

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **The Learning Centre Pupil Referral Unit**

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103769

Headteacher: Carole Mountford

Reporting inspector: Mr C A Wonfor  
OIN: 17546

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 198972

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	5 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Saltwells Education Development Centre Bowling Green Road Netherton Dudley
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Kelvin Peel
Date of previous inspection:	24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17546	C A Wonfor	Registered inspector	Mathematics; Information technology; Physical education; Special educational needs.	The characteristics and effectiveness of the unit. The unit's results and pupils' achievements. Teaching and learning. Leadership and management.
14324	M Hudson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. Pupils' welfare, health and safety. Partnership with parents and carers.
11239	S Flockton	Team inspector	Science; Religious education. English as an additional language.	Quality and range of opportunities for learning.
30243	A Heakin	Team inspector	English; Art; Geography; History. Equal Opportunities.	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

The Learning Centre is a part-time pupil referral unit for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 years, although at present all pupils are of secondary age. The centre is situated within the Local Education Authority of Dudley and pupils may be referred at any time during the year. There are places for up to 70 pupils at the centre although a maximum number of 35 pupils can be taught during each of the morning and afternoon sessions. Most pupils receive 12 ½ hours of teaching per week, although some attend a local college one afternoon a week while others integrate with their mainstream schools. Currently there are 53 pupils, 29 girls and 24 boys, on roll in Years 7 to 11. Younger pupils have a planned programme of re-integration back into mainstream education, while older pupils often stay at the centre until the end of their compulsory education. Most pupils have medical conditions or are school phobics which makes education within the mainstream school environment very difficult. No pupils have been excluded. Pupils do not need a statement of special educational needs to attend the centre, although five pupils do have a statement. Currently no pupils have English as an additional language.

### **HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS**

The Learning Centre is a very effective pupil referral unit, despite considerable difficulties with the centre's accommodation. Nevertheless, the teacher in charge and her staff have worked very hard to overcome these difficulties and provide pupils with a very good curriculum. The quality of teaching throughout the centre is of a very high standard and all staff have worked hard to create a calm, supportive atmosphere in which vulnerable pupils can learn and be successful, particularly with their GCSEs. The centre makes efficient use of its own staff and additional teachers from the Home Tuition Service, which the teacher in charge also manages, to enrich the curriculum. Overall, the centre is providing good value for money.

#### **What the unit does well**

- The quality of leadership and management shown by the teacher in charge is very good.
- The standard of teaching is also very good and as a result many pupils achieve high standards in their GCSE examinations.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils themselves are excellent.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for their work are very good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and its use to plan future lessons is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- The standard of accommodation, identified in the last inspection as poor, has not improved and still causes considerable difficulties for staff and pupils at the centre.
- The Local Education Authority has yet to meet its statutory duties, namely by publishing details of its policies on providing education for pupils otherwise than at school or its curriculum policy for Pupil Referral Units. This was also an identified weakness in the previous inspection.
- The management committee has limited membership and does not provide appropriate support or guidance to the centre, often relying solely on the teacher in charge for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the local education authority.*

## HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in November 1997, the centre has made very good progress in implementing the identified areas for development, whilst maintaining its strengths. It is very well placed to sustain and make further improvements to meet the targets it has set itself. There are now good strategies in place to extend and challenge the centre's most able pupils, including some physical and creative opportunities within the curriculum, although these are still restricted by the poor accommodation. Pupils' special educational needs are clearly identified and pupils have appropriate learning targets in accordance with the Code of Practice. The quality of assessment and reporting is very good, as is the standard of written reports for parents. However, the Local Education Authority has failed to improve the quality of the centre's accommodation or meet its statutory requirements and these are significant weaknesses.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 9	by Year 11	<b>Key</b>	
English	A	A	very good	A
Mathematics	A	A	good	B
Science	A	A	satisfactory	C
Personal, social and health education	A	A	unsatisfactory	D
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	poor	E

*\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs*

Considering the restrictions placed on the curriculum by the centre's very limited accommodation, especially for practical activities, pupils' GCSE results are very good in relation to their prior attainment. The centre has continued to improve standards year on year.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They enjoy attending the centre and are keen and enthusiastic to learn. Some pupils have chosen to attend the centre at additional times in order to complete their GCSE coursework, or experience other subjects such as physical education and drama.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond extremely well to the high expectations of staff and behave very well in lessons and around the centre.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good, although opportunities for younger pupils are more restricted. Relationships throughout the centre are excellent.
Attendance	Pupils' attendance is good overall, and many pupils have significantly improved their attendance rate since joining the centre.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Aged up to 16 years</b>
Quality of teaching	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is very good overall and occasionally outstanding in drama. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and learn with interest, enthusiasm and often enjoyment. Literacy skills are taught well, especially speaking and listening and opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills are improving. Many pupils use their information technology skills effectively across the curriculum to research using the Internet or to display their work using good word processing skills. Positive aspects of teaching which contribute particularly well to pupils' learning include: stimulating, challenging and enjoyable lessons; enthusiastic teaching that includes a clear understanding of pupils' needs; high expectations of pupils to produce high quality work and behave well, and lessons that are taught at pace.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Despite severe restrictions with the centre's accommodation, which restricts the breadth of the curriculum, especially practical skills, teachers still manage to offer a very good curriculum. Careers education and guidance is also very good. Subjects have been carefully chosen to support pupils' learning, offering them as many opportunities as possible to attain good grades in a wide range of GCSE examinations. In addition, vocational courses are also available to support the wide range of pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, teachers ensure that pupils with additional special educational needs have appropriately planned tasks that match their needs including direct assistance from support staff.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' social skills are very well developed through carefully planned activities, including personal, social and health education. The centre has a strong moral code so that pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and care for each other. Opportunities for pupils to develop spirituality are good, as are their cultural experiences.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good overall. Staff provide high levels of care and support for their pupils, as do many pupils for each other. The procedures to monitor and improve pupils' attendance are very good and these have a significant impact on their attendance rates. Assessment procedures are very good and teachers use this information very effectively to inform future planning.



## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership and management shown by the teacher in charge is very good. She is creative, imaginative and supports a highly motivated staff despite enormous accommodation difficulties, which often makes day to day teaching very difficult. She is very aware of those areas in need of further development and campaigns tirelessly to improve the services available to her pupils. She is very well supported by staff at the centre, and those from the Home Tuition Service, who provide additional curricular expertise.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	This is unsatisfactory. Although the management committee meets termly and receives a full report on current issues from the teacher in charge, it does little to support the work of the centre. The membership of the committee is very limited and rarely challenges, monitors or strategically plans for the centre's future.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The teacher in charge has a very clear understanding of how the centre is performing and what needs to be improved to make it even better.
The strategic use of resources	The use of limited finances is very good and learning resources have been carefully purchased to support curriculum needs. However, due to the severe restrictions on space additional resources cannot be purchased, as there is no where for them to be stored.

In an effort to improve pupils' learning opportunities, the teacher in charge regularly monitors the quality of teaching through classroom observations.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents are extremely positive about all aspects of the centre.</li> <li>The quality of the centre's staff is excellent. They provide help and support, enabling pupils to develop confidence and improve their education.</li> <li>Behaviour is very good, parents could not cite any examples of inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>Parents believe the centre is very well managed and led and staff treat all pupils with respect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few parents would like to see more homework set.</li> </ul>

Inspectors endorse parents' very positive comments about the centre. The inspection found that homework is regularly set and completed by pupils and many attend extra lessons to support their GCSE coursework. Indeed, inspectors judged the use of homework to support pupils' learning as outstanding.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The unit's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Attainment on entry to the centre is often below that expected of pupils of the same age, and is mostly due to their interrupted and fragmented education. Attainment in all subjects taught improves over time, as pupils benefit from the education provided by the centre. Pupils' learning is very good, including those with additional special educational needs. Most pupils follow a range of GCSE subjects, and other accredited courses such as GNVQ. Pupils show considerable determination to be successful and attain those grades they believe are commensurate with their abilities.

2. Pupils achieve very well in English and by the end of Year 11 many are achieving standards that are in line with those expected nationally of 16 year olds. All pupils work towards GCSE or other accredited courses. A consistently high proportion of pupils are achieving the higher grades, while there is an increasing trend in the number of pupils achieving grades A - C in English and English Literature. In mathematics last year all 30 pupils took GCSE and secured a pass. Although the grades overall were not as high as for English or science, six pupils achieved grade C, while three other pupils gained an additional pass in the Certificate of Achievement. Pupils' overall achievements in science are very good. They work towards both GCSE and the Certificate of Achievement and in summer 2001, six pupils gained double award GCSE, four at grade C. 23 gained single award science, of whom 11 gained grade C and above. In addition, five pupils gained the Certificate of Achievement. In art, of the 12 pupils who took the GCSE, 8 pupils attained passes at grade A or B. Pupils' achievements in religious education are also very good. Pupils in Year 11 are given the opportunity of taking the short course GCSE examination, and last Summer 16 pupils obtained passes, ten at grades A - C.

3. Last summer many pupils also attained a range of passes at grades A - G including: French, German, food technology, music, design and technology, environmental studies, physical education, media and business studies.

4. Pupils' progress overall is very good in English, mathematics, science, religious education, art and personal, social and health education. In history, geography and GNVQ pupils are making good progress, while in information technology pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, although some pupils initially make rapid progress as they are taught new skills. In physical education some of the older Year 11 pupils are gaining good experiences of different leisure activities. This is despite considerable difficulties with practical activities especially in science, art and drama due to the constraints imposed by the accommodation.

5. In English, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. This is because teachers in all subjects give pupils good opportunities to develop their discussion skills. For example during a religious education lesson Year 11 pupils were able to discuss with maturity and sensitivity the issues surrounding arranged marriages. In art, pupils at Key Stage 4 are developing their technical vocabulary very well and modify their coursework after discussion and consultation with other class members. Younger pupils confidently ask for assistance or confirm their ideas when for example, devising menus for rich families living in Tudor times. During English lessons pupils have many opportunities to listen to and talk with each other, for example, they talk with empathy about the emotions they felt when they started at the centre. The majority of pupils are fluent speakers, although some lower attaining pupils of all ages do lack confidence. However, they all listen carefully and are very sensitive to the contribution of others.

6. Standards in reading are satisfactory. The majority of pupils use their skills well when reading fiction and non-fiction and researching new information for their coursework. The centre effectively promotes the use of information technology in supporting pupils' learning and they confidently use the Internet to search for information relevant to their coursework. Lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress improving their literacy skills because the centre has very clear assessment procedures. These ensure those pupils who have difficulty in reading are given extra support so they are able to participate fully in all subjects. The introduction of *Compact Challenge 2000*, which is an accredited course promoting the use of basic English skills, is a further strategy the centre uses very well to motivate pupils to read for practical purposes, such as independent research into the cost of holidays. Pupils enjoy reading a range of texts including poetry, Shakespeare and modern short stories.

7. Pupils make very good progress with their writing and by the age of 16 standards are satisfactory. Pupils understand the nuances of comparing and contrasting in their writing about Roald Dahl's *Lamb To The Slaughter* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Speckled Band*. Older pupils consider in depth Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* and analyse characters, relationships and attitudes. Younger pupils develop their critical skills well as they examine the character of Harvey in *The Pinballs*, writing a profile for his fostering. Pupils give written reasons for their particular choices of music and effectively use techniques such as brainstorming as a basis for ideas, with associated vocabulary, when writing about a haunted house. Pupils take advantage of information technology, such as PowerPoint, to make a presentation of their persuasive writing skills. Pupils' interest in this form of presentation was so intense that they happily spent their break assessing their work and showing it to other groups of pupils. A recent visit to an outward bound centre has also inspired pupils to produce some high quality creative writing called *A Walk On The Wild Side*.

8. In mathematics pupils are consolidating and extending their basic understanding of number, for example, using and applying the principles of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division throughout their work. By 16 years of age pupils have an understanding of statistics, equations, co-ordinates and compass bearings, algebra, fractions and decimals. Most pupils throughout the centre confidently use calculators to check their work. As part of the centre's involvement with the *Maths Alive* project, pupils use an interactive whiteboard to explore the principles of two-dimensional shapes and the properties of an isosceles triangle. The vast majority of pupils are very confident using decimals and fractions, successfully calculating and converting fractions to decimals. Pupils also use raw data, including tally sheets, to construct and interpret data, producing line graphs and bar charts. However, the use of information technology in the form of spreadsheets to support this aspect of mathematics is underdeveloped. All pupils have a sound understanding of money, recognising and calculating different amounts, often within a practical situation. Some pupils still lack the self-confidence to use their skills, especially their awareness of basic multiplication tables, although the increasing use of mental mathematics strategies is helping to overcome this difficulty.

9. Pupils have developed a knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. For example, they know basic facts about the solar system, such as the names of planets, their sizes and atmospheres. Pupils carry out experiments, such as how to separate by dissolving, filtration and evaporation. They learn about electrical wiring, and how to wire a plug correctly. Pupils are careful with equipment and with recording their findings, understanding the importance of using correct scientific language. While they make good progress in practical work, the opportunities for this are limited by the space available within the centre's cramped classrooms and the practical equipment available. By the age of 16, pupils know about the functions of cells in plants and animals. They can explain how plants and animals adapt to different conditions. They know about the growth of the human body and the importance of a well balanced diet. They learn about the effects of hormones on the body. They carry out experiments to solve problems, for example, to find out what type of electrical circuit is needed to make a door bell ring, or car headlights to light up. Most record their findings very carefully, drawing and labelling diagrams appropriately.

10. It is only the younger pupils at the centre who are taught specific information technology skills. All other pupils use their existing but developing skills to support other subjects. This is mostly due to the lack of time available to pupils, especially those at Key Stage 4 who are following GCSE courses. However, pupils of all ages and abilities are familiar with computers and many older pupils are very competent. Pupils know how to load, save and print their work either on hard disk or to a floppy disk. There is a very good range of computers around the centre, including laptops and pupils have easy access to this equipment. English work is very well supported through pupils' word processing skills. For example, poetry and written accounts of activity days are word processed skilfully and include examples of different fonts, sizes and graphics, while some pupils use colour effectively to further illustrate their work. From an early age pupils learn how to use the Internet. They are aware of how to type in a web site address, how to move between pages using the *back* key and have an understanding of how *hyperlinks* work. When older pupils find what they have been searching for using the Internet search programs, they print out those pages for their coursework folders.

11. By the age of 16, pupils of all abilities have an understanding of electronic mail and each pupil has their own e-mail address. There are plans to extend this to pupils in Year 9, especially those who may stay at the centre for a longer time. In English, older pupils working on a GCSE poetry project have used a PowerPoint presentation complete with graphics and sound to illustrate their work. However, pupils' understanding of spreadsheets and databases is not as secure, as these are not yet widely used in mathematics or science lessons. The centre's involvement in the *Maths Alive* project is giving some pupils the opportunity to learn through an independent learners' programme, utilising Internet and electronic mail facilities. Although this is still very new, it is beginning to have an impact on pupils' skills and the centre hopes to extend this project to other pupils next year.

12. In art, pupils use their drawing techniques very well to show the use of light and shade on their self-portraits. By the age of 16, pupils discuss sensibly how to develop composition, encouraging each other with ideas and suggestions before modifying their work after consultation with their peers and teachers. Pupils in Year 11 show considerable levels of concentration developing linear compositions. In the limited display areas available around the centre, pupils are able to show their improving skills such as, the use of delicate watercolours based on inspiration from the Surrealist movement.

13. In personal, social and health education, pupils have had an opportunity to study and discuss a wide range of topics, such as feelings, bullying, friendship and prejudice. They take part sensibly in discussions, listen well to one another, and show respect for other pupils' ideas. For example, in a discussion about families they shared their own experiences of brothers and sisters, and discussed very thoughtfully the advantages and disadvantages of being the oldest or youngest in a family. In thinking about their personal abilities, they have been introduced to preliminary ideas about careers, and know how to find information using books or a CD-ROM. By the age of 16, they have considered issues such as relationships in more detail. Discussions such as rules for friendship and the pros and cons of marriage lead to pupils making very thoughtful contributions, both orally and in writing. They give further thought to themselves and to their futures, and develop their National Records of Achievement. In preparation for examinations, pupils undertake a module on study skills.

14. History and geography are taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3, while individual arrangements are made for pupils who arrive during Key Stage 4 and wish to take or complete a GCSE. Pupils understand about daily life in the times of the Tudors and appreciate the vast differences between rich and poor people during the reign of King Henry VIII. By 16, pupils know about the issues surrounding the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions. Pupils write with empathy in the role of historical figures such as, Edward VI on the death of his father and his feelings on becoming King. Pupils develop their research skills to devise a fact file on Queen Elizabeth I. Although it was not

possible to see any geography lessons during the inspection, an analysis of work shows that pupils study climatic conditions such as hot deserts in Africa and the Americas and use graphs to compare climatic types. They use the Internet to download information about tropical forests and they study volcanoes. By the age of 16, pupils use sources such as illustrations and statistical information to make deductions about lifestyle. They understand the difference between arable and pastoral farming and appreciate the impact of selective breeding and crop rotation.

15. By the age of 14 in religious education, pupils have learned basic information about some of the world's great religions. For example, they know the stories of some of the early Jewish leaders such as Moses, and are aware of great festivals such as the Passover. They know about the life of Mohammed, and some of the main aspects of the Muslim faith such as prayer and pilgrimage. They write in some detail about Christian ceremonies of baptism and marriage. By age 16, pupils have studied the Christian and Sikh religions in more detail. They know about the founding of the Sikh religion, and the lives of the Gurus. They can describe ceremonies such as a Sikh marriage and discuss thoughtfully beliefs such as reincarnation. More able pupils can put forward their own ideas about the different beliefs and reflect on the beliefs of others.

16. Currently only pupils in Year 11 experience physical education. This is mostly due to the limitations of time and the lack of any facilities at the centre. Year 11 pupils stay on at the centre after they have finished their lessons in the morning and teachers from the Home Tuition Service take pupils to activities nearby such as archery, skiing, swimming, basketball and badminton. Specialist coaches at these venues instruct pupils and offer them an experience of different leisure activities. By the age of 16, pupils have also experienced climbing, abseiling and problem solving activities at other venues. Some pupils have the opportunity to work towards nationally accredited certificates, while in other activities such as swimming, staff have created certificates to reward pupils for their efforts. Despite the understandable limitations, the centre has worked very hard to offer pupils some physical education experiences.

17. Due to the constraints on time and space, drama is now taught as an optional lunchtime activity. The lively lesson based on Australian migrants initiated a detailed discussion, a mature approach to migration and consideration of the effects it had on the people involved. The very good opportunities for speaking and listening allowed pupils to discuss their roles as child migrants with maturity and sensitivity. The rapport between pupils and teachers is excellent. Pupils benefited from the very well prepared lesson and the excellent opportunities for negotiation, reflection and role development. As a result pupils grew in confidence and in developing assertiveness skills.

18. Older pupils at the centre have the option to follow a GNVQ course that covers three modules, including Health and Social Care and Early Years, Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Understanding Personal Development. The course has been well organised so that pupils can achieve at different levels depending on their length of time at the centre and their individual levels of attainment. Visiting speakers are included in the course, making contributions to issues such as sex education and giving first hand information about working within the health care services. At the time of inspection pupils in Year 11 were preparing for their imminent visits to a nearby nursing home. Not only were pupils considering the research they needed to do on their half day visits but were also giving thought to their own communication skills. During this lesson pupils showed sensitivity to the needs of others and a good understanding of the impact that body language has on other people. As part of their studies pupils read and interpret graphical information showing a balanced diet and examine a number of case studies as they discuss healthy lifestyles. They examine their own lifestyles including the amount of sleep and exercise they take. Pupils use their English and mathematical skills well in preparing their projects; they also make good use of information technology to aid their research and present their findings.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

19. Since the last inspection pupils' attitudes have improved and are now very good. Many pupils have an unhappy history of school and negative feelings about education when they enter the centre, but quickly respond to the calm, caring and purposeful atmosphere it promotes. Pupils enjoy coming to the centre and greet staff cheerfully on arrival. In lessons pupils are highly motivated, respond eagerly to the challenges they are set and stay closely focussed on their tasks. They work very effectively both on their own, in pairs and in group activities, such as considering what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils take pride in their efforts and are pleased to share the joys of their achievements with others, such as the development of the centre's garden. They offer constructive ideas, listen to what others have to say and their contributions to discussions, for instance in art, are thoughtful and imaginative. Pupils' very positive attitudes greatly enhance their learning.

20. Pupils' behaviour has continued to be very good since the last inspection and there have been no exclusions. This has a very positive impact on their ability to listen carefully and to learn. On entry to the centre, some pupils are set clear and realistic behavioural targets to follow and once they settle into the new regime their behaviour improves noticeably. The behaviour policy and self-discipline codes are well understood and pupils respond willingly to what is expected of them. In lessons and throughout the centre pupils behave very well, showing respect for property and equipment such as displays and computers. They are courteous and respectful to visitors, to whom they are happy to speak and show examples of their work. Pupils are quiet and orderly while awaiting transport, and bus escorts confirm they are very well behaved while travelling to and from the centre. During the inspection there were no signs of intimidation or aggression.

21. Pupils' personal development is very good and successfully prepares them for the next stage of their education beyond the centre. Many pupils initially lack self-confidence and have low self-esteem, but this improves noticeably throughout their time at the centre. Pupils welcome the advice they are given by their personal tutors and they enjoy having their efforts and achievements recognised. In lessons they develop independence, take decisions and evaluate their own work. Pupils learn to organise themselves effectively and to carry out the duties they are given with diligence and pride. The maturity and self-image of older students are considerably enhanced by undertaking responsibilities such as the student council. However, opportunities for younger pupils at Key Stage 3 to be part of the student council is at present limited to a voting role rather than active participation. Pupils have a strong sense of community and they debate social issues such as drug abuse.

22. Since the last inspection relationships throughout the centre have improved, and are now excellent. This is a significant strength of the centre. Pupils are treated with great respect and they flourish under the consistent and sensitive approach of staff. Pupils have a trust and close affinity with their personal tutors and mentors. They readily seek their advice and confide in them. The centre has a strong identity and pupils care for each other. For example, when a pupil missed the end of a lesson due to being unwell, one of their friends immediately volunteered to photocopy the work they had missed for them so they would not fall behind with their GCSE coursework. Social inclusion is given a high priority, as pupils of all ages, genders and abilities interact very well together. Students appreciate different values and beliefs and have an excellent understanding of peer group feelings. There are many harmonious and constructive relationships, which help to increase pupils' confidence, self-respect and willingness to learn.

23. Pupils' attendance markedly improves once they have settled into the centre. The present rates of attendance and unauthorised absence are better than at the time of the last inspection, and compared with benchmark figures are good. Registration, which is completed informally, is orderly and effective. Attendance registers comply with statutory requirements and most pupils arrive punctually in designated taxis or buses. Good attendance and punctuality throughout the day have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching throughout the centre is very good overall and occasionally outstanding in drama. This has a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning, the enjoyment they derive from their lessons and ultimately the standards they achieve in their GCSE examinations. Of the 32 lessons observed the standard of teaching was very good or better in 68 per cent of lessons, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a further improvement on the high standards of teaching reported in the previous inspection.

25. High quality teaching is characterised by many strengths, including effective lesson planning. Each lesson is planned with the needs of individual pupils in mind. For example, English lessons allow pupils to talk with confidence and so develop their speaking and listening skills as well as improving their self-esteem. Despite teachers still getting to know some new pupils at the start of term, planned work was challenging, interesting and often very enjoyable. This ensures that pupils fully understand what is expected of them during the lesson and for older pupils how it fits into their coursework. Pupils are inspired to do their best not just for themselves but also for their teachers, who quite obviously enjoy teaching. Teachers are confident and have very good subject knowledge. They often check with their colleagues in the Home Tuition Service and in mainstream schools, that the standards of assessment and marking they use, are comparable to that of pupils in mainstream schools.

26. The atmosphere in the unit is relaxed yet busy and purposeful. All staff understand that time is precious and not a moment is wasted throughout the day. Teachers work hard to ensure pupils fully understand what they are learning and why, through a very good range of strategies. For example, they question, encourage, support, give constant feedback, reassurance and praise which enables many of the new and vulnerable pupils to grow in confidence and self-belief. Some pupils with medical needs do become tired very quickly but teachers sympathetically encourage them to continue with their work whilst supporting and praising their efforts.

27. The quality and use of assessment is very good, however marking does not always clearly indicate what pupils need to do to improve further. Teachers use an effective range of assessment strategies to monitor and plan future work for their pupils, such as written tests in mathematics, pupils' verbal responses during the lesson and of course written work. Lessons are well summarised, with clear reminders to pupils of what they have covered in the lesson. In addition, pupils are expected to assess their own work which is then recorded and forms part of a half-termly review process.

28. All teachers and support staff care deeply for their pupils and do whatever they can to keep them in the classroom for as long as possible, despite on occasions acute medical needs. In science, clear instructions are given for practical experiments, and great care is taken to ensure that safety procedures are followed, particularly as pupils often have to work in a very confined space. Staff will encourage their pupils to succeed and constantly check that they have understood their work and how it fits into their overall coursework. The quality of relationships throughout the centre is exemplary. For example, teachers encourage pupils to attempt topics which they have not encountered or have previously been unsuccessful in, such as mathematics and science. Teachers show great respect for their pupils, and frequently use humour to encourage them, which is appreciated and reciprocated. This can be clearly seen during most lessons but especially in English, science and personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are very comfortable with their teachers and support staff and will ask for help when needed, although sometimes this is just for reassurance. Pupils feel able to share their own experience with the group, for example, in a discussion about families. Pupils are

encouraged to work together in pairs, as well as part of a class, and this helps to develop their social skills.

29. Literacy, numeracy and other basic skills including information technology are well taught and these skills are utilised throughout the curriculum, although numeracy is not yet as well developed as literacy. For example, many pupils research information for their GCSE coursework using the Internet. Word processing skills are used to draft and re-draft essays for coursework. Learning resources are planned well in advance of lessons. For example, in religious education good use is made of artefacts to gain pupils' interest and to help their understanding. However, this is extremely difficult for teachers as the centre has so little storage space and most teachers have to prepare the learning resources they require elsewhere, and then carry them around in plastic boxes. During the course of a day's teaching this can be physically very demanding for teachers. Wherever necessary teachers individualise resources for pupils, for example word processed sheets including photographs for researching a history project on World War Two, or supporting a PowerPoint presentation in English. Other teachers go to great lengths, such as preparing visual reminders for an English lesson, of the items found in the man's pockets to support pupils' work on Simon Armitage's *About His Person*. This encouraged pupils to think carefully about the significance of the poem. Different newspapers are used to compare and contrast different reporting styles of the same story, while videos effectively encourage Year 10 pupils to consider how they might present information about their own personal experiences.

30. The use of homework as an extension to pupils' learning is outstanding. Considering pupils' previous experiences of school and homework in particular, teachers successfully encourage all pupils to regularly complete the work that is asked of them. Teachers set homework for all pupils, irrespective of age or ability. This is often an extension of class work or as preparation for the next lesson and is often related to pupils' coursework. All staff are acutely aware of the difficulties some pupils face completing set work outside of the centre. However, expectations are such that pupils rarely fail to comply. Pupils also know that they can go to any member of staff for help and advice if they are experiencing difficulties.

31. Despite the very high standard of teaching, occasionally some teachers did not provide work that was sufficiently challenging or noticeably different to other pupils in the class. This can be partly explained by teachers needing to assess the levels of attainment of new pupils. However, teachers also need to be careful when questioning pupils not to give them the answer too quickly, but to challenge their learning and understanding.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

32. The curriculum pupils receive is very good, being generally broad, balanced and relevant to their needs at the centre. Although the Local Education Authority has not yet produced a curriculum statement for pupils educated other than at school, a weakness identified in the previous report, staff at the centre have devised an appropriate curriculum within the constraints afforded by the poor accommodation. All pupils are taught English, mathematics, science, religious education and personal, social and health education, although the practical aspects of science are limited because of a lack of a specialist teaching area. Information and communications technology is well used to support other subjects. Attempts are made to give pupils access to other subjects but these, too, are restricted because of the limitations imposed by the centre's accommodation. For example, pupils are taught art, but the whole curriculum cannot be covered, drama has had to be removed from the taught curriculum and made a lunchtime club for all but Year 11 pupils. Physical education is available for pupils in Year 11, and subjects such as design and technology can only be taught when a local school will allow access to its facilities. The centre does attempt to offer individual pupils as much support



as possible to complete those courses they have already started before joining the centre. For example, the centre has even used its tiny staff kitchen for those pupils taking food technology at GCSE level, with successful outcomes. Pupils also have the opportunity to study a number of foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish. Pupils have good opportunities for taking accredited courses including GCSE, Certificate of Educational Achievement, and GNVQ. Staff at the centre have done everything possible to address the issues in relation to the curriculum from the last inspection. The only issues not dealt with are those in relation to accommodation, which is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority.

33. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies at Key Stage 3 is at an early stage of development. Overall, present strategies for literacy are good, and those for numeracy are satisfactory. Good support for both is already being provided with the recent introduction of *Compact Challenge 2000*, for pupils at Key Stage 4. Once this is in place, it will provide an additional form of accreditation through ASDAN.

34. Despite the part time nature of the unit, and the fact that most pupils travel to and from the centre by taxi or designated buses, there are good opportunities for extra curricular activities. These include allowing Year 11 pupils to stay for extra sessions to complete coursework, such as art and drama, double award science, and to attend various activity centres for a range of sports. The curriculum is enriched by visiting theatres and by a theatre group and poet visiting the centre. Exciting focus weeks each summer, including activities such as an art day, problem solving games and speakers about the environment, add an extra dimension to pupils' learning experiences.

35. The Local Education Authority's policy for equal opportunities is followed by all at the centre, and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Pupils who have a statement of special educational needs have a range of additional needs such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, learning difficulties, and emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The needs of these pupils are well addressed through clear targets on individual education plans. Good arrangements are in place to ensure pupils' annual reviews take place at the correct time and are attended by parents and other support agencies. Transition reviews are also held, where appropriate, and are well attended by the specialist careers officer and other appropriate services.

36. Provision for personal, social and health education is excellent. An audit of all subjects and other activities has recently been carried out by the co-ordinator, and a programme drawn up of those aspects which are to be covered in personal, social and health education lessons, and those which are dealt with in other subjects. The syllabus includes all the required elements such as sex education, drugs awareness and citizenship, as well as close links to the careers education programme. A taught course for the young mothers who receive home tuition is provided by the personal, social and health education co-ordinator at two local centres. This covers issues of personal development and childcare and has been effectively developed into an accredited course through the local college.

37. There is very good provision for work related education. There is a careers focus in some modules of personal, social and health education, from Year 9 onwards. There are close links with the local careers adviser who gives talks to groups of pupils, individual advice sessions and attends transition reviews of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Pupils have the opportunity of work experience when it is felt that they are ready to undertake such a placement. These are very well organised by the work experience co-ordinator who prepares the pupils, takes them on preliminary visits, and ensures that placements are carefully checked and monitored. Pupils produce a diary of their experiences, which becomes part of their National Record of Achievement.

38. Links with the community are also very good. Many local employers, such as banks, the hospital, nursing home, the zoo, schools, a veterinary practice and an accountant, provide work experience for pupils. Members of the local community are involved in the personal, social and

health education course, for example, the school nurse, health education staff and the police. Speakers from local Christian communities have taken part in school assemblies. Various leisure centres are used to provide sports activities for pupils in Year 11 and the customer services suite at a local shopping complex and a National Children's Home family centre provide accommodation for the young mothers' course.

39. Links with partner institutions are also very good. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 have the opportunity of attending part time courses at the local college for activities such as bricklaying and hairdressing. There are strong links with those schools to which pupils are returning, especially planning and monitoring the re-integration process. Local secondary schools have provided workshop and laboratory facilities to enable pupils to have experience of using them as part of their GCSE courses. Staff at the centre have had the opportunity of shadowing colleagues in mainstream schools to ensure that they keep up to date with curriculum initiatives.

40. The centre provides very good opportunities for pupils' to integrate back into mainstream schools. The expectation is that the majority of pupils at Key Stage 3 will return to mainstream schools. Very good procedures have been developed and the high quality of support provided to pupils ensures that most are able to successfully return to school. Many pupils return to school direct from The Home Tuition Service, while others use the centre as a place in which to get used to working with other pupils before returning to school. Due to this dual system, some pupils are supported in school by their home tutors, while others have links with staff from the centre. Staff in local schools speak very highly of the liaison with and support provided by the centre.

41. The centre has built successful links with local colleges, and pupils have the opportunity of undertaking a variety of work-related courses such as bricklaying and hairdressing. Community centres are used for a young mothers' group. This provides the opportunity for those who have home tuition to meet and work with other pupils, and to take an accredited course taught by one of the centre staff. Integration into the wider community is also supported through pupils' work experience placements.

42. The centre makes very good provision for moral and social development, and good provision for spiritual and cultural development. Although it is not a requirement for pupil referral units, there is a weekly assembly at which achievements are celebrated, and at which pupils have an opportunity to consider events in the world. These are sometimes accompanied by a prayer, for those who wish to participate. The centre also provides religious education for pupils and they have opportunities to think about their own and others' faiths. Careful thought has been given to ways of helping spiritual development in the centre and a useful policy document has been drawn up to provide ideas for staff.

43. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils are given a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. All adults are very good role models, and make use of opportunities throughout the day to reinforce the attitudes which the centre promotes. Discussions about moral issues feature in both religious education and personal, social and health education.

44. There is very good provision for pupils' social development. Relationships within the centre are excellent, and pupils are treated with great respect, their self-confidence is developed and they feel valued. Pupils develop responsibility at the centre by getting equipment ready for lessons or taking the registers to the office. Pupils in Year 11 are elected to the School Council. Pupils are encouraged to develop independence in working and good use is made of information technology and of research using the Internet. Pupils are encouraged to work together and they give one another very good support. Pupils care for others in the centre, for example, welcome those who have been absent and those who are new. They show concern for others and raise money for charities such as *Comic Relief* and *Jeans for Genes*. Pupils have contributed to Christmas parcels for children in Eastern Europe.

45. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their cultural awareness. Through work in English, they are introduced to different authors and to a variety of literatures such as stories, poetry and plays. Some appreciation of the work of different artists is encouraged through art, and pupils have been introduced to the art of other cultures, such as African art. Drama enhances both social development and cultural awareness. Pupils are also made aware of the multi-cultural nature of society in religious education when they hear about the festivals and customs of different faiths.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

46. Procedures for child protection and pupils' welfare are very good, which is an improvement on the previous inspection. Arrangements covering accidents, illnesses and medicines are very good and a sufficient number of staff have up to date first aid qualifications. A register is kept of pupils with conditions that may require emergency medical treatment. The child protection policy and procedures are excellent and very good links are established with the requisite agencies.

47. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good and pastoral care is a very high priority. Staff know their pupils very well and are fully aware of their individual needs. All pupils have both a personal tutor and a mentor to guide and advise them during their time at the centre. Tutors review pupils' progress in academic and life skills every half term, and together with pupils, set new targets. Copies of new targets are sent to parents and displayed in the staff room for all members of staff to be aware of and comment on if necessary. Tutors oversee pupils' daily attendance, their behaviour and social skills and monitor their academic achievements. Further support for pupils' personal development is provided through additional schemes such as merit awards for good work, attendance and behaviour, or by giving pupils additional responsibilities, such as the school council. However, at present this is more supportive of the centre's older pupils than those at Key Stage 3.

48. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and better than at the last inspection. The centre very carefully monitors all absences and there are close links with education social workers. The attendance policy is good and absence procedures are well known to parents. Those who do not comply are contacted promptly by the centre and thereafter are spoken to regularly while their children are absent. Most absences are for medical reasons and pupils take a pride in attaining certificates for good attendance.

49. The centre's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The behaviour policy is very positive and clearly defines standards and expectations for pupils. The policy is supported by a balanced range of rewards and sanctions which are consistently implemented by staff. Pupils are strongly encouraged to conform to an acceptable standard of behaviour and to take ownership and responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff monitor pupils' demeanour on arrival, their attitudes to learning, and their behaviour and relationships. An incident/accident book is very carefully maintained and referred to as necessary at daily staff meetings. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. The centre has an excellent anti-bullying policy and uses local authority guidelines for equal opportunities. Pupils discuss both these aspects in their personal, social and health education lessons. The supervision of pupils is very good and any incidents of bullying, harassment or aggression are dealt with immediately.

50. The centre has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, which is a similar finding to the previous inspection. When pupils arrive at the centre, staff assess their literacy and numeracy skills. This information combined with data available from the previous school is used well to decide on the appropriate teaching groups and strategies to meet pupils' individual learning needs. However, information from pupils' previous schools is helpful but inconsistent. Also pupils

may have undergone lengthy hospital treatment, missing part of their schooling, which can obviously impact on their learning. As a result the centre reassess pupils' levels of attainment when they arrive at the centre. This gives teachers an up to date and detailed understanding of pupils' individual learning needs. The very good use of assessment, in planning lessons to meet pupils' emotional and learning needs has a significant impact on their high levels of achievement. Teachers use a variety of effective recording systems which give a clear picture of pupils' progress and their levels of achievement. The information is used effectively to influence the review and guidance system when pupils discuss their individual targets, both academic and behavioural, with their tutor. As part of this process pupils assess their own skills and set themselves specific targets which are approved and endorsed by their parents and teachers. Teachers consistently monitor pupils' progress through examination course work. The Teacher in Charge is regularly updated on pupils' achievements and is able to maintain a close understanding and knowledge of the progress made by individual pupils. The marking of pupils' work is positive and encouraging, although the very good practice of giving pupils specific points for improvement is not used consistently by all staff.

51. The health and safety policy is very good and there is a clear safety code for science lessons. Staff have very good health and safety awareness, risk inspections are carried out regularly and officers from the emergency services speak to pupils. Emergency evacuations are regularly practised. All appropriate inspections of appliances and equipment are up to date and hazardous substances correctly managed. The centre is clean and hygienic and pupils feel safe, nurtured and secure which impacts very favourably on their attitudes to learning. However, a report, written by the Dudley's principal safety officer, in January 2001 raised several important health and safety issues relating to the centre's accommodation and its position within a shared campus. This report has been passed from the management committee to the Local Education Authority.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

52. Parents' views of the centre are very good. In addition to the parents' meeting, there was a very good response to the parents' questionnaire. Parents strongly support the quality and effectiveness of the educational provision for their children. Notably, parents say the centre is well led and managed, teaching is good, and their children are becoming mature and responsible. They affirm too that their children's attitudes and behaviour are good, pastoral care is particularly good and they feel comfortable about approaching the centre with any questions and problems. Evidence from the inspection strongly supports these views.

53. The centre's partnership with parents is well founded and since the last inspection parental links have continued to be very good. The centre greatly values the part parents play in their children's education and encourages them to be involved as much as they can. Parents are always very welcome to visit the centre, talk to staff and see their children's work. The induction programme for new pupils is very well managed and parents are given a proper understanding of the centre's practices and activities. The centre has an excellent complaints procedure. The quality of information provided for parents, including that on pupils' progress, has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. If pupils experience any problems or have a particularly good day, a member of staff will often telephone the parents to let them know. As well as regular review meetings, parents are sent half-termly reports, which include new targets and comments set by the pupils themselves. Annual reports provide a good commentary on pupils' efforts and achievements throughout the year, but do not give specific targets for improvement or include individual pupil comments, which is a shame. There are two parents' evenings annually. Newsletters keep parents up to date with school events and questionnaires ensure parents' views are known. The centre handbook is well presented and contains very helpful information.

54. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the centre is good, although there is little direct opportunity for parents to contribute to their children's education within the curriculum.

However, many parents take a close interest in their children's learning, help with homework and complete homework diaries. Annual review meetings for pupils' with special educational needs, including transitional reviews for older pupils are well attended, as are parents' evenings. The home/school agreement properly emphasises mutual commitment and most parents comply with their undertakings. Parental support for the work of the centre contributes well to pupils' learning.

## HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

55. The Local Education Authority, in the form of a designated officer, provides governance for The Learning Centre. There is also an established management committee which meets on a termly basis to receive a detailed report from the teacher in charge and consider the issues she raises. However, this committee has a very limited membership, which is confined to educational personnel, including staff from the centre and the Home Tuition Service. Meetings are not always well attended by members of the committee, for example, at the last meeting only three of the committee's six members were present. The committee does little to monitor, evaluate or support the work of the centre, its teacher in charge, staff or pupils. For example, in January 2001, the authority's principal safety officer wrote a highly critical report on the centre's accommodation. Although this was received and minuted by the committee and passed to another department, they have not rigorously sought answers to the many critical issues raised in the report. Other difficulties raised by the teacher in charge include finding suitable accommodation for pupils to sit their mock and final examinations, or to complete their drama examination. She often has to fight for these causes alone with little support from the management committee or the Local Education Authority. The management committee does not act as a *critical friend*, it rarely challenges pupils' standards, monitors the centre's development plans or oversees its financial expenditure and very little, if any, strategic planning takes place. Indeed the teacher in charge always has to chair the meetings herself. This is unsatisfactory and often leaves the teacher in charge as solely responsible for ensuring her pupils have appropriate access to a suitable education. She does receive some support from the designated officer, as time allows, but since the centre's attached Local Education Authority's link inspector left the authority, there has been little curriculum support.

56. At the time of the last inspection the Local Education Authority was not meeting its statutory duties, namely that there was no published policy on the provision of education otherwise than at school nor a curriculum policy, other than a draft policy requiring ratification. This situation still remains almost four years later, and is a significant weakness that requires immediate attention.

57. Another area for development identified at the time of the last inspection was the need to clarify a clear and agreed admissions policy for the centre and this has been suitably addressed. Procedures for admitting pupils to the centre are now clear and well understood by both schools and parents. However, the quality of information provided by some schools referring pupils to the centre is still insufficient and does not help teachers at the centre to quickly assess pupils' curricular needs or produce appropriate learning targets.

58. The teacher in charge is a very good and effective leader and manager. She is creative, imaginative and supports a highly motivated staff, despite enormous difficulties with the centre's accommodation, which often makes day to day teaching very difficult. She provides high quality support not just to her pupils at the centre, but to those within the Home Tuition Service and a number of primary and secondary schools. The centre and service are very well respected within the Local Education Authority, providing advice and support for many schools who re-integrate pupils back into full time education. The teacher in charge has a very clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development, including a very clear awareness of what could be improved with appropriate accommodation. Together with a dedicated staff, the centre has continued to improve curriculum opportunities for its pupils and raise standards of achievement. For example, GCSE examinations have improved year on year and staff are extremely aware of the need for all pupils to be given as many curriculum opportunities as possible.

59. The teacher in charge regularly assesses the quality of teaching on pupils' learning, through classroom observations. This is followed up with a verbal and then written report to help teachers improve. Each subject co-ordinator produces a detailed and appropriately costed subject development

plan including identified training needs. These plans, together with the centre's development plan, provide a clear overall strategy for continued improvement and development.

60. Educational inclusion and equal opportunities are given a high priority by the centre, such as meeting the wide range of pupils' abilities and for some meeting their additional special educational needs. The ethos of the unit is very good. Staff are highly effective in promoting an atmosphere where high standards of behaviour and harmonious relationships are the clear expectation. This encourages pupils to have a very good attitude to learning, which helps them to make progress and ultimately achieve success in their examination. Parents report that their children enjoy attending the centre, which for many of them with their history of disrupted education, is a significant achievement. Teamwork is of a very high standard, and the teacher in charge is very well supported by all teaching and support staff and her administrative assistant. Although very few pupils at Key Stage 4 return to their mainstream schools, they are offered the opportunity to attend local colleges to experience courses such as bricklaying and hairdressing. Together with a very good variety of work experience placements pupils are able to make informed choices about their futures before leaving the centre.

61. The match of teachers and support staff to pupils' needs is very good. The experience and expertise of teachers is well matched to the demands of the curriculum, and is evident in the high standards of teaching throughout the centre. Teachers have good experience of the GCSE and vocational courses that they teach. Staff have clearly defined roles linked to effective job descriptions. The teacher in charge actively supports her staff to maintain their own professional development by attendance at relevant courses. Though performance management is in its early stages, the centre has been involved in the appraisal process for some time and its effect on the high standard of teaching and staff expertise is evident. The teacher with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs is experienced and ensures that the register and administrative procedures are up to date. Support staff work effectively with teachers to make sure that lower attaining pupils gain maximum benefit from the curriculum. This is an improvement on the previous inspection.

62. The standard of accommodation at the centre remains poor as it was at the time of the last inspection. There is still insufficient space available for teaching and although some minor changes have been made, there has been very little improvement since the last inspection. When another unit within the Local Education Authority was closed, additional pupils were transferred to The Learning Centre. Despite expectations that the accommodation would be increased to cope with these new pupils and improve the amenities for existing pupils, the only additions to the centre have been two small teaching rooms. These however, are so small they are restrictive. For example, pupils cannot move around the room to work with their peers and have to remain seated throughout lessons. This also restricts teaching strategies. In order to access the largest classroom, staff and pupils have to walk through another classroom, which is a source of unavoidable disruption, no matter how careful people try to be. In an excellent drama lesson, both teachers had to move furniture so that the group could have space to work in. This all takes time and energy, yet remarkably teachers continue to put up with these immense difficulties for the benefit of pupils' learning.

63. Staff at the centre show a tremendous amount of resilience and goodwill. For example, the teaching resources they need for their lessons have to be carried from room to room in plastic boxes. They resort to using their car boots for storage and manage day after day without access to a desk or workspace at the centre. Staff make a very good job of displaying pupils' work in the limited space available but the lack of wall space restricts the use of some teaching resources and limits the amount of achievement that can be celebrated. In an establishment committed to raising pupils' self-esteem this is a distinct disadvantage. Practical subjects such as science and design technology are also significantly affected by the poor accommodation. For example, for pupils to use science laboratory or workshop facilities for design and technology, the teacher in charge first of all has to find a school willing to allow the centre to use their facilities. Then they have to organise and transport pupils to this

facility which is not always appropriate for many pupils who have unhappy memories of their mainstream schools.

64. The staff room cannot accommodate all staff at one time. This room also doubles up as the medical room which means that on many occasions, pupils who are unwell need to use this room and staff have nowhere to go. There is also a severe lack of toilet facilities, necessitating in male staff having to share one toilet with pupils. There are very limited places for teachers and support staff to work and during the inspection one member of staff was seen trying to prepare resources by using the paper cutter on the floor in the corridor.

65. Another major problem with the accommodation is that every year the centre needs to find appropriate facilities for pupils to sit their formal GCSE examinations. The centre is accredited as an examination centre on the basis of having access to rooms in the Education Development Centre, which is on the same site. However, these rooms are no longer being made available to the centre and rooms have to be found at other educational establishments. Many pupils have acute medical and emotional problems, which is why they receive their education at the centre. This lack of suitable accommodation merely compounds their difficulties and causes even greater anxiety. Therefore, pupils at the centre sitting their external examinations are not afforded the same consideration as their peers in local secondary schools. This is unacceptable.

66. The centre is situated in a large car park that serves the Education Development Centre and other Local Education Authority services. Although all staff are meticulous in ensuring that pupils come into and leave the building safely, there is no designated loading or unloading area in the car park to ensure that visitors to the Education Development Centre do not inadvertently endanger pupils waiting for busses and taxis. Potentially, this is a serious risk to pupils' health and safety, and although the principal safety officer highlighted this danger in his report in January this year, nothing has been done to address this concern. The lack of a suitable outdoor play area also inhibits opportunities for pupils to socialise and play together.

67. Learning resources overall are satisfactory. Within the constraints of the space available, teachers purchase and store whatever resources they can to support the curriculum. However, the simple limitations of suitable cupboards and shelving mean that teachers have to restrict the amount of support materials they can purchase. The supply of texts for English and English Literature is good but the library and careers library are limited, again due to a lack of space. Learning resources for information technology, including an interactive whiteboard, are very good although the workstations that house most of the computers are very cramped.

68. Staff at the centre are used efficiently to support pupils' learning, including additional staff from the Home Tuition Service to extend the curriculum. The centre's administrative assistant deals with the day to day administration of the centre's budget very well, including all internal procedures for ordering resources and arranging payment. The last auditor's report highlighted only a few minor issues which have been effectively implemented. The use of additional grants to support teachers' training and pupils' needs is effective. As the centre is beginning to apply the principles of best value, it provides good value for money.



## **WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

69. In order to build on the strengths and make improvements, the Local Education Authority should:

- (1) Urgently review the standard of accommodation to ensure pupils and staff have appropriate facilities to meet the educational, personal and social aims of the centre, including those health and safety issues identified in the authority's own report. (Paragraphs 4, 9, 16, 17, 29, 32, 51, 55, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67)
- (2) Publish without delay its policies on providing education for pupils otherwise than at school and its curriculum policy for Pupil Referral Units, in order to meet its statutory responsibilities. (Paragraphs 32 and 56)
- (3) Review the membership of the management committee and the support it gives to the centre by improving its role in monitoring, evaluation and strategic planning. (Paragraph 55)

70. In addition to the main areas for development outlined above, the following areas should also be considered by the centre:

- ◇ Ensure all teachers provide work that is sufficiently challenging and varied to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes. (Paragraph 31)
- ◇ Ensure all teachers consistently apply the agreed marking policy. (Paragraphs 27 and 50)
- ◇ Improve opportunities for the personal development of younger pupils at Key Stage 3. (Paragraphs 21 and 47)
- ◇ Further develop annual reports to parents to include pupils' own comments and targets. (Paragraph 53)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	19	9	1			
Percentage	6	62	29	3			

### *Information about the unit's pupils*

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	53

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	48

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

### *Attendance*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
Unit data	18	Unit data	1

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for last whole term before the inspection*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4*

Despite the fragmented nature of pupils' education and their learning difficulties, all 30 pupils last year were entered for external examinations. Of these, all 30 pupils attained at least one GCSE, while 20 pupils attained five A to G passes and another eight attained five A to C passes. Pupils studied a full range of subjects including modern foreign languages. In addition, some pupils gained vocational qualifications and Certificates of Achievement.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	53
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Year 11**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	38

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	8,500
Total expenditure	8,500
Expenditure per pupil	160.37
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

\* The centre only manages a capitation allowance as represented here. The Local Education Authority manage the centre's budget.

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the unit during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the unit during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	54
Number of questionnaires returned	27

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	30	4	4	4
My child is making good progress in school.	56	30	0	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	26	4	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	26	4	4	11
The teaching is good.	85	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	19	4	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	11	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	78	15	0	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	85	11	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	19	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	26	7	4	22