

St Mary's Centre and PRU

New Street, Rawmarsh, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S62 5AF

Inspection dates

26–27 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Students' achievement is good. From low starting points and with barriers to overcome, almost all progress to further education, training or employment when they leave.
- Most students make good progress from their starting points at the centre. All achieve qualifications in vocational courses and in courses that prepare them for work when they leave the centre.
- Teaching is good. Students learn successfully because staff know them well and plan activities that interest them.
- Students feel safe at the centre or when working off site because they are well supported and cared for by staff.
- The vast majority of parents value highly the improvements in progress and attitudes of their child, following arrival at the centre.
- Behaviour is good. Students behave well because the school makes it clear to all students that high standards of behaviour are required. Their skilled support helps students to reach these high expectations.
- The majority of students attend their mainstream school for some of the time. While in the centre, students are helped to overcome their difficulties. Younger students can therefore return to their main school and settle back to learning.
- Leaders and managers have improved standards of teaching and learning since the centre opened.
- The centre's close partnership with five secondary schools contributes well to teachers' and associate professionals' professional development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although around half of students in the centre attend well, overall, attendance is below national averages.
- Some aspects of teaching need further improvement so students can learn independently and be clearer about what they are to learn rather than which task they are to complete.
- Information about the attendance and progress of students, especially in literacy development, is not always shared effectively between the partnership schools and the centre. As a result, some students do not improve their reading skills and students with low attendance do not achieve as well as they could.

Information about this inspection

- At the centre, the lead inspector observed nine lessons and three teachers, three vocational instructors and one mentor. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the centre manager and the deputy centre manager.
- The lead inspector also held discussions with the centre manager, and the deputy centre manager concerning teaching and learning, and the curriculum and assessment, with lead teachers in literacy and numeracy, the Chair of the Management Committee and a member of staff from a partner school, two representatives from the local authority and a number of students.
- She also scrutinised students' work in lessons and held detailed discussions with two students about their work.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of the centre's documentation related to planning for improvement, evaluation of the quality of the education the centre provides, records of performance management, and professional training and development for staff, details of safeguarding and attendance procedures and the assessment of students' progress.
- The responses of parents were taken into account, the lead inspector telephoned one parent and a conversation was held with four parents. The school's analysis of responses to their recent questionnaires from parents, students and staff were also considered. There was insufficient response to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The responses of 10 staff to the questionnaire during the inspection were taken into account.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Centre and PRU was established in January 2012 as a new local authority provision. It serves a partnership in the north of Rotherham and comprises the centre and five secondary schools. The headteachers of the five schools are members of the centre's management committee.
- It admits students who have been, or are in danger of being, excluded from their mainstream school. The majority of students are dual registered, attend for part of the week and attend their mainstream school for the remainder of the week.
- In addition, a small number attend off-site provision at Swinton Lock and attend sessions with the local authority's alternative curriculum team and the independent alternative curriculum education provision.
- Students follow a range of vocational and work-related courses in their time in the centre. They continue their English, mathematics and/or science studies in their mainstream school. The mainstream school is responsible for their progress in these core subjects.
- A small number of students have a statement of special educational needs. The resources provided through the statement are allocated to the student's mainstream school, as is the pupil premium funding, which is additional funding for those students eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.
- All students, unless they have a statement of special educational needs, are supported at the school action plus stage of special educational needs.
- Students are admitted from age 11 to 16. They join the centre at any time during the school year. At the time of the inspection, there were 21 Key Stage 3 students and 27 Key Stage 4 students on roll at the centre. There are more boys than girls and most students are of White British heritage.
- Since the centre opened in January 2012, the centre manager has created a new team, including teachers, support staff, mentors and vocational instructors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of students in lessons by:
 - stating clearly what the student is to learn and what the successful learning might look like
 - planning tasks and activities to encourage students to learn more independently so they become less reliant on staff.
- Improve the communication between the centre and its partner schools so:
 - both are clear about the progress students make in each setting
 - both can use the progress information to plan teaching and intervention that closely meets the needs of students, especially in literacy
 - both share attendance data and resources systematically and effectively to increase students' attendance and engagement in their learning, especially those students who find it difficult to develop positive attitudes to education.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at the centre with a range of attainment levels but are generally working at a level much lower than would be expected, often due to literacy, communication or learning difficulties, absence from school, repeated short exclusions or difficulties in settling in school and in lessons.
- Students achieve well in the centre because the good care and support provided by the centre enable them to be calm in lessons and be willing to learn. Students comment that being in small groups helps them concentrate and say they feel confident in asking for help because they know any member of staff will respond.
- The vast majority of students sustain their courses and attain a range of qualifications at different levels. The centre is very skilful in matching students to courses and personalising their learning programmes so students make good progress both at the centre and when attending alternative provision.
- In 2012, many students achieved vocational and work-related qualifications even though the centre had only been open since January 2012. This year, many more are set to achieve qualifications in a range of vocational and work-related areas which prepare them well for future employment or training. The vast majority of students attain entry level qualifications or qualifications at Level 1, with a number succeeding at Level 2.
- Those students who do not gain qualifications are those whose attendance is low and whose attitude to learning remains negative despite the centre's best efforts to support them in their learning.
- In lessons, students' progress is mostly good. Although the centre is successful in promoting literacy and numeracy skills within lessons, some students find learning more difficult, as a result of limited communication and/or reading skills, or because they have difficulties managing their mood or frustration and this slows their progress.
- The focus on vocational and work-related courses has proved very successful in engaging students' interests and promoting good achievement. A number of students enjoyed a competition in a horticulture session to see who could plant the most seedlings correctly in a given time, and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills successfully. Disaffected students rose quickly to this challenge and made outstanding progress.
- The centre is successful in promoting equal opportunities to succeed by their prompt response to individual interests, talents and rates of progress.
- Students' progress is similar overall. This includes boys and girls, those with a statement of special educational needs or those looked after by the local authority.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and students benefit from skilful support so they maintain their concentration and effort.
- Staff set high expectations and develop highly positive relationships with students which enable them to challenge students to do their best. Even the most reluctant learners engage in learning when it is closely related to their interests, such as when they are asked to create their own website about themselves, or when they are given a task that requires them to use skills they have learned in previous lessons. The judicious use of humour by staff invariably defuses any developing agitation.
- Staff know the students well and work in very effective partnership with mentors and teaching assistants to make sure that learning is sustained and students have the confidence to tackle work they think is too difficult for them. At times, support is given too readily so students do not always have the chance to develop the independence and self-reliance they will need in the

future.

- In all lessons, staff plan activities carefully but these are sometimes focused more on what the students are to complete rather than on what they are to learn.
- Although literacy and numeracy skills are very well developed in the curriculum, there are few regular opportunities to intervene to strengthen or develop the literacy skills of those with the lowest reading levels. The centre has established a comfortable and welcoming reading corner to encourage students to read when they have the opportunity and staff read novels with students which engage their interest.
- In the best lessons, students are able to show their knowledge from previous lessons because staff question them carefully, tailoring questions to individuals and prompting students just enough to help them remember what they have learned earlier. In a personal, social and health education lesson, skilful questioning and prompting were used successfully to enable students to remember what a range of speakers had described to them in relation to the use of drugs and alcohol. Students were then able use those memories as a springboard for discussing the consequences of actions, not just for the individual but for people close to them.
- Communication is promoted extensively not just in lessons but in all the encounters during the centre's day. All opportunities to engage students in conversation are taken by staff, giving students the chance to talk more extensively about topics where they are more knowledgeable and confident.
- Staff are meticulous in ensuring students present their work well so their files for their course qualification provide extensive evidence of their progress and achievement. Work is regularly marked and periodic feedback is useful, giving information about what has been done well, what they need to do to improve and what level the task would be awarded. However, the opportunities to improve the suggested areas are not always included in future lessons so students have limited chance to take the advice given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around school. They know and respond to the clear routines for moving around the centre and into and out of lessons. They are polite and helpful to visitors to the school and happy to talk to them about their work.
- The centre provides a safe environment where students feel secure. Where less than good behaviour affects others, or when someone feels unhappy or worried, prompt staff responses resolve the issue. There have been very few serious bullying issues since the centre opened, with the majority being quickly nipped in the bud and dealt with. Parents wholeheartedly support this, with all parents saying that they are confident their child is safe in the centre. Students are very clear about the different forms that bullying can take, including how technology and mobile phones can be misused.
- Students respond very well to staff who are firm, fair and intervene unobtrusively to re-establish learning and good behaviour when necessary. Younger students are taught in a nurture group which provides them with the consistent and individual support they need in order to improve their behaviour and make progress.
- Students follow highly personalised programmes which build their learning skills effectively and develop their personal and social skills well. Parents, pupils and staff expressed a view that this is the key factor in improving students' attitudes to learning. One parent said her son coming to the centre, 'has changed my life', because she did not have to spend her day expecting the school to telephone her to come and take her son home. He is happy to attend the centre regularly.
- The attendance and punctuality of the majority of students improve on arrival to the centre. Many students attend at a level either the same, or above, the national average. However, there are a significant number whose attendance is well-below national levels.

- The centre has limited access to support from other agencies to improve students' attendance as this support is allocated to the mainstream school attended by each student.
- There have been very few fixed-term exclusions and no permanent exclusions from the centre.

The leadership and management are good

- The centre manager and all staff form a strong team and share a commitment to helping the students achieve their best.
- The centre manager and deputy centre manager transmit a clear message about the need to continue to improve teaching and learning and all staff are keen to improve their practice from its already strong base. Professional development opportunities are extensive and regular and are well supported by the centre's partner secondary schools.
- Students' progress is closely monitored by the centre and the management committee so any changes needed to their timetables can be quickly arranged. This increases the engagement and commitment of students to attending the centre and doing well in lessons.
- Leaders recognise that there is scope to increase the number of courses and qualifications on offer and are already taking steps to introduce courses in construction and landscaping into the current successful curriculum from September 2013.
- The school has good procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance. Senior leaders have improved the level of detail and rigour in performance management arrangements and ensure teachers who promote students' progress effectively are recognised for this.
- Much of the daily life of the centre effectively promotes the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of students. Opportunities are taken to include a range of resources which demonstrate the different lifestyles and beliefs of groups across the United Kingdom and beyond. In an art lesson, students learned how the work of Andy Warhol was influenced by American cultural history.
- The centre's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The partnership schools and the local authority have provided intensive support and guidance since the centre opened which have played a significant part in the steady improvement since January 2012.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee supports the centre's leaders in promoting rigorous performance management and in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The committee has effectively supported centre leaders in improving the environment so it offers a lively and attractive welcome to staff, parents and students. The centre manager regularly reports on progress of the centre to the management committee and they are well placed to challenge as well as support the centre's leaders. The committee meets regularly to review the progress and attendance of students but some aspects are not currently shared effectively as the systems for recording and reporting differ across the five schools. As a result, the centre has not yet been able to distil some progress and attendance information into a structure which fully supports their plans to improve attendance, teaching and student's progress further. The management committee fully meets its duties in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are robust.

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	137823
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	400348

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	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Pridding
Headteacher	Max Hayter
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01709 710144
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