

School Returners/Young Mums Provision

Grindon Lane, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4EN

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2013

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.

- Achievement is good with an improving trend year on year, because leaders and managers have maintained a strong focus on improving teaching since the previous inspection.
- Parents are correct to praise the exceptional care and support their children receive. The comment, 'staff do not give up' summarises their views of the successful reinvolved in learning of their children.
- Almost all Year 11 pupils in 2012, from both units, gained GCSE qualifications or the equivalent. Approaching one third of pupils in the School Returners unit gained five A* to C grade passes, including English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good with elements of inspiring and thought-provoking practice. Almost all lessons capture pupils' interest well, because individual learning plans are well matched to pupils' abilities, needs and interests.
- Pupils' behaviour is good with levels of commitment that are often high. Pupils show much confidence and trust in their staff, as do their parents and carers.
- Pupils enjoy school life in the happy, friendly relaxed atmosphere in both units. They take pride in their achievements and those of the school.
- The effective leaders and managers, management committee and local authority closely monitor performance and hold staff to account in rigorous ways.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is inspiring, thought-provoking and closely enough matched to abilities, especially for more-able pupils. Occasionally, insufficient is expected of pupils capable of achieving more highly at GCSE.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to ensure pupils do more for themselves.
- Pupils' progress is sometimes hindered, because pupils do not read widely enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons. Two of these lessons were observed alongside the school's managers. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons to check the quality of what is provided for pupils and to talk to pupils about their reading.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, members of the management committee, school staff, including managers and a local authority officer responsible for looked-after children.
- The inspector met with seven parents, spoke by telephone with one parent and received written observations from two parents. There was insufficient response to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including their own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, pupils' books, self-evaluation and the school's improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.
- The inspector visited a pupil at an alternative provider and spoke to both the pupil and tutor in charge.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- School Returners and Young Mums is school provision for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils. Both are discrete units, providing individualised programmes of learning and support to small numbers of young people who have a range of vulnerabilities and complex needs. Many are anxious pupils, most of whom have a history of persistent absence and non-attendance. A large majority of pregnant schoolgirls and young mums were persistent absentees before becoming pregnant and have a disrupted pattern of education.
- Together, the units form part of the local authority's alternative provision. School Returners is based in Sandhill View Community Arts School and Young Mums in a health centre four miles away.
- All pupils are supported through school action, which is high compared to the national average, with two pupils currently in the care of the local authority.
- Pupils on both sites are dual registered, remaining on the roll of their mainstream school. At the time of the inspection, there were seven Key Stage 4 pupils in Young Mums and five Key Stage 3 pupils and 16 Key Stage 4 pupils in School Returners. All pupils are White British.
- One in three pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding (which is provided by the government to support the learning of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces). None is eligible for the Year 7 catch-up pupil premium.
- Key Stage 4 pupils in School Returners spend part of their week following subject courses in the host mainstream school's option programme. When appropriate to pupils needs, School Returners works with an alternative provider, the Pallion Action Group.
- Young Mums access the on-site multi-agency provision available to them and their babies in the health centre. This includes the B2b childcare provision, which is not run by the management committee and is subject to a separate inspection. Inspection reports of this provision are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- The headteacher of Sandhill View School undertakes leadership and management of School Returners and Young Mums with the support of a local authority officer.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that inspires and excites pupils' thinking by:
 - matching even more closely tasks and activities to individual pupil's abilities and talents, especially those who are more able
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in their GCSE attainment
 - making better use of questions to test pupils' understanding, getting them to think more deeply and read more widely
 - ensuring pupils do as much as they can for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well because the high quality of care and support makes certain each pupil feels valued, confident and willing to learn. In discussions, pupils in both units comment how their interest in learning has been rekindled. For almost all pupils there is a significant turnaround in their attendance, their aspirations, self-esteem and willingness to learn and acquire qualifications.
- Pupils arrive with skills and experience well below those expected for their age. Pupils in both the School Returners and Young Mums units are provided with a safe and supportive environment. Throughout all areas of learning, pupils achieve well, closing the gaps in their knowledge and skills with those pupils in mainstream, because of the marked improvement in attendance and willingness to learn. This includes those entitled to the pupil premium. In individual cases, progress is rapid and their achievement considerably improved.
- In 2012, almost all pupils gained accreditation in English and mathematics, but not always equivalent to GCSE. The increased proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes, including English and mathematics confirms the clear trend of improvement, although occasionally opportunities are missed to expect even more from pupils following GCSE courses.
- Pupils who join in Key Stage 3 settle quickly, happily and confidently. Pupils in both units readily work hard to make up for lost time, particularly in their reading, writing and mathematics. Active approaches to practically-based activities, such as scrutinising a range of texts for evidence of guesswork or inference, enables pupils to think critically and justify their thinking. Yet, pupils of all ages and abilities do not always read widely enough to support their own learning.
- The knowledge, skills and standards of those pupils supported by the pupil premium funding and those with special educational needs match those of their classmates. This is the result of effective use of individual learning programmes and at times highly effective classroom support and encouragement.
- The firm focus on Key Stage 4 options and vocational accreditation is proving to be successful. School Returners are able to access a variety of subjects in the host school's option programme. These include science, food technology, art and design, psychology and information and communication technology.
- In Young Mums, emphasis is placed on life and parenting skills. Highly effective and sensitively managed learning ensures that pupils adopt positive attitudes to motherhood. All pupils acquire the skills to progress to further education, training and employment.
- Occasionally, an alternative provider is used to deliver training. In these circumstances, pupils' interests are closely matched to the available provider programmes. As a result, pupils achieve success, acquire confidence and pick up positive work habits.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The overall quality of teaching is good, although sometimes inconsistencies remain in the level of challenge to pupils' thinking. This is especially the case for older, more-able pupils and prevents teaching from being better. Occasionally teaching is inspiring, imaginative and the work set skilfully matched to individual needs. However, there is some which lacks that essential spark. Consequently, pupils' thinking and understanding are not constantly checked and tested.
- Adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve make a strong contribution to the pupils' good and sometimes rapid progress, but occasionally opportunities are missed to demand even more.
- A key strength in teaching, both in the school and by other providers, is the skill in creating a relaxed, friendly and calm atmosphere. Teaching assistants are especially skilled encouraging and supporting pupils. For example, a group of young mums were observed in the kitchen eagerly preparing an enterprise lunch for 10 health centre staff. They were decisively guided by

a teaching assistant. Nevertheless, there are times when too much is done for pupils.

- Progress is most rapid and achievement highest when:
 - imaginative, lively practical approaches capture and hold pupils' interest really well
 - clear and concise explanations about key learning ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them
 - tasks are clearly sequenced, always building on their prior learning at a brisk pace
 - positive and constructive marking ensures pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve
 - skilled questioning constantly checks pupils' thinking and encourages them to find out more.
- In lessons which require improvement:
 - approaches are sometimes unexciting and lack that essential energy to create interest and purposeful discussions
 - subject knowledge is variable and demands made do not stretch pupils' thinking enough
 - questioning does not constantly probe and check knowledge and understanding
 - opportunities are missed for pupils to think for themselves and work out their own solutions.
- The firm focus on literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to working, despite a sometimes inconsistent focus on developing reading enjoyment and skills. This includes ensuring young mothers can effectively help their children in the early stages of learning to read.
- When progress is rapid and achievement high, thought-provoking teaching motivates pupils to apply their skills to demanding tasks. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils were absorbed accurately changing and matching positions of two-dimensional shapes on a flat grid.
- Teachers mark work frequently and provide good written detail. They make sure that pupils are aware of whether their testing targets are being achieved. In discussions, parents remark on how the written comments by teachers in books help them to support their children's progress and development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- All groups of pupils demonstrate good and at times extremely considerate behaviour. At social times, pupils are friendly, sensible and welcoming, such as when anxious new arrivals are settling into routines. Their relationships with staff are excellent with much mutual respect evident both in classrooms and at social times. This is a direct result of the exceptionally caring and supportive ethos across the two units.
- Staff ensure that arrival each morning in both buildings is happy and cheerful, setting a very positive tone for the day. Pupils get on well with one another. They show each other kindness and understanding of their differing personal situations, demonstrating a well-developed sense of fairness. Pupils are polite and good-humoured in their discussions with visitors. They take pride in their positive contributions to improving what is provided for them through regular 'pupil voice' sessions.
- In conversations, pupils report that they feel safe and secure, because adults 'look out for us'. Bullying is not seen as an issue by pupils or parents. Both express confidence that staff will successfully resolve any worries or concerns they may have.
- Individuals, whose circumstances might put them at risk, are skilfully and sensitively managed. They are encouraged to manage their anxieties, fears and emotions more effectively. Regular sessions improving their skills to manage daily life and their responsibilities play a crucial part in pupils' development and happiness. Consequently, all are able to enjoy school and achieve well, underpinning their excellent moral, social and good spiritual and cultural development.
- On arrival, attendance improves strikingly for almost all pupils, because effective routines are adopted for encouraging and managing attendance and punctuality. The large majority of pupils attend regularly and persistent absence has been almost eliminated since the previous inspection.

The leadership and management**are good**

- The headteacher, management committee, local authority and unit managers form a strong team. Together, there is a convincing drive to help all pupils achieve their best, regardless of their starting points or individual circumstances. Additionally, parents think exceptionally highly of what the school offers in both units.
- Leaders and managers provide much momentum in their push to raise pupils' performance and achievement. Rigorous systems are in place to check pupils' performance and development. As a result, leaders have an accurate view of how well the units are doing. Areas for improvement are correctly identified in order to continue to improve performance.
- Teaching is well led and managed seamlessly across the discrete units. Lesson quality is regularly checked, development suggestions provided and relevant training arranged. A well-thought-out system to check the performance of teachers is in place with clear targets for improvement and close links to incentives and rewards. As a result, teaching has improved strongly since the previous inspection.
- Discrimination is not tolerated. All pupils, including those with complex needs and the young mothers, are thoughtfully and sensitively included in a wide variety of experiences. For example, young mothers benefit from a broad range of interesting visits, such as to the theatre, local arts centre and community lunches at a local Methodist church. They are currently planning a trip to London. Older school returners are well integrated into a wide range of accredited courses alongside mainstream friends. This successfully helps to raise their aspirations and self-esteem.
- The curriculum is well matched to the abilities, needs and interests of all pupils. The individual learning plans are highly effective in practice and meet pupils' personal needs. They help to ensure at least good achievement and prepare young people for the next stage of their education, training and employment well. For example, in 2012 all Year 11 School Returners progressed to education and training, including one pupil who, after achieving highly at GCSE, progressed to study three advanced level subjects. Similarly, young mothers leave with a variety of qualifications and all make up much lost ground.
- A large part of daily life makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with positive impact from staff initiatives, such as anti-bullying and child abuse. Partnership working with parents and carers is excellent. In conversations, parents are particularly appreciative of how approachable staff are when their help is sought. The remark of one parent, 'My child never feels threatened', sums up the views of all.
- Highly effective links are maintained with mainstream schools and specialist support agencies, including mental health services. All pupils have easy access to support and advice, including possible destinations when they leave at the age of 16. The school works really well with the local authority who present robust challenge and offer positive support in equal measure.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much best practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for pupils. Child-protection procedures are excellent and the school takes all reasonable steps to check that pupils are safe when attending off-site provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is effective and astutely led by the chairperson, who has clear insights into the issues faced by pupils. It systematically checks the school's performance and is aware of the importance of pupils' progress and achievement and the crucial link with teaching and attendance. Members play a full part shaping the strategic direction of the school and work closely with the local authority. Reinforced by regular training and briefings, the management committee demonstrates an accurate grasp of current performance, including checking the performance of staff and linking it with incentives, as well as the use of pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' achievement and skills.

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	135642
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	402728

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	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Snowdon
Headteacher	Richard Bain
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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