

The Primrose Centre

Throne Road, Rowley Regis, B65 9JP

Inspection dates

10–11 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement, although there is some that is good and outstanding.
- This inconsistent quality of teaching affects the progress that pupils make with their reading, writing and mathematical skills. While some make good progress, others do not do as well as they should.
- In some lessons, staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve. Behaviour is not managed firmly enough and time is wasted.
- Leaders do not make the most of social times to help pupils to improve their behaviour and to get on well with other people. Pupils do not always go outside to play at lunchtimes even when the weather is fine.
- Work to improve teaching has not ensured that teaching is consistently good. However, there have been improvements.
- Some pupils do not attend well enough. The centre also closes early on Fridays which means that learning time is lost.

The school has the following strengths

- In the best lessons, staff have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Their management of pupils' behaviour is very skilful so pupils concentrate for long periods of time.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has improved many aspects of the centre. In particular, the centre is now good at helping pupils to go back to mainstream schools and to succeed once they get there.
- The management committee, which is new this year, are using their skills well to support and challenge the centre.
- The headteacher and staff know pupils and families well. They work closely with families to get the additional help that their children often need.
- Pupils enjoy many of their lessons. During their time at the centre they become more confident. They get better at working co-operatively with other pupils in the classroom and at following instructions from adults.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. During these lessons she talked to pupils about their work and looked at their books. The inspector watched pupils arriving from their taxis in the morning and visited the dining room at lunchtime. The inspector also heard three pupils read.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress, records of the headteacher's monitoring of the work across the school and documents relating to safeguarding. She looked at pupils' work from each class and across the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and a deputy headteacher, two members of the management committee, and a representative of the local authority.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View). Instead, the inspector took into account responses to the centre's own recent questionnaire for parents and carers and letters and cards they had sent to the centre. Eight staff questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

Sue Morris-King, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Primrose Centre is a small pupil referral unit catering for two groups of primary-aged pupils: those who are permanently excluded and those who need a short time away from their mainstream school in order to receive support to improve their behaviour and their learning skills. The second group come for an initial placement of four to seven weeks, although this time is sometimes extended.
- Almost half of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium (government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority).
- At the time of the inspection there were no looked-after children on the roll of the centre.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- Seven pupils have statements of special educational needs and several others are undergoing statutory assessment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently at least good by making sure that:
 - each lesson contains work that is suitably challenging for different ability groups
 - teachers develop a clear, firm and positive way of managing pupils' behaviour in each class and each lesson to help them to engage fully with every aspect of their learning
 - each lesson makes the best use of the time available so that pupils make as much progress as they can
 - all adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and actively support them with their learning in each lesson.
- Maximise the chance that pupils have to succeed by making sure that leaders:
 - review the structure and timing of the school week so that pupils attend full time
 - work closely with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance
 - clarify the whole-school responsibilities of the two deputy headteachers in improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Extend the opportunities to develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills at informal times, including through greater use of physical activities that promote good teamwork and develop pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Many pupils have fallen behind in their learning before they come to the Primrose Centre and many are working below the levels expected for their age. Not enough of them make the accelerated progress they need to in order to catch up quickly in reading, writing and mathematics, although some do.
- The work in pupils' books shows variable achievement. Some pupils are making steady or good progress in mathematics and writing. Their books show clearly that they are understanding new mathematical concepts and are writing with more accuracy and length. For other pupils, less progress is evident. The centre's data show that this was also the picture for pupils who attended during the last academic year.
- Many pupils find reading difficult. By reading frequently in lessons they become more confident. The school's assessment information shows that the majority of pupils, especially the younger ones, are developing their phonics skills (knowing the sounds that letters make) steadily.
- Pupils who have the most complex reading difficulties do not always make the progress they should. The centre has introduced a more suitable reading programme for these pupils. This is at too early a stage to show progress.
- Some pupils make good progress in reading, writing or mathematics and for a few, progress is outstanding. The new skills and knowledge they gain helps them to reintegrate into a mainstream school or to achieve well in a special school.
- Some pupils' achievement is affected by their attendance. Where pupils miss too many days at the centre, they do not make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium make similar progress to their peers. Some do very well, others make expected progress, and some do not make enough progress. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012/13 to comment on their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 without identifying them.
- Pupils with more complex needs are already benefiting from being part of the nurture group, a small, welcoming class where a strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not good enough in some lessons to promote good progress.
- Teachers' expectations are not always high enough. This was clearly shown when comparing sets of books from different classes. Some books were untidy, and had other pupils' names on the front, crossed out. This does not help pupils to have pride in their work. In contrast, other books were pristine and pupils' work was neat and tidy as well as accurate.
- Where teaching requires improvement, there is not enough insistence on pupils completing their work and they are allowed to do other things instead. Support staff are not always briefed well enough. In these lessons the teacher does not intervene quickly enough when pupils need help.

- Where teaching is good or outstanding, teachers know exactly what they want the pupils to achieve by the end of the lesson. They build carefully on what pupils have learnt in the previous lesson. They brief the teaching assistants well so each adult in the room is equally effective. In these lessons, teachers pace the lesson so that they stretch pupils' concentration span, which helps to prepare them well for going back to mainstream schools.
- Pupils' books are marked frequently, often with encouraging comments. Sometimes marking includes useful corrections or advice, but this is not consistent.
- The assessment of pupils' work against national standards is thorough and the centre has a clear system to track progress over time. Teachers look at pupils' work together to check that they are being consistent in awarding levels. However, they have not yet compared their pupils' work with the work of pupils from other primary schools to moderate their judgements.
- Classroom displays celebrate pupils' work and help to support learning by providing prompts that pupils can use to help them explain their feelings, know the sounds that letters make or use key words in their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The management of behaviour in lessons is inconsistent. There is a behaviour policy and a reward and sanctions system but this is not always used by staff to promote good behaviour.
- Where the management of behaviour in lessons is weaker, staff let pupils opt out of learning too quickly. Pupils then distract other pupils who want to do their work.
- Some of the older pupils swear quite frequently, and use the word 'gay' inappropriately, to mean that they do not like something. Some staff challenge this well and others do not. The centre does not have a clear enough approach to tackling offensive language, which makes it difficult for new staff to know what to do.
- Some management of behaviour is excellent because teachers and teaching assistants work as a close team and are highly consistent in the way they speak to pupils. They are firm about what they expect, constantly praise pupils when they work hard and make the right choices, and encourage pupils to keep trying. Pupils almost always respond well to this and show positive attitudes to learning.
- Many pupils improve their behaviour considerably once they have spent some time at the centre. Many parents and carers are very pleased with how their children's behaviour and attitudes change.
- At lunchtimes, pupils and staff eat together in the dining room. Pupils are generally calm and sensible, but there is not enough emphasis on developing social skills such as taking responsibility and making conversation. The centre has a large outdoor area but this is not always used well, for example to develop play and team skills.
- The new sports lessons on which the sports premium grant is being spent are helping pupils to develop their ability to cooperate with each other and to become more resilient, both aspects of learning that many of the pupils find difficult.

- There is very little bullying at the centre. There is a high staffing level and pupils are well supervised, so there is little opportunity for it to occur. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils know how to seek help if they feel picked on and staff quickly notice if pupils are upset.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and in a range of other situations.
- Some pupils attend very well, but for others attendance is too low. This means that they miss valuable learning time.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher knows what aspects of teaching need to improve and has worked alongside staff to support them. This has resulted in some improvement, however weaknesses remain. A range of monitoring activities has taken place although these have not always been frequent or formal enough. The headteacher's judgements of the quality of teaching observed during the inspection were accurate.
- The whole-school leadership roles of the two deputy headteachers are not clear enough.
- The centre works well with families where pupils' attendance is very low. There are good procedures to check where pupils are each day if they do not arrive at school. Not as much attention is paid to raising all pupils' attendance to a good level.
- The headteacher has successfully changed the way in which the centre supports local primary schools. In the past, the centre was mainly full of permanently excluded pupils. The centre now offers short-term placements to help pupils to improve their behaviour and their learning skills and works with schools to help pupils to reintegrate.
- The centre is developing good partnerships with local schools. Some of these are well established and others are at an earlier stage. Schools with whom the centre has worked have appreciated the support provided for their pupils.
- Processes to safeguard pupils are strong. Many pupils and their families are involved with a range of different agencies and the centre works hard to gain additional support for them when needed.
- The headteacher rightly identified that the more formal classroom environments did not meet some pupils' more complex needs. The centre has therefore very recently set up a nurture group. This was in its third week during the inspection and was developing well.
- The local authority has supported the centre by commissioning an advanced-skills teacher to work with staff. This has had some positive impact. The local authority has also supported the headteacher with self-evaluation. The resulting document recognises the areas that need to improve, but the judgements are generous.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee includes several serving or retired primary headteachers, who between them bring valuable knowledge and experience to the centre.
 - Since the management committee has formed they have developed an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They know how to use this information to decide how teachers should be paid and to tackle underperformance.

- The headteacher has identified that the current model of funding the centre is leading to a financial shortfall which is quickly increasing. The management committee has raised this issue with the local authority, which has offered short-term support. At the same time, the management committee has formed a strategic plan to make the provision sustainable and partly self-funding, which they are discussing with local schools.
- This management committee was not in place when original decisions were made about how to spend the pupil premium funding. However, they have closely analysed the impact of the funding. They were involved in the decisions about how to spend the sports premium funding.

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	135253
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	427165

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Linford
Headteacher	Jan Pennington
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
Telephone number	0121 5591043
Fax number	N/A
Email address	jan.pennington@primrose.sandwell.sch.uk

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