

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BISHOPTON CENTRE

Stockton-on-Tees

LEA area: Stockton-on-Tees

Unique reference number: 111521

Centre Manager: Ian Johnstone

Lead inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 1st February 2005

Inspection number: 268680

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	32
School address:	Wrensfield Road Stockton-on-Tees
Postcode:	TS19 0AT
Telephone number:	01642 393565
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Appropriate authority:	Local authority
Name of chair of management group:	Mike Davison
Date of previous inspection:	April 2003

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bishopton Centre is part of the provision by Stockton-on-Tees local education authority for pupils in Years 7 to 11 who have been either permanently excluded or excluded for a fixed term from a mainstream school. The pupils come from all regions of the local authority, some of which are socio-economically very disadvantaged. The agreed maximum number is 48. Currently, there are 28 boys and four girls at the centre. Two pupils are dual registered with a mainstream school. All pupils are White-British. There are no Traveller children and no one is learning English as an additional language. The attainment of most of the pupils when they enter the centre is below that expected for their age. Three pupils have statements of special educational need for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All the others are at School Action Plus for reasons that have to do with their social and emotional development or the difficulties they have in controlling their behaviour. The centre is attempting to clarify its role within the local education authority by beginning to operate two distinct programmes. It is intended that pupils in Years 7 to 9 spend ten weeks at the centre before returning to mainstream schools. The other programme, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, is preparing them for life after school. The centre is not involved in any national initiatives and has gained no awards. The last inspection was in April 2003, when the centre was identified as having serious weaknesses. Since that time a new centre manager has been appointed (November 2004) and a new management committee has been formed, led by the headteacher of a secondary school whose pupils, if excluded, are referred to the centre.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2742 4	Dr D Alan Dobbins	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology; Vocational Courses.
1104 1	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
3055	Clive Tombs	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Music; Physical Education.
1078 1	Robert Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Design and Technology; Art and Design.
3024 3	Anne Heakin	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Geography; History; Personal, Social and Health Education; Citizenship.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bishopton Centre is a satisfactory and improving pupil referral unit. Teaching and learning are good and pupils who attend regularly achieve well. The 10-week programme for returning pupils in Years 7 to 9 to mainstream schools is becoming increasingly effective. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress over a wide range of vocational courses. However, too many pupils, especially those in Years 10 and 11, choose not to attend regularly and they gain very little from the centre. The newly appointed manager, with the very good help of the local education authority's (LEA) link advisor, has made a very good start at improving the centre. He needs the continued support of the LEA's professional officers before the centre will be fully effective in meeting the needs of all pupils and become an asset to the local secondary schools. The centre gives satisfactory value for money.

The centre's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good relationships that pupils develop with staff help them to listen well to the good guidance and advice they are given.
- The good quality of teaching and learning is helped by the good attitudes pupils show to their learning and by their good behaviour in lessons.
- The centre's role in the LEA's overall provision for secondary-aged pupils is not clear enough.
- Too many pupils do not attend regularly enough for the good progress they make in lessons to be sustained over time.
- The very good accommodation includes spacious classrooms and very good specialist facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology.
- The good links with colleges and training providers produce a wide range of relevant vocational experiences for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The panel for referring pupils to the centre does not give enough guidance on how the centre should provide for the pupils.
- The procedures for checking the work of the centre do not provide sufficient information for the centre's manager or the management group in helping to judge its effectiveness.

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. All the key issues identified then have been addressed, either in full or in part. Attendance is better, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The procedures for checking the work of the centre are better, but they need to be developed further before the management group can judge accurately the effectiveness of the centre. Target setting is embedded in the curriculum better than was the case last time, but it can still be developed further. The hours of taught time are now in line with expectations. The provision for multicultural education is much better. There have been other improvements. Since the appointment of the centre manager, leadership and management are better. The management group is more aware of its responsibilities. Although many areas of its work require further development, the centre no longer has serious weaknesses.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED*

Achievement of pupils at the end of:	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
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The 10-week programme	Good	Good
Years 10 and 11	Good	Good

**These judgements are made for the standards achieved in lessons by the pupils who attend regularly. The irregular attendance of many pupils affects the progress they make. As a consequence, the overall judgement for pupils on the 10-week programme is satisfactory. The progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is affected more because their attendance is poorer. Overall, they make unsatisfactory progress.*

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, though pupils achieve well and make good progress in their lessons, in all the years and in all subjects, They make good progress in their personal and social development and, especially, in controlling their behaviour. Generally, they show good attitudes to their learning. However, the standards achieved by too many pupils are badly compromised by their irregular attendance. This is the primary weakness of the centre. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. The procedures for maintaining appropriate behaviour provide very clear directions to pupils on what is right and wrong and acceptable and unacceptable. The generous staff-pupil ratio means that staff have more time to speak with pupils than is the case in mainstream schools and in many equivalent centres. This helps pupils develop very good relationships with staff. They gain from this because, generally, they pay good attention to the advice and guidance that staff offer. This is the strength of the centre. Most often, the centre is a calm, ordered and friendly place in which pupils behave well. Most pupils feel comfortable at the centre and many are able to reassess their attitudes towards themselves and to their learning. Progress in spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 most of the pupils attend regularly, but many in Years 10 and 11 do not. This makes a significant contribution to the overall unsatisfactory rate of attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning in lessons are **good**. The good use of colleges and training providers means that teachers and instructors with specialist knowledge teach more lessons than is the case in many equivalent centres. Classrooms, generally, are spacious, and the specialist ICT room and the multi-skills workshop are very good. The 10-week curriculum prepares pupils in Years 7 to 9 satisfactorily for their return to mainstream schools. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 includes a good range of vocational courses which pupils take to Level 1 of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and the Foundation Level of the General NVQ (GNVQ). There are, however, few opportunities to gain more advanced qualifications, such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The curriculum is extended well by the contribution of personnel from agencies outside education, including charitable organisations that offer counselling and personal advice, the police liaison officer, and Connexions. However, the considerable advantage of being taught in classes with only a small number of pupils is not fully realised for those whose attendance is irregular.

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Pupils receive good support and guidance overall, which includes good advice on personal issues and good guidance on future work possibilities. There are good opportunities for them to be involved in the development of the centre. The partnership with parents is satisfactory. There are good links with the community, and with colleges and training providers, and the links with the client secondary schools are improving.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The manager of the centre has made a very good start. The link adviser, and other professional officers from the LEA, have given very good support. Nevertheless, more development is required for the centre to take its place as a valued and integral part of the LEA's provision for the secondary phase. The chairperson of the management group has a

clear vision for the future of the centre as an extension of this provision. As yet, the management group is unable to offer precise advice and guidance, or to fully meet its responsibilities to the centre, because the centre's role is not sufficiently clear and the procedures for checking the quality of the work are not robust enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

The views of parents are satisfactory. They believe the centre has improved since the appointment of the new manager. Pupils report that they like the staff, and they appreciate the efforts made to help them with their learning and to deal with their other difficulties.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the centre should do to improve are to:

- develop a clear role for the centre, by having the centre manager and the management group work with LEA officers and the headteacher's and principals group;
- have the referral panel provide specific information on the centre's role in the full-time education of those pupils referred to it;
- have the management group, in line with the role of the centre, establish and operate procedures to check all the work of the centre to promote further improvement and development, especially in:
 - * attendance,
 - * teaching and learning,
 - * the curriculum,
 - * the effectiveness of links with other schools, colleges and training providers,
 - * the safety and security of pupils,
 - * the work of the centre manager.

and meet statutory requirements as they relate to:

- the provision for statemented pupils;
- training in child protection;
- the production of an annual report.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In all the years, pupils' achievement in lessons is good. Throughout the centre, boys and girls make similar progress. However, too many pupils do not attend regularly enough to sustain this good achievement over time. When the progress of all pupils at the centre is judged, those in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend less frequently and the effect of their absence is greater. They make unsatisfactory progress overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils make good progress in their personal and social development.
- The good progress made in lessons is not sustained over time for many pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, because of their irregular attendance.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain good results on vocational courses, but they are able to take fewer nationally accredited awards than do pupils in most equivalent centres.
- The curriculum is balanced well by subjects that are taught as part of the National Curriculum in mainstream schools.

Commentary

1. Pupils who attend regularly make good progress in their personal and social development, especially in dealing with their emotions and in controlling their behaviour. Pupils enter the centre because they have experienced difficulties in meeting the expectations and the routines of their mainstream schools. Many have a poor self-image and lack self-confidence, and some are frustrated and even angry. Nevertheless, they very quickly become comfortable at the centre and realise that staff are helpful and friendly and want them to succeed. With increasing time at the centre they develop a trust in staff, and a respect for them, and ultimately establish very good relationships with them. Because of this, they are receptive to the advice and guidance they regularly gain from their key workers and transition tutors, as well as from others, for example at the breakfast club. The planned programme for personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is good. It is extended very well by use of personnel from many relevant agencies. The expertise available for promoting pupils' personal and social development is considerably broadened by a range of outside help. This includes specialists from the youth service, the police liaison team, the youth offending team, and staff from Connexions to give advice on careers. There is also the involvement of local charitable organisations that offer counselling and personal advice. As a consequence, pupils make good progress in becoming more self-assured and in dealing with the difficulties in their lives. They learn to control their behaviour better and many pupils begin to like themselves. The small size of classes means that teachers and their support assistants spend more time with pupils than was the case in their previous schools. The increased level of attention helps them to make good progress in their learning during lessons. They enjoy this, and it contributes to their wanting to try harder and do even better in their learning. As a consequence, many pupils reorientate their thoughts on the meaning of education and leave the centre very well prepared for the successful return to mainstream schools and into the adult world. A sizeable minority of pupils do not. They reject what the centre offers them by deciding not

to attend regularly. These pupils make little gain in their personal and social development and benefit hardly at all from being on the roll of the centre.

2. Over all the years, pupils achieve well in the lessons in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Those who attend regularly make good progress. However, when progress is judged over all the pupils, the very limited progress made by those who attend irregularly reduces the quality. It is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 on the 10-week course, and unsatisfactory for those in Years 10 and 11. This is disappointing for all at the centre. Many procedures are being put to very good use to ensure that pupils are regular attenders, including the sanction of taking legal action against parents. Quite simply, too many pupils do not make the progress that they could in their learning because they do not attend regularly enough.

3. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 typically achieve success on a small number of vocational courses. The table shows the range of courses offered for examination and the levels of the awards gained by last year's leavers. The table also shows that most pupils who took part in these courses were successful in gaining an award.

Course	Award	No. entered 2003 – 2004	No. gained award 2003 – 2004
Key skills	OCR Level 1	6	4
Motor vehicle maintenance	NVQ Level 1	4	4
Sheet metal work	NVQ Level 1	6	4
Sports Leader Award	Level 1	6	6
ICT	CLAIT	3	2

4. The range of nationally accredited awards that pupils take for examination is smaller than is the case in many other equivalent centres. Pupils at the centre do not have the same opportunity as those in most other centres to demonstrate to prospective employers and college admission officers the full extent of their learning over their time in education. Some pupils are capable of taking the full GCSE; others are capable of being successful at the entry level.

5. The curriculum is balanced well by the inclusion of a number of other subjects. These subjects do not follow the programmes of study of the National Curriculum but are designed to add breadth to the curriculum and to maintain links with the National Curriculum, as it is taught in mainstream schools. Pupils gain a good experience of art and design. They stay in touch with the humanities because they are taught selected topics that are relevant, current, and of interest to them. For example, in geography, the topic for pupils in Years 7 to 9 during the time of the inspection was 'earthquakes' and the tsunami effect when these occur under water. In design and technology, lessons take place in the very well appointed multi-skills workshop. Pupils gain a very good experience of car mechanics, simple joinery, the use of metal and plastic, and learning to weld. Teachers with specialist knowledge of music, from the Tees Valley Music Service, teach those in Years 7 to 9 and, for the first time this year, pupils in Years 10 and 11 also have lessons in music. Lessons in physical education make a significant contribution to pupils' social development. They include six-week modules in football, tag rugby, cricket, basketball, snooker and golf. Pupils learn to climb at the local leisure centre and take part in outdoor activities on the moors of North Yorkshire or in the Dales.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their work in lessons are good. They behave well and establish very good relationships with staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to improve their behaviour, develop their self-confidence and self-esteem, and help them with their learning.
- The high expectations for behaviour and the good procedures help pupils take increasing control of their behaviour and their emotions.
- There is good provision for developing pupils' personal and social skills, and improved provision for promoting cultural awareness.
- There is unsatisfactory attendance and inadequate procedures for recording attendance.

Commentary

6. The centre is an orderly community in which staff encourage pupils to behave well, to become more confident and self-assured and to take responsibility for their actions. They do this by being very good role models and by creating a supporting ethos that is based on friendliness and openness when they deal with pupils. Pupils respond well. Generally, they behave well in and out of lessons. In the lessons where teaching is directed well, they remain on task and work hard. They are at ease when they are with staff and, with increasing time at the centre, with each other also. A good number take a full part in the activities of the centre. For example, they are pleased to take advantage of the many sporting activities and enjoy taking part in the wide range of off-site activities. But too many do not.

7. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Bullying, when it occurs, is dealt with quickly and efficiently. Pupils are aware of the rules and expectations for behaviour and for relating to one another. Staff are now applying the procedures for improving behaviour with greater consistency, and this is helping pupils to know with greater clarity what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they feel safe and secure at the centre and appreciate the ways in which staff are helping them with their learning, and to cope with the other difficulties they have in their lives. The building, equipment and resources are treated with care. There is no sign of vandalism or graffiti and there is very little litter within the grounds.

Exclusions

8. Last year there were 46 fixed-term exclusions for boys and two for girls. This number is higher than is the case for many equivalent centres. However, since the appointment of the new centre manager, there have been only three fixed-term exclusions. Each was recorded correctly and each was given for a good reason.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
25	48	0

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

9. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Themed assemblies are regularly held, and the pupils have visited the places of worship of other religions, including mosques, synagogues and temples. The important beliefs and traditions of many faiths are taught in lessons, and major festivals are celebrated, such as Diwali, Chanukah and the Sikh New Year.

10. Moral development is addressed well. Circle time for pupils in Years 7 to 9 includes discussions on, for example, emotional literacy, relationships, citizenship and drugs education. Workers from charitable trusts visit for group work on topics that include drug and sex education. Pupils are invited to keep contact with them by attending their education centres in the evening and during the holidays. The key workers especially, and also the transition mentor, get to know their pupils very well. All make significant contributions to helping pupils understand the difficulties they have to deal with and to developing strategies to help them cope. The police liaison officer, who is regularly at the centre, provides for many pupils another, more positive, perspective on 'authority'. He is able to point out clearly the end product of anti-social behaviour, but helps pupils by identifying what changes they need to make in their life-styles in order to be seen as 'good citizens'.

11. The provision for social development is a strength. Underpinning all the procedures for making pupils more secure as young people are the very good relationships that staff develop with

them. These are obvious to see during discussion. An example is the daily breakfast club, where pupils are at ease socialising with staff and are ready to signal to them that they need help with an issue that is troubling them. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend colleges of further education and training centres. In both, they work in an adult environment with very clear rules as to what is expected of them and equally clear outcomes should they not abide by the rules. They like being part of the adult world, act responsibly, and show a level of maturity not always apparent in the 'school' environment of the centre. Visits are organised for pupils to take part in activities that are new to most of them, such as rock climbing and outdoor pursuits on the Yorkshire Moors and in the Dales, and these play an important role in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Many pupils gain considerably from realising that they can behave well, that they do enjoy taking part, and that they are happy to work as members of a team.

12. The provision for pupils' cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now promoted satisfactorily in the lessons in many subjects, but especially at key worker time. Prominent displays throughout the centre show aspects of the lives of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and other role models from different cultures. There are regular visitors to the centre to talk about their traditions and religious beliefs, and most recently these have included visitors from the Chinese, Muslim and Sikh communities.

Attendance

13. Attendance for the period over the time of the inspection (7th - 28th January 2005) was 58 per cent. This is unsatisfactory. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11, who were absent for long periods of time in their other schools before being referred to the centre, see little benefit in attending. They are making a sizeable contribution to the overall low rate of attendance. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 attend much more regularly, and their attendance percentage is improving. The overall rate of improvement in attendance since the beginning of the current academic year suggests that the 80 per cent target for attendance agreed with the LEA is likely to be achieved by the end of the year. But this is still too low, because it limits the effectiveness of the centre in meeting the needs of all pupils.

14. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance also need to be better. The electronic system for recording attendance is not used accurately enough. Information on whether a pupil is at the centre, on work experience, or at a local college or training provider is not always entered correctly. The centre manager has recognised this and, with the help of the LEA's attendance officer, is refining the procedures so that at all times the centre is able to place accurately the whereabouts of all pupils. A minority of parents do not co-operate with the staff, and the education welfare officer in ensuring that their children attend. The absences of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are condoned by parents, and even the threat and taking of legal action against parents has little effect on the attendance of their children.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	18.5	School data	17.0
National data	*	National data	*

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

* No national data is available for pupil referral units.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. The good quality of teaching identified in the last inspection report and in the report of the HMI visit (2003) has been maintained. The curriculum is satisfactory and gives pupils many relevant learning experiences, but is not sufficiently focused either for returning pupils to mainstream schools or for preparing them for life in the adult world. Pupils gain good support, advice and guidance, and the centre and has established good links with the community and with local schools, colleges and training providers.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good, and in lessons this results in good quality learning. In four lessons in ten, teaching and learning are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The generous staff-pupil ratio means that staff know the pupils very well as learners.
- The good quality of teaching and learning in the lessons in PSHE and citizenship makes a considerable contribution to the good progress most pupils make in developing their personal and social skills.
- Computers are not used well enough in teaching and learning, especially for teaching literacy and numeracy.
- The limited specialist knowledge of teachers about the main subjects of the National Curriculum contributes to pupils being able to take only basic level awards.

Commentary

15. The staff-pupil ratio is generous. Moreover, for some part of their week, most of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 are out of the centre taking classes at local colleges or with training providers. Each of these contribute to pupils having much greater access to teachers and support assistants than was the case in their previous schools. As a consequence, all staff gets to know the pupils very well as learners. In most lessons, teachers and support assistants, and those who teach at the local colleges and training centres, have clear and high expectations for learning. Many of the lessons are taught in good specialist rooms, and teachers and support assistants are good at guiding and encouraging pupils. As a result, many pupils regularly match these expectations by working hard to do their best. For many pupils this is a considerable accomplishment and reflects an important change in their attitudes to education and to their own learning. Only in a small number of lessons is learning interrupted because teachers have to remind pupils of their responsibilities.

16. Teachers and the support assistants routinely encourage pupils in their learning and deal sensitively with them. The general friendliness of staff also helps pupils regain their confidence as learners, and because of this they achieve increasing success. In most lessons, pupils work on tasks that are relevant and interest them. This contributes to their enjoying lessons, and sometimes even looking forward to them. Over their time at the centre, a good number of pupils, and especially those in Years 7 to 9, begin to feel better about themselves, and this contributes to the effort they make to do as well as they can.

17. Computers are used well by pupils to create final drafts of reports and presentations. The interactive whiteboards located in the classrooms which are used most regularly for lessons are employed well by some teachers. They use them to present new learning through animated links that emphasise relationships and procedures. Generally though, computers are not used well in helping to develop new learning or in reinforcing existing learning. This is disappointing because pupils enter the centre with different histories of learning in the subjects and with a wide range of

capabilities. Teaching pupils according to their individual needs is the most effective way in which the progress of all pupils can be ensured, and computers are a powerful tool for helping teachers achieve this goal. Teachers and pupils are also disadvantaged because they do not have available a large self-learning package that directs learning in literacy and numeracy. This is a particular issue for the many pupils who do not read, write, spell or use number as well as most others of their age. In many equivalent centres, the regular use pupils make of a self-learning package enables them to work at their own level whenever they have time during the day. The progress they make is precisely recorded and this gives useful information for lesson planning. Although pupils have ready access to the Internet, in most subjects there are too few CD-ROMs that teachers can use to bring colour and movement to topics. For example, in geography there is no CD-ROM to support the teaching of the movement of plates with the subsequent release of considerable energy.

18. A significant number of lessons are taught by unqualified teachers and instructors in training centres. The overall judgement on teaching shows they do well. However, over all the teachers there is a lack of specialist knowledge and training in some subjects that make up the National Curriculum. One result of this is that the nationally accredited awards pupils in Years 10 and 11 take, to demonstrate the extent of their learning and their interests in education, are basic level awards such as Key Skills, NVQ and GNVQ Level 1. In most equivalent centres pupils are able to take up to six subjects for examination at the entry and full levels of the GCSE.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 17 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	7	7	3	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation is very good and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong vocational focus of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 excludes opportunities for pupils to take more advanced level accreditation, such as the GCSE.
- The very good accommodation at the centre, and the good use of the specialist workshops of local colleges and training providers, means that all aspects of the present curriculum can be taught without restriction.
- The three pupils with statements of special educational need do not have access to the full National Curriculum.
- Resources to support teaching and learning, other than those presented through computers, are good.

Commentary

19. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is planned well, with an emphasis on developing personal and social skills and literacy and numeracy. This is an appropriate emphasis given that the intent is to return these pupils successfully to mainstream schools. All seven pupils in Years 7 to 9 who were referred to the centre last year returned to mainstream schools and are still there one year later. The programme for PSHE and citizenship is good. The recommendations of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are embedded well into lesson planning. There are good opportunities to study ICT and practical subjects such as design and technology, including food technology.

20. The focus of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is different. It is designed to move pupils into the adult world after they leave the centre at the end of Year 11. It also emphasises PSHE and citizenship, and literacy and numeracy, and gives pupils opportunities to take vocational courses that lead to basic level awards such as Key Skills, CLAIT, NVQ and GNVQ at Level 1. The links with local colleges and training providers are good and, collectively, these give pupils a good experience of vocational subjects that is not possible at the centre itself. Other awards available to pupils include the City and Guilds in motor vehicle maintenance, the Sports Leader Award (Level 1) and a range of awards in first aid. An important aim of the curriculum is to prepare pupils for work. For many this is an appropriate emphasis, and they gain from taking a broad range of vocational courses, from taking part in the work experience programme, and from the good advice and guidance they receive from the officers of Connexions. However, some pupils learn more over their time in education than is judged by success on nationally accredited awards at a basic level. These pupils are disadvantaged because they have no opportunities to take examinations in National Curriculum subjects, including English, mathematics, science, and ICT beyond the basic level. If they are to demonstrate their capabilities to college admissions officers and prospective employers more accurately, they need to be assessed at more advanced levels, including at the entry and full levels of the GCSE. This is the case for pupils in most equivalent centres.

21. The provision available to the three pupils with statements of special educational need does not meet that specified in their statements. Each statement clearly indicates that the pupils should have access to the full National Curriculum and the relevant programmes of study. Within the context of the centre, they do not. The statutory requirements for reviewing statements, however, are met.

22. The centre is a very good base for teaching the subjects that are timetabled there. Classrooms are, generally, spacious and the ICT suite is very good, as is the multi-skills workshop. The building is bright and very clean. The ethos for learning is supported well by the good quality of the completed work displayed throughout the building. The colleges of further education and the training centres are similarly good bases for teaching the vocational courses. Together they constitute very good accommodation that allows pupils to have unrestricted access to all aspects of the curriculum in its present form.

23. With the exception of computer-based resources, the centre has a wide range of relevant resources of good quality to support teaching and learning. Resources are good in English, mathematics, science and PSHE and citizenship. The use of the specialist workshops of the local colleges and training providers means that pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain a very good experience of using a wide range of power tools and machines. Within the centre, the ICT suite and the multi-skills workshops are very well resourced. The lack of a computerised self-learning package is limiting pupils' opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and in most subjects there are too few CD-ROMs to support learning.

24. The curriculum has made good improvement since the last inspection. when it was deemed to be unsatisfactory. The innovative transition-mentoring project is a very good development. It is having a beneficial effect on the successful move of pupils from Year 11 into the adult world.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils receive good support and guidance, especially for the development of their personal and social skills. The opportunities for pupils to be involved with the development of the centre itself are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recent changes in organisation have had a good effect on the centre's ethos.
- There is a paucity of staff with current and sufficient training in child protection.
- The good range of specialist counsellors and others provide good advice and guidance to pupils, because they are regularly at the centre.
- There is very effective work by the transition mentors.
- There are good procedures for improving behaviour and attendance.
- The procedures for recognising the gains pupil make are not precise enough.

Commentary

25. In recent months, changes in staffing and in the organisation of the centre have been considerable. Over that time, staff have worked hard to provide a happy and secure learning environment in which pupils can develop as young people. For example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 and those in Years 10 and 11 have recently been separated to different parts of the building. This is proving to be a good arrangement, because it helps staff focus more effectively on the requirements of preparing pupils in Years 7 to 9 for return to mainstream settings after 10 weeks at the centre. It also benefits the pupils in Years 10 and 11, because staff can more effectively meet the different demands inherent in preparing them for inclusion in the adult world, after they leave the centre at the end of Year 11.

26. The provision for first aid is satisfactory. Risk assessments are routinely carried out, but the centre has been slow to implement the recommendations made by the LEA's safety officer. Child protection procedures are satisfactory, but in view of recent changes in staff there is a need for a programme of retraining. The centre manager recognises this and has already organised such a programme. The procedures for recording the occasions when medication is given are not stringent enough.

27. Pupils gain good advice and guidance. They know that the teachers, support assistants and the others at the centre want to help them, and they believe all staff to be 'fair'. Staff know them well and are sensitive to their needs. Through informal discussions and the advice offered throughout the day, staff provide additional support to the planned programme of PSHE and citizenship. Their very good relationships with pupils, and the regular access to trained counsellors and to the police liaison officer, means that when pupils need help or advice they are easily able to speak to someone they trust and respect. Taking part in the Youth Inclusion Project, the activities of the Princes Trust and Way Out also help pupils deal with their difficulties. Daily, at the breakfast club, pupils talk easily with staff about issues that they are having to deal with. Those in Years 10 and 11 benefit from involvement with Connexions staff, who give very good advice on the opportunities available when they leave the centre. The recent forming of the Council provides pupils with a good means of voicing their opinions about issues to do with the running of the centre.

28. Pupils' induction into the centre is informal. Parents and carers, with pupils, are involved in the preliminary meeting and are made fully aware of the aims of the centre and the intention of returning their children to mainstream schools or into the adult world. In this, pupils benefit from the very effective work of the two transition mentors who provide on-going support for pupils who leave the centre up to the age of eighteen years.

29. Pupils' progress in their personal, social and emotional development is carefully monitored. Assessments of behaviour based on prior information and regular observation are used to establish personal targets in individual educational plans (IEPs). A points system provides very clear guidance on what is acceptable behaviour. Pupils like it, and are proud when they have gained points for effort and good behaviour. There is a very clear recognition by all at the centre, and by the LEA professional officers linked to the centre, that the poor attendance of pupils limits their achievement and at the same time the efficiency of the centre in carrying out its work. Realistically, staff at the centre do as much as they can to promote good attendance. Attendance data are displayed in classrooms and these act to reinforce the importance of work of the centre. Staff are supported by the work of the education welfare officer, who provides additional help to those pupils whose attendance is irregular, and to their families. In extreme cases, in order to have parents recognise the importance of ensuring, as best they can, that their children attend the centre, legal proceedings have taken place. Overall, the rate of attendance is better than it was at the last inspection, when there were fewer strategies for improving attendance.

30. The procedures for recognising the progress pupils make do not operate well enough. The recent changes in staff have not helped. The irregular attendance of pupils also makes charting progress difficult. However, the setting of targets for personal and social development and for learning is not being done well enough. Moreover, the use of standardised tests is rare, as is reporting pupils' attainment in the levels of the National Curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory. Links with the community and local colleges of further education and training providers are good. The links with the client secondary schools are improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and carers have a good regard for the work of the centre.
- The centre manager is doing very good work to foster better links with parents and carers.
- A small number of parents do not join with the centre in ensuring that their children attend regularly.
- There are good procedures for returning pupils to mainstream schools.
- Good use is made of local colleges and training providers to extend pupils' learning experiences beyond those that can be offered only at the centre.

Commentary

31. Most parents who responded to the parents' and carers' questionnaire reported that they appreciated the way in which staff were encouraging their children to become mature and independent. They also appreciated the way their children were expected to work hard in dealing with their difficulties and with their learning. Parents and carers also reported that they felt the arrangements for settling their children into the centre were good and helpful. They found it easy to communicate with staff on issues to do with the centre and their children, because staff made them feel comfortable when they visited the centre and when they talked by telephone. A small number of parents and carers reported that they would appreciate more information on what their children were learning at the centre and how they were doing. Inspectors fully agree with the positive views of parents and carers and agree, in part, with the minority of parents who wish to have a greater amount of information on their children's progress.

32. The manager of the centre is making a considerable effort to foster increased links with parents and carers and has established a good rapport with them. The prospectus is a new document and is prepared well. It identifies the ethos the centre is striving to create, the mission statement, and the primary aims and objectives. It gives details on the policy for behaviour, the alternative curriculum, and how pupils are to be returned to mainstream settings. There are no formal procedures for obtaining the views of parents and carers, but for those who wish to deal with the centre, the staff are always available either at the centre or on the telephone. The recent changes in staffing and in the membership of the management group contributed to the fact that no annual report to parents was published last year. This is a requirement that the centre manager and the chairperson of the management group know was missed. In accord with their responsibilities, they have already formulated plans for the collection of information from staff that will make up this year's annual report.

33. Staff have not been able to convince a small number of parents that they need to support them in ensuring that their children attend school. The centre manager and other staff working with the education welfare officer are determined to gain the active help of all parents and carers in securing the regular attendance of their children.

34. Mechanisms for the transfer of pupils to mainstream schools and into the adult world are satisfactory overall. The centre has recently introduced a policy for reintegrating pupils in mainstream school within ten weeks. Prior to this time, pupils, even those in Years 7 to 9, would spend an undetermined length of time at the centre. In part, this was because the information provided by the referral panel on the centre's role in the education of those referred to it was often unclear. The procedures for returning pupils in Years 7 to 9 into mainstream schools have been improved by the appointment of keyworkers, who organise the return to mainstream settings, brief the receiving teachers, and oversee the success of the reintegration. Since the appointment of the tutors, communication between mainstream schools and centre staff is much improved. Parents and carers are involved in decision-making about reintegration, and the pupils who have most recently returned to mainstream schools are pleased with the effectiveness of the programme.

35. The links with local colleges of further education and training providers are good, and they extend the learning experiences of pupils in Years 10 and 11 well beyond those achievable in the centre itself. The headteacher's and principals of the LEA's 14 secondary schools see the need for the type of provision the centre is offering, and view it as a required extension of their own provision. A number of factors have helped to establish closer links between them and the centre. There was the appointment of the centre manager, who was previously known to them, the reworking of the management group and, especially, the nomination of a member of their own group as the chairperson. They are rightly anxious that the precise role of the centre be quickly established, so that they can make effective use of it in helping them deal with their pupils who experience difficulties with their personal and social development, including controlling their emotions and behaviour.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

36. The centre manager has made a very good start. Nevertheless, more development is required before the centre can be seen as a valued and integral part of the LEA's secondary provision. The new management group is well formed and satisfactorily meets its responsibilities, with certain exceptions. One is the need to ensure that the provision as set out in the statements for the three with statements of special educational need is met. Others are that sufficient staff are trained in child protection and that the annual report meets requirements. The role of the centre is not clear enough, and the procedures for checking the quality of its work are not robust enough to provide a precise steer for future development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improvements recognised by HMI in their visit in 2003 have been sustained.
- The role of the centre within the LEA's secondary provision is not clear enough.
- The panel for referring pupils provides too little information to help the centre deal with the pupils referred to it.
- The procedures for checking the quality of the centre's work provide too little information for the centre manager and the management group to make it possible to judge the quality of the provision.
- The development of the curriculum is being hindered by the absence of designated co-ordinators for some of the subjects.
- The centre's funds are managed and used well.

Commentary

37. The centre manager has made a very good start at improving the quality of the provision. The decision to separate pupils in Years 7 to 9 from those in Years 10 and 11, and to locate them in different parts of the building, is based on the clear and appropriate recognition that the role of the

centre is different for these two groups of pupils. Most of the time, the centre is a calm and organised place in which pupils are committed to their learning. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done before the centre can be recognised as a truly effective extension of the provision of the LEA's 14 secondary schools.

38. The report of the visit of Her Majesty's Inspectors in October 2003 indicated that since the last inspection, when the centre was reported as having serious weaknesses there had been good progress against three of the key issues and reasonable progress against the other two key issues. Progress in English, mathematics, PSHE, design and technology and ICT was judged as good, as was the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. The relationships between pupils and staff were reported as excellent. Since that time, pupils are achieving better in the subjects, and the good quality of teaching has been maintained. The very good relationships between staff and pupils continue to form an important bedrock for all the work of the centre. Since the visit of Her Majesty's Inspectors, the visible and energetic leadership of the new centre manager has resulted in further development, including the better attendance of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and closer links with the client secondary schools.

39. The chairperson of the management group has a vested interest in the success of the centre. At this time, he is leading a group that is fulfilling its responsibilities satisfactorily. However, the management group cannot provide directed support to promote development because the centre's role within the LEA's overall provision for secondary education is not clear enough. The centre manager, the link adviser and the chair of the management group are all very competent, and individually and collectively they are capable of managing the quick improvement in the work of the centre. They will be better placed to do this when they know, in detail, what is the purpose of the centre and the role of the panel that refers pupils to it. Also, the centre gains too little information from the referral panel on its responsibilities to the full-time education of those who are referred. The focus of the work is being blurred by the absence of precise information, for example on the targets pupils should work towards at the centre, and on exit criteria, including the expected date for placement in the next school and wherever possible the name of the school. Consequently, neither the centre manager nor members of the management group are able to account fully for the quality of the work of the centre. When the role is clear, the management group will be able to instigate procedures to judge the quality of all the work. These will include monitoring the rate of attendance, the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of the curriculum. They will also include monitoring the effectiveness of the links with schools, colleges and training providers, the safety and security of pupils and the work of the centre manager. When they gain this information the management group will be better placed to direct developments and to ensure that all statutory responsibilities associated with pupil referral units will be met. There are other issues that are also to do with self-evaluation. At this time, the centre is not able to judge accurately the effect of the generally good teaching that takes place in what are for the most part good and very good specialist facilities. Importantly, when pupils return to mainstream school, the portfolio that returns with them gives too little information at present on what they have learned in the subjects during their time at the centre; information of this kind is necessary to provide effective help for the mainstream teachers when they plan their lessons.

40. The considerable change in staffing since the last inspection, and the illness of some staff, has affected the organisation of the centre. For example, too many subjects do not have co-ordinators, and this is limiting their potential for development. Also, too few staff are trained in child protection.

41. Overall budget responsibility for the centre sits with the manager of the special educational needs support service (SENS). Financial management and control are good. Good systems are in place within the centre to manage the budget. Funds allocated to the centre are used appropriately.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	593,363.00
Total expenditure	634,147.00
Expenditure per pupil	7,125.00

Balances (£)*	
Balance from previous year	0.00
Balance carried forward to the next year	0.00

* The centre's money is controlled at the level of the local education authority. No money can be transferred from one year to another.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The irregular attendance of many pupils limits the progress they make.
- The curriculum provides many good opportunities for pupils to improve all aspects of English.
- The good quality of teaching results in many pupils trying hard to do their best.
- The lack of a co-ordinator hinders development.
- The range of nationally accredited awards pupils in Year 11 can take is too small.
- There is no policy for language use across the curriculum.

Commentary

42. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are particularly responsive in lessons; they achieve well and make good progress. They have good attitudes to their work and this helps them feel positive about themselves and about their learning. In part, this is because of the very good relationships they have with their teachers and support assistants, which are based on mutual respect. As a result there is rarely a need for teachers to remind pupils of their responsibilities as learners. In most lessons, pupils want to be fully involved in their learning. In this, they are helped by the good quality of teaching, including the good choice of books and interesting topics for discussion. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are less well motivated, and teachers and support staff have to more often spend time helping them return to their work. Their achievement in lessons is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. This is much the same as it was at the last inspection.

43. Over all the years, but especially in Years 10 and 11, the regular absence of many of the pupils limits the progress they make over time. Quite simply, those who attend regularly and commit themselves to their work make good progress; those who attend irregularly, or not at all, make unsatisfactory progress. When all pupils on the centre's roll are included, the progress pupils in Years 7 to 9 make is satisfactory. The poorer attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11 makes their progress, overall, unsatisfactory.

44. Pupils are given good opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills. For example, they discuss the emotions of the main characters in the novel *Buddy*, and interpret the attitudes of different cultures to marriage during their reading of *The Rain Came*. They learn to listen to each other, take turns at speaking, and appreciate it when their own comments are valued. Outside of lessons, in the breakfast club and the daily sessions they have with their key workers, they gain from discussing issues that are important to them. These are particularly effective in building pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as helping improve their conversational skills. There are many opportunities to improve reading. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a daily reading session when they read aloud to staff. Most read reasonably well, the best with expression and understanding. Those in Years 10 and 11 are less secure in their reading. They read less fluently and are less likely to interpret the emotions of the text when they read aloud. Pupils

in Years 7 to 9 write satisfactorily. They follow a well-structured course to develop the skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling and have good opportunities to write imaginatively and factually. They learn to write for a purpose, such as when they write a letter of complaint. In general, pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not write well. Lessons focus on the vocational use of the language. Pupils have many opportunities to research topics to do with work, including writing sample letters of application and accounts of their work experience.

45. Lessons are planned well and are made up of tasks that, mostly, are well matched to pupils' wide range of learning needs. In lessons, the balance between challenge and humour is good and creates a learning environment in which pupils are comfortable. Pupils know their efforts are appreciated and they respond well most of the time. In the lessons with pupils in Years 7 to 9, teachers and support assistants have high expectations for behaviour and learning, and it is in these lessons that pupils make the most progress. They are confident learners and make suggestions and offer opinions without fear of condemnation. They work hard to do their best. Teaching for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is also good, although these pupils are more reluctant to learn and co-operate less. In a small number of lessons, too much time is spent in returning pupils to their work.

46. Leadership and management in the past have been satisfactory. Currently, there is no co-ordinator because of recent changes in staff. This is a temporary situation and plans are in hand to appoint a co-ordinator. The procedures for setting targets for learning and for assessing the work of pupils require further development before they can be fully effective in helping teachers plan lessons and recognise the progress pupils make. The range of texts has improved since the last inspection. The centre has not, however, invested in a large self-learning package presented through a computer that assesses pupils' capabilities, directs their learning and judges the progress they make. Pupils enter the centre with different experiences of learning English and with widely different capabilities. In many equivalent centres, the use of such a facility provides very effective support for improving literacy skills.

47. Pupils are able to take only one nationally accredited award to demonstrate the extent of their learning. This is Key Skills at Level 1. Pupils in most other equivalent centres are able to choose from a greater range of nationally accredited awards, including the entry level and full GCSE examinations. Key Skills requires pupils to apply their literacy skills to, for example, letters of application and helps prepare them for interviews. The knowledge and skills in English of many pupils go beyond this award. They are capable of success at more advanced levels.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Because class sizes are so small pupils have many opportunities in lessons to practise speaking and listening skills. They gain from this, and from the school's implementation of the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 strategy. For example, important key words in the other subjects are displayed in classrooms. Pupils could gain more if there were a policy that guided the use of language across the curriculum. Also, the absence of literacy targets for pupils means that good opportunities to promote learning in the areas of literacy in which pupils are at their weakest are being missed in the lessons in the other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality teaching results in good learning in lessons.
- The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 links well with their learning in their mainstream schools.
- The very good relationships between staff and pupils inspire pupils to do their best in many lessons.
- The opportunities for pupils to take nationally accredited awards are too limited.

Commentary

49. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good. However, the progress many pupils make over time is not as good, because too many do not attend regularly. When account is taken of all the pupils, including those who are frequently absent, the standards they achieve and the progress they make are satisfactory, and are the same as at the time of the last inspection.

50. Lessons are planned and taught well. The recommendations of the Key Stage 3 strategy are embedded in lessons and these help provide a clear structure for learning. Lessons start with a short mental activity in which pupils take a full part and which they enjoy. The small size of the classes means that teachers know very well what pupils understand and can do. They are good at planning lessons that match well the pupils' learning needs. For example, they make good use of computers, giving pupils specific opportunities to practise in innovative ways the skills of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. They also make good use of interactive whiteboards in presenting new information to pupils. Teachers use well-directed questions to check pupils' level of understanding and to judge how they are progressing. The many comments they make on completed work are helpful and encouraging, because they clearly point out how well pupils are doing. The classrooms are of good size and are well furnished, and the resources to support teaching and learning are good. Both are used well by teachers who regularly choose strategies to enable pupils to learn through practical activities. Although computers are used well in supporting teaching and learning, pupils are not able to use a large computer-based self-learning package that can organise and direct their learning in mathematics.

51. Topics in the lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are much the same as the work they would be doing if they had remained in their mainstream schools. This is good, because it makes learning mathematics less of a challenge for them when they return. Lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 focus predominantly on the practical use of mathematics and include activities to do with money, time and distance, which lead to pupils gaining the adult numeracy award.

52. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils know they are respected as individuals and realise that staff want them to succeed. In most lessons, pupils respond well, show enjoyment and take pride in their work. In these lessons, time is used well, learning takes place over the full duration, and work is presented neatly. In a minority of lessons, especially those for pupils in Years 10 and 11, staff have to work hard to keep pupils at their tasks. They use humour very well to defuse challenging situations, but in these lessons teachers' good planning and high expectations for learning do not always result in equivalently good learning.

53. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 gain a good experience because their learning links well with their experience of mathematics in their previous schools. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is less successful. They are able to take only a basic level award to demonstrate the extent of their learning to college admission officers and prospective employers. Many are capable of success in awards that are more advanced, such as the entry and full levels of the GCSE.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Overall, there is satisfactory support for the development of numeracy across the curriculum, although there is no whole-centre policy to guide this and pupils do not have numeracy targets. The small number of pupils in classes helps, because staff quickly learn what pupils can and cannot do in mathematics. Teachers reinforce pupils' numeracy skills in a spontaneous, but not in a pre-planned, way. For example, in a motor vehicle lesson in the multi-skills workshop, pupils in Year 11 used their numeracy skills to calculate the ratio of anti-freeze to water required in a car radiator. In a Year 9 lesson in geography, pupils

calculated the exchange rate of cedis, the Ghanaian currency, against British money. However, in many lessons opportunities are missed because of the lack of a formal policy and the absence of numeracy targets written for each pupil.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality teaching results in good learning in lessons.
- Pupils have a good attitude to their work and enjoy learning through conducting experiments.
- There is good leadership and management.
- The irregular attendance of too many pupils limits the progress they make over time.

Commentary

55. In lessons, pupils achieve well and make good progress because teaching is of good quality. Lessons are planned well, with clear learning outcomes. They proceed with pace and little time is lost reminding pupils of their responsibilities as learners. The very good relationships that the teacher and support assistants have with the pupils help in this. Pupils respect staff and, most of the time, want to do well for them. The support assistants are deployed well and make an effective contribution to sustaining learning, both through subtle interventions and through direct support for individual pupils or for small groups of pupils. The teacher makes especially good use of the interactive whiteboard in presenting new learning and in showing pupils, visually and through animation, how an experiment works. His good subject knowledge means that queries and questions are handled confidently and good examples are given of how the process under investigation is made use of in the real world. Good questioning, for example 'What does parallel mean?', confirms pupils' understanding and encourages all to take a full part in lessons. Initial and continuous assessments are used effectively in lesson planning to pitch work at a suitable and challenging level, so that the needs of all pupils are, generally, met. Literacy skills are reinforced because of the teacher's expectation that scientific terms should be used accurately.

56. The very positive attitudes pupils have to learning science contribute to the good progress they make. They like the practical and investigative nature of the subject, and when conducting an experiment they work accurately, behave sensibly and deal carefully with the apparatus and other equipment. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils constructed an electric circuit and investigated whether the amount of current depends on the voltage. They did so with a minimum of fuss and predicted the outcome before they collected their results. During the experiment they recorded the results accurately and neatly, and carefully considered their meaning.

progress in science over time is badly affected by their irregular attendance. This undermines the good progress they make in lessons. The judgements here are similar to those of the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is not preparing them well enough for their learning in ICT lessons when they return to mainstream schools.
- The range of awards that pupils in Years 10 and 11 take to demonstrate the extent of their learning is too limited.
- The co-ordinator's good specialist knowledge is used well in planning lessons and he has a good vision for developing the subject.
- The limited knowledge and confidence of a minority of teachers and teaching assistants means that opportunities to support learning through the use of computers are missed.
- There is a lack of a self-learning package to help develop literacy and numeracy.

Commentary

59. In lessons, pupils achieve well because teaching is good and lessons take place in the very well appointed computer suite, in which each pupil is able to work at his or her own computer. The teacher's high expectations for learning and behaviour are fully realised in most lessons and, as a consequence, pupils work hard and make good progress. Those who attend well make equivalently good progress over time. However, too many pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, do not attend regularly enough to make even satisfactory progress. Progress, when it is judged over all pupils, is satisfactory.

60. The curriculum is changing from Key Skills (Level 1) to the content of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). The ECDL is a basic qualification in ICT. It does not reflect in full the content of the programme of study of the National Curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and is a lower level qualification than the entry level and full levels of the GCSE examination. The ECDL covers the key concepts of computing in seven modules, but there is an issue here. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are expected to return to mainstream schools after some time at the centre. In their previous schools, they will have followed a curriculum in ICT that is based on the National Curriculum and will experience this curriculum when they return. For these pupils, continuity and progression in learning would benefit if the topics they worked on at the centre were those that they would be studying if they were still in their mainstream schools. This would mean that pupils in Years 7 to 9 would follow individual programmes based on what they were learning when they left their mainstream schools, rather than a self-contained course they may well not finish before they return there. This approach is entirely possible, because the teacher has a wide-ranging knowledge of the programmes of study and the computer suite allows each pupil to work at his or her own workstation. On the other hand, the ECDL is a meaningful qualification for some pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, because it is a basic qualification in ICT, for many pupils it will not reflect the full extent of their learning. For example, in one lesson when pupils in Year 10 were searching for information on the Internet, one pupil was using the hyper-link facility appropriately and with confidence. The extent of his learning is better judged against a higher level qualification, such as the GCSE.

61. The subject is managed well. The co-ordinator has good specialist knowledge of computers and of how they work. He has a good vision for the future development of the

subject, which includes making learning relevant to all pupils by matching the curriculum to their needs and capabilities. The co-ordinator's very good relationships with pupils means that pupils enjoy visiting the computer suite and are happy to work hard in their lessons. Rarely is there a need to remind pupils to respect the equipment, or have them attend to their work with greater enthusiasm. The quality of the provision is much the same as at the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. Teachers and teaching assistants are beginning to make good use of computers and other equipment, such as digital cameras, in supporting teaching and learning in lessons in the other subjects. Interactive whiteboards are being used with increasing effect. Most classrooms have computers that teachers use well for preparing their lessons, recording pupils' progress, and producing worksheets. However, not all teachers have completed the national training programme and, for some, their knowledge of how new technologies can support teaching and learning is too limited. This shows in the way in which computers are used in lessons in some of the subjects, that is to say mostly for word-processing, and in the paucity of resources, such as CD-ROMs, which are specific to subjects. It also shows, particularly, in the absence of a specially designed large self-instruction program to promote literacy and numeracy. In some equivalent centres the regular use pupils make of such a program contributes to their making rapid progress in literacy and numeracy.

OTHER SUBJECTS

63. It is not possible to judge the quality of the provision in the other subjects taught at the centre because too few lessons were seen.

64. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, who will return to mainstream schools, study humanities through learning geography and history. They experience art and design, design and technology, music and physical education, though in each subject the full programmes of study are not followed. Nevertheless, these subjects make a valuable contribution to the centre's curriculum because they maintain the link with the National Curriculum as it is taught in mainstream schools.

65. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 take art and design, music and physical education but not for examination. At the centre, pupils in Year 10 take the City and the Guild Skills Power Award in motor vehicles, and for the first time this year the entry-level examination of the GCSE in geography. Outside of the centre, at local colleges and on the sites of training providers, pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain nationally-accredited awards on a good range of courses, mostly vocational. These include motor vehicle maintenance (NVQ Level 1), sheet metal work (NVQ Level 1), Sports Leader Award (Level 1), ICT (CLAIT), courses of the Princes Trust, and Key Skills (Level 1). Generally, pupils enjoy taking these courses, in part because they are taught in workshops and other places which are well staffed and have a very good range of relevant equipment. Most of last year's leavers who took these courses completed them and gained an award. For the first time this year, pupils are able to take a course in construction for examination (NVQ Level 1).

Art and design

66. An artist in residence is employed to provide pupils with an experience of art. In all years, pupils have good opportunities to complete a satisfactory range of two- and three-dimensional art. For example, pupils in Year 10 happily explained the problems of the design and making phases of their current three-dimensional topic, entitled 'Street Art'. An analysis of completed work shows that pupils take pride in their artwork and produce work that is sometimes innovative and often of good quality.

Humanities (Geography and History)

67. In both subjects, topics are selected that interest pupils because they are relevant or current. For example, in geography the topic for pupils in Years 7 to 9 over the time of the inspection was 'earthquakes' and the resultant tsunami effect when these occur under water. In history, the two latest topics were the black people of America and World War 1.

Learning is not organised and sequenced to ensure that the key skills of each subject are developed in a progressive way, but lessons in both subjects are meaningful because they allow pupils to stay in touch with these subjects over their time at the centre.

Design and technology

68. Lessons take place in the very well appointed multi-skills workshop. The very good range of equipment and power and hand tools lets pupils gain a very good experience of simple joinery, of using metal and plastic, and of welding. The front ends of two cars project through an outside wall into the workshop. These are used very effectively in teaching pupils about the combustion engine and the peripheral devices, such as alternators, that are required to make the cars run. The quality of completed work in each medium is very good, and the model of a local railway station, complete with appropriate engines and railway stock, is of excellent quality. The teacher's expectations for learning are very high. His expertise over a wide range of tools and different materials is considerable. In the workshop, pupils are required to pay great attention to the rules of health and safety and do so in a very mature fashion. Time spent in the workshop is very much enjoyed by pupils.

Music

69. Members of the Tees Valley Music Service teach pupils in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are designed to provide pupils with an awareness of music; this term the focus is drumming. Equipment is brought to the centre and pupils learn about the traditions and practise the skills, for example of djumba, stick and Chinese drumming. For the first time, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taking music. Instructors from a local music workshop are teaching them how to produce different styles of music using electronic technology, for example dance music and traditional music from different countries.

Physical education

70. Pupils enjoy taking part in lessons in physical education and report that they work hard to improve their skills and co-ordination over many games and different activities. For example, in conjunction with the Simon Carson Sports School they take six-week modules in football, tag rugby, cricket, basketball, snooker and golf. Trained instructors lead nearly all sessions, using very good quality equipment with an appropriate regard for health and safety, especially when pupils are learning to climb on the climbing wall of the local leisure centre. All pupils are able to take part in outdoor activities, either on the moors of North Yorkshire or in the Dales. Lessons in physical education make a very good contribution to pupils' personal, social and moral development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good way in which pupils' PSHE and citizenship are promoted permeates all the work of the centre.
- The good quality of teaching and the very good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to address the issues of conflict in their lives.
- The good use of people from many agencies beneficially extends the guidance and advice given to pupils.
- The lack of a co-ordinator is limiting development.

Commentary

71. The primary focus of the curriculum is promoting pupils' personal and social development. In this aspect of its work the centre is successful. All pupils have dedicated lessons in PSHE and citizenship and, in addition, benefit from the daily tutorials they have with their key workers. Social time at the breakfast club, and the unplanned and informal discussions that regularly occur throughout the day, also make an important contribution to the overall good quality of the provision. Pupils achieve well in their personal and social development and in becoming aware of the benefits of a healthy life-style.

72. The quality of teaching in the dedicated lessons is good. Lessons are structured well and are made up of topics relevant to the pupils. For example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 took part in impromptu role-play, sensibly and maturely, and as a result learned how to move on from aggressive confrontation to negotiation and mediation. The time with the key worker is a good opportunity for pupils to say if they are troubled and to discuss the progress they are making in their learning and in dealing with their other difficulties. They also talk about the points they have been awarded on the previous day for good behaviour, and decide on strategies to ensure continued improvement. The guidance given by staff is invariably very good and is accepted very well by most of the pupils. The very good relationships between pupils and staff are an important feature. They help create a learning environment in which pupils are secure enough to look critically at the sources of conflict in their own lives, as a first step to dealing with these.

73. The centre makes good use of the wide range of links with relevant agencies. The nurse helps in the teaching of sex, drug and relationship education, the youth worker helps teach about citizenship, and a small number of charitable organisations link with the centre to offer counselling and personal advice. The police liaison officer is a familiar figure in the centre, working alongside pupils and teachers to add a further dimension to the curriculum. The well-established and effective links with Connexions result in very good career guidance for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

74. As a consequence of the recent changes in staff, there is no appointed co-ordinator, although the plans are well advanced for an early appointment. The centre has adopted published schemes of work, and teachers are using these effectively to provide an interesting and relevant curriculum. The quality of the provision is much the same as at the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the centre	4
How inclusive the centre is	3
How the centre's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the centre	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the centre	4
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the centre's links with parents	4
The quality of the centre's links with the community	3
The centre's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the centre	4
The governance of the centre	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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