

Silverbank Centre

Silverbank, Chatham, Kent, ME5 0LB

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- Too many pupils make inadequate progress, particularly those who attend the Oaks. This has been the case over several years.
- Teaching is inadequate. Too much teaching requires further improvement. Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils or provide work that interests and engages them.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving, but instances of poor behaviour in the Oaks slow the pace of learning.
- Attendance overall is well below average and too many pupils do not attend regularly. Attendance at the Oaks is particularly low.
- Leadership and management require improvement because, despite significant improvements this year, leaders, managers and the local authority have not been effective in raising pupils' attainment and improving teaching sufficiently.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership team has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Recent improvements in teaching and pupils' progress demonstrate a capacity for further improvement.
- The Rowans meets the needs of its pupils well and the rate at which Rowan pupils make progress is accelerating.
- Pupils receive good support to help them overcome their learning difficulties and to manage their own behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the centre’s work and looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils’ current progress, self-evaluation documents, checks carried out by leaders on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, most lessons were observed jointly with members of the centre’s staff. They listened to pupils read aloud and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They discussed the work of the centre with senior leaders, representatives of the management committee and an adviser appointed by the local authority. They also listened to the views of a range of school staff.
- The inspection team reviewed the responses to 35 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- Six parents responded to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View survey.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Robert Ellis, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- There are two different aspects of the provision for 11- to 16-year-olds. The Oaks has places for pupils who have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The Rowans has places for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. The centre operates as though it were two separate schools.
- The Oaks was closed briefly to Key Stage 3 pupils from the 28 December 2012 to 04 December 2012 and for Key Stage 4 pupils on 3 and 4 December 2012 due to concerns about pupils' safety. The current interim headteacher was seconded to lead the centre in January 2013.
- The majority of the pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces, is well above average.
- All pupils attending the Oaks have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils attending the Rowans are mostly supported through school action plus, but a small number have a statement of special educational needs.
- The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre. Some of its responsibilities are devolved to a management committee.
- There are plans for the Oaks to become a free school in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement through consistently good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that pupils' progress in lessons is closely monitored to pick up and correct any mistakes and misunderstanding pupils might have
 - raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of what pupils can achieve in regard to their behaviour and attainment, particularly in the Oaks
 - paying close attention to the progress of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium and ensuring the gaps in attainment are closed rapidly
 - ensuring that all lessons are taught at a brisk pace, motivate pupils to do well and encourage them to have positive attitudes to learning.
- Build on improvements to attendance to ensure all pupils attend as regularly as they can and are punctual to school by:
 - challenging and supporting the families of pupils who do not attend regularly
 - raising pupils' and parents' expectations regarding the importance of good attendance and punctuality
 - consistently rewarding improvements in attendance and good attendance.
- Strengthen further the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to promote improvement by:
 - ensuring the local authority rapidly establishes appropriate arrangements for good governance of the centre and holding the centre to account for further improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement

- creating effective long-term structures for governance, leadership and management for both parts of the current provision
- ensuring effective support so that improvement is not impeded by planned changes to the provision.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils arrive at Silverbank with knowledge, skills and abilities below the levels typically seen for their age, often more than two years behind in their learning.
- Most pupils in the Rowans make good progress and attainment is rising. However, some Key Stage 3 pupils are not making consistently good progress.
- Pupils in the Oaks make too little progress overall and rates of progress are inconsistent as pupils move through the school. Results for pupils in their final year at the Oaks have shown a declining trend over the last three years and are significantly below what might be expected considering the pupils' abilities and starting points.
- Standards in English remain low, but are improving because there has been a sharp focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. The centre's information and pupils' current work show that pupils' progress is accelerating so that, although attainment in reading is below national averages, the gaps are beginning to close.
- Standards in mathematics remain below average. Results in Rowans show a clear trend of improvement and the gap with the national average is closing. Results in Oaks are poor and show too little improvement over time.
- Some pupils read hesitantly and lack strategies to deal with unfamiliar words. Adults sometimes intervene too quickly when pupils are trying to read words that they find challenging.
- The achievement of pupils supported by the pupil premium varies. Some have made good progress because the extra funding is used effectively to provide good individual support to ensure that they catch up. Around one in four of the pupils supported by the pupil premium has not made sufficient progress and is not closing the gap with pupils of a similar age.
- The majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those who are supported at school action plus, are making progress at similar rates to the others in the centre. Those at the Oaks are not making enough progress. Many of these pupils have poor attendance and this also has had a negative impact on their learning and progress.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make the necessary progress from their starting points.
- Despite recent improvements, the impact of teaching over time has not enabled pupils to make rapid and sustained progress. The profile of teaching is stronger in the Rowans than in the Oaks.
- There are too many lessons where the pace of learning is too slow and the work does not involve the pupils sufficiently. In these lessons teachers do not check the progress that pupils are making or modify their plans if pupils are not making progress or have finished quickly.
- An increasing proportion of teachers has very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They provide stimulating and engaging lessons where work is pitched at the right level for the pupils in the class and is set in a relevant context. In these lessons, pupils respond positively and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- Many lessons in the Rowans include good opportunities for pupils to work together. This collaborative work helps pupils develop their social skills and ability to work as part of a team.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work and comments made during lessons, provide pupils with good feedback about how well they are doing. Pupils told inspectors that teachers explained things clearly and gave them extra help if they had difficulty understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide helpful and effective support, particularly for the pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. They work closely with the teacher and help pupils manage their behaviour and learning. In a few cases, they intervene too quickly and do not allow pupils to develop independence.

- Some teachers set the bar too low in terms of the behaviour that they expect from students. For example, pupils' use of inappropriate language is sometimes not challenged sufficiently or consistently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour in and around the centre is not always good. When lessons fail to engage or challenge them, pupils often behave inappropriately and learning time is lost. This is particularly evident in the Oaks. Both staff and pupils agreed that behaviour needs improvement in order to be good in all parts of the centre.
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons mostly support learning. Pupils generally listen well when other pupils are speaking and give them the respect they deserve. A minority needs frequent reminders and sometimes considerable prompting from adults in order to keep them focused on their work.
- Staff management of pupils' behaviour varies and is not always effective. Pupils do not manage their own behaviour to a high enough standard. Many expect that adults will manage their behaviour for them or will tolerate low-level, inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils in the Rowans say that the rewards system that operates there promotes good behaviour.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at Silverbank. They say that there are adults that they can turn to if they have a problem. They understand that some situations are potentially unsafe and have effective strategies to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils say that there are instances of bullying, particularly in the Oaks, but that if they are reported, staff deal with them appropriately. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the different types of bullying they might encounter.
- The pupil council ensures that pupils have a voice. They are confident that staff will listen to their ideas and concerns and they can influence change.
- Despite some recent improvement, attendance overall is well below average and this has a negative impact on pupils' learning. Pupils at the Rowans have a higher rate of attendance than those at the Oaks. Pupils' punctuality is improving but needs to improve further in order to be good.
- Exclusions were previously very high but have reduced significantly. Despite this reduction too many days are still lost due to exclusions.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership is not yet good because leaders and managers at all levels have not had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement and on the quality of teaching, both of which are inadequate overall.
- Joint observations conducted with centre leaders show that they have an accurate view of what constitutes good teaching.
- Teachers who are not teaching well are challenged and supported to improve. The centre can show examples of where coaching and support have enabled teachers to significantly improve their practice and become more effective. Teachers value the good professional development opportunities they have.
- Systems are being developed to make sure that the management of teachers' performance and salary progression are linked more closely to teachers' impact on pupils' progress.
- The centre reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and there are appropriate systems and procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress accurately. Leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and they are acting diligently to address weaknesses and accelerate progress. Much of this work is recent and there remains a significant legacy of previous underperformance.

- The centre regularly reviews and revises the range of subjects that pupils study. Consequently, it provides a broad curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils. Moral and social development is promoted well and pupils have good opportunities to participate in activities that develop their creativity and understanding of the wider world. The behaviour of some pupils in the Oaks limits the extent of activities which they can undertake. Work experience and a range of extra-curricular activities also extend pupils' opportunities. During the inspection a group of pupils were preparing for an expedition as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The local authority, acting through the management committee, has previously not been effective in holding the centre to account. Responsibility for staffing and finance has not been devolved to the management committee. Too little has been done to review information on pupils' progress or monitor the quality of teaching and review it in relation to performance management. Centre leaders have undertaken these tasks, but they have not been supported effectively to accelerate improvement. The local authority commissioned an independent consultant to work with the centre and, recently, additional experienced people have been recruited to strengthen the management committee. It is not clear if anyone outside the centre checks on how the pupil premium funding is spent. There are emerging plans for the Oaks to become an alternative provision free school, but these plans are at an early stage of development. There is an urgent need for medium- and long-term plans which set out clearly how the two parts of the provision will become independent of each other, while continuing to improve to become good.
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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

Unique reference number	132034
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	406463

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	88
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Councillor David Royle
Headteacher	Paul Cottam (interim headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 March 2011
Telephone number	01634338801
Fax number	01634 338808
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