

Woodlands Education Centre

Park House, Farm Way Leigh Park, Havant, PO9 4AJ

Inspection dates

8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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Achievement of		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of		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:

- Achievement requires improvement because too few students make consistently good progress while they are at the centre. This is especially the case for those who have fallen furthest behind their peers.
- Too many students have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills, especially relating to literacy and numeracy. There are too few opportunities to practise reading and writing skills in a range of subjects.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of the students. This leads to work being set which is not always challenging enough for all.
- Marking is not consistently of high enough quality; students do not always know how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants and others who support students do not make a strong enough contribution to improving their learning. This does not represent good value for money.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons which are interesting enough to maintain students' concentration. When this occurs, students are prone to become distracted and misbehave.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders' and the management committee's monitoring of the quality of teaching and achievement has not been rigorous enough. Not all leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to contribute well to raising standards.
- The recently introduced systems to promote more regular attendance and improved behaviour have not yet had time to lead to significant improvements in these areas.

The school has the following strengths:

- The current headteacher has made a strong start in making the necessary improvements. He has evaluated the centre's strengths and weaknesses accurately and put into place clear and achievable plans for development.
- Current students in Key Stage 3 are making better progress than in the past. Teaching in practical subjects is typically strong.
- While at the centre, students affirm that they feel safe. Most say they are more positive both about learning and their future ambitions than when they were in their previous schools.
- The present management committee has begun to accelerate the pace of improvement. Much closer liaison with the Havant Federation means that the centre is starting to provide a better service than in the recent past.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, ten part-lessons were observed, some of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with: senior leaders, including the headteacher; middle leaders; members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body; officers representing the local authority; and a group of students.
- The inspector looked at: planning and quality assurance documentation; governing body minutes; assessment information; examples of students' work; and a range of policy documents.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, to indicate the views of parents and carers. However, the inspector gave consideration to the results of a parental survey undertaken by the centre in April of this year. In addition, Ofsted questionnaires completed by 20 centre staff were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodlands Education Centre is a pupil referral unit for male and female students aged 11 to 16. It can cater for up to 80 students. Most of the students on roll are dual registered. This means that both the centre and the mainstream secondary school which has referred the student take joint responsibility for their progress. Those students who are registered solely at the centre have generally been permanently excluded from their previous school.
- Students are placed at the centre for a variety of reasons, in addition to having been permanently excluded. Some are deemed to be at high risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream schools and so the centre offers an opportunity to prevent that occurring. Others have complex physical, mental or emotional needs. Just under half of the students receive one-to-one tuition, occasionally at the centre but more commonly at home. The intention for all students is that at some point they will return to mainstream education. The period of time students remain at the centre varies considerably. Almost all students have missed substantial periods of their education.
- A majority of the students have special educational needs supported through school action. About one third are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, mostly for emotional, social and behavioural problems.
- About 30% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals and a small proportion are looked after children. The centre does not receive any additional government funding (known as pupil premium) to support these groups, as is the case in mainstream schools. Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- About half of the students in each of Years 10 and 11 currently attend or attended until recently external placements for part of the week. In these settings, they study a range of vocational courses or undertake work-related learning.
- The centre is part of the Havant Federation of Schools.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership at the centre. The previous substantive headteacher resigned in August 2013. An interim headteacher was in post for some of the present academic year but, for a short period, the centre was without a headteacher. The current headteacher took up post in April of this year.
- In the summer of 2013, the governing body (known as the management committee) was reconstituted under a new Chair of the Governing Body. The current management committee includes several senior leaders from the Federation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good by ensuring that:
 - all teachers set challenging work which reflects their high expectations of what all students can achieve
 - all teachers provide interesting lessons and other activities which sustain students' concentration and lessen the chances of them becoming distracted
 - the quality of marking is consistently high in all subjects so that students always know how to improve their work, including how to write accurately
 - teaching assistants and other adults in a support role make a stronger contribution to raising achievement.
- Improve achievement so that it is at least good by ensuring that:
 - the rate of progress of all students accelerates, especially of those who have most catching up to do
 - students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are developed systematically and rapidly

- students are given more opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a wide range of subjects.

■ Increase the impact of leaders, including the management committee, on raising standards by ensuring that:

- the monitoring of the quality of teaching and students' progress is more rigorous
- systems to promote more regular attendance and better behaviour are sufficiently robust and lead to consistent improvements in both areas
- all leaders have the necessary skills, expertise and training to contribute well to securing necessary improvements
- the management committee holds centre leaders rigorously to account for its performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few students make consistently good progress while they are at the centre. Rates of progress vary considerably for different individual students, and to a lesser extent, in different subjects.
- Staff have not always been adept enough at establishing quickly where each student is starting from in terms of prior knowledge, understanding and skill development. This has led to gaps in their learning not being addressed systematically enough or in a sufficiently timely manner. Those students who are the furthest behind their peers when they join the centre typically make the slowest progress.
- All recognised groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs and the most able students, progress at a broadly similar rate. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children attain GCSE grades in Year 11 which are not significantly different from those of other students in the centre. Consequently, there are no notable gaps in either English or in mathematics.
- Many students have not acquired the basic skills to achieve well in subjects with a high literacy content, such as English, history and media studies. They frequently struggle to read with a sufficiently good level of understanding or to write with confidence and technical accuracy. Not enough demands are made on students to write at length. This often reinforces students' perceptions that anything other than writing in single words and short phrases is 'difficult' and to be avoided. There are also insufficient opportunities for students to practise their reading and writing skills in a range of subjects.
- Progress and attainment in mathematics are improving more rapidly than in the past because of a sharper focus by staff on building students' conceptual understanding more rigorously. The inspector saw an effective one-to-one session where a home tutor patiently and supportively built a student's confidence in problem solving. This was achieved by continually reminding her of what she had already learned and encouraging her to use that knowledge on a different problem.
- Many students achieve well in practical subjects. The inspector saw some high-quality artwork in the centre produced by the Year 11 students who have recently left. Rates of progress for current Key Stage 3 students are beginning to increase because some staff are now tracking how well students are achieving more carefully and planning accordingly. This is not yet consistent across the centre.
- Almost all Year 11 students succeed in gaining at least one qualification by the time they leave, either in GCSEs or in entry level courses. There is no early entry policy for GCSE courses.
- Most of the students who undertake vocational courses or work-related learning away from the centre also gain some form of accreditation as well as valuable skills. The degree of success varies from course to course. This has prompted a major centre review of this form of provision to ensure good value for money.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because too few students achieve well while they are at the centre. Where there are gaps in learning, teaching is not always well matched to the specific needs of individual students. Given that teaching group sizes are typically very small, this represents a missed opportunity to accelerate progress.
- Planning is improving but still tends to be too broad-brush and does not take into account what students already know, understand and can do. This means that some students have work which is far too easy, especially the most able, and others too hard. In these lessons, students quickly lose interest and progress slows.
- Teachers' expectations of students are not consistently high enough in terms of the volume and

quality of work they produce. The inspector saw a number of examples in books and portfolios where exercises were left unfinished, where work was badly presented and where a sequence of lessons had generated little or no written work. On many occasions, there was no evidence that the teacher had intervened or insisted on higher standards.

- There is some evidence that the quality of marking is beginning to improve, especially in mathematics. In several mathematics exercise books, there was a clear link seen between teachers' supportive comments and probing questions, and how much work was successfully completed with good standards of presentation.
- However, when there is a lack of clear guidance from teachers, marking is not helping students to improve their work. There is a particular weakness where students are not given enough advice on how to improve the quality of writing, including in subjects other than English.
- The centre has a high number of teaching assistants and other staff who work in a support role. Where they are most effective, they provide useful guidance to students and support teachers well. However, during the inspection, there were too many instances where they made little contribution to learning other than be present in a general supervisory capacity to keep students on task. This does not represent good value for money as students' learning is not developed as well as it might be.
- A strength of the centre is that staff know the students very well. Relationships are positive and most staff are skilled in drawing out students who may be initially reluctant to contribute to lessons. In several lessons seen during the inspection, students' personal and social skills were well promoted.
- Practical subjects such as art and food technology are typically well taught and successfully enable students to demonstrate talents in which they show pride. In these subjects, in particular, good subject knowledge clearly contributes to effective learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Where teaching is not sufficiently interesting, students typically fail to maintain their concentration and frequently begin to misbehave or go off task.
- Most students state that they are more positive about their learning in the centre than they were in their previous schools and have higher ambitions for their futures. However, when teachers' expectations are not high enough, standards of presentation of written work are often poor with some exercise books seen covered in graffiti.
- The great majority of staff are proficient in managing students' behaviour but there is some variability. Most staff were positive about how they feel that the centre is moving forward under the leadership of the relatively new headteacher. Nevertheless, there were about a quarter who either did not agree that behaviour is consistently well managed or that behaviour in the centre is good. In the centre's own survey, similar proportions of parents, carers and students expressed the same view.
- The centre has a high level of expertise and an effective range of strategies for dealing with those students who have the most serious and persistent behavioural problems. Case study evidence indicated some notable examples where significant improvements have been effected.
- The centre's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students affirm that the centre is a safe place to be and they feel that staff look after them well. Records indicate that the centre has undertaken checks to ensure that sites used for vocational courses are safe.
- Students report that incidents of bullying are rare; this is confirmed in the centre's behaviour logs. They are knowledgeable about all forms of bullying, including that relating to social media and text messaging.
- Attendance rates are low compared to those typically found in mainstream secondary schools, but there has been a gradual improvement during the course of the present academic year. Recently revised systems for monitoring both attendance and behaviour incidents are beginning

to make a contribution to raising standards, but the impact is still limited.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because since the previous inspection, standards have declined. Moreover, leaders and the management committee over time have not ensured that the quality of teaching has improved quickly enough. Few staff have made use of the best practice currently taking place in the most effective secondary schools or other pupil referral units.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and of students' achievement has not been sufficiently rigorous. Consequently, too many students have failed to make the necessary learning gains, especially in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Lack of detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching by individual staff has also led, in the past, to some receiving salary increases which did not accurately reflect their performance.
- The current headteacher has made an impressive start in getting the centre moving forward more rapidly. His evaluation of the school's strength and weaknesses is accurate and he has, with the management committee, created a clear, systematic and workable improvement plan.
- The headteacher has introduced well-coordinated new systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and students' progress and begun an extensive and comprehensive programme of staff training. The key focus of this is to ensure that the centre puts as much emphasis on catering well for students' academic progress as for their personal and welfare needs.
- Instrumental to the centre's plans are the much closer partnerships with the local secondary schools which refer students to Woodlands. The centre has become part of the Havant Federation and so is much more accountable to it for how well students achieve. The partnership has also helped to bring in additional support as well as challenge to improve both teaching and the quality of leadership at the centre.
- Over time, other leaders, including those responsible for subjects (middle leaders) have not made as strong a contribution to raising standards as they might have done. This situation is now beginning to improve. Tailored leadership support is now being put into place to ensure that all leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to make improvements in those areas for which they have responsibility.
- The curriculum is broadly fit for purpose. At Key Stage 4, students follow a range of courses leading to accreditation, including some vocational courses run off site. The Key Stage 3 curriculum covers National Curriculum requirements adequately. The provision for both key stages is currently under review with the key objective at Key Stage 4 to offer greater student choice. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is, overall, well promoted.
- The local authority has been monitoring the progress of the centre closely over the past year and played a key role in the reconstitution of the management committee. It is now providing useful support for subject leaders and to the headteacher to ensure that standards continue to rise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Until the start of the present academic year, the management committee had not held the centre to account rigorously enough for its performance; during that period, standards declined and the rate of improvement was too slow.
 - The present membership of the committee contains a high level of educational expertise and represents several of the schools which the centre serves. This is leading to much better challenge. Consequently, the committee is increasingly aware of how well students achieve and the quality of teaching. Plans are now securely in place to ensure that in the future, pay progression is more closely aligned with the successful achievement of teachers' targets.
 - The management committee ensures that all current requirements are met to safeguard students and that there is equality of opportunity for all. It also ensures that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

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 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 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	115840
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	432056

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	11–16
Gender of	Mixed
Number of on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Evelyn
Headteacher	Martin Hall
Date of previous school inspection	30-31 March 2011
Telephone number	02392 442530
Fax number	02392 442532
Email address	m.hall@woodlands.hants.sch.uk

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