

# The Rubicon Centre

Raincliffe Street, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 4AN

**Inspection dates** 25–26 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
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 requires improvement.

- Achievement overall requires improvement because students' progress across the school is not consistent. As a result attainment for some students is too low.
- Attainment in reading is lower than it should be because support for the less-able students is not sufficiently in place and students do not yet spend sufficient time on tasks designed to improve their reading skills.
- In some lessons, work set does not meet the needs of individual students sufficiently accurately. This is because teachers do not always use information about students' previous learning effectively enough when planning lessons.
- Sometimes the pace of learning in lessons is too slow and students lose interest. As a result behaviour dips and learning time is lost.
- While marking is undertaken regularly across all parts of the school, too often staff only give positive feedback to students and do not give them sufficient guidance and direction on how to improve their work.
- Too frequently, students' behaviour during lunchtime requires improvement. Often this is related to students having too little to do as currently the school has no outdoor facilities and indoor sports facilities are limited.
- Over the last two terms, school leaders have observed teaching regularly. However, the quality of the recording of their findings requires improvement as it is insufficiently detailed and their feedback to teachers is insufficiently clear on how to improve

### The school has the following strengths

- Despite their recent appointment, the school leadership team are very clear about what needs to be done to move the school forward.
- The achievement of students is now successfully tracked and regularly checked.
- The quality of teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement due to the successful recruitment of effective staff.
- The management committee is effective. It has adopted advised changes and has good representation from local schools.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers and a specialist instructor. A joint lesson observation was undertaken with the headteacher. The inspector also examined the quality of work in the books of students from across the school.
- The inspector studied health and safety documentation, teachers' planning for lessons, and documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the quality of teaching as well as the school's system for checking students' progress.
- Meetings were held with students, senior leaders, members of the school staff, a member of the management committee and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took into account the views shared by three parents with school in a recent questionnaire. One parent made their views known on the online questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This pupil referral service is a small school which was opened in September 2012. It moved to its current site in January 2013. This is the first inspection of this provision as it replaced a local authority run provision known as REOTAS, which was not subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- Initially the provision was named Selby Pupil Referral Service, but from September 2013, this changed to The Rubicon Centre. The senior leadership team including the headteacher are all new to their posts having joined the school at its opening in 2012.
- The school meets the needs of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 many of whom have either been permanently excluded from school or are in danger of being so. A smaller number of students attend because of their medical needs, often on a part-time basis. All students who attend live in Selby and surrounding areas
- Currently, the school has 13 students on roll all of whom, due to their health or behavioural difficulties, are recognised as having special educational needs, which are supported through school action plus. A smaller number of students are supported with a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with a very small number from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Last year the school did not receive pupil premium funding (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families) despite the eligibility of approximately 60% of students. This has not yet been rectified but discussions are planned with local secondary schools with the aim that the school will soon receive appropriate funding for this group.
- The school offers outreach behaviour-management support to six mainstream secondary schools within the Selby and surrounding area. This work is aimed at reducing the numbers of students excluded from mainstream schools.
- Students who attend the school do not currently attend any alternative provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better by:
  - ensuring that data on students' previous performance is used more effectively to plan learning for individual students
  - improving the pace of learning in some lessons so that students remain interested
  - improving the quality of marking across the school so that it not only praises students' efforts but gives them guidance on how to improve both the content and presentation of their work.
- Improve attainment in reading by:
  - offering students more opportunities to read for pleasure and for purpose in different areas of the curriculum
  - providing more individual support for the less-able students.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - increasing opportunities for outside activities in order to improve behaviour at break and lunchtimes
  - ensuring that records of lesson observations clearly detail the aspects of teaching that need to improve and to share these with individual staff.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most students arrive at the school with low levels of attainment because of gaps in their education, often due to their behavioural or medical needs. School data shows that last year the majority of students who attended school made some progress. Too few, however, made good progress from their starting points. As a result a small number left without qualifications or accreditations.
- Whilst a number made good and accelerated progress during the time they attended, overall, students' achievement requires improvement.
- Attainment in English is lower overall than in mathematics. This is because students have insufficient opportunity to read either for pleasure or in other subjects across the curriculum. The less-able students are also not given sufficient individual targeted support to improve their reading skills.
- Despite the lack of pupil premium funding last year, students who are known to be eligible for free school meals made very similar levels of progress to their peers in both English and mathematics and their achievement also required improvement. School leaders currently check on the progress of all groups and ensure achievement for this group, together with others, is improving.
- Last year the most-able students made better progress than other groups. This was because staff identified them through effective tracking systems and also used their Key Stage 2 results to accurately produce realistic targets, which were met by the majority. Overall, the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is improving.
- Apart from all students who attend the school having identified behavioural or medical needs, some have additional learning needs, for example, being on the autistic spectrum. These students receive extra support through individual educational plans. However, the progress that some students make towards their targets is not sufficiently well checked by the school's leaders and, as a result, progress for this group also requires improvement.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is improving, but nevertheless still requires improvement. This is because not enough is yet consistently good. This was clearly evidenced by the range in the quality of teaching observed during the inspection.
- Too frequently teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what students can achieve in lessons and the pace of learning is too slow. As a result students make less progress than they are capable of in the time allowed.
- The majority of staff plan learning well and take into account data available on students' previous learning and abilities. This results in personalised learning which meets the needs of individual students well. However, occasionally teachers' planning is not sufficiently individualised and tasks are too broad, and when this happens progress slows.
- The vast majority of teachers mark students' books regularly. However, teachers' written comments are inconsistent in quality. Too little marking gives clear guidance to students on how to improve their work to the next level or how to improve presentation. Similarly, examples of less effective feedback were seen in some lessons during the inspection. Comments were positive and encouraging, but students received little guidance on how to make their work better. As a result, learning was less effective.
- Since the appointment of the literacy and numeracy coordinators with responsibility for English and mathematics, standards are beginning to improve. A focus on improving basic skills is beginning to contribute to a rise in standards.
- In lessons where teaching is good, learning is made purposeful and enjoyable. Consequently, students are involved and concentrate well and, often for the first time, grow in confidence in

their own abilities. This reduces the barriers they face and their behaviour improves. This was clearly evident in an English lesson in which Year 9 students were involved in role play, enacting a scene from the book *'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'*. This poignant and emotionally charged book held the attention of students well. The role-play activity, which included them taking the persona of a Nazi officer, challenged their thinking and led to some excellent responses.

- The majority of teaching assistants' time is used effectively to support learning and behaviour. Despite the newness of the school, staff teamwork observed during the inspection was a strength.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Although behaviour requires improvement overall, the majority of students' behaviour shows a marked improvement from that at their mainstream schools.
- In lessons where the well-structured behaviour-management plan is adhered to, students' behaviour is well managed and many make the right choices. However, outside lessons, particularly at lunch and break time behaviour is often less good. This is because students are not able to go outside on the school site as no outside area is available for play. This reduces the amount of activities on offer and leads to students' boredom and often a dip in behaviour.
- Students spoken to during the inspection say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school for the majority of the time and feel their views are respected and that staff 'understand them and care about their needs'.
- The vast majority of students are well informed about the different forms bullying can take. They were also clear that although they may have been subject to incidents of bullying in the past, 'Bullying does not happen here.' because, as one pupil explained, 'We all just get on.' and bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Levels of attendance are increasing and are closely monitored by staff on a weekly basis. Links with other agencies, for example the Education Welfare Service, have further increased this rate of progress. Attendance this term is close to the national average, a significant increase from last year. Data also shows that attendance improves for the majority of students once they join the centre compared to their time in mainstream schools.
- Parents who met with the school during a recent local authority review agreed that school kept their children safe and had helped to improve their behaviour over the time they attended.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Despite leadership and management requiring improvement overall, much has been achieved over a short period of time. Since his appointment just over a year ago the effective headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, has managed the successful transfer from a local authority unit to a school. Their clear focus on raising standards and increasing the achievement of students have been key to this successful transfer.
- Given the improvements in the last year and the determination of senior leadership and the governing body to continue to bring about change, the school is well placed to improve further.
- However, before the school's overall effectiveness moves to good, leaders recognise much needs to be accomplished. For example, the quality of teaching needs to be more consistently good. Although teachers have been observed regularly since the school opened by senior leaders, the usefulness of the feedback to teachers from these observations is reduced by the lack of effective note keeping and feedback analysis. As a result the quality of teaching is slower to improve, although effective action is beginning to be taken through the management of staff's performance to improve areas of weakness.
- Although priorities for improvement have been identified in the school's development plans, up until very recently targets set have been too broad. Senior leaders have now refined this and steps forward are now more clearly defined.

- Senior leaders are aware of students' lack of progress in reading and the newly appointed literacy coordinator has plans to improve support for the less-able students. These have not yet been put in place.
- The leadership team ensure staff are set performance targets that link directly to students' achievement and are identified within the school's development plan. Checks on the achievement of targets are undertaken and the headteacher uses this information to make effective decisions on teachers' pay and training opportunities.
- Opportunities for students to study a wider curriculum have improved this year with a stronger emphasis on broadening students' experiences away from the classroom. Trips to outdoor locations to study survival skills have proved popular with students, one of whom described a recent expedition as, 'good fun for all of us'. These experiences increase students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Whilst behaviour requires improvement overall, senior leaders are effectively addressing current issues and have improved behaviour in lessons in the short time that the school has been open. This has been through the continuous application of the behaviour-management policy and through the tireless work of the staff team who have developed strong relationships with students and outside organisations.
- Feedback from parents who recently visited the school was wholly positive with comments such as, 'Since coming here, my child has settled and is much happier and wants to learn.' This is evidence of the good job the majority of parents feel the school is doing in improving outcomes for their children.
- The school is now benefitting from a good level of support offered by the local authority which is assisting senior leaders to successfully bring about improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The well-organised management committee has, in response to recent guidance, widened its membership to include senior staff from local schools. Currently, members offer good support and challenge to school leaders, particularly in relation to staffing, the achievement of students and financial issues. They have a good understanding of data relating to students' achievement and have recently delivered training designed to improve the quality of teaching. As a result they are well placed to offer a good level of support and challenge. Working with senior leaders they have developed an effective system for checking the performance of staff, which rewards good teaching and is beginning to address any underperformance of staff. They are also currently supporting the headteacher in his efforts to secure pupil premium funding for eligible students referred from other schools, as well as ensuring a more sound financial footing for the school by ensuring that an identified, delegated budget is in place. This represents good financial management. The health and safety committee ensures systems and procedures for safeguarding students meet current standards.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137751
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425685

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	17
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Pirie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Les Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01609 533951
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
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