

Andover Education Centre

Smannell Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP11 6JP

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Andover Education Centre is very effective in meeting the wide range of students' medical and behavioural needs, enabling students to improve their personal development and academic ability well. There is much good practice for the school to be proud of.
- Teaching is good. Staff are skilled at building trusting relationships with students, overcoming their reluctance to learn, often due to previous negative experiences of education, and establishing more positive attitudes.
- Students' behaviour and safety are good. The centre is calm and purposeful. Students develop pride in their work and form exceptionally good relationships.
- From often low starting points, students make good progress and many students are able to achieve nationally recognised qualifications and become more mature and responsible.
- The headteacher, well supported by the management committee, has made changes to how students with medical and behavioural needs are taught. This has been a successful innovation and has had a positive impact on students' development.
- There has been a dip in students' progress, often due to lack of subject expertise. However, this has been addressed and the centre is on a rapidly improving trajectory.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some Key Stage 3 students stay at the centre too long.
- Some students' attendance is too low and some students have poor punctuality, meaning they miss some lessons at the start of the day.
- The website does not contain all the required statutory information.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 16 part lessons. Most were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, teaching staff, students and members of the management committee.
- There were insufficient responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to be analysed, but the inspection team considered the centre's recent survey of parents' views.
- Responses from 16 staff to the Ofsted questionnaire were also taken into account.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information on students' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of students. Students' work was also examined.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Lambern

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Andover Education Centre (AEC) is part of the Hampshire Education Inclusion Service and works in partnership with the seven other secondary schools in the Test Valley area.
- AEC provides for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. This is a change since the last inspection when the service provided for primary pupils as well.
- AEC provides for students who are unable to attend mainstream school for medical reasons, those who are emotionally vulnerable and also for pregnant students.
- The school provides a breakfast club for students.
- Outreach support for students in mainstream schools is provided to help them remain in this setting.
- Students are predominantly from a White British background and none have English as a second language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after. There are consistently very few eligible students in Year 11.
- The centre does not use alternative providers.
- The headteacher took up her position in an acting role in September 2012, and in September 2013 this was made a permanent position.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to increase the number of Key Stage 3 students who can return to mainstream or special schools more rapidly, where appropriate.
- Increase the attendance rate of students and improve their punctuality at the start of the day.
- Ensure the centre's website meets statutory requirements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management of the centre at all levels are good and enable students to flourish in a supportive environment and make good progress through personalised learning. Close partnership working with the management committee is a strength and adds rigour to the work of the centre.
- The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and management. She has introduced innovative teaching through carefully grouping medical needs students and those with behavioural needs together. This has been effective, particularly for vulnerable students, as they receive a broader range of subjects and experiences. It has also increased understanding, tolerance and respect by all students.
- Senior and middle leaders are enthusiastic and committed. Staff responses to questionnaires show that the headteacher has the confidence of staff.
- The outreach service is very effective in preventing exclusions from mainstream schools by providing good quality advice and support. This service is valued by schools.
- Students benefit from a wide range of subjects and experiences which are very effective in capturing and re-igniting their interest in learning. Practical subjects, such as physical education and food technology, not only motivate students but also provide opportunities for employment in catering and outdoor activities.
- Students are prepared for life in modern Britain effectively. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly. The centre's strong ethos of tolerance and respect promotes students' self-confidence well. Students are exposed to a wide range of cultural and social experiences, such as residential trips. A recent visit to a prison, as part of the personal, social, and health education programme, provided students with an insight into the realities of breaking the law.
- Equality of opportunity is assured through ensuring all students, whatever their need or background, achieve as well as possible. Diversity of beliefs, cultures, lifestyles and forms of discrimination are openly discussed. The centre is a warm and supportive environment where students are at ease and this develops their self-esteem effectively.
- Middle leaders have a clear view of their areas of responsibility and are enthusiastic to develop their areas further. They have opportunities to share good practice across the centre and receive good levels of training to enable them to keep abreast of developments. Staff are exploring ways of assessing students' progress following the removal of National Curriculum levels in conjunction with its feeder schools.
- Students are given good advice and careers guidance to help them make suitable decisions for their future. Work experience placements are sometimes the catalyst for students to go on to further education and pursue a course in relation to their interests. One student carried out a work placement at a local fishery and intends to follow a course in fisheries management at college.
- The small amount of pupil premium funding the centre receives is used to increase the range of students' experiences through outdoor adventure programmes and individual learning support. This has helped students to close the gap on their peers, so that they perform as well as other students in the centre.
- The centre's self-evaluation is accurate, perceptive and supported by wide ranging evidence. Similarly, the improvement plan is well judged and focuses on the most important priorities to bring about further improvement. This, together with effective team work, particularly with the management committee, indicates good capacity to improve further.
- The local authority rightly regards the centre as low priority in terms of needing support and help. However, it provides good oversight and challenge to the headteacher.
- The website does not contain all the required information, such as students' progress and achievement information and the impact of the pupil premium funding.
- Responses to a survey of parents show that they hold the work of the centre in high regard. They appreciate the close cooperation with families to overcome the difficulties students have.
- Safeguarding of students has a high priority, particularly as many students are vulnerable, and there are robust procedures in place to ensure they are safe. Any concerns expressed by students, usually related to events outside of the centre, are followed up thoroughly and quickly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is a very effective body which holds the centre to account well. Members use key performance indicators which focus on areas such as attendance, students' achievement, behaviour, teaching and learning. These enable them to ask challenging questions and to identify reasons for potential trends.
 - Members have a clear view of teaching and the areas of strengths and improvements. Very clear and

digestible information allows them to understand how well students are achieving and why there was a dip in performance in 2013.

- They challenge the headteacher well in a supportive and constructive manner. The management committee has been involved in the performance management of staff well and has ensured that the link between salary progression is appropriate.
- The management committee is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well trained. The members visit regularly so that they have a good working knowledge of the centre. They know how the centre promotes British values in a meaningful way to students and how they are prepared for life in modern Britain. Safeguarding is rigorous and they have ensured that recruitment of staff is in line with requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. This reflects the values and ethos of the centre.
- Students are excellent ambassadors for the centre. Many arrive with negative attitudes and a reluctance to engage, but these quickly change into a positive approach. One student, who initially was convinced she would not like the centre, commented, 'This place is so good.' The students recognise improvements in their personal and academic progress, with many achieving grades they previously thought would not be possible.
- Friendships are strong and students spoken to say behaviour is always good and that the centre is typically calm.
- Students' attendance is closely checked, but is below average. The centre staff know that both attendance and punctuality of some students at the start of the day are particular challenges and are areas for improvement. However, attendance for many is a vast improvement on their previous record at their original school. Unexplained absences are followed up quickly and students are contacted by phone if they are late. The breakfast club is a sociable occasion and encourages better attendance.
- Although temporary exclusions have risen over the last two years, this is as a result of higher expectations of behaviour and has resulted in better behaviour in lessons and around the centre.
- Some students present challenges particularly when they first arrive, but they quickly learn the rules of the centre and learn to cooperate and improve their behaviour. The centre places a strong emphasis on appropriate language and has a zero tolerance approach to drugs, alcohol and tobacco. This is enforced effectively.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many subjects, such as drama and the very effective personal, social and health education programme, contribute to students' personal development and attitudes. Students distinguish between right and wrong and explore moral questions in discussions, and develop their awareness of diverse views. Students show respect for each other and also for staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding.
- Students spoken to were very confident they are kept exceptionally safe and secure. Bullying is not perceived as an issue.
- The exceptional positive relationships permeate the work of the centre and help all students, particularly those with emotional vulnerabilities, to gain confidence. Students have total trust in the staff so that they are able to share any concerns they have in the knowledge that staff have their best interests at heart.
- Students are taught how to keep safe online and about the dangers of cyber bullying and disclosing personal information. They are taught how to keep themselves safe outside school by recognising and responding to dangers that might arise.
- Systems to assess risk and safeguard students, enabling them to participate in outdoor off-site activities such as canoeing and power boating, are thorough.
- The centre's safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and kept up to date. All staff understand and follow the procedures. Visitors to school are vetted to keep students safe.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and has many strengths. The high quality relationships between staff and students are

exceptional and underpin much of the successful work of the centre. Students are encouraged to overcome their often considerable hindrances to learning and start to improve.

- The grouping of students with emotional vulnerabilities and those with behavioural needs together has been very effective in raising students' expectations and improving their achievement. They are expected to gain a good number of GCSE qualifications and to aim for a C grade wherever possible as a minimum. Students rise to the challenge and there has been an increase in the number of qualifications that have been achieved.
- Staff have good subject knowledge, which is delivered in a lively manner. Teaching captures the attention of students. As a result, they are on task and positively engaged in learning. This in turn boosts their self-esteem.
- Classrooms are vibrant. Displays place a strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy, which are reinforced across all subjects and students are encouraged to use these skills in other lessons.
- The management of students' behaviour is skilful and sensitive. It is rare that poor behaviour affects learning.
- The knowledge of students' needs and background by staff is excellent and this information is used exceptionally well to get the best out of them. Learning often takes place in an informal atmosphere and students commented how much this approach helps them to improve.
- The teaching of English is a strength. Students develop fluency and enjoyment in reading a wide range of texts and they write extended pieces of work in which they develop their arguments.
- Students' progress in mathematics dipped in 2013, and more latterly in science due to lack of teachers' subject expertise. This issue has been addressed and students' progress in mathematics is improving strongly, enabling students to achieve functional skills and GCSE qualifications. Improvements in science are not yet as embedded as they are in mathematics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students generally have below average levels of attainment when they enter the centre. Many students experience disrupted patterns to their attendance and learning. Some students have been unable to access mainstream education due to mental health difficulties, such as anxiety. Despite these obstacles, students make progress comparable to students in other schools. They make good improvements in their attainment through achieving qualifications.
- Students achieve particularly well in English, art, food technology, outdoor education and design and technology, and are able to gain GCSE or equivalent qualifications. The outdoor and adventure programme is very effective in engaging the hard-to-reach students. Students are able to achieve certificates of competency in activities such as rock climbing. For some, it is initially the only activity they will engage in. However, there is often a crossover from this to other subjects, so that students participate more positively in other lessons.
- Students stay at the centre for varying lengths of time, ranging from six weeks to two years. Those students who start the centre in Key Stage 4 appropriately remain at the centre. By the time they leave, nearly three quarters of students leave with five A* to G GCSE grades or equivalent qualifications. A few more able students achieve grade C or above. The centre does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Many students have low levels of literacy and language skills, but through sustained work they make vast improvements in these areas. For example, one student was extremely proud to follow a GCSE course in English, which she thought previously would not have been possible.
- The strong focus on basic skills helps students to gain confidence in literacy and numeracy. In literacy, students learn how to improve their writing through a range of techniques such as using similes, metaphors or varying the length of sentences. In mathematics, students learn how to tackle problems that they find difficult, such as algebra or working out areas and capacity in readiness for examinations.
- The centre carefully tracks and analyses the progress of all students to check if any are underperforming. Analysis shows that all groups of students, including boys, girls, those with behavioural and medical needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium, achieve equally well, in line with their individual abilities.
- The number of students who return to mainstream or special schools at Key Stage 3 is low. This means that some students stay at the centre too long and this does not allow the centre to operate rapid and effective short term placements as it should do for younger students.
- The majority of students who leave at the end of Key Stage 4 progress on to college. The centre recognises the difficulties some students face in maintaining their placement and has improved transitional arrangements and support provided. A few students do not go on to education, employment or training.

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	115837
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	448153

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	David Weston
Headteacher	Lisa Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 July 2010
Telephone number	01264 335640
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