

South West Area Pupil Referral Unit

Chessbrook Centre, Tolpits Lane, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 6LJ

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is outstanding. Students quickly settle into learning on admission. They make rapid progress over time from their low starting points.
- Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives. They make outstanding progress in functional skills, work related learning and preparation for life. At the end of Year 11, all move into further education or apprenticeships.
- Students make outstanding progress in their academic and work-related courses as a result of outstanding teaching.
- Teachers have very high expectations for students' learning; they create a strong atmosphere for learning and maintain excellent relationships with students. Teachers use every opportunity to promote the use of literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. As a result, students make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They make excellent progress in their behaviour and most make rapid progress in attendance.
- The centre's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and direction for the work of the centre and receives excellent support from senior and middle leaders. Leaders have sustained the outstanding effectiveness of the centre's work since the previous inspection. They have also made significant improvements. The quality of teaching and learning has moved from good to outstanding. Systems for tracking students' progress have improved significantly.
- The local authority and management committee provide consistently good support for the centre. They rigorously hold leaders to account for its work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by eight teachers, including observations in some of the offsite alternative provision. All of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard students read in lessons and looked at samples of students' work jointly with subject leaders.
- Meetings and informal discussions took place with different students. Meetings were held with the centre's leaders, four members of the management committee and a group of three primary headteachers and five secondary deputy headteachers. A telephone discussion took place with the local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed in the centre's most recent survey of parents. They also held telephone discussions with a small number of parents, as there were too few responses to the online survey Parent View. They also looked at the responses on 41 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the summary of self-evaluation, the centre's improvement plan, minutes of management committee meetings, policies and procedures for safeguarding students, records of behaviour, attendance figures, examination results over the last three years, students' destinations when leaving the centre and records of progress and achievement over the last three years.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This pupil referral unit is usually referred to as Chessbrook Education Support Centre. It provides full time education for students, most of whom are at Key Stage 4 and have been permanently excluded from school or the school has requested a managed transfer. It also provides a programme of outreach support to 83 primary and secondary schools within the local area.
- Most students are White British.
- All students are supported at school action plus, including eight students at Key Stage 3 for whom the centre has applied for statutory assessment.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is the additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those with a parent in the armed services and those in local authority care.
- The smaller proportion of students at Key Stage 3 receive full time education at the centre for up to 18 weeks before returning to mainstream or special schools. Most students at Key Stage 4 follow a two-year programme of academic and/or work-related studies.
- All students attend alternative providers for part of their education. These include, the *High Herts Equestrian Centre* in Hemel Hempstead for stable management and equine studies, *TEC Tabard* in Radlett for functional skills, *Bicycle Hub* in Watford for cycle maintenance, *Watford Angling* in South Oxley, for fishing, *Building 1 Zone* in Watford for construction, *The Princes's Trust* in Watford for team building and enterprise skills, *Falconer Special School* in Bushy for motor vehicle maintenance, *Lifestyle Gym* in Hemel Hempstead for sport and leisure, *First Rung* in Watford for catering, sport and leisure, *Sparks* at Phasels Wood near Watford, for outward bound, *Motocross* in Francis Coombe Academy and West Herts College in Watford.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has become a national leader in education and the deputy headteacher a specialist leader in education for behaviour and attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain outstanding teaching and achievement by ensuring all leaders maintain a sharp focus on the impact of teaching on students' learning over time when evaluating the centre's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' achievement has moved from good to outstanding since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 11 they make outstanding progress in a wide range of academic and work-related examination courses. The range of examination courses and the grades students are achieving have increased significantly since the previous inspection. The centre's accurate 'Pupil Tracking Sheet' for each student shows that all are making expected progress and many are making above expected progress over time in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- The fewer students at Key Stage 3 make at least good progress, all working within their expected levels and some exceeding these. Most students successfully return to their schools within two terms at the centre.
- Different groups of students make equally outstanding progress as their classmates. A high proportion of more-able students in Year 11 gain the equivalent of five A* to C grades at GCSE and more-able students at Key Stage 3 quickly catch up and often exceed the targets set by their previous schools. Those with additional special educational needs make as much progress as their classmates because they receive excellent support for their learning.
- The few students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make the same progress as their classmates in English and mathematics because they receive outstanding additional support in literacy and numeracy which enables them to catch up with their classmates quickly.
- Students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their lives. They make at least consistently good progress in work-related learning such as construction and motor vehicle maintenance at all of the offsite centres. This has enabled all students over the past three years to transfer successfully to further education or apprenticeships and the majority have sustained their places one year on.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection moving from good to outstanding. This is accurately reflected in the centre's rigorous monitoring of teaching over time and the centre's tracking of students' progress over time. It is also reflected in views of parents and students. The quality of teaching in the offsite centres is at least consistently good enabling students to focus on their learning and show interest in their work.
- All teachers set high expectations for students learning. They use the information about what they already know and can do to plan precisely highly relevant activities. These enable students to make outstanding progress in rapidly gaining new knowledge, skills and understanding as they work towards their full potential. This was seen in students' work and in their records of progress over time.
- The very positive atmosphere in all classrooms and teachers' excellent relationships with students mean they do their very best to succeed in their learning activities. This was seen for example in a motor vehicle maintenance session, where a student accurately measured tyre pressures and tread depths, comparing these to legal limits and then went on to explain how the walls of the tyre were slightly worn.
- Outstanding teaching of the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy is promoted

very well across all subjects, including in work-related courses. As a result, students make excellent progress in applying their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects and in real-life situations. This was evidenced, for example, in construction lessons where teachers checked students' spelling, punctuation and grammar and encouraged the use of full sentences when marking their work.

- Teachers carefully link what students have previously learned to the next stage of learning in lessons enabling all students, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs, to learn even more.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Their behaviour in lessons, around the centre and in offsite provision is at least good and often outstanding. Students respond very positively to the code of conduct and maintain excellent relationships with staff. Teachers have high expectations for students' behaviour and manage it very effectively.
- Typically over time exclusions are rare. Occasionally, when students test out boundaries they are excluded for short periods of time with a managed return to lessons. This is highly effective in changing students' behaviour and attitudes to learning over time and is reflected in the high rate of successful return to school by students at Key Stage 3 and to further education and employment by students at Key Stage 4.
- Students' attitudes to learning rapidly improve on arrival at the centre. This is because expectations are always made clear and staff always provide encouragement and positive feedback on how well students are responding in lessons and what they need to do to improve. No instances of low-level disruption were seen and this is reflected in the centre's records of behaviour over time.
- In discussion, students confirmed that there was no bullying at the centre, which was echoed in the views of parents and staff. Students have a good understanding of the various types of bullying and do their utmost to prevent it. They also have an excellent understanding of why it is important to behave well in the centre, at offsite provision, at home and in society.
- Students show respect and are courteous to visitors. They listen carefully to the views of others and make a very positive contribution to discussions.
- The centre's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Very detailed risk assessments are made for all offsite activities, educational trips and work experience placements. A member of staff from the centre always accompanies students to each alternative provision to assure their safety and well-being.
- Students stay very safe and use the internet safely because they learn how to use computers and mobile phones safely. They fully abide by the rules for mobile phones, so that no misuse of mobile phones has ever been recorded. Students handle equipment safely and adopt safe practices in workshops as they consistently follow guidance on health and safety in the work place. Students say they are very safe in the centre and this was confirmed by parents and staff.
- The majority of students attend regularly and most make rapid progress in attendance during their time at the centre. Good attendance is promoted extremely well through the use of targets and rewards and this is closely monitored both at the centre and when students attend offsite provision or work experience. Parents and students agreed that attendance greatly improves at

the centre because students develop positive attitudes to learning quickly and want to learn and succeed.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, with excellent support from senior leaders and staff with leadership responsibilities, has successfully sustained the outstanding effectiveness of the centre. Under this leadership, the range of courses available to students has increased considerably, teaching has moved from good to outstanding and robust highly accurate systems of assessment are in place.
- The headteacher is highly regarded by academies and schools throughout the local authority and enjoys the full confidence of staff and parents in meeting the needs of different students. As a national leader in education, the headteacher works with other schools within the local authority to bring about improvements.
- Leaders rigorously monitor teaching and learning every term using national guidance based on the 'Teachers' Standards' to identify clear strengths and any areas for development. This has led to steady improvements in the quality of teaching and learning over time with all teaching being judged as good and a significant proportion across different subjects and year groups as outstanding.
- The management of staff performance is excellent and securely linked to any increases in salary. Teachers benefit from excellent opportunities for professional development to sustain high quality teaching and learning.
- The school's view of itself is highly accurate. Leaders know that they need to keep a sharp focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress over time in order to sustain high quality teaching.
- The range of academic and work-related courses has increased considerably since the previous inspection with more students being entered for high levels at GCSE. This has led to a significant rise in students' achievement because students now have a much wider choice of courses they wish to follow in addition to English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. Students receive excellent guidance in choosing the right options when preparing for the next stage of their lives. As a result, all pursue meaningful courses at college or enter apprenticeships when they leave school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. For example, younger students develop confidence in working together as a team through participation on outward bound activities at *Sparks* at Phasels Wood. Students learn about different cultures and religions through, for example, the celebration of festivals and participation in 'Black History' month. They reflect on world issues and discuss and share different views to arrive at very sensible conclusions. Students develop a good awareness and appreciation of diversity in different subjects such as art, food technology and music.
- Leaders make sure that pupil-premium funding is use effectively to provide one-to-one or small-group support for students to enable them to catch up quickly with their classmates in English and mathematics. This additional funding is also used to subsidise physical education kit and extra out-of-school activities for eligible students.
- The centre maintains strong links with parents and local schools. The outreach support provided

by the centre is highly regarded by local primary and secondary headteachers and parents.

- The local authority provides minimal support for the centre as it is so effective. The work of the centre has recently been reviewed with clear targets set for further development. Training and support, for example in the teaching of mathematics, is also provided where needed.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee provides good support for staff. Members are rigorous in holding the centre to account for its work. They form an accurate view of the quality of teaching over time through visits, an accurate interpretation of data and in the regular reports of the quality of teaching from leaders. They ensure all legal requirements for safeguarding students are met by making sure that all potential risks are fully assessed in offsite provision, that all training, policies and procedures are up to date. They ensure that the management of the headteacher’s performance is rigorous and securely linked to priorities for development. They also make sure that the performance objectives for teachers are carefully linked to the headteacher’s performance and that good teaching is rewarded.

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	130349
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425403

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 local authority
Headteacher	Susan Howe
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2010
Telephone number	01923 212025
Fax number	01923 225774
Email address	admin@chessbrook.herts.sch.uk

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