have been excluded because of behavioural issues.
- All students transfer to the Hub for full-time education. Many students were in receipt of additional support (school action plus) at their mainstream school. There are no students with statements of special educational needs admitted.
- Students follow agreed individual programmes. They all attend the Connected Hub site for some lessons that include English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education.
- Additionally, the Hub commissions programmes taught by outside providers at the Hub and other sites. For this year, these sites are:
 - Albion in the Community at the Amex football stadium
 - City college
 - Central Sussex YMCA
 - Plumpton Agricultural college
 - DV8
 - So Seedy allotment school
- In addition, a few students can return to their former schools to continue with individual courses started previously.
- The unit was initially managed by a local authority officer and the headteacher took up her duties in April 2012. The two other teachers employed by the Hub started in September 2012. In addition to the three teachers, the unit has three learning mentors and administration staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the current academic year, increase the effectiveness of teaching on students' progress further by:
 - ensuring that teachers adopt a consistent approach to the marking of students' work making sure they tell them how well they have done and what they need to do to improve further
 - ensuring that in all lessons teachers, learning mentors and commissioned lecturers give sufficient attention to improving students' reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- With immediate effect, extend the strategies used to encourage students with poor attendance to attend more regularly and improve their punctuality.
- In time for the next academic year, provide all students with the opportunity to study science more extensively.
- Over the current academic year, making better use of achievement information to enable the unit leaders to be in a stronger position to know how well students are performing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- There are too many students who fail to take advantage of the opportunities to learn presented by the unit. A few are poor attenders and some of those who are more regular attenders miss parts of lessons because of their poor punctuality.
- Last year's students who joined the unit for their last two terms of schooling did not achieve well in English and mathematics. Many failed to make progress in following the programmes offered to improve their skills in both subjects.
- Students' progress in developing their reading, writing and number skills is limited. This is because often insufficient attention is given to improving skills in these areas in the teaching of other subjects or in the other courses on offer.
- Although last year's students did not achieve well, they did make good progress in re-engaging in learning. This led to almost all of them being accepted onto post-16 courses at the local further education college when they reached school leaving age. This represented a much improved outcome than predicted for them if they had remained in a mainstream school.
- Since the start of this academic year, students are making better progress in both English and mathematics. For example, records of their achievements show that 30 out of 34 on roll will take GCSE mathematics and more than half are currently on target to achieve their predicted grades.
- Students often make good progress in lessons. For example, in mathematics, a student was able to tackle A* GCSE work by factorising a quadratic equation and simplifying algebraic equations. In a sports development course, students developed a good understanding of the importance of undertaking a warm-up before engaging in rigorous exercise or a game.
- There are an increasing number of individual pupils making good progress in following the courses commissioned by the unit, including those run off-site. For example, examples of students' predicted achievements include gaining an NVQ in beauty therapy, completing an internship at the local allotment and passing external certificates with 'Albion in the community'.
- Although data on students' achievements are limited, there is no evidence that any group of students, including those supported previously by school action plus, are doing less well than other students in the unit. During this academic year, many students, including those for whom the unit receives pupil premium allocations, are closing the gap between their achievements and those expected nationally for students of a similar age.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The written marking of students' work is not always helpful. It does not consistently tell students how well they have achieved or give sufficient indication as to what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers, learning mentors and commissioned lecturers do not always give sufficient attention to students' reading, writing and mathematical skills. The written work in lessons is often the same for all students and this therefore means that some higher-ability students are not necessarily stretched to improve as much as they could be. Likewise, it is not always apparent how students with reading and writing difficulties are given appropriate additional support.
- Teachers, learning mentors and commissioned lecturers have very good relationships with the students. They make good use of these to engage them in learning activities. 'Teachers are on it' was how one of the students described her admiration for the work of the teaching team.
- Teachers and learning mentors are effective in managing and improving the behaviour of students. Often, adopting appropriate non-confrontational approaches, they find effective ways to keep students on task in lessons. They are particularly good at encouraging students who use inappropriate vocabulary to find more appropriate alternative ways of expressing themselves.
- This academic year, in both English and mathematics, teachers have improved the systems in place to track the progress of students. This is being used well to identify students who are not

making the progress they should and put in additional support.

- Teachers effectively seek to widen students' experiences through special projects and topics. For example, they recently had a 'Black History' week. These experiences are used well to help students' spiritual and cultural development.
- A good programme for personal, social and health education provides students with good awareness of the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse. This work has a positive impact on improving students' moral and social development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Not all students develop improved attitudes to learning. This is demonstrated by the poor attendance of a minority and the erratic punctuality for teaching sessions of some others.
- At times, a few students make use of their mobile phones inappropriately during lessons. This reduces their involvement in learning and takes their attention away from the support being provided to them by staff.
- However, observations and behavioural records show that the majority of students usually behave well in lessons and on off-site training sessions. For many, this represents significant improvement from their time in mainstream education where their behaviour was often a problem, disturbing their progress and that of others.
- Students develop improved skills in working in group situations in different environments. For example, many manage to undertake courses on the College site alongside students from mainstream schools. This increases their confidence to succeed in different social situations and environments, preparing them well for their move to college when they leave the Hub.
- Students stress bullying is not an issue at the Hub. They say they feel safe when on-site and while attending courses or undertaking work experience. Work in information and communication technology gives them a good awareness of the dangers of the inappropriate use of social networks and of cyber-bullying.
- Staff provide students with very good support for their emotional well-being. Regular one-to-one support sessions are provided and staff work very closely with other agencies to address any students' concerns.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Initially, insufficient information was collected on the performance of students. This is starting to improve in English and mathematics but is still insufficient for the Hub to be in a strong position to assess how well it is supporting students. It is unable to say, for example, whether girls achieve as well as the boys. This also limits the capacity of the management committee to monitor the unit's rate of improvement.
- Despite securing improvements in attendance for the majority of students compared with the levels reached at their mainstream schools, senior staff have been unsuccessful in improving the attendance of a minority of students on roll. Although telephone calls are made whenever students are absent, insufficient other strategies are used to improve attendance.
- In the short time the unit has been in existence, much has been done to improve and extend the courses and activities available for students. The move to the new building has increased the capacity for even more. However, the unit has limited opportunities for students to study science.
- Much has been achieved in the short time that the unit has existed. The headteacher, well supported by her local authority line manager and the chair of the management committee, has a very clear vision of how she would like the unit to develop and eventually become outstanding. This is well backed up by an honest document that details accurately how well the school is doing and recognises there is still much to do to reach excellence.

- Although teaching and learning still require improvement, they have been improved over the last year. Good staff training opportunities have been provided, including opportunities to visit other schools judged to be of a high quality. The headteacher has implemented a rigorous system for checking on the quality of teaching and provide additional support where weaker aspects have been identified.
 - The performance of all staff is monitored carefully, including by the management committee. Responsibilities are shared between teachers, and learning mentors have been provided with good opportunity to extend their skills and take on whole-school responsibilities. Appropriately, teachers on the highest salaries are also given added responsibilities.
 - Financial management has been secure. Despite the lack of detailed information about student progress, some effective use has been made of the additional money made available under the pupil premium to give the students for whom the money is allocated additional one-to-one support sessions. These are starting to show a positive impact in these students' progress in English and mathematics.
 - Safeguarding has been given a key priority. Staff have received appropriate training on child-protection issues and the management committee has regularly checked very carefully on safety aspects. Arrangements to ensure the safety of those students who study courses off-site are also securely in place.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee has developed its role well over the past year and has become more knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, although less so about students' achievement. The new chair has started to increase the degree of rigour in the way in which the committee checks on the work of the unit. It is clear how the performance of staff is monitored and is very familiar with how the finance available is spent. This includes ensuring the money allocated for students under the pupil premium has been used well to provide these students with additional one-to-one support.
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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

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|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 137750 |
| Local authority | Brighton and Hove |
| Inspection number | 400345 |
| Type of school | Pupil referral unit |
| School category | Pupil referral unit |
| Age range of pupils | 15–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 34 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Headteacher | Louise Cook |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01273 291294 |
| Fax number | |
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