

The Park Education Support Centre

High Street, Potters Bar, EN6 5AB

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and has consistently driven improvement since the last inspection. As a consequence, achievement and teaching are outstanding.
- The headteacher receives excellent support from the centre leaders and together they set high expectations for both staff and students. All staff are highly committed to the centre's work and teamwork is highly effective.
- Students' achievement is outstanding because teaching is of a very high quality and the curriculum is matched exceptionally well to their needs.
- Teaching and support staff are highly skilled in working with students who present with a wide range of challenges including mental health difficulties. Most have not had successful experiences in their previous schools. Staff work closely with each student's previous teachers in order to plan effective learning programmes.
- The centre works in partnership with a large number of schools and organisations, providing an outreach service which is highly effective and very much valued by all its partners.
- Behaviour is outstanding and students on both sites show very positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. It underpins the ethos of high expectations and care within both learning environments.
- The centre supports students to overcome the considerable barriers they face to re-engage with learning positively. Most either return to mainstream schools or engage in courses which lead to accreditation.
- Students say they feel exceptionally safe and the centre has exemplary procedures to make sure they are safeguarded.
- Partnerships with parents, carers, other agencies and organisations are outstanding. Parents are very positive about the work of the centre.
- The management committee provides very good support and challenge to senior leaders. Members work tirelessly to ensure the centre has the provision and resources it needs to carry out its services effectively.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited both sites to observe teaching and to gather evidence about students' progress. All lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and centre managers, subject and middle leaders, staff with particular responsibility for areas of the centre's work and with students. The inspector had telephone discussions with the Chair of the Management Committee, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher representative of the Secondary Exclusions Pilot Partnership.
- The inspector considered the four responses to the online survey, Parent View and a number of questionnaires from parents and carers from the recent survey run by the centre.
- The inspector took account of the 14 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including records of students' behaviour and progress and their individual learning plans. She looked at records of leaders' monitoring of teaching, headteacher's reports of the work of the centre including the impact of the outreach service, school self-evaluation, the strategic plan and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lynda Morgan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Park Education Support Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, or are considered at risk of permanent exclusion. The centre also offers an outreach service. Support and referrals are taken from 70 primary and 12 secondary settings in Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City, Potters Bar and Borehamwood.
- The centre is situated on two sites in Potters Bar providing accommodation for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students.
- Most of the students have complex difficulties which include those associated with cognitive learning, mental health and social and emotional difficulties. In addition they present with challenging behaviours. They have all experienced difficulties within their mainstream provisions and are largely disengaged from learning when they join the centre.
- The centre aims to support students in Key Stage 3 to achieve a move back to mainstream education. For the most part, the centre aims to help students in Key Stage 4 to gain GCSEs and other accreditation, enabling them to further their education at college or through training and move into a work environment. Some students attend off site vocational courses in motor mechanics, equine studies and social care for one or two days a week at Oaklands College.
- Students' attendance at the centre can be for a relatively short number of weeks, but this is variable and depends on the needs and response of the students to the programmes offered. Students referred in Key Stage 4 tend to remain with the centre following individualised programmes leading to accreditation. In the previous academic year there were 84 students in the centre. Currently the centre has 46 students across both sites and is supporting a number of students across a wide area within the partnership through outreach.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is approximately a quarter which is above average.
- The centre works with two teaching school alliances which include mainstream and special schools, and it contributes to a number of local and national partnerships.
- The headteacher plays a major role in the Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere Double District Partnership providing training, skills and knowledge to a large number of organisations as well as support for individual students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the many strengths in teaching and learning by ensuring all staff have a detailed understanding of the most complex barriers to learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership drives the continuous desire to improve and contributes to the highly effective teamwork and strong staff morale. Senior leaders work exceptionally well with her and they are all passionate about achieving a high quality learning environment and the best possible outcomes for students.
- Senior leaders evaluate in detail the effectiveness of the centre by measuring the impact of its work on students' achievement. They listen to the views of all concerned and adapt their practice in order to improve. Since the last inspection they have worked relentlessly to improve and refine the service they provide. As a result, the centre is regarded as a highly effective service provider across the two areas it serves and beyond.
- The staff provide a highly effective outreach service. They advise staff on how to understand and manage students' behaviour and create effective learning programmes in a large number of primary and secondary schools. As a result of the Secondary Exclusions Pilot Partnership work led by the centre, there have been no permanent exclusions from these schools over the last four years for students living within the Double District Partnership.
- Senior leaders have created a calm working environment where high-quality relationships are characterised by support, regard and trust. Expectations are consistently high. As a result, students respect the staff and their classrooms and show consideration for each other and their work.
- Individual members of staff are valued highly by senior leaders who provide support to ensure teaching is consistently of a very high quality. They are rigorous in checking the progress, attendance and behaviour of students, including those who attend vocational courses one or two days a week, at college.
- Performance management systems are very thorough and the leadership of teaching is exceptionally good. Senior leaders are accurate in their judgements and provide strong support to staff so they know how to improve. They ensure that staff with responsibilities for particular aspects of the centre's work, including subject and middle leaders, make a strong contribution to its effectiveness and development. Staff training is very carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals as well as the planned development and identified priorities of the centre.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed the marking policy and refined the way students' progress is tracked and assessed. There is now a clear understanding by all students of when they have achieved well and when they need to improve.
- The centre is highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- The curriculum meets students' needs exceptionally well. Opportunities to gain qualifications have increased in both breadth and in the number of accredited courses available. It inspires interest and helps to re-engage students in meaningful learning that will take them to the next steps when they leave the centre. Some 30 different courses are now available to students in a wide range of subjects. Students are given careers guidance and practical support to make decisions that will reflect their aspirations for the future.
- The centre promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and life in modern Britain, extremely well. For instance in an English lesson in Key Stage 3, students who were studying 'Oliver Twist' discussed the consequences of Fagin's behaviour as he sent out young boys to steal for him. They considered the punishments that might have been applied at the time against those which might be given today.
- Partnership working with schools, colleges, organisations, other agencies and parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are closely consulted in decision making about their child's progress and future. The

centre works with them from the point of referral and for many, during outreach.

- The centre's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all statutory requirements and are exemplary. Leaders ensure staff are consistent and exceptionally vigilant so that students are kept safe.
- The centre uses its pupil premium funding very effectively to provide offsite activities, vocational programmes, one-to-one therapy, counselling and mentoring, clothing items and subsidised food. This has led to eligible pupils making rapid progress since the previous inspection, closing the gap in attainment with national levels and achieving a wider range of accreditation.

■ The governance of the school:

- The management committee provides strong support to senior leaders in judging the centre's effectiveness, including that of the outreach service. Highly effective systems are in place which ensure it functions very successfully.
- Members of the management committee are very knowledgeable, making a meaningful contribution to the centre and working in strong partnership with leaders. They provide challenge and support to senior leaders and know how well students are achieving through the detailed data reports given to them by the headteacher. Members gather information for themselves about the quality of teaching and are well informed about how the performance of teachers is managed. They make sure that the best teaching is rewarded and that systems are in place for underperformance to be tackled.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is indeed a huge achievement considering all students have been either permanently excluded from their mainstream schools or are at risk of exclusion when they join the centre. Rules and routines are made clear so staff and students fully understand what is expected.
- Students respond very well indeed to the well-established routines. They respect their learning environment, the staff and each other. They show great respect for property and for their work. For example, their books are kept very neatly, they take a pride in sharing their work and they try hard to help and encourage each other when appropriate.
- Students respond to the teaching with a very high level of engagement in all lessons across both sites. They respond well to the advice they are given by staff and are polite and respectful when having conversations. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and they achieve exceptionally well.
- Parents say the centre has helped their child to turn their lives around with an 'amazing increase in motivation' and students told the inspector 'I see this as an opportunity' and 'it's like a family here, now I'm really learning.'
- Almost all students travel to the centre by public transport which for some includes a bus and train followed by a walk. Many of them find this difficult. Despite this, nearly all students attend the centre more regularly than their previous schools. The overall attendance rate is improving and close to the national average. Attendance in Year 10 has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Safety

- The centre's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Risk assessments undertaken are thorough and detailed to ensure students are kept safe during work experience and when involved in on and off site activities.
- Students say they feel safe and know who to seek help from if they have concerns. Exceptionally effective practice is in place to keep students safe when they are using computers and mobile phones, particularly when they are online. The practice, which is understood by all staff and students, is consistent across both sites and students and parents understand the key points to remember out of school time too.

- Many students have experienced different types of bullying in their previous schools. They say bullying in the centre is rare and is dealt with promptly. Anti-bullying forms part of the centre's highly effective personal, social and development curriculum.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding and has a very positive effect on students' engagement, learning and achievement.
- From the point of referral, teachers and their assistants quickly establish excellent relationships with students. They are highly skilled in planning lessons which challenge students academically and promote their personal development.
- Teachers develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum's wide range of subjects. They ensure the appropriate vocabulary is taught within each specialist subject. Teachers use real-life situations very effectively to make work meaningful and wall displays are rich in students' work and prompts to support learning.
- Practical lessons engage and sustain students' interest in learning; they are encouraged to develop their reading and extended writing skills in all subjects. Work in students' books confirms that teaching in mathematics is systematic and enables students to make rapid progress in filling gaps in their learning.
- The teaching of information and communication technology is a strength. In a music lesson, Year 9 students worked on computers to create an 8 bar backing track using online music software. The teacher and his assistant provided exactly the right amount of support and challenge to enable students to work through the different instruments available, making choices and composing their introduction.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to check students' understanding. They provide them with clear information about how well they are doing, how to improve and what the next steps are towards their goals. All staff have high expectations and regularly adjust students' targets to make the most of their learning.
- Assessment is detailed and thorough. Teachers quickly identify what students need to do to move forward with their learning and this is shared with both students and parents.
- Students are inspired by the innovative and creative range of resources teachers use. Their interest in learning is engaged and sustained over the whole day and quite often they do not want to pack away and leave the room at the end of the lesson.
- Teaching assistants provide excellent support. They know students' capabilities well and know when to intervene and when to step back. They take direction from the teacher and contribute very well to students' learning and well-being.
- In some cases, teachers do not have a complete understanding of the difficulties that students' face. They do not always use the most appropriate methods to assess students' learning, social, emotional or mental health problems.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- When students are referred to the centre, their attainment is mostly below average. Most students have complex needs which the centre begins to address from their point of entry. During the time they spend at the centre, many meet or exceed the amount of progress expected nationally.
- Students' make rapid progress in developing their skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and

communication technology.

- The centre has placed an even greater emphasis on literacy across the whole curriculum since the previous inspection; as a result students are articulate in discussion on a variety of topics. They speak with confidence and knowledge, showing they are willing to consider other points of view. They read aloud with confidence and expression and are able to apply their writing skills in a variety of subjects.
- The centre's focus is to motivate and re-engage students in learning. Many have had negative experiences in school and their challenging behaviour has disrupted their progress and attainment. Staff work closely with students' mainstream schools and other agencies to put together programmes to address both their learning and emotional needs. Therapeutic work supports each student and the large majority make rapid progress as a result. In Key Stage 3, most are reintegrated to mainstream schools, and in Key Stage 4 a high proportion achieve accreditation and successfully move on to college at the end of Year 11.
- In Key Stage 4 the most-able students make good or in some cases outstanding progress. The number of students achieving A-C grades in GCSE is increasing each year with successes in English, mathematics, science, art, business studies and citizenship studies last academic year. In Key Stage 3, achievement is influenced by the time students spend on the centre's roll. Some remain for only a short period before re-integration to a mainstream school. Where they remain longer and typically up to 20 weeks, they make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Students achieve qualifications in a wide range of accreditations on offer to them. Nearly all students go on to further education or training when they leave the centre.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of groups of students, including those who have additional learning needs, those with mental health difficulties and those who are disadvantaged. The centre uses pupil premium funding very effectively to fill gaps in eligible pupils' learning through individual support for students.

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	130348
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447968

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	46
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Peter Brown
Headteacher	Sara Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2012
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