

Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School

Russet House, 35 Russet Close, Gloucester, GL4 0RQ

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some pupils do not make the progress in reading, writing and mathematics of which they are capable.
- The assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills when pupils join the school is insufficiently accurate.
- When teaching does not build sufficiently on pupils' existing knowledge and skills, it does not challenge pupils to make rapid progress.
- Teaching programmes are not designed to develop pupils' skills quickly enough.
- Pupils' attendance, especially among those in Years 10 and 11 at The Russet House Centre, is too low. This leads to gaps in pupils' learning that slow their progress.
- Pupils entitled to additional funding are not identified with sufficient accuracy. As a result, school leaders are unable to identify the impact of the funding on improving these pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' safety requires improvement because their frequent absence can place some of them at risk.

The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour of pupils within the centres is good. Any unacceptable behaviour is managed well by staff.
- The curriculum is effective in raising young people's self-esteem and in teaching the skills pupils need to live and work independently. The alternative provision makes a strong contribution to this for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The acting headteacher is successfully tackling some of the school's weaknesses, especially in teaching. This has led to some recent improvement in pupils' achievement. She is supported well by an effective management committee.
- The school's outreach work in mainstream schools is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, accompanied by the acting headteacher, visited the three sites used by the school, and observed parts of 12 lessons. Three alternative providers were visited, where three further lessons were observed.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ written work in order to analyse their achievement over a period of time and to assess the quality of teachers’ marking.
- School documents were reviewed. These included those relating to pupils’ attainment and progress, pupils’ behaviour and attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, members of the management committee and representatives of the local authority. They also met with the headteachers of the mainstream schools that use the school’s services and with staff employed by alternative providers.
- There were insufficient responses from parents and carers to the online Parent View questionnaire for the results to be considered. Evidence of parents’ and carers’ views supplied by the school was taken into account. The views of 27 staff who completed a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Simms

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school serves pupils experiencing educational difficulties who live in the area of the City of Gloucester and in the Forest of Dean.
- There are two centres in Gloucester. The Raikes Centre caters for pupils in Years 1 to 6 who are permanently excluded, and pupils in Years 1 to 11 who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Young people usually attend this centre for a period of 20 school days. The Russet House Centre educates pupils in Years 7 to 11 for longer periods of time. Most of these pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools.
- The Joys Green Centre educates pupils from the Forest of Dean. It is situated in the village of the same name, which is over 20 miles from Gloucester. Currently, on a temporary basis, only pupils in Years 7 to 11 attend this centre; those in Years 1 to 6 travel to Gloucester.
- Staff from the school undertake outreach work in mainstream schools, supporting young people at risk of exclusion and their teachers.
- All pupils have special educational needs, mostly behavioural and/or learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is not known; the proportion of children in the care of the local authority is high. The school receives a lump sum grant from the pupil premium funding to which these two groups of pupils are entitled. A small amount of primary sport funding is allocated for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The school uses a wide range of external provision. This includes Gloucester College, The Gloucester Youth Project, Phocale Farm, The New Leaf Project, Broadwell Hub and Glean. A small number of other providers are used on an occasional basis for individual pupils.
- Plans by the local authority to reorganise alternative education are at an advanced stage. From 1 April 2015, an executive headteacher, who will lead the three schools that make up the provision, and a newly appointed head of school will take up their posts. At the time of the inspection almost all senior and middle leaders at the school were holding their posts in an acting capacity.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Speed up pupils' progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - accurately assessing pupils' current levels of knowledge and skills when they arrive at the school
 - planning programmes that develop pupils' skills as quickly as possible
 - ensuring that teachers set challenging work that builds on pupils' interests and previous learning and adapt it when necessary to meet their changing needs.
- Improve attendance, especially among pupils in Years 10 and 11 at The Russet House Centre, by
 - clarifying for pupils, their parents and carers and staff, the very limited range of circumstances under which absence other than for medical reasons might be authorised
 - making clear to parents and carers the possible consequences of condoned, unauthorised absence.
- Ensure the effective use of the pupil premium by:
 - accurately identifying eligible pupils when they enrol
 - analysing the achievement of eligible pupils and comparing it to that of other pupils, both within the school and nationally
 - taking effective action to eliminate any identified gaps in achievement.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- School leaders do not check adequately the impact of additional funding on pupils' achievement. Pupils eligible for free school meals are not identified accurately, and there is no effective analysis of the progress of these pupils and those in the care of the local authority. As a result, the extent of any gaps between the achievement of these two groups of pupils and others in the school and nationally is not known.
- Policies on the authorisation of absence, other than for medical reasons, are not applied with sufficient rigour. The consequences of condoning absence are not made sufficiently clear to parents and carers. As a result, attendance, especially among pupils in Years 10 and 11 at The Russet House Centre, is too low.
- While there have been improvements in teaching, it is not yet routinely good. This is because pupils' previous learning is not assessed with sufficient accuracy when pupils arrive at the school. There is too much reliance on information supplied by pupils' most recent mainstream school which may be incomplete or inaccurate.
- The acting headteacher has held the post for a short time, during which effective action has been taken to tackle the weakest teaching. Correctly, improving teaching has been given a very high priority. The checking of teachers' performance and the provision of necessary training are increasingly effective.
- Middle leadership is of variable quality, reflecting the fact that many of these staff are in an acting capacity. The provision for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is led well, whereas the management of attendance is less effective.
- Leaders and staff have been successful in improving behaviour within the school. In this respect the school is successful in promoting good relationships and tackling discrimination.
- The management committee, local authority and senior leaders, including those who will take up their posts shortly, share a positive vision for the future role of the school. They are aware of its strengths and most of its weaknesses and are developing suitable improvement plans.
- Rightly, the curriculum is designed to enhance pupils' self-esteem and their ability to return to mainstream education. This shows the commitment of school leaders to promoting equality of opportunity. Progress has been made on implementing the revised National Curriculum, and productive discussions concerning its assessment are taking place with mainstream, partner schools.
- There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' social and emotional skills. Pupils have a growing awareness of British values, such as the importance of tolerance and fairness.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity. The primary sport funding is used well. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 have a growing awareness of the importance of healthy living and of the dangers of substance misuse.
- Pupils receive effective advice and guidance concerning their futures. Those in a position to do so are helped to return to mainstream schooling, while pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successfully helped to find college courses or employment.
- The alternative provision is a strength. Placements are tailored to meet pupils' needs and interests. Arrangements to check that these pupils are safe and making good progress are effective.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are, in most respects, of good quality. This record is marred by the poor attendance of some pupils, because when they are not at school it is possible that they may be at risk.
- The local authority provides a high level of support. Support for improving teaching and attendance has had some positive impact, but has not fully resolved the weaknesses in these areas. Much energy has been focused on the reorganisation of the service overall, the impact of which will not be apparent for some time. Significant shortcomings in the school's accommodation, such as the lack of specialist facilities for teaching the curriculum for Years 7 to 11, have not been rectified.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee works well and is committed to a positive future for the school. Members are aware of the outcomes of checks on the quality of teaching and of what is being done to improve it. They know how teachers' good performance is rewarded and how underperformance is tackled.
 - Members of the committee understand performance data, but because comparative information about the performance of similar schools is difficult to obtain, they find it hard to know how the school compares with others. This is true especially of the impact of additional funding on improving the

achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because too many do not attend regularly. This slows their progress, as they miss teaching and have gaps in their learning.
- When they are at school, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils sometimes start at the school with very poor attitudes to learning. These are dealt with effectively by staff who are all well trained in the management of difficult behaviour. Pupils are taught in small groups or one to one, which contributes well to their improving behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour in almost all lessons is good. Pupils get on with their work and respond well to adults' instructions. Poor behaviour rarely slows the learning of others.
- Pupils try their best to be polite to adult visitors. Many lack the necessary experience or social skills. Staff plan carefully, for example by using young people to guide visitors around the school, to develop such skills.
- Pupils say there is little bullying. This is confirmed by the school's own records. Breaks and lunchtimes are planned carefully to avoid potential conflict.
- Pupils behave well whilst attending the alternative provision. Staff who teach them are aware of their potentially challenging behaviour and have the skills to manage it. Strategies include therapies such as contact with domestic animals. Pupils' behaviour and their attendance at the alternative provision are checked carefully by school staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. This is because the poor attendance of some has the potential to place them in risky situations.
- Among most pupils, notably those taught at The Raikes and Joys Green Centres, attendance has improved during the current school year. However, attendance at The Russet House Centre remains very low, especially among Years 10 and 11. Pupils have a good understanding of the risks of bullying in its different forms. They understand the risks associated with the misuse of electronic media and could easily recall a recent police visit on the subject.
- Staff are well trained in child protection requirements. They are alert to the potential dangers of issues such as radicalisation or child sexual exploitation. Records on child protection matters are kept secure and meet requirements.
- Senior leaders have good contact with other agencies and with the carers of children in the care of the local authority. They check the welfare of children in the care of the local authority very well, but are less effective in checking on their progress as a group.
- Pupils say they feel safe, both at school and at the alternative provision. Safety checks made on the alternative provision are rigorous and effective.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Because teachers lack reliable information about pupils' levels of attainment when they join the school, teaching programmes sometimes fail to develop pupils' skills and knowledge quickly enough, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of the tasks pupils are set are repetitive or lack challenge. An example is where similar mathematical calculations are repeated over a lengthy period of time, without moving on to more complex examples.
- While teachers are aware of those children in their class in the care of the local authority, they do not know which other pupils receive additional funding. Hence, they are not in a position to ensure that additional resources are used to enable these pupils to make better progress.
- Teachers and other adults are effective in developing young people's social and emotional skills. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum builds well on pupils' personal interests, often through courses offered at the alternative provision.
- Some subjects are taught well. These include art and cookery, and English in Years 7 to 11. Specialist teaching is used well, for example in information and communication technology (ICT), sport and physical education, and in courses offered at the alternative provision.

- Improvement has taken place in some aspects of teaching, including those identified as weak at the previous inspection. Questioning in depth, allowing pupils time to give a well thought out answer, is a developing strength.
- Pupils value the oral and written guidance they receive on how to improve their work. Teachers' good feedback is having a growing, positive impact on pupils' improving written and other work.
- The teaching in mainstream schools carried out by school staff is highly valued by the headteachers of those schools. They can give examples of where the work of Gloucester and Forest staff in raising pupils' self-esteem has enabled young people to avoid exclusion.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils start at the school with levels of knowledge and skill below those that might be expected for their age. While most pupils then achieve well, too many do not do so in important areas, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not always achieve what they might because the progress they have made cannot be checked with sufficient accuracy. This is especially true for some disadvantaged pupils, because their progress is not checked separately. A few pupils, notably in Years 10 and 11, do not make good progress because they miss vital work when absent.
- There are very few pupils in the most-able category at the school. As with other pupils, this small group makes good progress in most subjects, those in Year 11 attaining GCSE grades of C or above. Sometimes, however, these pupils are not challenged enough. When Year 10 pupils were set simple work on ratios in mathematics, it was clear that they already had a good understanding of ratios.
- Many pupils, when they arrive at the school, lack confidence in reading. While their progress in learning to read is erratic, most develop their enjoyment of reading and hence widen the scope of their reading. Often this is because they are motivated to use the internet for research purposes.
- Pupils make good progress in their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters. This is true, especially of those in the care of the local authority. Additional funding for these young people is used well to promote this understanding, such as by funding adventurous activities or visits to cultural centres.
- Whilst all pupils have special educational needs, those with more profound needs achieve well as staff are aware of how to meet their needs and plan accordingly.
- In some subjects, pupils' achievement is good. In art, pupils in Years 9 and 10 were observed making excellent ceramic tiles with an insect design. A review of their work showed that Year 11 pupils studying for GCSE English had made good progress over time, except when absent. Pupils' books also showed good progress in science among pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in sport and physical education. They like to be active and know the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. This shows that the primary sport funding is used well.
- In Years 10 and 11, most pupils are entered for GCSE or other externally recognised qualifications. They generally achieve some success, notably in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Early entry for these examinations sometimes takes place. This is for good educational reasons, such as helping pupils become familiar with external examinations, and does not hold pupils back.
- Pupils make good progress at the additional provision. They generally reach what they have set out to achieve, including any available external accreditation. School staff check on their progress through regular discussions with pupils and the staff of the provision.

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	135330
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	449459

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	David Bishop (management committee)
Headteacher	Marie Walker (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 July 2012
Telephone number	01452309510
Fax number	01452309510
Email address	marie.walker@gfaps.gloucs.sch.uk

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