Malden Oaks PRU

The Dukes Centre, Dukes Avenue, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5QY

Inspection dates	6–7 February 2013

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.

- The new headteacher has high expectations of students and staff. She has planned carefully for further improvements and has made a significant impact on teaching and learning in the short time she has been in post.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers work hard to support the different needs of their students and are skilful in finding the best way to help them catch up with their learning.
- Students achieve well and start to make good progress as soon as they join the centre. Gaps in learning are quickly identified and students can make rapid progress because of the personalised learning timetables they are offered.
- Students are supported to improve their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills through carefully planned activities.
- The centre is highly valued by schools and other organisations. It has a proven record of success in helping students to overcome the difficulties they face and encouraging them to re-engage with education.
- Relationships at the centre are very positive. Students feel cared for and supported and are encouraged to support each other. Instances of poor behaviour are very rare and there are high levels of respect and tolerance for each other.
- The management committee is increasingly involved in driving forward improvement. It works closely with the local authority to support and challenge the headteacher and her staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough teaching is outstanding because lessons are sometimes too tightly controlled by teachers and do not challenge students to achieve more.
- Some students do not continue with their placements in education and training on leaving the centre and cannot maintain the improvements they had made there.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons taught by five different teachers. One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher. A presentation to students from a health professional was attended. A number of shorter visits to lessons and personalised learning sessions took place. The inspector looked at students' work, teachers' planning and evidence of progress for lessons that she was unable to observe during the inspection.
- There were only six responses to the online parental questionnaire, so account was also taken of the centre's own parental surveys and correspondence.
- Six staff questionnaires were returned.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, the centre coordinator, other staff, the Chair of the Management Committee, a leader from a partner secondary school and a representative from the local authority. Discussions took place with students in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at the centre's checks on how well it is doing and development plans, teachers' planning and assessment files, examples of students' work, policies and procedures, management committee minutes and attendance records. Safeguarding records and other documents were evaluated.

Inspection team

Lesley Cox, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Malden Oaks is a pupil referral unit (PRU) which provides alternative education for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 who have diagnosed medical, mental health, behavioural or anxiety conditions. At the time of the inspection 20 students were on roll at the centre. All students have personalised learning plans which aim to help them re-engage with their education.
- Students have dual registration with their secondary schools during their time at Malden Oaks.
- A new headteacher has been appointed from September 2012.
- Malden Oaks works as part of a federation with Mecklenburg PRU within the same local authority. They share the headteacher and management committee. Some staff work across both centres. Mecklenburg PRU was inspected independently at the same time as this inspection.
- Students sometimes attend alternative education providers such as Kingston College and Merton College. Placements are usually arranged by the students' secondary school. A few students have additional work placements arranged by the centre.
- The centre works in close partnership with all the secondary schools within the local authority, health agencies and educational welfare services.
- All students have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties and are at school action plus on the special educational needs register. Ten students have been eligible for the pupil premium additional funding so far this year, although this number changes on a regular basis.
- The length of time students spend at Malden Oaks varies greatly. Reintegration back to mainstream or special schools is sought whenever possible but some students remain at the centre for longer periods of time.
- Most students are of White British heritage. There are usually a small number of students in the care of the local authority at any given time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
  - encouraging students to take a greater responsibility for their own learning by finding things out for themselves and providing them with more opportunities to work without direct supervision in lessons
  - planning more lessons that include exciting and creative activities that capture the imagination of students and encourage them to join in
  - asking more challenging questions that provoke able students to make a higher level of contribution to lessons.
- Reduce the number of students who are not in education, employment or training after they leave the centre by:
  - maintaining and developing stronger links with colleges and training providers to support students after they have left the centre.
  - providing higher quality information, advice and guidance and supporting students to visit and explore placement opportunities so that they are more confident in these placements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at the centre having missed considerable amounts of schooling due to the health, social and emotional difficulties that they face. As a result there are often large gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Most are severely lacking in confidence with poor levels of motivation. The centre tackles these barriers to learning by quickly establishing the level that students are working at and planning individual programmes for them. This ensures that they are able to make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Most students make significant progress in their personal development and start to re-engage with their learning, closing the gaps between their own achievements and those of other students nationally.
- Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that older students are able to gain GCSE passes or other forms of accreditation in as many subjects as they can manage. The proportion gaining examination passes has risen year on year, with nearly all students leaving Year 11 in 2012 with two or more GCSE passes. Some students achieved five passes at GCSE, with three passes being the average. Most students achieved accreditation in English and mathematics at either GCSE or entry level. Accurate tracking indicates that most students will leave with four or more GCSE passes this year.
- Some Year 10 students are entered early for an examination if this is felt to be useful in boosting their levels of engagement or confidence. They are able to resit the examination to improve their grade at the end of Year 11. This has been a useful strategy for maximising accreditation over time.
- Analysis of assessments and examination results shows that there is little difference in the performance of different groups of students. Those eligible for the pupil premium achieve broadly the same results in examinations, including English and mathematics, as other students. This is due to the intensive support offered to them by the centre. The additional funding has been used to provide a wider range of educational activities such as a cooking course and an outdoor education programme. These have improved participation rates of students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and allowed them to make more progress towards their targets.
- Students make good progress in improving their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills through a planned programme of activities that take place throughout the centre.
- Students are supported to attend work placements and college courses if this is agreed as part of their learning plan. This is closely monitored by the centre through regular communication and visits from staff. The progress students make is reviewed regularly to ensure they have the best chance of being successful.
- Some older students find it difficult to maintain their improved levels of confidence on leaving the centre and do not always attend the placements they have been offered on college courses. Careful tracking by the centre has identified this as an area for further improvement.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and students say they enjoy their lessons. Specialist teachers are skilled at meeting students' needs through careful planning and appropriate levels of support.
- Teachers work hard to build very positive relationships with their students. They give freely of their time both in and outside of lessons. Students often come in before school or stay afterwards to attend additional one-to-one sessions or join in extra-curricular activities such as cooking. This improves their attitudes to learning and rates of attendance.
- Teachers use information gathered on entry, school assessments and performance predictions to plan lessons, setting targets that will help students move forwards. They give high-quality

written feedback and encouragement so that students know what to do to improve further.

- Lessons are fast paced and carefully pitched to ensure that students remain engaged. Teachers ask questions to check understanding but sometimes miss opportunities to stretch more-able students by challenging them to explain more clearly or expand their answers. In some lessons the high levels of support mean that students do not take as much responsibility for their own learning as they could.
- All teachers carefully monitor the progress students are making to identify any gaps in their learning. This helps students to improve quickly and many begin to make rapid progress as their levels of confidence, attitudes to learning and attendance patterns change.
- All teachers teach reading, writing, communication and mathematics in lessons. This takes the form of reading activities, spelling and number games and the use of individual whiteboards to model written responses. Attractive displays, electronic tablets, books, magazines and newspapers can be found throughout the centre. Students use these during reading sessions at the start of morning and afternoon lessons and are encouraged to read for their own pleasure throughout the day. Careful tracking and targeted support ensure that all students make good progress from their starting points.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students see the centre as a place in which they are valued and where they can get the help and support they need. The high-quality learning environment, with space for independent and small-group learning, allows students to move around freely without direct adult supervision. They make good use of the facilities on offer at the centre with a high regard for safety.
- Students make good progress in improving their attitudes to learning and are polite and supportive of each other. Lessons are rarely disrupted but some students are passive and compliant, rather than actively involved in their learning.
- Exclusions are very rare with only one incident last year and no exclusions this year. There are no reported incidents of bullying of any type. Responses from students, staff and parents and carers confirmed that bullying and incidents of poor behaviour were not a concern for them.
- Nearly all students make significant improvements on their previous levels of attendance and the effective strategies used by the centre show high levels of individual progress. Attendance rates are monitored carefully and swift interventions are made with the help of other professionals, if improvements are not maintained.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has lost no time in building on the previous success of the centre and a great deal has already been achieved since her appointment in September. She is resilient, enthusiastic and positive and this encourages others to be the same. She has a supportive and capable team of staff who put students' achievement and welfare at the core of all they do. They are fully committed to equality of opportunity and work hard to ensure all students make the progress they are capable of, whatever difficulties they face.
- All leaders, including middle managers and the management committee, have a common vision and have worked together to agree plans for improvement and prioritise the actions that need to be taken. Since September, the senior leadership team and the management committee have been restructured, the monitoring of teaching and learning has been improved and the curriculum has been expanded to meet the wider needs of students. Leaders evaluate accurately and know the centre's strengths and weaknesses.
- Senior leaders and the management committee have effective systems for monitoring staff's performance and expectations are high. All staff are held to account for the progress of the students they teach and are appropriately rewarded for the roles and responsibilities they hold within the centre. Training is carefully planned to ensure that standards remain high and expertise is increasingly shared between the centre and secondary schools. Responses to the

staff questionnaire show that recent changes to the performance management systems at the centre have been well received and appreciated by teachers.

- The quality of the curriculum is good. Students can study a range of courses that lead to recognised accreditation. A combination of academic and creative subjects link with high-quality enrichment programmes and alternative provision to create individual timetables. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The centre has correctly identified that students need to be better prepared for when they leave the centre and has commissioned a destinations project for older students to participate in this year.
- Tracking systems are in place to monitor rates of students' progress, although leaders are aware that these are not as efficient as they might be because they do not link to other information systems within the centre. Progress information is shared regularly with secondary schools to allow them to monitor students' performance while they attend Malden Oaks.
- The centre works very effectively with parents and carers who are invited to regular progress reviews attended by all the professionals working with their child. Links with schools and other agencies are strong and the support that the centre offers is recognised as having a positive impact on the lives of many young people.
- The centre has been well supported by the local authority whose officers show a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the students who are referred there. They work alongside the headteacher and the management committee to offer challenge and provide advice when needed.
- Arrangements for recruiting staff and for keeping students safe at the centre meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The management committee works closely with centre leaders to ensure that standards are maintained and improvements made when necessary. Members of the committee offer good levels of support and challenge and are closely involved in decision making. This includes deciding how to spend the pupil premium funding and measuring the impact it is having. They have recruited new members who can contribute relevant skills to the different committees they have created. The impact of the new achievement and teaching sub-committee, chaired by a secondary school leader, can already be seen in the closer monitoring of teachers' performance and improved outcomes for students. Committee members are kept well informed by attending appropriate training and reading the detailed reports provided by the headteacher. The committee is well placed to meet the new governance responsibilities that come into effect from April 2013.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	102562
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	400557

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	20
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Roger Lowe
Headteacher	Samantha Axbey
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 May 2010
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