

The Linden Education Centre

The Linden Education Centre, Queens Road, Farnborough, GU14 6JU

Inspection dates 2–3 July 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

- Strong and consistent leadership by the devoted headteacher ensures that the quality of education and care is consistently good.
- Students achieve well and make good progress. On arrival, many have poor attitudes to school and their work is well below average for their age. Attitudes often change quickly. The centre successfully enables students to make good progress in their education and personal development.
- Teaching is mainly good, with some that is outstanding. Careful and thoughtful planning enables students to make better than expected progress over time, especially in reading, writing and numeracy.
- Students enjoy their learning and feel safe in the caring and stimulating environment provided. Staff manage behaviour skilfully so that it is consistently good; in some cases, it is outstanding. Many students boast greatly improved attendance records.
- Leadership is good and staff morale is high. The determination of leaders, including governors, to improve students' education is strong and has had a positive impact on achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Partnership work is strong. The centre works successfully with its local authority and many schools and other agencies.
- There is a strong commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consideration for others and promoting responsibility and respect are key elements underpinning much of the centre's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, students are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their skills in writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, involving seven different teachers, and various other learning activities.
- Meetings were held with students, with the chairman of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and staff. A number of stakeholders were contacted by telephone to gain their views.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the inspector took account of the unit's own surveys of parents and carers and two letters. Returns from 15 questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.
- The inspector scrutinised examples of students' work and looked at various documents. These included the centre's self-evaluation and planning, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Education and emotional support and care are provided for students aged 11–16 whose behavioural problems have resulted in them being permanently excluded from a mainstream school, or who are in danger of being excluded.
- The aim is to re-integrate students aged 11–14 into a mainstream school. Older students, especially those in Year 11, invariably complete their education at the centre before moving on to further education.
- The majority of students attending are boys. Girls are outnumbered by a ratio of almost 2:1.
- All students have a history of disrupted education and exhibit behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Almost all have special educational needs at a level of school action plus, with a very small minority having statements of their special educational needs.
- Just over 30% of students are eligible for the pupil premium, and this proportion is above average. This government funding supports students eligible to receive free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and the children of serving military personnel. In this school, the great majority of these students are those eligible for free school meals, there being only a small number in each of the other two groups.
- About one in two Year 7 students are eligible for the Year 7 Catch-Up premium.
- The vast majority of students are of a White British heritage. It is rare for a student to have a first language other than English.
- The centre does not make use of any external learning providers.
- A daily breakfast club is offered to the students.
- During the previous academic year, the work of the centre was reorganised. It changed from providing for students aged 5–16, concentrating instead on students aged 11–16. The current headteacher started in post at the beginning of the current academic year.
- Re-organisation also saw changes in the composition of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chairman.
- There is no early entry policy for GCSE.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and progress further by ensuring that in lessons students are:
 - offered regular opportunities to record their learning in notebooks
 - offered regular opportunities to write in an extended form and in different styles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Though attainment frequently remains below average by the end of Year 11, or when students return to mainstream education, all groups, including those supported by the pupil premium, and irrespective of their disabilities or special educational needs, make better progress than predicted when they first entered the centre. Progress and achievement are good.
- Students almost always join the centre with low standards of attainment. This is because they have had considerable periods of disrupted education because of poor attendance, exclusion or personal circumstances and difficulties.
- All students are prepared well for the next step in their education. For younger students, this will involve re-integration into mainstream education. For Year 11 students, this will mean being equipped to progress to further education. There are no significant differences in the achievement and progress of different groups, with boys and girls making similar gains. Students whose heritage is other than White British make similar progress to their peers.
- All groups of students who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics as measured by their average points scores at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium make good gains, from their individual starting points, in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The centre is rightly proud of the fact that no Year 11 students left in July 2012 without a work placement or a place at college.
- Students improve their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics well over time. Some students were heard to read accurately. Some good written work was seen, including in an English lesson where students were writing haiku poetry. On occasion, students' progress in developing their writing skills slows because in a small minority of the classes, they do not have enough opportunities to consolidate and extend these skills.
- On many occasions, students spoke well and with enthusiasm about their learning, but they did not consistently make written records about what they had learnt in exercise books or notebooks. In some instances, their scope to make detailed written observations was constrained by the use of worksheets. The available space meant that answers were brief and opportunities for the students to display their writing talents were limited.
- Virtually all students make significant strides in their personal development. Confidence and self-esteem improve, with notable gains in attendance and the quality of behaviour. This in turn enhances their motivation and contributes to their good academic progress.
- Staff carefully check and monitor the progress and performance of every student. The manner in which data are used to set targets and track progress and outcomes has improved considerably since the previous inspection. This helps to ensure that students' good progress is sustained.
- The good outcomes for each student are the result of the good quality of individual attention offered to each student. Personalisation is the key to the centre's success. Staff are committed to ensuring that individual needs are clearly identified and catered for. Staff work in partnership with an array of other professionals, in health and social care for example, to see that good outcomes are secured.

The quality of teaching is good

- Progress is good because most lessons are taught at least well, with some featuring outstanding teaching. Teaching shows a clear determination to challenge and extend the students' knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching has continued to improve since the previous inspection. This is because of robust monitoring. Teachers adapt resources and activities well to match students' abilities and needs, usually inspiring them to believe that they can succeed. Such careful and thoughtful planning

has a significant impact on motivation and leads to good progress. Many students re-engage with education so that when they return to their 'home' schools, or progress to college, their attitudes and commitment are greatly improved.

- In many lessons the students' enthusiasm and commitment for learning were very clear. They are often keen to learn because they are taught most effectively by keen staff who have high expectations about what can be achieved. For example, in a food technology lesson, outstanding and challenging teaching resulted in the students showing independence, concentration and pride in their work on designing decorations for their cupcakes.
- Subject-specific literacy is promoted most effectively in lessons as diverse as chemistry and hairdressing. In chemistry, students were able to explain terms like 'saturation' and 'covalent' and developed a very good knowledge about the structure of alkanes. Hairdressing students developed skills in shampooing and head massages and could identify various techniques such as 'effleurage', 'rotary' and 'petrissage'. Learning opportunities, however, were not always fully maximised. Though students frequently displayed impressive oral skills in explaining terminology and answering questions, on occasion they were not consistently challenged to write about their learning.
- Staff take much pride in their students' work. Classrooms and corridors are often enlivened with good quality examples of students' work. Some impressive artwork, for example, showed how the centre endeavours to celebrate the achievements of its students.
- Partnership working is strong and this too helps the students to make progress and succeed. For example, an innovative partnership between the centre, a local university and a radio station has resulted in students compiling their own radio programmes. Such enterprising activities have boosted literacy, especially in terms of honing oral communication skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The centre successfully meets its core aims of motivating its students and re-engaging them with education. Many students markedly change their attitudes and commitment. Conduct improves and this is witnessed by fewer incidents of unacceptable behaviour and a significant rise in attendance.
- Many now have attendance records that are at least in line with the national average, and virtually all students have better attendance records than they had when in mainstream education.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the site is invariably good. Where teaching is especially engaging, behaviour can be outstanding. Staff place considerable emphasis on encouraging students to behave well, to be polite, to show respect and to take pride in their achievements. These qualities are constantly reinforced in lessons and in social activities such as at the daily morning breakfast club and through the centre's reward system.
- Staff place much emphasis on acknowledging and rewarding success. Students who do especially well in lessons, or whose general behaviour is particularly polite and courteous, can earn reward points. For many, being congratulated on an achievement, or being praised for doing something well, is a new experience. The successful nurturing of worthiness boosts self-esteem and contributes well to an individual's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All are encouraged to lead safe and healthy lives. Much work is done to ensure personal safety. This involves eating healthily and adopting safe practices, especially in relation to the use of the internet and mobile phones. All students are provided with clear guidance on the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse and information on personal relationships.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying such as cyber bullying, racist or homophobic name-calling and other forms of anti-social behaviour. They know how to respond to unpleasant incidents. They have faith in their staff to deal with unsavoury incidents. They feel safe, valued and respected when attending the centre.

The leadership and management are good

- The visionary and highly effective headteacher leads by example. Her sensitive and caring approach is amply supported by the governing body and staff at all levels. The headteacher has been in post for less than a year but she has successfully established unity and high expectations despite some recent significant reorganisation of the service.
- A period of reorganisation and change has been led and managed most effectively by the headteacher. Morale is high and there is a unified desire to improve the life chances of students whose prior experiences of education have often been anything but positive.
- The centre offers a calm and restful environment where the students can learn and socialise safely. Though no parental responses were received via the inspection questionnaire, the centre's own surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction. The centre plays a key role in re-engaging students with education, helping to boost self-esteem and confidence. As one appreciative parent commented: 'It would be hard to find an establishment where the staff are so dedicated. They help the students to reach their potential and turn their lives around.'
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support developments in literacy and behaviour in particular. The improved outcomes mean that gaps in performance in comparison with that of mainstream students are being closed at a good rate.
- Partnership work is strong. Professional partners consulted during the inspection praised the centre for its work. They identified key strengths in helping students who have often had negative experiences of school to change their lives and successfully re-engage in education. Many also described the centre as being an essential resource in the local community, and a place where other professionals can turn to for advice and guidance, especially when dealing with challenging, difficult or disillusioned students.
- A keen commitment to equality ensures that all students, including those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, make good progress. Relationships are good, with no evidence of discrimination.
- Achievement and the quality of teaching have improved well since the previous inspection because of improved monitoring, tracking and target setting processes, as well as improvements in staff training.
- A good range of enrichment activities, including visits, visitors and sports activities, adds richness and enjoyment to learning. Appropriate plans are in place to ensure that the range of academic and other activities offered is expanded. Events such as a cooking competition sponsored by an international hotel chain, charity fundraising, a murder mystery exercise and forest survival offer students exciting experiences that they might otherwise never enjoy. These events have a worthy impact on the students' emotional well-being and contribute effectively to the quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Self-evaluation is effective and contributes well to improvements. A good development plan aids improvements, as does the helpful occasional support offered by the local authority.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Risk assessments, including those for occasions when students might be working off-site, are detailed and fit for purpose.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been recent changes in the composition of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chairman. Governors have a realistic understanding of how well the centre is performing, and of the quality of teaching and learning. They rightly judge that it offers a good education to its students and they know its strengths and where improvements are needed. They are developing their capacity to hold the centre to account by improving the ways they review progress data to analyse outcomes. They are involved in ensuring that there is a close link between salary progression and the effectiveness of teaching, and that any weaknesses identified in the quality of teaching are addressed. They understand how performance management works through the training they have received. They monitor expenditure appropriately and challenge the headteacher to account for the way in which additional funding from the pupil premium is spent.

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	115836
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	401540

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	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Wade
Headteacher	Anna Bagley
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 November 2009
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