

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WARRINGTON HORIZONS

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 133572

Headteacher: Mr Michael Frost

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 259079

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Permanently excluded pupils  
School category: Pupil referral unit  
Age range of pupils: 11-16  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 33

School address: Horizon House  
Grappenhall Hall Campus  
Church Lane  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
Postcode: WA4 3ES

Telephone number: 01925 860249  
Fax number: 01925 860982

Appropriate authority: The local education authority  
Name of responsible officer: Jonathan Potter

Date of previous inspection: Not previously inspected

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Warrington Horizons was opened as a pupil referral unit in September 2003. It was formed from the combination of existing provisions that did not meet the requirements of the local education authority to provide full time education to excluded pupils and promote inclusive practices. The unit is made up of two bases. Horizon House is for pupils in Years 7-10 who are expected to return to mainstream school and Horizon Centre is for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are being prepared for the wider world of employment and future education and training.

Pupils can be admitted at any time and numbers fluctuate greatly. At the time of the inspection there were five pupils on the roll of Horizon House and 28 on the roll of Horizon Centre. Boys outnumber girls about 5:1, a ratio often found in such units. Nearly all pupils are white, though two recent referrals are of Afro-Caribbean ethnicity; there are no travellers' children and no refugees. All pupils are from Warrington and its surrounding areas. Four pupils have statements of special educational need, reflecting the severity of their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have been underachieving prior to their admission, more often because of frequent interruptions to their education and low attendance than through any significant degree of learning difficulty.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, geography, history
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English, physical education, citizenship and personal, social and health education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This newly formed unit has got off to a troubled start and **pupils are being provided with a poor standard of education**. Special measures are required to help it to overcome its many areas of weakness. The inexperience of most teachers is evident in the poor quality of teaching and learning which contributes to the significant underachievement of pupils. Leadership and management are poor and governance is unsatisfactory. The unit is achieving few of its aims and is giving poor value for money.

#### The unit's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievement in many subjects is poor
- Significant weaknesses in leadership and management are slowing the unit's development
- Much of the teaching is less than satisfactory and there is virtually no formal assessment of pupils' progress
- Pupils' behaviour remains poor, their attitudes to learning are very negative and many choose not to attend
- The curriculum is weak and many pupils are not offered the opportunity of full time education
- Pupils are not receiving effective advice and guidance to help them to improve their learning and personal development.

*In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion and HMCI agrees that special measures are required in relation to this unit.*

This is the unit's first inspection.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement *	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
In Years 9,10 and 11	<b>poor</b>	<b>poor</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

*\* as a new unit, no pupils have reached the end of Year 9 or 11 so judgements relate to the overall achievements of pupils currently attending.*

Achievement is **poor**. It is very poor in science, poor in English but satisfactory in information and communication technology. Achievement in mathematics is unsatisfactory overall but satisfactory at Horizon House. Pupils achieve very little in other subjects but several in Year 11 are successfully participating in courses at college. Insufficient attention is paid to the individual needs and abilities of pupils and there is a low level of challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils. It is not possible to gauge pupils' achievements in relation to personal targets because these are not broken down into small enough parts to register improvements in the shorter term. Two pupils from Horizon House successfully returned to mainstream school last term as a result of the progress they had made. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils of different sex or ethnicity achieve any differently from each other.

Pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **poor**. There are few uplifting moments and pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance are poor. Bad behaviour often brings teaching and learning to a halt, most pupils show very little interest in their work and many simply do not attend.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **poor**. Teaching is frequently ineffective and pupils learn very little that is new to them. Teachers rarely acknowledge the differing needs and abilities of pupils in their planning of lessons, they are not marking pupils' work accurately nor are they checking or recording what pupils are learning in any detail. As a result, they are often underestimating pupils' abilities and giving them work which is too easy. Occasionally this occupies pupils and keeps them settled but just as often it leads to pupils misbehaving. When this happens, many teachers show limited skills in managing bad behaviour. The curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not sufficiently reflect the local education authority's policy. The weaknesses are different in the two centres. At Horizon House, there are many gaps in the range of subjects being taught and this will make returning to school more difficult for pupils. At Horizon Centre very few pupils are offered the full time education they are entitled to and nowhere near enough time and attention is paid to teaching pupils the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Weaknesses in assessment and the monitoring of personal development mean that the advice and guidance that can be offered to pupils is not sufficiently well informed and is not contributing enough to pupils' development or learning. Well established links with the local college are a good feature of Horizon Centre, offering several pupils the opportunity to gain qualifications they could not get at the centre. There are no links with other schools though, and no service is offered to them to help keep pupils in school rather than being excluded.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **poor** and governance **unsatisfactory**. In his haste to do too much, too soon, insufficient attention has been paid by the headteacher to improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and his leadership and management has been poor. All staff have been set targets to improve their performance but there has been very little monitoring or evaluation of anything the unit does. The local education authority has offered considerable support in the initial setting up of the unit but in its role as the appropriate authority has not sufficiently held it to account or contributed enough to its development and improvement. There are many inefficiencies. The management of staff does not make best use of individual expertise or skills and several teachers carry a very light workload. The unit is funded to provide full time education for all pupils but it is not offering this to many of them.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Very few parents took the opportunity to express their views. They felt teachers listened to their children and were patient but were annoyed that their children were not getting full time education. Many pupils like the centre, but often for all the wrong reasons. In conversation, many say that the best thing about the centre is that they do not have to work as hard or attend as often as they had to at school. Many pupils express their opinion of the unit by not attending. There are no formal procedures for seeking or acting on the views of pupils.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

**The most urgent things the unit should do to improve are:**

- Raise the standard of teaching to help pupils learn and achieve more
- Address weaknesses in leadership and management to speed the unit's development
- Improve procedures for helping pupils to improve their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and personal development
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the specification of the local education authority's policy
- Improve the assessment of pupils' learning and the monitoring of their personal development and, to meet statutory requirements:
  - Provide full time education for all pupils
  - Fulfil its obligations to eliminate racial discrimination and promote good race relationships.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is **poor**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils complete very little work and there is widespread underachievement in many subjects
- Insufficient attention is paid to the individual needs of pupils and systems for setting pupils realistic yet challenging targets are weak
- Horizon House has met with success in returning pupils to school.

#### **Commentary**

1. Very few pupils are doing enough work. Many attend too infrequently to develop any momentum in their learning. When work is done, much of it is of a low standard and teachers are not providing pupils with the necessary guidance to improve it because marking is often inaccurate and unhelpful. Achievement is spread over a very limited range of subjects and not enough time is allocated to the most important ones. Few pupils at Horizon Centre are offered full time education, in many instances not much more than half time, and this further limits their achievement. Achievement is poor in English, especially in writing, where pupils do not overcome their aversion to committing pen to paper and spelling often remains inaccurate. It is unsatisfactory overall in mathematics but satisfactory at Horizon House, where the benefit of an experienced, specialist teacher is seen. Achievement in science is very poor; the subject is not taught at Horizon Centre and barely so at Horizon House. In information and communication technology, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, helped by knowledgeable teaching and good resources.
2. As this is a new unit, there are no records against which trends in achievement can be measured. Small numbers also make it difficult to comment on relative achievement by different groups of pupils but inspectors noted no differences in the achievements of boys and girls or of pupils of different ethnicity. In English and mathematics, however, there is little to challenge higher attaining pupils and the level of accreditation being sought this year is too low for them. Most pupils arrive with very negative attitudes to education and many have been underachieving for long periods prior to their admission. This is more often the result of their education being hindered by their bad behaviour, which has led to their exclusion from other schools, than any significant degree of learning difficulty. Horizons is not successfully addressing this problem; behaviour remains poor and lessons are frequently disrupted to the point where very few pupils are achieving.
3. Weak assessment procedures also contribute to pupils' poor achievement. Teachers are not gathering the information they need to set pupils appropriately challenging work or targets. As a result, the same work tends to be presented to all pupils in a class, irrespective of their ability or any prior learning. This means that some pupils are repeating work unnecessarily whilst others are struggling to attempt it. It also means that small improvements are going unnoticed, leading to a lack of motivation and a reduction in effort.
4. An area of success at Horizon House is the return of pupils to mainstream schools. Last term two pupils were returned. This is a small number but it represents a half of all pupils who were on roll at the time. A few pupils at Horizon Centre are also achieving success on their college courses, especially in Sports Culture, but the centre is not following this up by providing extra tuition in key skills to compensate for what they are missing on their college courses.



## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' **poor** attendance, punctuality, attitudes, behaviour and personal development are greatly restricting learning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of strategies to promote better attendance and punctuality
- Pupils show very low levels of interest in lessons and the unit fails to stimulate a desire to learn; this leads to very poor behaviour
- The unit fails to promote good relationships, including racial harmony
- There is no agreed policy for personal development. Consequently, the great majority of pupils are unable to develop the necessary personal characteristics and skills to progress in their learning.

### Commentary

5. The unit does not do enough to raise attendance. Monitoring is very weak and therefore the unit is unable to identify patterns or problems in individuals. The marking of registers is erratic, especially at Horizon Centre, and consequently the headteacher does not have access to accurate information with which to devise and target effective strategies to improve attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance remains poor and pupils are often late arriving. There are signs also that unauthorized absence is increasing. During the inspection, absence was far higher than the 19 per cent reported for last term. The scale of the problem is well illustrated by the difficulties inspectors faced in finding lessons to observe. At Horizon House, for instance, whilst three pupils attended on the first day, no pupils attended the next and one the day after. On most days at Horizon Centre there were fewer than seven pupils present. It is unsatisfactory that staff at Horizon Centre are not sufficiently monitoring the attendance of pupils on college or work placements.

#### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting term (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8	School data	11
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

6. The great majority of pupils demonstrate very low confidence and self-esteem. They show very little interest in lessons and other activities and do not concentrate and make enough effort in their learning. Much of the time both sites are disorderly and pupils have a poor understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community. This is because staff have low expectations of pupils' conduct and behaviour management is often very weak. In lessons it is common for pupils to disrupt others in their learning. Language is often bad and many pupils wander in and out of lessons. The few pupils who show a desire to learn cannot do so under these circumstances. Exclusions are rising at Horizon House; more days have been lost through exclusion in the first two weeks of this term than in the whole of last term. However, many of these exclusions are the result of behaviour that has been exacerbated by personal circumstances, especially amongst children in the care of the local authority. Exclusions are rarely recorded at Horizon Centre because pupils tend to walk out before action is taken.
7. The unit has failed to establish an appropriate ethos at either site. The race equality policy is ineffective and the unit is failing in its statutory duty to eliminate racism and promote good race relations. For instance, in one poor lesson, a pupil made a racist remark to the teacher in charge

and this was not challenged. Pupils are unable to work co-operatively and respect others' feelings. This was very clear in the same lesson, ironically, a PSHE lesson about teamwork.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last term*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	31	6	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0

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

8. Personal development is poor overall. As yet, there is no policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is little to promote spirituality, with no religious education and very few opportunities for celebration and the sharing of thoughts. An assembly is held each morning at Horizon Centre but pupils rarely arrive in time to join in. The one observed had four staff and two pupils and ended in acrimony, with pupils becoming antagonistic and uncommunicative. Pupils remain very intolerant of one another and rarely listen to each other's views. They show very little respect for staff or visitors. Pupils are doing little work to help them appreciate their own or other people's cultural traditions.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Pupils receive a **poor** quality of education. Teaching is **poor**, the curriculum has many weaknesses and pupils are not given the advice and support they need.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is **poor**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers expectations are too low
- Assessment and the marking of pupils' work is poor
- Teachers have a lack of expertise in the management of pupils' behaviour
- The planning of many lessons is weak and frequently does not identify individual needs
- When teachers tailor their lessons more closely to the needs and interests of pupils they respond and learn well.

### Commentary

9. Many lessons are characterised by low expectations of pupil achievement and several teachers have voiced the opinion that to ask for more from the pupils would lead to an escalation of bad behaviour or refusal to do the work. This belief was proved unfounded in a good mathematics lesson at Horizon House where the teacher followed up an unsuccessful lesson, where demands on pupils had been minimal, with one that set pupils interesting and challenging tasks. The pupils responded very well, worked hard and achieved the objectives of the lesson.
10. There is a good marking policy but it is not followed. Pupils are told that their work will be promptly marked and teachers will explain to them how they can improve it. They are specifically told that their spellings will be corrected to help them improve. Despite this, much of the work in pupils' books goes unmarked and, when it is, the marking often lacks rigour. In a single sentence on a science worksheet about blood circulation, for instance, one pupil has managed to spell

each of the key words vein, artery and capillary incorrectly, recording them as vain, artillary and capillary. The work received a cursory tick. Another problem with marking is that it misleads pupils. They are occasionally told that their work is good, even when it is clear that it is not. Teachers are keeping very sparse records of what they teach and what pupils learn. In a self-evaluation completed last November the consensus was that their assessment procedures were very poor. A few teachers have taken steps to address the weakness but there is still very little information available about pupils' progress and no attempt to relate pupils' attainment to national standards or averages. As a result of these very weak procedures, teachers do not have the information they need to plan lessons which meet the needs of each individual. Too often tasks are the same for all pupils. At Horizon Centre many lessons take place with no written planning in evidence.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 14 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	1	6	4	3	0

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

11. All too often teachers are allowing pupils to dictate terms and this is resulting in pupils being occupied in many lessons rather than being taught. Many teachers show a very limited range of strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and it is significant that nearly all of the satisfactory and better teaching was with classes of one or two pupils. Teachers are far too tolerant of bad language and verbal abuse and pupils frequently wander in and out of classrooms at will. There is insufficient focus on preventing problems from arising. Lessons often start late and there are few routines to prepare pupils for them. Too often they start when pupils are ready rather than when the teacher wants them to. A bad error of judgement was made at Horizon Centre when pupils arriving late were fed into an art lesson being taught by a temporary teacher for the first time. Over the course of half an hour four pupils were introduced to the lesson, each time causing disruption. The teacher had no records of what they had done previously and no plans had been provided for her. Two more experienced teachers had non-contact time whilst this was happening. It was totally unsatisfactory that the temporary teacher was expected to manage nearly all the pupils who were attending. The end result was disgruntled pupils preventing the teacher from teaching and themselves from learning. At Horizon House, one of the two teachers has only recently acknowledged that she is unable to manage the pupils' behaviour and as a consequence was removed from teaching duties on the Friday before the inspection.
  
12. When teachers plan lessons carefully, prepare well and put their subject knowledge to good effect, teaching improves. Examples of teachers deploying support well to help individuals were observed, for instance in a sports' studies lesson where good use was made of the support teacher's superior knowledge of computers. In the same lesson, praise was used well to encourage a pupil to acknowledge that he had done a good piece of work and to carry on trying hard. In an English lesson at Horizon Centre support was again well deployed to help a lower attaining pupil and, in the same centre, pupils were motivated by the teacher setting them English work that they saw as relevant (writing about a work related experience). In a mathematics lesson at Horizon House, the teacher put her good subject knowledge to use in setting up an interesting and challenging investigation of number patterns. Pupils responded with increasing enthusiasm as they achieved success and warmed to the challenge. These are all strengths that demonstrate that the pupils can be taught effectively and that most teachers have the necessary skills to do so.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **poor** and opportunities for enrichment are **unsatisfactory**. The accommodation and resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Few pupils at Horizon Centre are given access to full time education
- The curriculum does not reflect the local education authority's policy
- The provision for PSHE is unsatisfactory
- Staffing is unsatisfactory but resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall.

## Commentary

13. The unit was set up with the brief to ensure that all pupils were provided with full-time education. At Horizon House they do, though lesson time has recently been unsatisfactorily shortened by 45 minutes per day to accommodate the schedules of local taxi firms. Few pupils at Horizon Centre are offered full time education and several parents are unhappy about this. Here, a minimum of a day and a half a week, and for one class two days per week, is timetabled for 'motivational work placements.' Ten placements have been allocated to sixteen pupils but only three pupils have taken them up. No alternative is offered in the centre so thirteen pupils spend up to two days each week at home. This is a breach of statutory requirements. Pupils attending college spend no time in Horizon Centre despite the fact that their college courses amount to only 15-17 hours per week. Each course contains a key skills module of one and a half hours per week but Horizon Centre staff are not monitoring attendance for these modules nor the content of them. They have not identified the fact that many pupils are getting virtually no teaching in the key skills of numeracy and literacy despite the fact that about a day and a half each week could be made available in the centre to address the issue.
14. The curriculum falls well short of that described in the good, local education authority curriculum policy for pupil referral units. In Horizon House there is no teaching of geography and history and practical work is limited to cookery. Virtually no science is taught. Creative or aesthetic opportunities are limited to a little artwork and there is no drama. An excessive amount of time is allocated to physical and leisure activities, more for instance than either English or mathematics and almost as much as all the other subjects combined. Some of this time is not used wisely; during the inspection, for instance, pupils played pool for a full afternoon. The teacher in charge has produced very good planning for a much broader curriculum but this has not yet been implemented. Pupils at Horizon Centre who do not have college places have only two English and two mathematics lessons each week, a total of one and a half hours for each subject. The curriculum for English, mathematics and information and communication technology at Horizon Centre is planned around the 'Unit Award Scheme'. This is designed for much lower attaining pupils than are on roll and falls well short of fulfilling the needs of higher attaining pupils. There are no GCSE courses available for these pupils. Seven pupils at Horizon Centre are following courses at the local college. These courses are well chosen to meet pupils' interests and include motor vehicle maintenance, sports culture, hairdressing and health and social care. The two pupils spoken to about these courses were very enthusiastic.
15. The programme for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils from each site are timetabled for a full day to participate in activities provided by an outside charitable organisation but there is no obligation for them to attend them. These activities are usually more of a therapeutic nature than learning experiences. During the inspection arrangements broke down on both of the planned occasions and no substitute activities were provided. The headteacher reports that this is becoming an increasingly problematic arrangement. The inspection team found instances of pupils' work appearing to celebrate drug culture rather than educating against the dangers of it, its illegality or its impact on society. Very recently, steps have been taken to improve personal, social and health education at Horizon House by following LEA guidelines more closely.
16. There is insufficient enrichment of the curriculum through well planned activities but pupils at Horizon House have enjoyed a couple of visits to places of local interest and produced some good artwork following each visit. Lunchtime activities at Horizon House revolve around ball

games and using digital cameras and computers. Horizon Centre offers few enrichment activities outside of pupils' timetables.

17. The match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Most teachers have been very recently appointed. There is too little subject expertise in English and science, where there is no specialist teacher on either site, and in mathematics where there is no specialist teacher at Horizon Centre. This lack of subject knowledge is one of the factors limiting the courses available in Horizon Centre for higher achievers. There is no sharing of expertise between the two sites. Several teachers are not well suited to working with the pupils being admitted because they do not have the required skills to manage their behaviour. A teacher with expertise in mathematics and science has been appointed and is due to start after Easter. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are not given the advice, support and guidance that they need
- The involvement of pupils through the unit staff seeking, valuing and acting on their views, is unsatisfactory
- Arrangements for introducing pupils to the unit are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

18. Staff are aware of their legal responsibilities regarding child protection and locally agreed procedures are followed. As a good precaution, Horizons is in the process of arranging further training so that there can be at least two fully trained child protection officers at each site. Arrangements for general health and safety checks, risk assessments and emergencies are satisfactory. However, the advice and support pupils receive on a day-to-day basis, regarding attendance, personal development and learning has shortcomings. Opportunities to help pupils are frequently lost, for instance by neglecting to mark their work or to comment on how they could improve it. Consequently, pupils know very little about the progress they make and many retain a very low opinion of their ability to improve. The first display anyone sees when entering Horizon House is about staff's commitment to marking and assessing pupils' work. It is a good display and reflects a good marking policy which, alas, is too often ignored. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is weak and does not give staff the information they need to help pupils to overcome their personal difficulties or to measure the effectiveness of any advice and support they give. Pupils receive satisfactory advice and information about possible careers but this is not accompanied with enough guidance about the expectations of the workplace, for instance, the importance of punctuality and reliability. Too often, pupils are allowed to dictate terms and staff back down in the face of problems. This is not giving pupils the right message.

19. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to have a say in the development of Horizons and this leads to many pupils feeling that they do not have a stake in it. As a result, they show very little loyalty to it and do not see it as a place that is going to help them achieve success or gain qualifications. The unit has yet to create a climate where pupils can confidently raise issues and make suggestions that would benefit others as well as themselves. There are no formal procedures for welcoming pupils to Horizons. As a result practice varies and too many pupils learn what is expected of them from other pupils rather than from staff. This source of information is often unreliable and, as such, leads to difficulties.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents and the wider community, including other schools and colleges are **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of information to parents about the unit and their children's progress is unsatisfactory
- There are good links with the local college
- Community links have yet to make a significant contribution to learning.

## Commentary

20. Procedures to ensure parental satisfaction and to deal with individual concerns and complaints are satisfactory. Parents report that staff are happy to discuss any issues that they raise. Although the great majority of parents attend review meetings of individual education plans, this is of limited value in informing them about their children's academic progress because the plans and related records show that meetings are largely devoted to personal development matters and little information is shared about pupils' learning and achievement. Horizons has very recently appointed a Pupil Support Officer (not yet in post) to address weaknesses in this area.
21. Horizons has established links with many sections of the community and there is much goodwill. The headteacher figures prominently in a multi-agency support group that meets each month and considers issues relevant to pupils attending or likely to attend in future. Particularly good attention is paid here to pupils in the care of the local authority. However, not all links with the broader community are working and the unpredictability of individuals and agencies who offer to lead or contribute to lessons, then fail to fulfill their commitment, unsettles pupils and reduces learning opportunities. There are good links with the local college and satisfactory mechanisms for the transfer of pupils to other schools and colleges, but relationships between Horizon House and the adjacent school are strained and unproductive. Horizons staff are not involved in any outreach work in local schools; this is a lost opportunity when so few pupils are attending and several staff have so much non-teaching time.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is **poor** overall. Governance is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The unit does not effectively monitor and evaluate the standards of education provided and improvement planning is weak
- There is inefficient deployment of staff. Not all teachers make effective use of the time provided out of lessons
- The unit has difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.

## Commentary

22. The headteacher and LEA in its role as the appropriate authority share a suitable vision as to how they want the unit to develop in the future and have many good intentions but they have not succeeded in addressing the most important issue, that of ensuring that pupils already attending are receiving a satisfactory standard of education. The leadership and management of the headteacher falls well below the standard expected. In the short time Horizons has been operating, very little attention has been paid to monitoring standards of teaching and learning or the curriculum with a view to improving them. The first item in the improvement plan for 2003-2005 is to develop a school improvement plan over the course of the next year. What currently exists is a list of procedures and policies that need developing, the people responsible and a timescale. These are insufficiently prioritised; for instance, although a draft policy exists, the development of a fuller teaching and learning policy is scheduled for next summer; after the development of procedures for recording pupils' progress. Performance management procedures have been implemented before either and also a term before job descriptions are due

to be defined. None of the targets for improvement explains how they will raise standards nor how improvement will be measured.

23. There are few signs of effective leadership by senior staff. No subject is co-ordinated across both sites, staff remain rooted to the same site and there is no sharing of expertise or support offered when one or the other site has problems. At Horizon House the teacher in charge has developed good written plans for an appropriate curriculum but the curriculum remains weak because the timetable does not reflect the plan. Senior staff are not contributing to the monitoring of teaching, learning and planning and, at Horizon Centre in particular, do not have a sufficient grasp of pupils' achievements, progress or even, occasionally, their whereabouts. Many staff are inefficiently deployed. At Horizon Centre two permanent teachers teach only 18 out of a possible 50 lessons per week between them. Weaknesses in record keeping and planning there do not reflect efficient use of non-contact time. Too often, responsibilities at Horizon Centre are being passed on to other agencies. In this respect, senior staff are acting as brokers. For instance, pupils are found places in colleges or on work placements but once this has been done there is virtually no monitoring of their progress and no effort made to ensure that they are receiving their educational entitlement.
24. The headteacher and LEA share the same vision for the development of Horizons. They have a clear view of the differing roles of Horizon House and Horizon Centre and have successfully identified the support that should be offered to pupils by each. Horizon House, where the headteacher has his office, is much closer to fulfilling its aims than Horizon Centre. In this respect, the split site is not being adequately managed. The local education authority has played a satisfactory role in setting up the unit and describing what function it wants it to serve and how it anticipated future development. It has ensured that the project is not starved of funds or resources and that the headteacher is involved in valuable multi-agency negotiations. Weaknesses remain, however, in the lack of systems to ensure that it is kept well informed about what is happening in the unit and what it does to supplement this information with its own monitoring. The unit itself does not sufficiently apply the best value principles of challenge and comparison and it does not look critically enough at the effectiveness of what it currently provides.
25. One of the most significant barriers to raising achievement has been in attracting and retaining specialist teaching staff. At Horizon House, the teacher in charge finds herself teaching every lesson except sport and leisure because a second teacher, responsible for English, has been unable to adapt to working with pupils exhibiting extreme behaviour. At Horizon Centre another teacher left on the Friday before the inspection. The unit has not been able to attract an English specialist. Development has also been slowed through difficulties outside the control of the unit. The headteacher was appointed well in advance of the unit's opening but contractual difficulties resulted in him taking up post a term later, in September. A new teacher with science and mathematics expertise has been appointed but cannot start until Easter.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

*Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects that reflect the standards achieved by pupils.*

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **poor**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject is not being co-ordinated
- Pupils make poor progress in improving their writing skills. They make unsatisfactory progress in reading and speaking and listening; at Horizon Centre, insufficient time is allocated to English
- There is too much unsatisfactory and poor teaching in the subject and this slows learning
- The development of literacy across the curriculum is poor.

#### **Commentary**

26. The lack of leadership of the subject is very evident in pupils' poor achievement in English. Standards are not being monitored, record keeping is weak and no targets have been set for improvement. Pupils produce very little work. They make too little progress because much of the teaching is weak, planning of the curriculum is poor and assessment and target-setting procedures are inadequate. Other factors lowering achievement include poor attendance and the poor attitudes and behaviour of many pupils, which are manifested in their refusal to work or even to enter or stay in lessons. Achievement at Horizon Centre is particularly weak because pupils do not have enough English lessons to enable them to make appropriate progress.
27. Pupils' writing is poor, as is their achievement. They are not taught well enough how to improve the way they plan and structure a piece of work. In addition, teachers' expectations are very low with respect to the amount pupils are expected to write. Most pupils are reluctant to apply themselves and very little work is completed. Several pupils demonstrate a rudimentary knowledge of English punctuation, such as the use of full stops and capital letters when constructing simple sentences but there is no evidence to suggest that this is the result of their learning at Horizons, though teachers are reminding them to use punctuation. Achievement in reading, speaking and listening is unsatisfactory. Pupils speak a lot more than they listen but opportunities for pupils to learn more about the importance of well considered dialogue and giving others the chance to express opinions are seriously limited by the difficulties teachers face in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils' reading is tested when they first arrive but this information is not used to set targets or to plan future learning. Nearly all can read, and several do so fluently, but there is little enthusiasm to do so and few pupils read of their own volition.
28. There is occasional satisfactory teaching but too much is unsatisfactory or poor. The small sample that could be seen reflects the dearth of English lessons at Horizon Centre and the difficult circumstances at Horizon House. Additional evidence comes from analysis of pupils' work and teachers' records and planning, all of which point to inadequate teaching of the subject. Work is rarely adapted or modified well enough for lower attaining pupils and higher attaining pupils are not challenged. In better lessons, teachers share learning objectives with pupils and try hard to keep them working. Too often, however, pupils are allowed to opt out of thinking or working, remaining reliant on adults to give them one-to-one attention, tell them the answers and to do the writing for them. The main weakness in many lessons is in managing the behaviour of pupils. Staff are not sufficiently skilled in bringing reluctant learners on board and ensuring that all pupils actually tackle the work productively.



## Language and literacy across the curriculum

29. Pupils are not given suitable, planned opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum and there is no whole unit approach to developing and improving literacy.

## MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **unsatisfactory** overall. It is satisfactory at Horizon House but unsatisfactory at Horizon Centre.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led at Horizon House and pupils achieve sufficiently well
- Accreditation for pupils at Horizon Centre lacks challenge
- There is little use of mathematics in other subjects.

### Commentary

30. The benefits of a specialist teacher and good subject leadership are seen at Horizon House, where pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils' work is well organised, neatly presented and accurately marked with grades for attainment and effort, which the pupils understand. Good records are kept of these marks and the work completed. Pupils are following a broad curriculum incorporating all the main aspects of mathematics. The teacher has good subject knowledge and has planned well; as a result, in a good lesson, the one pupil present achieved well in identifying number patterns in a 10x10 square into which the numbers 1-100 had been entered. The pupil arrived in the lesson in an unwilling state of mind but by the end was enthusiastic, working independently and very proud of his success. This was a good example of how academic achievement affected a pupil's attitudes and behaviour. Occasionally, teaching is weaker. This is the result of low expectations and mundane, rote tasks. For instance, the lesson preceding the one mentioned earlier involved pupils filling in the numbers 1- 100 in the matrix, first in pencil and then over-writing with felt tip. Pupils were occupied for half an hour but no new learning took place.

31. Pupils at Horizon Centre are following an accredited course consisting of entry-level units. These include number work, use of calculators, money management, shape and measurement, clocks and time and statistics. These lack challenge for many of the pupils and this contributes to low achievement. Pupils are not assessed on entry to check whether this accreditation is matched to their needs and target setting is not used as a means to raise achievement. Many pupils complete very little work because they are attending infrequently and there are very few mathematics lessons. Several pupils have produced well-presented files of work but marking does not give suggestions for improvement and too much work is unmarked. The subject was taken over by a temporary teacher on the first day of the inspection and, during a satisfactory lesson, the one pupil present made satisfactory progress, as he gained knowledge and understanding of calculating perimeters using a meter rule and a measuring wheel.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

32. There are few planned opportunities for using mathematics in other curriculum areas though in a sports studies lesson, at Horizon House, pupils drew a graph to represent sporting activities and answered questions about the graph. Opportunities were missed at Horizon Centre to use computers to support work on areas such as statistics. The use of formulae in spreadsheets in information and communication technology contributes to pupils' mathematical learning, but there is little in other subjects that can contribute to improving standards in mathematics.

## SCIENCE

*No lessons were observed and virtually no previous science work was produced for analysis.*

33. No science is taught at Horizon Centre. At Horizon House, pupils' achievement is very poor. Only 45 minutes per week is timetabled for science and it is very clear that even this rarely materialises. Pupils' work is recorded in the backs of their cookery books and consists of a few worksheets about the human body. These have either been shoddily marked or not marked at all. There is no investigative or experimental work. Most pupils have no records of completed work. There is no specialist science teacher and there is no leadership of the subject at any level. A suitable curriculum has been planned but it is not taught.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

*Only one separate ICT lesson was seen so no overall judgement of teaching is made. The use of ICT was seen in several other subject areas.*

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject knowledge of teachers is good and pupils' achievement is satisfactory
- Both sites are well resourced and accommodation is good.

### Commentary

34. Teachers are confident about teaching the subject and leadership and management are satisfactory. In the one lesson observed, at Horizon Centre, an interactive whiteboard was used well to show pupils how to sort records in datasheet view and this helped pupils to sort each field alphabetically. Pupils were also able to find specific data using the filtering command. This would have been more effective if a larger database had been provided to demonstrate the power of this facility. The teacher held pupils' attention by making good reference to mobile phones as everyday objects that make use of a database and this created sufficient interest to keep pupils working and behaving satisfactorily.

35. At Horizon Centre, pupils are following an entry-level course in ICT. This is an appropriate level for most of them. They are using word processing effectively and incorporating Wordart and images into their text. They have created simple spreadsheets and used presentation software and databases. Pupils are searching for images on the Internet to incorporate into other software. However, expectations are occasionally too low; for example, pupils are not expected to create databases themselves, but only to manipulate an existing database. At Horizon House a new scheme of work based on the QCA units has recently been introduced. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and a clear vision for improving standards and pupils have received an award for word processing; they have entered data into spreadsheets and databases, have used presentation software, experienced graphic work and have designed logos.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

36. Other than in separate ICT lessons, teachers are occasionally too quick to use the promise of using computers as a reward for a little work rather than as a tool to promote learning. In an English lesson, for instance, a pupil listened to music on the Internet for a third of the lesson not after, but before starting work on word processing a letter. In another lesson on project work, a pupil played pool 'on line' for the last fifteen minutes. Much better practice was seen at Horizon House, where pupils in a sports culture lesson used computers confidently to help them present data graphically. Both units have an ICT suite with networked computers running up-to-date software and an interactive whiteboard. This facility is used well by teachers.

## OTHER SUBJECTS

37. Pupils achieve very little in **art**. At Horizon House, pupils have completed isolated pieces of work but there is little progression in these separate tasks so pupils cannot demonstrate the development of specific skills. The best work is in drawings inspired by a visit to Dunham Massey, a local attraction. These drawings show accurate representation of period features in some of the buildings seen. There is no evidence of pupils looking at the work of renowned artists or developing an appreciation of good art. Pupils' work is assessed but well over half of the individual grades are A1, representing maximum effort and maximum attainment. These grades are at odds with the work seen by inspectors and suggest that teachers' expectations are too low. The artwork at Horizon Centre is very weak. There is very little of it and it is unimaginative. There is no evidence of development of ideas or techniques and no sophistication in pupils' work.
38. A very generous part of each week is dedicated to **sports studies** and a substantial amount of it is not used wisely. At Horizon House, pupils usually use the local leisure centre for a suitable range of physical activities but on the week of the inspection there was confusion over the booking of the centre and pupils played pool for a full afternoon instead. This is unsatisfactory. Pupils study a little about the theoretical background to sport and exercise and about facilities that provide for it. At Horizon Centre, two pupils are successfully following a college course in sports' culture and the work in their files and their keenness to discuss it points to them achieving well. Opportunities for other pupils include skiing on a local dry slope, which several pupils participated in during the inspection. On both sites, the subject is taught by an instructor; not a qualified teacher. No records are kept of pupils' achievements and there is little advance planning. There is little written work, it is not marked or annotated and therefore there is little evidence of pupils' achievement. The instructor is well qualified and enthusiastic, but feels he does not have sufficient expertise to keep pupils at Horizon Centre engaged for the length of time they are timetabled for.
39. In Horizon House, the programme for the curriculum plans for **personal, social and health education** (PSHE) follow LEA guidelines and are appropriately matched to pupils' needs. However, the programme has only recently been introduced and its effectiveness has not been evaluated. The 'Peace Centre', a local charity, delivers PSHE for one full day each week, but this provision is subject to short notice cancellation and did not take place as planned during the inspection week. At the Horizon Centre the majority of PSHE lessons are delivered by the 'Peace Centre' and all evidence of pupils' work and progress is apparently kept by them and not shared with the centre. The centre has no records of its own and does not monitor achievement. This is a pointer to weak leadership of the subject. Each week a session called the 'XL Club' is taught by 'Connexions' staff with the aim of improving confidence and self-esteem.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>6</b>
How inclusive the school is	6
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	6
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>6</b>
Pupils' achievement	6
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>6</b>
Attendance	6
Attitudes	6
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	6
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	6
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>6</b>
The quality of teaching	6
How well pupils learn	6
The quality of assessment	6
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	5
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	5
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>6</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	6
The leadership of other key staff	6
The effectiveness of management	6

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*