

Children's Support Service Langdon Hills, Basildon

High Road, Langdon Hills, Basildon, Essex SS16 6HG

Inspection dates

23–24 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- A new team of leaders has built on many of the strengths noted at the school's last inspection.
- The headteacher's vision to provide each pupil with the support and education they need to reach their potential is shared by all staff and governors.
- The school is fully inclusive. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many have missed long periods of schooling due to illness or exclusion.
- Pupils' personal development and their behaviour are outstanding. Excellent care and support helps pupils to overcome personal difficulties, and re-engage in learning.
- From their very different starting points, most pupils make good progress. Almost all of them gain qualifications and go on to further education or training.
- Outcomes vary. Pupils do better in English than in mathematics and science.
- Assessment information does not always show a clear picture of how well all pupils achieve during their stay in the school.
- Teaching is good. At times it is outstanding. There are some inconsistencies within and across the three centres.
- Relationships are excellent. Pupils told inspectors, 'staff don't just care about your grades, they care about you too'.
- Assessments made when pupils join the school enable leaders to match the curriculum to their individual needs. Pupils educated off-site are routinely monitored to ensure that they remain safe and make progress.
- Participation in a wide range of curricular and enrichment activities adds significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents value what staff do to re-integrate pupils back into learning.
- Safeguarding is prioritised. All necessary checks are made. Procedures to protect pupils from harm are firmly established.
- The management committee oversees the school's strategic development and manages the finances of this complex setting effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out inconsistencies in teaching within and across the three centres by checking regularly that teachers:
 - plan learning that is always sufficiently challenging for pupils
 - expect pupils to complete all tasks, and present their work neatly
 - give pupils time to read the advice given to them about their work, and correct basic errors
 - enable all pupils to contribute to discussions and answer questions.
- Improve the overall effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - collating systematically the information gained from regular assessments to show a clear picture of the progress made by each pupil from their entry to exit from the school
 - spreading the best practice in leadership seen in art and English into other subjects, particularly mathematics and science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Overseeing teaching and learning on three separate sites, arranging to educate pupils off-site or at home, and providing behavioural support services for other local schools add significantly to the demands of leading this complex setting.
- The headteacher does this exceptionally well. She leads by example, sharing her experience and knowledge to promote a strong, caring ethos, and a culture of high expectations across the service. All of the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire confirm that she has the full backing of staff, who value her leadership and support.
- The headteacher's team of senior leaders share her ambitions. They work collegiately and effectively to ensure that pupils joining the school receive the care and support they need to re-engage fully in learning.
- Heads of each centre monitor teaching and pupils' learning effectively. They ensure that staff get to know pupils well and forge strong relations with them. This restores pupils' confidence, and helps to build trust and respect between pupils and staff.
- Leaders work collaboratively with other schools. Pupils excluded from mainstream schools receive good support during their re-integration back into their main school. Leaders also provide schools with high-quality training and advice about how to manage challenging behaviour and reduce the need for exclusion.
- Leaders shape the curriculum to meet the personal needs and aspirations of each pupil. Staff know about pupils' behaviour and the reasons for their exclusion. They find out about pupils' health and well-being, and their special educational needs. They involve them and their parents in determining the best way of re-integrating back into full-time learning.
- Tutors are found to enable pupils who are part-way through GCSE courses that are not usually taught in school, to continue their learning. Effective arrangements are made with a range of local providers to educate those more suited to vocational learning off-site.
- The school's beacon status for Holocaust education enriches the curriculum and adds significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Regular personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons help pupils to write applications, prepare themselves for interview and understand the demands of different types of work. They learn about current issues, and the values and beliefs of people in Britain and from other backgrounds.
- Leadership is good rather than outstanding because the information gained from regular assessments is not used systematically to gain a full, accurate picture of pupils' achievement over time. Leaders have a wide range of information but do not analyse it thoroughly. Without these systematic procedures, they and the management committee are unable to examine in depth the performance of different groups of pupils.
- Middle leadership is too variable. For example, the good organisation and coherent development planning seen in art and English are less evident in other subjects. Not all subject leaders are fully aware of the effectiveness of teaching, and the impact this has

on pupils' achievement across all three sites.

- The headteacher recognises these shortfalls. Plans are in place to strengthen procedures this year. She acknowledges that her new team needs more time to make the improvements listed in the school's development plan.
- Leaders and staff keep in close contact with parents and carers. They see them as key to ensuring pupils attend regularly and settle quickly into their new school. Parents who spoke with inspectors praised the regular contact made and the positive comments shared with them.

Governance of the school

- The management committee has increased its support and challenge for leaders. Members have improved their monitoring of the school's work. For example, checks are made that safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Minutes of meetings show that governors maintain a thorough overview of the school's finances, staffing and the strategic direction of the school as it grows in size.
- Governors oversee arrangements to ensure that pay increases are based on teachers' performance.
- Governors know most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, their monitoring of the impact of leaders on raising achievement is limited because they are not provided with detailed assessment information to show the progress made by key groups, particularly disadvantaged pupils, over time.
- The committee liaises closely with the local authority to improve the quality of education provided by the school. Governors ensure that the local authority remains aware of the significant shortfalls in the school's facilities, particularly the lack of outdoor space and the cramped conditions for teaching primary-aged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All the required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff. The single central record is maintained effectively.
- The headteacher and several other members of her staff are designated leads for child protection. They ensure that incidents or disclosures on any of the sites are followed up promptly.
- Staff liaise with a wide range of support agencies to keep pupils safe, and monitor closely their safety and welfare in and out of school.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe, including using social media.
- Risk assessments for all off-site visits are carried out systematically.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is firmly based on establishing excellent relations with pupils, and ensuring that they feel valued, safe and ready to learn.
- Most pupils join having missed long periods of their schooling due to illness or exclusion from their mainstream school. Staff are experts in helping them to re-engage in learning and enjoy school again.

- Staff quickly get to know pupils well. Early assessments of each pupil provide an overview of their prior learning, attitudes, behaviour and attendance. Individual programmes are designed to re-introduce pupils step-by-step back into learning. Pupils' learning and welfare are discussed each day and reviewed weekly to monitor their progress.
- One-to-one teaching is used effectively in most subjects to provide pupils with intensive, personalised learning and high-quality support. This has a significant impact on their learning and leads to pupils making good progress.
- Teachers also make good use of one-to-one teaching to ask pupils regular questions to prompt discussion and check their understanding. When teaching pupils together in groups, questioning is less effective because teachers tend to accept the first response offered, and fail to engage all pupils fully in discussion.
- Staff manage behaviour exceptionally well. Pupils are fully aware of their teachers' expectations of them. The learning environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils are expected to act responsibly, and take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff know when to step in and prevent behaviour from deteriorating. They do this calmly and effectively.
- Teachers use their detailed subject knowledge to plan learning that stimulates pupils' interest and encourages them to engage fully. As tasks become more challenging, pupils become more resilient because help is at hand to support them.
- Teaching in the primary classroom is good and often outstanding. For example, in an English lesson the teacher enlivened learning about speech marks by using a football and goals to spark pupils' interest. Boys in particular enjoyed learning together in this interactive way, and made rapid progress.
- Teaching in art and English is exceptionally good. This is reflected in the quality of pupils' written work. In art, the quality of their drawings, paintings, ceramics and screen prints is exceptionally good.
- Teaching is good rather than outstanding because there are too many inconsistencies. In a few lessons, teachers and support staff do too much for pupils. At times, pupils are 'spoon-fed' learning by staff, rather than being encouraged to work things out for themselves.
- Not all work is sufficiently challenging. Some calculations in mathematics are too easy. In science, pupils observe staff doing basic, practical tasks rather than doing them for themselves. Worksheets and written work are left unfinished.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly in line with the school's marking policy, providing pupils with good advice about the next steps to take to improve their work. Teachers identify spelling and grammatical errors, but do not give pupils time to revisit and correct them. Some marking praises pupils' work, even though it is incomplete or untidy.
- Work is regularly assessed in all subjects, but this is not recorded systematically. The school's assessment procedures do not enable staff to analyse in detail the performance of different groups of pupils.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive in the caring, nurturing environment provided for them. Staff set the tone for the day by welcoming pupils on arrival, providing breakfast and chatting with them to gauge their moods. Younger pupils enjoy eating healthy, cooked lunches together with staff. Relations are exceptionally good. Pupils respond well to staff, follow their instructions and display positive attitudes.
- Senior leaders coordinate effectively a team of personal tutors to provide education for pupils unable to come to school due to their anxiety or ill-health. Weekly tuition is provided in their homes or at other community settings to help them remain in learning.
- Pupils feel valued and appreciate the help provided by staff. When asked to rate the school, all of them answered 'ten out of ten'. One pupil told inspectors, 'if I was at my previous school, I wouldn't be doing half as well as I am, or studying as many subjects.'
- The coordinator of special educational needs meets regularly with the virtual headteachers from eight local authorities to ensure that pupils who are looked after by foster parents remain safe and achieve well. Their progress is regularly monitored. Their personal plans are reviewed annually.
- Pupils' personal development is enriched by a wide range of off-site visits for activities such as parkour (obstacle-course training), mountain-biking and visits to art workshops at the Tate Modern. A project run by pupils at one of the centres to use recycled Remembrance Day poppies to create special gifts for those living nearby has helped to forge new relations with the community.
- This year, a small group of older pupils and the headteacher took part in 'the challenger troop', a team-building exercise, working alongside pupils from a local special school over a 12-week period and culminating in a residential trip. One pupil told inspectors how this experience had 'turned her life around'.
- Attendance is lower than average, but rising. Many pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance at their previous schools. Some have not attended regular education for over a year. Overall attendance is also adversely affected by the large proportion of pupils who live long distances from the school and rely on buses and taxis each day.
- Leaders can point to good examples of pupils who, having started on part-time timetables, now attend regularly and participate fully in school life. The parent of one pupil who had previously missed significant amounts of his schooling said the school had revitalised her son's desire to learn, and 'if he had not attended this school he would have simply slipped through the net'.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to encourage many more disadvantaged pupils back into learning. Routine monitoring of their persistent absence, coupled with a wide range of actions to persuade and cajole pupils back into school, is leading to improvement. School records show that their attendance has improved significantly this year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils join the school at different times during the year, usually because they have been excluded from their schools due to their challenging behaviour. Staff are adept at finding out their needs and interests, and helping them to modify their behaviour and attitudes towards school.
- Pupils quickly re-engage in learning and behave well. Inspectors found all three centres to be calm, orderly environments in which to learn.
- Inspectors noted the friendship and mutual respect shown by pupils. They are tolerant of others' needs, understand the differences between one another and respect others' feelings.
- Pupils feel safe and free from bullying. They say that if bullying does happen they can approach any member of staff and they will sort it out. They are taught about keeping safe when using social media and the risks attached to radicalisation and extremism.
- Excellent relations underpin the school's approach to modifying pupils' behaviour. Pupils feel listened to, and say that staff understand them. They are encouraged to manage their own behaviour and attitudes by reflecting on their actions and making the right decisions.
- Robust procedures are in place to monitor behaviour. Pupils carry reward cards with them so that staff can record the quality of their behaviour and attitudes in lessons. This system works well. Staff reward pupils by awarding credits for good behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is reviewed each day by staff in each of the centres.
- Leaders use exclusion as a last resort when all other procedures have been followed. Records show a reduction in the proportion of pupils who were excluded this year. Because they want to be in school, very few of those excluded due to their unacceptable behaviour continue to misbehave.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's complex provision, including short-stay referrals, together with the wide range of medical and educational needs of pupils, requires staff to secure pupils' social and emotional well-being before learning can take place. They do this remarkably well.
- Teachers and support staff prioritise getting pupils ready to learn. They work together to rebuild pupils' confidence, promote their social skills and develop positive attitudes. Pupils' re-introduction to learning is both gradual and sustained.
- A significant proportion of younger pupils are helped to re-integrate back into mainstream schools. Older pupils are prepared well for adulthood. Good guidance ensures that they are well informed about future careers. Almost all pupils gain qualifications needed for the next stage of their education, training or the workplace.
- Assessment records show that outcomes appear strong. For example, leaders pride themselves on ensuring that almost all pupils leave with accreditation and progress on to further education or training. However, this information does not show the full picture of how well pupils do in all of their subjects, compared to their starting points.
- In the primary classroom, staff tailor learning to fill gaps in pupils' basic numeracy and literacy, particularly their speaking and listening skills. Overall standards are low but

pupils make good progress, due to the high-quality care and support and good teaching they receive.

- In key stages 3 and 4, assessments of pupils' attitudes show that pupils make significant gains in their behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Almost all pupils in Year 11 achieved entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics this year.
- Similar proportions of pupils attained a grade C or above in GCSE English and in mathematics. However, the school's assessment information shows that overall pupils make better progress in English than in mathematics, mainly because teaching of English is more effective.
- The subject leader for English has a clear understanding of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress across the three sites. Leaders of some other subjects do not have this understanding.
- In 2016, a small minority of more able learners achieved at least a grade C in English language and literature, and general studies. This represents a significant achievement as most of these pupils had missed long periods of school due to their poor health.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve equally well as others in English. Leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done in mathematics to reduce differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared with others of similar starting points.
- The last inspection identified art as a strength of the school. This continues to be the case. Outcomes achieved by the end of Year 11 are high. The standard of pupils' art work is exceptional.

School details

Unique reference number	136035
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10019222

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Di Shepherd
Headteacher	Jo Barak
Telephone number	01268 542 367
Website	www.css-essex.co.uk
Email address	jo.barak@css-essex.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Children's Support Service (the school) is based on three sites. It also caters for pupils unable to attend school due to health reasons, operating in pupils' homes and on a range of community sites. Most pupils are either permanently excluded from school or are referred to the support service by their mainstream school. Some have missed long periods of their schooling.
- The local authority commissions the school to educate approximately 20 pupils in key stage 4 who have a statement of special educational needs, an education, health and care plan, or who have no alternative placement. Some other pupils, in key stage 2, remain in school because no placements are available in a special school.

- The pupil roll changes weekly as new pupils arrive and others are re-integrated back into mainstream schools.
- Most pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Approximately half of pupils currently on roll are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school uses a wide range of alternative provision to provide vocational learning and work experience for pupils. This includes: Circles Farm, Gateway FM, Motorvations and Rallysport.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 22 lessons across the three sites; most observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- The team held meetings with senior and middle leaders, two members of the management committee, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and the child protection policy and procedures, risk assessments, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the management committee, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and one free text response from a parent. They also talked on the telephone with another parent. They considered 79 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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