

# INSPECTION REPORT

**DORSET BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE  
(PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS)**

Sherborne, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 130315

Head of Service: Ms Di Hankins

Reporting inspector: Steven Parker  
13033

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 223591

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNITS

Type of school: Behaviour Support Service (Pupil referral units)

School category: Pupil referral units

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Service address: Sherborne Learning Centre  
Simons Road  
Sherborne

Postcode: Dorset  
DT9 4DN

Telephone number: 01935 814582

Fax number: 01935 815233

Appropriate authority: The Local Education Authority

Name of responsible officer: Nigel Austin

Date of previous inspection: Not inspected previously

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members                   |   | Subject responsibilities  | Aspect responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Steven Parker<br>OIN: 13033    | Registered inspector and lead for Sherborne         | Mathematics<br>Science<br>Art<br>Geography<br>History<br>Music  | What sort of PRU is it?<br>The PRU's results and pupils' achievements<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How well is the PRU led and managed?   |
| Elaine Parrish<br>OIN: 9577    | Lay inspector - Roving commission on all three PRUs | Support on personal, social and health education  | How well does the school work in partnership with parents?   |
| Sarah Mascall<br>OIN: 20536    | Lead for Wimborne                                   | Mathematics<br>Science<br>Geography<br>History<br>Modern foreign language   | What sort of PRU is it?<br>The PRU's results and pupils' achievements<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How well is the PRU led and managed?   |
| Alastair Younger<br>OIN: 23587 | Lead for West Dorset (Dorchester)                   | Mathematics<br>Science<br>Art<br>Geography<br>History<br>Modern foreign language  | What sort of PRU is it?<br>The PRU's results and pupils' achievements<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How well is the PRU led and managed?   |
| Glyn Essex<br>OIN: 1358        | Team inspector – West Dorset (Dorchester)           | English<br>Information technology<br>Design and technology<br>Music<br>Physical education<br>Equal opportunities<br>Special educational needs | Pupils' attitudes values and personal development<br>How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils?<br>Support on staffing, accommodation and learning resources |
| Declan McCarthy<br>OIN: 23886  | Team inspector - Sherborne                          | English<br>Information technology<br>Design and technology<br>Modern foreign  | Pupils' attitudes values and personal development.<br>How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to   |

|                                 |   |  |   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
|                                 |   | language<br>Physical education<br>Equal opportunities<br>Special educational needs   | pupils?<br>Support on staffing, accommodation and learning resources.   |
| Alan Tattersall<br>OIN: 20466   | Team inspector<br>– Roving commission on all three PRUs | Personal, social and health education  | How well does the PRU care for its pupils?<br>Support on staffing, accommodation and learning resources   |
| Vanessa Wilkinson<br>OIN: 18461 | Team inspector<br>- Wimborne                            | English<br>IT<br>Art<br>Design and technology<br>Music<br>Physical education<br>Equal opportunities<br>Special educational needs | Pupils' attitudes values and personal development<br>How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils?<br>Support on staffing, accommodation and learning resources. |

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Information about the Service<br>How good the Service is<br>What the Service does well<br>What could be improved  |           |
| <b>Individual summaries for Sherborne and Wimborne Learning Centres and West Dorset Pupil Referral Unit</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| Information about the centres<br>How good the centres are<br>What the centres do well<br>What could be improved<br>How the centres have improved since their last inspection<br>Standards<br>Pupils' attitudes and values<br>Teaching and learning<br>Other aspects of the centres<br>How well the centres are led and managed<br>Parents' and carers' views of the centres |           |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>   |           |
| <b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>  | <b>19</b> |
| The service's results and achievements<br>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  |           |
| <b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>  | <b>22</b> |
| <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>   | <b>23</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SERVICE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>   | <b>24</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SERVICE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>   | <b>25</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL IS THE SERVICE LED AND MANAGED?</b>   | <b>26</b> |
| <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SERVICE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>   | <b>28</b> |
| <b>PART C: SERVICE DATA AND INDICATORS</b>  | <b>29</b> |

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICE**

The Dorset Behaviour Support Service is part of the Local Education Authority's (LEA) Pupil and Parent Services branch. The element of this service that this report covers is the pupil referral units (PRUs). There are four PRUs in the county and three of them were inspected (the fourth, Crossways, having been inspected earlier in the year). The three units are The Sherborne Learning Centre, The Wimborne Learning Centre and the West Dorset Pupil Referral Unit near Dorchester. All of the units provide support for pupils who have a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that prevent them from thriving full time in mainstream schools. Most of them have learning difficulties and low achievement when they join the centres. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities. Sherborne and Wimborne make provision for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 who are still attending their mainstream schools part time and Key Stage 4 pupils who are excluded from school. At West Dorset they provide for just dual-registered Key Stage 3 pupils. Dual registered pupils attend for up to three half days a week and excluded pupils for up to twenty hours a week. The LEA plans to combine Crossways and West Dorset to create a new Learning Centre, similar to the other two, by the end of October 2000. The Sherborne and Wimborne Centres are housed in recently refurbished buildings and West Dorset will move into new premises in October.

### **HOW GOOD THE SERVICE IS**

The service is effective in developing pupils' self-esteem and improving their behaviour and attitudes considerably. This enables them to either return to their mainstream schools full time, or achieve satisfactory and sometimes good results in GCSE and other accredited courses at the Sherborne and Wimborne Centres. Despite the fact that the quality of leadership and management by the head of service, the LEA and its management committee is unsatisfactory overall, learning is maintained at a satisfactory and often good standard because pupils are well taught. The service therefore provides satisfactory value for money

#### **What the service does well**

- Very good relationships between staff, pupils and their parents contribute significantly to improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. These are well supported by very effective personal and social education.
- A good curriculum, together with good quality teaching and leadership at the Sherborne and West Dorset Centres, ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Good links with the community and local schools and colleges provide pupils with effective individualised learning programmes.
- A caring and supportive culture helps pupils to improve their self-esteem and become more confident that they can succeed.

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

- Unsatisfactory management by the LEA, its management committee and the head of service, which has led to:
  - a lack of clear educational direction for the service;
  - inefficient delegation of responsibility;
  - slow progress in establishing the management committee as an effective body. As a result of this they are not yet fulfilling their duties;
  - ineffective systems for monitoring and evaluating curriculum provision, teaching and learning;
  - lack of proper structure, focus and rigour in development planning;
  - inefficient communication systems and lack of shared vision, resulting in low morale in parts of the service;
  - lack of clarity concerning efficient and effective use of financial resources and staff
- Monitoring of pupils' performance.
- Systems for assessment and the writing of effective individual education plans (IEPs).
- In the Sherborne and Wimborne centres, the quality of information for parents about their child's achievements.

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

There are serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the service. The following summaries give details of inspection findings for each of the three PRUs. The commentary that follows them relates to the service provision as a whole.

## SHERBORNE LEARNING CENTRE

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Sherborne Learning Centre makes provision for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 who are still attending their mainstream schools part time, and Key Stage 4 pupils who have been excluded from school. It has places for up to 30 pupils in maximum group sizes of eight. Numbers fluctuate throughout the year and at the time of the inspection there were seven pupils on roll. It was expected that this number would increase rapidly as referrals were processed. Pupils who attend the centre have a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that prevent them from thriving full time in mainstream schools. Most of them have learning difficulties and low achievement when they join the centre. The centre is part of a facility that is used by a number of community groups and educational organisations. Accommodation is in an attractively converted old primary school building.

### HOW GOOD THE CENTRE IS

The centre is very effective in developing pupils' self esteem and improving their behaviour and attitudes considerably, enabling them to either return to their mainstream school full time or achieve good results at the centre by the end of Key Stage 4. Leadership and management within the centre is good, but its effectiveness is weakened by the lack of formal monitoring by the local education authority and its management committee. The centre provides good value for money.

#### What the centre does well

- Good relationships between staff, pupils and their parents in a caring and supportive environment ensure that pupils develop confidence and self esteem.
- Teaching is consistently good and this helps pupils to do their best.
- The very good curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities. Additional arrangements to attend colleges and mainstream schools ensure that pupils are included in the mainstream of learning.
- Good accommodation and very good learning resources, particularly for information and communication technology, support pupils' high achievements in relation to their ability.

#### What could be improved

- Targets set out in IEPs are not written in sufficient detail to enable pupils' progress to be measured reliably. This leads to unsatisfactory use of assessment to guide teachers' planning.
- Pupils' records are unsatisfactory overall, because they do not properly inform parents about their child's achievements and progress.
- The co-ordination and monitoring of subject provision, both within the centre and across the other PRUs, is not sufficiently well organised to ensure consistent practice across the service

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

### HOW THE CENTRE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The centre has not been inspected previously.



## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the centre.

| Progress in:   | by age 16 | Key            |   |
|--|-----------|----------------|---|
| English  | B         | very good      | A |
| mathematics  | C         | good           | B |
| science  | C         | satisfactory   | C |
| personal, social and health education                    | B         | unsatisfactory | D |
| other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | C         | poor           | E |

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

Pupils take GCSEs in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects, including childcare, and achieve creditable grades between C and G. A number of pupils achieve good passes in basic skills in literacy and numeracy through AEB accredited courses and other individuals have gained certificates of achievement in hairdressing, making movies and information and communication technology. Overall, pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the centre                | Very positive. Pupils are happy to attend the centre. They concentrate well and work hard.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Pupils are well behaved in the centre, where lessons are settled and break-times are civilised and friendly. This good behaviour is also apparent when they go to mainstream schools, colleges and out into the community. Close supervision and support ensures that there is no bullying or harassment. |
| Personal development and relationships | Pupils make very good progress in their personal development and become mature young people by the time they leave the centre. They are polite and courteous to visitors and staff and are often seen helping each other with their work. All of this valued by parents                                   |
| Attendance                             | Good monitoring and follow-up procedures ensure that attendance is satisfactory.  |

Most pupils who attend the centre have had a very negative experience of school. During their time at Sherborne they rebuild their self-esteem and come to believe that they are capable of achieving well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| Teaching of pupils:  |      |
| Lessons seen overall | 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.*

Good subject knowledge and very effective teamwork between teachers and the very able auxiliary welfare assistants ensures that a wide range of subjects is well taught. Where pupils have particular subject needs that are outside the expertise of the permanent staff, good arrangements are made to bring in additional teachers or for pupils to attend local mainstream schools. This results in pupils' overall good achievements. The management of behaviour is very effective and good quality relationships throughout the centre ensure that pupils meet the realistically high expectations that staff have of them, both academically and socially. Whilst lesson planning is mostly effective, systems for assessing pupils are not well developed. This means that planning is not always properly supported by assessment information and records are as informative as they could be about pupils' progress. During the inspection, eight lessons were observed. All were at least satisfactory and the great majority was good.

## **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CENTRE**

| <b>Aspect</b>   | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | Very good, with some excellent features. Pupils are provided with a wide range of appropriate and relevant learning opportunities that are carefully planned to engage and excite them. Where individual pupils display an aptitude for a particular subject, appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that they can study successfully. Very good use is made of mainstream schools and colleges, various opportunities that exist within the Learning Centre for pupils to join adult groups and in the wider community. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | A very good planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) helps pupils to become more confident and responsible. The positive environment of the centre and the good role models that staff present help pupils to develop an awareness of themselves and to become more sensitive to the needs of others. They are encouraged to develop a set of values that will help them to fit into society more successfully. Pupils have a very good range of cultural experiences.                               |
| How well the centre cares for its pupils  | The centre is caring and supportive, providing a happy and safe setting for pupils. Staff know pupils well. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. However, arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are not so well developed, closely linked as they are with the unsatisfactory IEPs mentioned earlier.  |

The centre is very committed to the principle of working in partnership with parents. For the most part they are successful in this ambition. However, reports to parents do not provide them with sufficient information about what their children know, understand and can do.

## **HOW WELL THE CENTRE IS LED AND MANAGED**

| <b>Aspect</b>   | <b>Comment</b>   |
|---|--|
| Leadership and management by the head of centre and other key staff | The head of centre provides very good leadership within the centre and works in successful partnership with the wider community. She has formed very good working relationships with mainstream schools and the many professionals that she comes into contact with. The success of her vision and drive is reflected in the Learning Centre itself and the many |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | successful initiatives that she has completed over time.   |
| How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities | The recently formed management committee has yet to formulate and carry out the full range of its responsibilities. It has not yet had sufficient impact in shaping the development of the unit, or in monitoring its effectiveness. The unrealistic requirement of the LEA for the head of centre to have responsibility of two centres and also be head of service has not had a damaging effect on the Sherborne provision. This has been because she has clearly prioritised the development of this centre and works there with a very supportive and effective team of colleagues. |
| The centre's evaluation of its performance                     | There are not sufficiently effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, either by the head of centre, the LEA or the management committee. The development planning process is unsatisfactory and is not sufficiently well structured to aid the process of evaluation.   |
| The strategic use of resources                                 | Resources in the centre are used to very good effect, both those directly available for learning and the many groups that operate within the learning centre. Good use of local schools, colleges and specialist staff ensures that pupils experience a broad and relevant curriculum and achieve well. Information and communication technology resources are particularly well used.   |

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE**

Parents are very positive about the provision made by the centre and the progress that their children make, both academically and personally. They are particularly appreciative of the pastoral care that often extends to the whole family.

## **WIMBORNE LEARNING CENTRE**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE**

Wimborne Learning Centre provides support for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils who are still attending their mainstream school part-time and Key stage 4 pupils who have been excluded from school. It has places for up to 30 pupils, although the aim is that there should be no more than six pupils in each class. At the time of the inspection there was a total of ten Key Stage 4 and four Key Stage 3 pupils. Three of these had statements of Special Educational Needs. Pupils who attend the centre have a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that prevent them from thriving full time in mainstream schools. Most of them have learning difficulties and low achievement when they join the centre. The centre has undergone a period of upheaval, having had its building refurbished over the last few months. There is now appropriate accommodation and administrative support on site has been put in place for the first time since the centre was opened in March 1999. Although there is a head of centre, she is not based at Wimborne, because she is also head of centre at Sherborne. The permanent full time teacher undertakes teaching and administration, assisted by a part time teacher.

### **HOW GOOD THE CENTRE IS**

The centre is effective in developing pupils' self esteem and ensures that basic skills in literacy and numeracy are improved. However, as the result of a lack of monitoring and support by the head of centre, a number of planning, assessment and recording systems that should be in place have not been effectively established. Despite serious weaknesses in leadership and management, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements are satisfactory and the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

### **What the centre does well**

- Good relationships between staff, pupils and their parents ensure that pupils develop a positive self-image and the confidence to achieve.
- The planned provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), together with the effective careers and vocational education, prepare pupils well for return to full time education or work.
- Learning resources particularly for information and communication technology (ICT) are good, enabling the centre to offer pupils a range of experiences within the curriculum.
- The centre works well with local schools to provide pupils with an individualised learning programme.

### What could be improved

- Serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the centre by the head of centre, the LEA and its management committee have led to:
  - a) a lack of clarity about responsibilities for the day to day management of the centre and its future development;
  - b) insufficient support and guidance for the permanent full time teacher;
  - c) inadequate monitoring of all aspects of the centre's provision, particularly teaching and the curriculum.
- Not all dual-registered pupils have IEPs, and where targets are set for individuals these do not always take account of the advice and information provided by other professionals.
- The quality of information to parents, concerning the progress their child is making, is unsatisfactory.

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

There are serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the centre.

### HOW THE CENTRE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The centre has not been inspected previously.

### STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the centre.

| Progress in:   | by age 16 | Key            |   |
|--|-----------|----------------|---|
| English  | C         | very good      | A |
| mathematics  | C         | good           | B |
| science  | C         | satisfactory   | C |
| personal, social and health education                    | C         | unsatisfactory | D |
| other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | D         | poor           | E |

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

Pupils take GCSEs in English and mathematics and achieve grades between C and G. A number of pupils achieve passes in basic skills in literacy and numeracy through AEB accredited courses. Overall, pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. The lack of specialist teachers to support a broader curriculum prevents pupils from achieving in a wider range of subjects, such as childcare. There is very limited evidence available to make secure judgements on progress over time because of a lack of past work and records of attainment. The planned programme for PSHE is good and will ensure that pupils achieve well in this subject. The targets established in IEPs do not take sufficient account of assessments by other professionals. They lack specific focus on literacy and numeracy and teachers do not use them effectively to support pupils' learning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the unit                  | Good. When in the centre, pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They appreciate the learning environment and recognise the benefits they gain. Pupils work hard in lessons and concentrate well.   |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Good. In the centre, pupils behave appropriately in front of visitors and make a real effort to control their language and make a good impression. On visits to the local leisure centre pupils behave well. They are co-operative and friendly.  |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. There are effective relationships with staff. Pupils get on well together in their small groups, both in and out of lessons. Parents comment positively on how their children develop in maturity. There were good examples during the inspection of pupils helping each other with their work. |
| Attendance                             | Unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absence is high, but recently introduced systems for monitoring should have a positive effect in encouraging pupils to attend more regularly.  |

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Teaching of pupils:  |              |
| Lessons seen overall | Satisfactory |

*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 subject knowledge of the two teachers ensures that English, mathematics, science and ICT are taught effectively. This enables pupils to achieve appropriately in basic skills. The management of pupils' behaviour is good and relationships are such that pupils readily accept corrections to their work. Teachers' positive approaches ensure that pupils' self-esteem is raised. Teachers' lesson planning lacks sufficient detail to ensure that individual needs of pupils are effectively met. Assessment is not used to support the planning of lessons and this, together with the lack of dates in work, makes it difficult for teachers to demonstrate the progress that pupils have made. During the inspection, eight lessons were observed and they were all satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CENTRE

| Aspect                                  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory overall. However, pupils at Key Stage 3 do not at present have opportunities to study science, although there are appropriate arrangements in place to address this issue. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are provided with an adequate range of experiences, but the lack of specialist teachers to support a range of subjects prevents pupils from having access to a wider curriculum. There is no time allocated for one-to-one |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | tutorial work.   |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs   | Satisfactory for the small number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need.   |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Satisfactory. Aspects are addressed in the PSHE programme and accredited course work. The centre celebrates major festivals and there are plans to develop this provision further through visits from speakers and other guests.   |
| How well the centre cares for its pupils  | The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is unsatisfactory. Not all dual-registered pupils have IEPs and, for those with them, targets are not specific or evaluated. Procedures for child protection are good and teachers know pupils well. |

The quality of reports to parents does not give sufficient information about their children's achievements and some are inappropriately lacking in detail. The centre does not carry out any risk assessments.

### **HOW WELL THE CENTRE IS LED AND MANAGED**

| <b>Aspect</b>  | <b>Comment</b>   |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the head of centre                | Unsatisfactory. The role of the permanent full time teacher has not been clearly defined in terms of responsibility for management of the centre. There has been inadequate monitoring and support by the head of centre, the LEA and management committee. As a result, procedures and systems, common to the other centres in the Service, have not been implemented effectively.    |
| How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities | Unsatisfactory. This is still at an early stage of development and, although some decisions have been made, others, such as the management of the Wimborne Learning Centre, have not been addressed. There are unrealistic expectations of the head of centre to run two centres and also be Head of Service.  |
| The centre's evaluation of its performance                     | As it has only been operational in its current form for less than a term it is not possible to for the centre to evaluate its performance. However, there are no procedures established to enable it to carry out such an evaluation in the future.  |
| The strategic use of resources                                 | Learning resources are used well. Good relationships with the local schools enable staff to use science materials that they would not normally have access to. Classroom support staff are not effectively deployed and supply support staff that are brought in to cover absentees are often not really required. There is no formal rationalisation of how to make best use of them. |

Although accommodation is a great improvement on the previous building, the size and shape of one classroom makes it difficult to undertake group work. There are no proper facilities to enable teachers to have quiet discussions with individuals. The lack of financial information for staff and systems to evaluate the centre's effectiveness makes it difficult to ensure best value.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE**

Parents like the centre and value the support that their children have received. They have expressed their appreciation through letters and evaluation sheets at the end of last year.

## WEST DORSET PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

West Dorset Pupil Referral Unit has the capacity to make provision for up to 20 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Numbers fluctuate greatly and at the time of the inspection, at the start of the school year, there were five pupils on roll. Pupils attend part-time, for between one and three half days per week. Most spend the rest of their week in mainstream schools. A small number are in the process of returning full time to schools where they are registered. Pupils display a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that are preventing them from thriving full time in mainstream schools. Many pupils also have recognised learning difficulties and have low attainment on entry. Two have Statements of Special Educational Need and another is being assessed. Pupils can be referred and admitted at any time of the school year, often at short notice. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities.

### HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The unit does a good job in helping pupils to remain on the roll of their mainstream schools. Pupils are enabled to maintain access to a broad and balanced curriculum because staff work very effectively with these schools. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning improve considerably, allowing many to return full time to school within a year. Learning is maintained at a good standard because they are well taught. Leadership and management within the unit is good, but its effectiveness is weakened by the lack of formal monitoring by the head of service, the LEA and its management committee. Nevertheless, the unit achieves what it sets out to do and gives satisfactory value for money.

#### What the unit does well

- The very good relationships between staff, pupils and their parents contribute significantly to improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Staff work very closely in successful partnership with mainstream schools to maintain pupils' access to a full curriculum.
- Organisation and administration within the unit are strong.
- Assessment and monitoring of behaviour are good.
- Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and have very clear learning objectives.

#### What could be improved

- The range of subject expertise available.
- Targets set in IEPs lack the necessary detail against which progress can be measured.
- The degree of involvement of the head of service, LEA and its management committee.

*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

The unit has not been inspected previously.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

| Progress in:   | by age 16 | Key            |   |
|--|-----------|----------------|---|
| English  | B         | very good      | A |
| mathematics  | C         | good           | B |
| science  | C         | satisfactory   | C |
| personal, social and health education                    | B         | unsatisfactory | D |
| other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | B         | poor           | E |

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

Nearly all work done by pupils is set in their mainstream schools. This work corresponds to those subjects that the pupils would be studying in school were they not in the unit. As a result, not all pupils are studying English, mathematics and science at the unit. Pupils are, however, achieving a sufficient standard in their work to enable them to maintain their studies on return to school. Whilst personal, social and health education is not usually taught as a lesson it is recognised as a vital part of the curriculum and is evident in all lessons, during break-times and before and after sessions. This is why progress is good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the unit                  | Very good. Pupils enjoy attending the unit and for many it is a highlight of their week because it is where they achieve success. They work hard in class and usually take care with the presentation of their work.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Good. There are few serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour: good supervision and the small size of the unit ensure that there is no bullying. Lessons are settled and break-times relaxed and friendly  |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils share responsibilities. They take their part in rotas, such as making coffee at break-time or for cleaning the kitchen. They learn how to relate to adults and to each other in an appropriate manner. The progress they make in this area is significantly contributing to their successful return to mainstream school. |
| Attendance                             | Good. Given the fact that many of the pupils exhibited a considerable reluctance to attend school prior to their referral, the overall figure of 90 per cent attendance last term represents a significant achievement. A quarter of pupils maintained a 100 per cent record.   |



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| <b>Teaching of pupils:</b> |      |
| Lessons seen overall       | 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.*

As pupils usually bring in work set by their own schools, there are few lessons in which a single subject is taught to the whole group. The strength in teaching is therefore in the organisational skill necessary to ensure that individual pupils are receiving the support they need. This is achieved through very good planning and the ability to cope with unforeseen circumstances, resulting in pupils understanding what is required of them and making a good effort to achieve it. The observed teaching was good overall and occasionally very good, because it was well planned and the teacher had good behaviour management skills, enabling her to involve even the most reluctant pupil in the lesson.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | Good. The real strength is the way in which, through careful negotiation and planning, pupils maintain access to the full National Curriculum within an environment that meets their personal and social needs. A high priority is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs   | Good. Individual needs are well met and good emphasis is placed on addressing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as any learning difficulties.   |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. The unit has created an environment in which pupils are happy and achieve success, whilst also examining their own and other's feelings. They are encouraged to develop values, which make them better equipped to fit into society.   |
| How well the unit cares for its pupils  | Very good. The unit is a safe and happy place. This helps pupils to relax and to focus upon their learning. Very good procedures ensure that this status can be maintained   |

The unit is committed to working with parents, and forges a partnership within which parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress. Parents contribute well to their children's learning through their involvement in regular reviews and target setting.

## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| Leadership and management by the head of centre and other key staff | The head of centre has very good organisational and administrative skills. She has formed very good relationships with mainstream schools and support services, who value her expertise and advice. The small staff is well managed to ensure that high standards are maintained.                    |
| How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities      | A management committee has recently been formed by the LEA, but has yet to have sufficient impact in shaping the development of the unit, nor in monitoring its effectiveness. The LEA has met its responsibility to produce a curriculum policy, but it is not sufficiently forceful in setting the |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | context within which the unit operates as part of a broader countywide provision.  |
| The unit's evaluation of its performance | The head of centre monitors the progress that pupils make, but there is insufficient monitoring or evaluation of the unit's performance by the head of service, LEA or its management committee. Service development planning is too vague to provide a means whereby they can fulfil this responsibility. |
| The strategic use of resources           | Satisfactory. Although pupils achieve well and the unit is successful in meeting its aims, it rarely runs to capacity in the times that it is open to pupils.  |

There is sufficient staff, but in such a small unit there are difficulties in providing a full range of subject expertise. The accommodation is good. It is well suited to the teaching of small groups. Resources are also good.

### **PARENTS AND CARERS VIEWS OF THE UNIT**

Parents like the unit and many have shown their appreciation by writing letters expressing their gratitude for the way it has helped their children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The service's results and achievements**

1. Pupils' achievements are mostly good, particularly in relation to their personal development, and never less than satisfactory. This is as a result of a generally good curriculum being well taught to pupils who are well motivated to succeed, even though their previous experience of learning has often been very negative and discouraging. Pupils make better progress at Sherborne and West Dorset than at Wimborne because the overall organisation of the latter centre does not match the efficient provision of education at the other two.
2. The younger pupils at West Dorset benefit from a well ordered environment that provides a secure and understanding ethos, within which they relax and overcome their often longstanding reluctance to attend and learn. They make good progress because their needs are well met through very carefully constructed learning packages, written collaboratively with teachers from their mainstream schools, which they attend part-time. Good quality teaching and small groups make a significant contribution to their success. Their good progress allows many to return full time to their schools, with very sensitive and effective support provided by the unit staff. Younger pupils at Sherborne and Wimborne make satisfactory progress overall in literacy and numeracy, but progress in science often does not come up to this standard because there is little or no science teaching offered.
3. The older Year 10 and 11 pupils at Sherborne and Wimborne follow GCSE and AEB courses. The results at Sherborne were very good last year, but less so at Wimborne, although the overall results there were satisfactory. For example, of the seven pupils who were entered for English language at Sherborne, all seven achieved creditable grades ranging from B to E. Of the six entered at Wimborne, four achieved grades between C and F. There were similar comparisons in mathematics. All the pupils at both Centres who were entered for the AEB literacy and numeracy examinations achieved passes. Pupils at both Centres followed a range of other accredited courses and achieved good results, particularly at Sherborne. There are a number of possible explanations for these differences. Probably the major reason is that extra teaching resources are made available at Sherborne, through the employment of specialist sessional teaching staff to cover particular subjects like childcare. A further consideration is that the Wimborne Centre experienced a very unsettled start to its work after it opened in 1999. It is now housed in new, more appropriate accommodation.
4. Pupils in both centres benefit from well-planned college courses and work experience placements. The college placements enable them to develop skills in design and technology through attendance at, for example, photography, building or car maintenance courses. This good breadth of opportunity and the increasing length of time that they will attend the Centres (up to 20 hours in the current year) help them to mature and achieve well in their personal and social skills. Records show that the outcomes of both Centres are generally very good, with three-quarters of leavers going on to further education, employment or training.
5. Achievements in English are good overall. A wide range of texts, including Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Roald Dahl's books, ensure that pupils are introduced to literature at an appropriate level and are motivated to read. They make perceptive observations about character and plot and sensitively

explore the week's theme of 'fear and horror'. There is a wide range of reading ability across the centres, but most pupils demonstrate a readiness to tackle the challenge of reading aloud. Teachers' encouraging support ensures that they experience success and mostly achieve well. Many pupils display good speaking and listening skills and the quality of discussion is often impressive. Most of them are able to find evidence in the text to support their analysis of motivation, although some of the younger pupils do find this difficult. Good, challenging questions from staff often move pupils beyond their first anxious reactions to try again, and they are often pleasantly surprised by their own abilities to analyse a situation. Pupils' writing ability is again very variable, but there is evidence in samples of work that they often make good progress. They are helped to think about the need to write for different purposes and audiences across a range of activities. For example, they write letters to employers, produce imaginative short stories and analyse critically poetry related to their course work. Much of the best writing seen from older pupils was in subjects other than English, when pupils were motivated by the content of their studies to write extended pieces that were often accurate and well presented, paying due regard to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Good use of word-processing and the research potential of ICT have had a beneficial impact on many pupils' work. All staff are aware of opportunities to guide and consolidate literacy across the curriculum and the overall good GCSE and AEB results are an indicator of success.

6. Achievements in mathematics are satisfactory across all three centres and there are some pupils who achieve good passes in GCSE and AEB numeracy. Pupils use number well to solve mental arithmetic problems, recognising when to add multiply and divide to obtain the correct answer. All pupils are encouraged to apply their numeracy skills across a range of activities and some higher attaining pupils are able to analyse data confidently to produce informative graphs and charts. Most pupils make good progress in understanding shape, space and measurement and more able pupils can calculate angles, areas and volume. Work with three-dimensional shapes consolidates this learning well. The highest attainers develop confidence in their subject knowledge as the result of well planned lessons and enabling support from teachers. They are then able to tackle, for example, algebra problems, working through test papers and improving their marks as they progress. Teachers' often high, but realistic expectations are an important contributory factor to pupils developing the confidence to tackle higher order work.
7. Pupils' achievements in science are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. For those pupils following science courses in Key Stage 3, there are opportunities to carry out simple experiments. Pupils understand how to use microscopes, handling the equipment with care. They use appropriate scientific vocabulary when talking about body cells and show good recall of previous work. There are good links with elements of the health education programme.
8. Pupils are achieving well in ICT. They gain a variety of certificates in ICT competency at foundation and intermediate levels. A number are working towards advanced level skills. Their good progress in computer skills is further enhanced as they study for a European Driving Licence in information technology, a newly recognised qualification. Pupils competently use word processing skills to lay out a document, copy, cut and paste text from other sources, use spell checkers effectively, use drop-down menus confidently and generally handle the technology efficiently to produce well presented work. Pupils also make good progress in using databases, spreadsheets, CD-roms and the internet for research purposes. There are plans in place for the use of video-conferencing in the near future. Older pupils at Sherborne demonstrated high order skills in translating the video material they produced during their Making Movies Certificate studies with the Sherborne Community Learning Network into a CD format

for playing on the computer.

9. Achievement in personal social and health education is good across all three centres. This is recognised as a vital part of pupils' studies and is evident in all lessons, during break-times and before and after lessons. As a result, progress is consistently good. Pupils learn in an environment where they can achieve success and overcome difficulties. They readily discuss their emotions, having overcome their natural reticence through very sensitive staff support and encouragement. They develop the ability to take turns in discussions and share ideas productively. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and greater awareness of others' needs and health studies help them to understand the value of a healthy diet and lifestyle.
10. Pupils always make satisfactory and often good progress across a range of other subjects, including art, design and technology, physical education and outdoor pursuits activities. They demonstrate a high level of commitment in sustaining their studies over time during project and modular courses and this effort is frequently rewarded with good passes in examinations, as for example with childcare. Pupils enjoy and are highly motivated by 'taster' vocational courses at local colleges and this has led to a number of pupils gaining very good results in further studies.

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

11. Pupils in all three Centres have very positive attitudes to learning. Their comments in reviews and evaluation sheets indicate that they enjoy attending and that they appreciate how much they change because of the opportunities they have. This is particularly so at Sherborne, where they often join in with the adult groups that attend courses and activities at the Learning Centre. They grow noticeably in confidence and self-esteem. The work of all pupils shows that they respond well to all subjects offered. Consistent effort and application and careful presentation are all apparent in their work.
12. Behaviour is consistently good, both within the centre, during college and school placements and on visits to the wider community. Pupils are generally polite and friendly towards each other and consistently so with staff and visitors. There were occasions observed when they clearly worked hard to moderate their behaviour and language in front of visitors. They were happy and keen to talk about their work and discuss wider issues with inspectors. Their openness is impressive when they talk frankly about the problems they have had at their mainstream schools. All pupils clearly benefit from the atmosphere of mutual respect that all staff work hard to create. No incidents of bullying were observed and parents were confident that such behaviour would be quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils obviously trust the firm but fair approach of the staff and behave accordingly. Records indicate that, whilst there have been incidents of disruptive behaviour, they are rare and have not disrupted the calm and well-ordered atmosphere of the centres. Pupils appreciate the quality of their surroundings and treat the buildings and learning resources with care and respect.
13. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. This enables them to either return successfully to mainstream schools or, as many parents comment with pleasure and satisfaction, to become mature young adults by the time they leave the centres at sixteen. They are prepared to make choices, for example in free activities, and to take on responsibilities, for instance when organising refreshments at break-times or in organising their own work. Reports from work placements are particularly complimentary about the older pupils in this respect. There were many instances observed of pupils working collaboratively and helping each other when they were

experiencing difficulties with their work. They listen respectfully to each other's contributions in lessons.

14. Attendance across the centres is satisfactory overall, but unsatisfactory at Wimborne, because of inadequate monitoring and follow up.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

15. The quality of teaching is generally good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Of the lessons observed, nearly half were good or very good. The best teaching was seen at West Dorset, where detailed planning and small groups enabled well-focused attention on individualised learning programmes. The teaching at Wimborne suffered from a lack of planning to meet individual needs, which was as a result of there being little or no assessment information, and inadequate records.
16. Strengths were observed across the service. Good use is made of teachers' subject knowledge to provide a breadth of curriculum experience and the opportunity to explore subjects in depth. This is particularly so in English. Good introductions to lessons with clear expectations expressed about both work and behaviour ensure that study is productive. Lessons have good pace and challenging questions make sure that pupils think carefully for themselves before giving answers. When, for example, pupils were studying *Of Mice and Men*, they were able to extend their knowledge of the era in which the book was set and discuss maturely why George and Lenny were friends.
17. All staff are aware of the need to focus on pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy and teachers take full advantage of opportunities that they create through their planning or which come up naturally during a lesson to consolidate pupils' learning. Teachers are particularly aware of the vocabulary of subjects and are careful to ensure that pupils understand what is being said. Most worksheets used are at an appropriate level of text difficulty, although it was noted that there is an occasional over-reliance on worksheets at the expense of direct teaching.
18. Good relationships, carefully nurtured between pupils and the whole staff team, give pupils the confidence to enter into discussions and, importantly, to admit freely when they do not know or understand something and to ask for help. Auxiliary welfare officers work in a good, productive partnership with teachers. Their own individual strengths are used well to supplement and extend learning opportunities and their sensitive support ensures that pupils learn effectively. They always challenge pupils to find answers independently before offering direct help to them. This is a particular strength at Sherborne.
19. Behaviour is managed well across the service. On rare occasions, pupils lose concentration or become frustrated at what they see as their inabilities. Teachers bring them back on task quickly, encouraging them to look at different ways of solving problems and to be clear about what they can do. This was particularly well illustrated in an introductory mathematics lesson at the beginning of a course when the teacher quickly and effectively overcame the pupils' anxiety about and resistance to the subject. She was able to encourage them to identify and share their existing knowledge and understanding across a range of skills and build on this to develop a positive and productive atmosphere.
20. Regular use of homework supports learning, particularly at Sherborne and Wimborne, and is appreciated by the pupils. In one lesson they actually reminded the teacher to set them some. Returned work is carefully marked and helpful comments extend

pupils' understanding and performance.

21. The quality of planning, assessing and recording pupils' work varies widely across the service. At Wimborne, teachers follow relevant schemes of work but do not plan effectively for each lesson. As a result, the work set is not always matched to the needs of each individual pupil and they are often set the same tasks. The lack of dating of materials and ordered record-keeping results in work not being kept efficiently. This hinders the effective monitoring of pupils' progress. Practice is better at Sherborne, but, whilst lesson planning is mostly effective, successfully meeting pupils' individual needs, systems for assessing pupils' achievements are not well developed. This means that planning is not always properly supported by assessment information and records are not as informative as they could be about pupils' progress. Inadequate IEPs do not help the targeting of work. In contrast, practice at West Dorset is sharp and effective, enabling well focused planning using detailed assessment information. This then leads to informative records and good quality reporting.

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

22. The curriculum statement of the service fully reflects the LEA's curriculum policy for PRUs and meets statutory requirements, although science is not taught consistently in Key Stage 3 across all three centres. The quality, balance and relevance of the Key Stage 3 curriculum are assured through close liaison and joint planning with referring mainstream schools. This generally ensures that pupils follow carefully structured learning programmes that seek to assure full coverage of their curriculum entitlement across the week.
23. There is a very wide range of accredited courses available to Key Stage 4 pupils, at the Sherborne and Wimborne Centres, which enables them to achieve well in relation to their individual abilities. These include GCSE examinations, OCR certificates, ASDAN awards, St John Ambulance First Aid certificates and various certificates of achievement. There are very good opportunities for pupils to follow short taster courses in a variety of vocational subjects at local colleges, including horticulture, animal care, hairdressing, engineering and information technology. Very good links are also made with colleges through the 'Bridging the Gap' initiative, which is a valuable carefully designed life-long learning initiative to smooth the transition from the centres to full time college courses. Both centres also have very good, productive links with local mainstream schools and colleges to extend pupils' learning opportunities when there is a need for particular subject coverage or expertise not available in the centres.
24. There are particular opportunities available at the Sherborne Centre. For example, very good links with the local primary school enable pupils from the centre to help younger pupils at the school with their reading through a paired reading project. The curriculum is also enhanced through a very wide range of extended curricular opportunities that result from the centre being part of the Sherborne Learning Centre. The head of service has clear ambitions to create similar opportunities at Wimborne and West Dorset.
25. There is very good careers guidance. Pupils receive regular counselling from the careers service, who assess and match individual pupils' interests and aptitudes with suitable career opportunities. This process is supported by very good work experience opportunities with local employers.

26. All three centres make good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are suitable opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness through the planned programmes of personal, social, health and religious education, modules of accredited course work and the creative opportunities they have both at the centres and college. Moral and social development are appropriately addressed across the curriculum where there is a strong focus on building pupils' self esteem and providing opportunities to explore moral issues. Staff provide good role models for the development of appropriate social behaviour and there are high but realistic expectations of behaviour which pupils clearly understand and respond to.

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

27. The centres provide a supportive setting for pupils to feel at ease and be able to concentrate on their learning. Correct procedures are in place to enable staff to respond appropriately to any child protection concerns. Pupils receive a high level of adult support and supervision during lessons and activities, but there is not always an assessment of all the risks. For instance, there are insufficient assessments of the risks involved when pupils work in the kitchens and to ensure that electrical appliances are safe.
28. Teachers and welfare assistants place a strong emphasis upon promoting good behaviour. There are good policies and codes of conduct. Staff create good opportunities to promote acceptable behaviour by example and discussion. Well-presented lessons in personal and social education provide additional opportunities for pupils to consider the effects of their actions on others. The success of measures taken to promote good behaviour means that there is an absence of oppressive behaviour. The way that staff monitor pupils' personal development and behaviour in a systematic way in the West Dorset Unit provides evidence to demonstrate improvement.
29. The procedures to measure pupils' academic and personal development are not good enough overall. Whilst there are good procedures to determine pupils' academic attainment on entry, the centres vary in the way that they use the information. The results of initial assessments provide a good starting point for pupils when they join the Sherborne Centre. However, there is not a close enough relationship between the results of assessment and the work provided at the Wimborne Centre. Procedures are very good at the West Dorset Unit, where pupils' work matches as closely as possible the work that their peers follow in school.
30. Pupils have good opportunities for their academic work to be accredited. However, ongoing records of pupils' academic and personal development are not maintained sufficiently rigorously. The records of pupils' work at the Wimborne Centre yield little information to indicate how pupils are progressing academically. Since not all pupils at the centre take part in the required tutorials to assess and guide their progress in personal development, there is insufficient recorded evidence to judge progress in personal development. Staff maintain daily records of the work that pupils complete at the Sherborne Centre. However, the records give insufficient indication of what pupils have learnt and how well they are progressing. Good practice at the West Dorset Unit provides clear objectives for academic and personal performance for each lesson. Evaluation of pupils' success means that the records successfully monitor daily progress against the intentions. A strength of these assessment procedures is the way that they measure pupils' progress against their assessed needs on entry. This means that records at this unit provide relevant information to inform those concerned about the pupils' progress, towards returning to school for the full week.



31. Parents welcome the positive reports that they receive, where teachers show good concern for pupils' feelings and welfare. However, the reports from the Sherborne and Wimborne Centres provide limited information to judge levels of academic attainment or how well pupils are progressing towards planned objectives. The reports from the West Dorset Unit report clearly on specific aspects of personal and academic performance, providing pupils, parents and schools with good information about progress.
32. Individual education plans prepared for pupils do not properly fulfil their purpose, because targets for academic and personal development are insufficiently detailed to enable teachers to monitor progress. Long term objectives are appropriate, for example 'to raise self esteem' or 'improve spelling', but the more detailed targeted steps that would enable everyone, including pupils, to judge progress are not written. Neither do targets always take account of the advice and information provided by other professionals. Some pupils at the Wimborne Unit do not have individual plans at all, because of liaison difficulties with referring mainstream schools.
33. Procedures to improve attendance are satisfactory overall. The best practice is at the West Dorset Unit, where the teacher in charge monitors attendance levels well. She determines causes of absence and takes steps to make improvements. Procedures for monitoring attendance at the Wimborne Centre are unsatisfactory. Although staff are aware that rates of absence are too high, there is not a sufficiently rigorous approach to determine reasons and develop strategies for improvement. The impressive and recently created central database of attendance statistics should provide the means to monitor attendance more effectively.

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

34. All staff demonstrate good commitment to developing and sustaining a productive partnership with parents in order to help pupils gain maximum benefit from their time in the units. In the inspection questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meetings parents registered their support for the work of the units and were keen to describe the positive impact the staff had made on their children.
35. Parents are very satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of the units. There is evidence in correspondence of parents' appreciation of the efforts made by staff to help children overcome their difficulties and make a fresh start. In one letter a parent describes how life in a secondary school had knocked her child to the bottom of a hole; she thanked the unit staff for their help in 'getting him to the top of the hole and walking him away from the edge'. Parents particularly appreciate the kindness and respect shown to their children and the subsequent improvements in their attitudes to learning. Although links with parents at the new Wimborne Centre are not yet well established, parents are, nonetheless, pleased with results. The only criticism that parents have is in the limited number of hours available for pupils to spend at the centres.
36. The centres extend a warm welcome to parents, which begins with an invitation to join in the induction process for each child. In Sherborne and West Dorset many opportunities follow for parents to discuss informally their child's progress and there are said to be frequent telephone calls between home and the centres, although few of these are recorded. Members of staff in all three centres are friendly and approachable and are always prepared to discuss a concern a parent may have, however small. In the questionnaires all parents said they felt comfortable approaching the centres with questions or problems.

37. The standard of formal written reports of pupils' progress varies from very good in West Dorset to unsatisfactory in Wimborne. Reports in two of the centres fail to inform parents adequately of what their children know, understand and can do. For example, to say that in mathematics a pupil 'continues to work steadily and with commitment on her smile programme' does not give parents a clear picture of what their child can do, the level of progress made and the extent to which targets have been reached. There is, however, very good practice in report writing at West Dorset, which could become an effective model for the other centres. Two of the centres hold open days when parents can see for themselves what their children are achieving. This is welcomed by parents, even though some find the journey difficult and open days are not yet available at Wimborne.
38. Although most parents support the work of the centres by ensuring their children attend regularly, there is little evidence of parents actively supporting their children's learning at home, for example, by helping with homework. In West Dorset there are plans to help parents understand the curriculum by holding workshops and setting up programmes of positive parenting.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SERVICE LED AND MANAGED?**

39. Overall leadership and management of the service are unsatisfactory. This is a serious weakness that has resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of provision. It has also led to low morale in parts of the service. A major factor, recognised by the LEA, has been the LEA's requirement that the head of service should also be responsible for managing two of the centres. This situation is untenable and has been a contributory factor to the head of service not performing her duties to best effect. Recent planning for a new management structure, with a head of service and heads of each centre, has indicated that the LEA is clear about the appropriate way forward to solve some of these difficulties. Individual centres at Sherborne and West Dorset are well managed and it is testament to the overall quality and commitment of the members of staff throughout the service that the quality of teaching and learning is as good as it is.
40. A further difficulty for the service has been the inconclusive, ongoing debate about the service's role, purpose and structure. Decisions have recently been taken about the admissions policy for the service, including the discontinuation of referrals of pregnant schoolgirls, school phobics and other vulnerable young people who have previously benefited from the provision. These strategic decisions do not, however, appear to have been informed by full debate with all the relevant personnel.
41. Individuals with management responsibility have not been appraised to determine how effectively they have been carrying out their duties and, as a consequence, have not benefited from appropriate guidance or management training. This has meant that many of the aspects of management, for example in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, have not been carried out.
42. The situation relating to budget allocation, planning and management is not clear. There is some confusion about what level of responsibility the head of service has for the budget. This has resulted in a lack of discussion across the service about priorities and, consequently, development planning has lacked structure, focus and rigour. There are certainly inequities and inefficiencies in resourcing, particularly in relation to provision of specialist curriculum staff and use of existing support staff. The cross-service co-ordination of curriculum development and delivery is inadequate and does not secure consistency of provision. All teachers have been assigned some

responsibility for co-ordinating curriculum provision across the service, but they are not clear what is expected of them. There is regular and informal discussion between individual teachers and some attempt to share expertise and standardise provision, but there is no clear pattern to this.

43. Whilst a management committee is now in operation and has met on a number of occasions, it has not as yet clearly determined its brief and is not carrying out many of the functions that such a body is expected to fulfil. This is particularly important in relation to planning and accountability of the service through monitoring and evaluation of the quality of service provision.
44. Communication within the service is unsatisfactory and leads to inefficiencies and confusion. There are irregular whole-service meetings. When they do take place they do not have agendas that take proper account of all interests and the minutes are not informative in terms of outcomes and responsibilities. The recent introduction of ICT networked communication through e-mail and video conferencing promises to solve some of the problems connected with the distances between centres and the challenge of bringing everyone together regularly.
45. The recent provision of administrative support within centres has been a valuable initiative and is beginning to have a positive impact on overall efficiency.
46. The service is appropriately staffed for the numbers of pupils it potentially serves, but there are issues relating to the numbers of pupils that actually attend each of the centres and best use of staff curriculum expertise. This has an impact on the determination of value for money.
47. The LEA has identified particular training needs and has arranged for good quality training, especially in relation to behaviour management. Teachers are studying in their own time for advanced qualifications, which will benefit both the service and their own professional development.
48. The centres at Sherborne and Wimborne are accommodated in recently improved buildings that provide potentially good quality learning environments. The third, near Dorchester, will be similarly re-housed when it amalgamates with the Crossways Unit mid way through the Autumn Term. This will then ensure that accommodation has been significantly improved right across the service.
49. Learning resources are at least adequate and in some instances of good quality, especially for ICT, as the result of the LEA's recent investment. The use of curriculum resources is not, however, efficiently co-ordinated.

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

50. In order to raise standards across the service and ensure equitable distribution of resources and improved morale the LEA should:
  - (1) Improve the leadership and management of the service by:
    - clarifying the future role, purpose and structure of the service (*paragraph 40*);
    - completing the ongoing process of management planning to clarify the staffing structure and appointment key personnel to create an efficient and effective management team (*paragraph 39*);
    - identifying the management training needs of key personnel and providing that training (*paragraph 41*);

- providing greater management autonomy for the head of service and heads of centres, particularly in relation to budget management (*paragraph 42*);
  - accelerating the development of the management committee to take account of current weaknesses in strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation of the quality of service provision (*paragraphs 40 and 43*);
  - clarifying the process and improving the structure, focus and rigour of development planning (*paragraph 42*);
  - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of curriculum co-ordinators (*paragraph 42*);
  - improving communication systems and practice within and across the service and the LEA (*paragraph 44*);
  - developing more efficient and effective use of resources (*paragraph 49*).
- (2) Improve assessment processes and procedures, together with the content of IEPs to:
- more effectively inform planning of teaching and learning (*paragraph 21*);
  - facilitate more effective monitoring of pupils' progress (*paragraph 32*);
  - improve the writing of more informative reports for parents (using the model of good practice already operating in the West Dorset Unit) (*paragraph 37*).

In addition to the above, the following minor weakness could also be addressed in the action plan:

- establishing and operating an effective system for risk assessment (*paragraph 27*).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed   | 21 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 52 |

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

|           |           |      |              |                |      |           |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|

|   |   |    |    |   |   |   |
|---|---|----|----|---|---|---|
| - | 5 | 40 | 55 | - | - | - |
|---|---|----|----|---|---|---|

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the service's pupils

| Pupils on the service's roll           | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Number of pupils on the service's roll | 26           |

| Special educational needs  | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs        | 5            |
| Number of pupils on the service's special educational needs register | 7            |

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

### Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|--------------------|---|
| Service data       | 9 |

| Unauthorised absence | %  |
|----------------------|----|
| Service data         | 10 |

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

17 pupils entered for 53 GCSEs in 2000. Two pupil achieved 5 or more A\*-C; 17 pupils achieved 1 or more A\*-G.

20 pupils entered for AEB Literacy and Numeracy Certificates of Achievement and all but two passed both subjects.

14 pupils entered RSA Text Processing examinations. All passed, all but one with distinction.

10 pupils passed a St John Ambulance First Aid Training Course.

12 pupils took a range of other courses and examinations, including ASDAN Foundation Training Award, Dorset Information Technology Award Scheme and vocational courses at local courses. Many of them gained 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            |

### 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  |
| Chinese                         | 0  |
| White                           | 26 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 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) | 5   |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 5.2 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 5   |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 175 |

### **Financial information**

Since information relating to delegation of the budget is unclear it is not possible to provide whole-service data in the required format.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 44 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 13 |

### Percentage of responses in each category

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 38             | 31            | 23               | 8                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 46             | 46            | 8                | 0                 | 0          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 31             | 54            | 0                | 8                 | 8          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 23             | 38            | 23               | 0                 | 15         |
| The teaching is good.  | 69             | 31            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 77             | 23            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 100            | 0             | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 46             | 54            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 62             | 38            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 77             | 23            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 75             | 25            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 46             | 31            | 0                | 0                 | 23         |