# **INSPECTION REPORT**

# YOUTH CHALLENGE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 132255

Teacher in charge: Paul E Hodgkinson

Lead inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins

Dates of inspection:  $25^{th} - 26^{th}$  April 2005

Inspection number: 268723

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

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### INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of school: Special

School category: Pupil referral unit

Age range of pupils: 14 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number on roll: 20

School address: 124 Newport Street

**Bolton** 

Lancashire

Postcode: BL3 6AB

Telephone number: 01204 333872

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Appropriate authority: The local education authority

Name of chair of Councillor Phil Ashcroft

management committee:

Date of previous inspection: No previous inspection

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTRE

The Youth Challenge Centre is a pupil referral unit that is part of the provision of the Bolton Local Education Authority for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. It is located on two sites. One is in the centre of Bolton and the other is nearby at Halliwell. Pupils come from all regions of the local authority, some of which are very socio-economically disadvantaged. The agreed maximum number of pupils in the centre is 24. Currently, there are 19 boys and one girl at the centre. Three pupils are dual registered with a mainstream school, and the centre provides outreach provision for a further 34 pupils. 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. Four pupils have statements of special educational need for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre is not involved in any national initiatives and has gained no awards to date. This is its first inspection.

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# **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities		
27424	Dr D Alan Dobbins	Lead inspector	Personal, social and health education; Citizenship.		
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector			
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Science; Vocational courses.		
10781	Robert Thompson	Team inspector	Mathematics; Information and communication technology.		
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	English; Other subjects.		

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# PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Youth Challenge is a good pupil referral unit. The very good leadership and management of the teacher in charge, who is supported very well by all staff, have resulted in the establishment of excellent relationships with pupils and very high expectations for learning and behaviour. Procedures and strategies have been put in place to ensure that both learning and behaviour develop well. The centre is calm, ordered and very well organised. The curriculum is broad and relevant and includes very good opportunities to gain nationally accredited awards that reflect pupils' efforts to learn. Good quality teaching and very good guidance and advice mean that pupils make good progress in their learning. Most who enter the centre re-engage successfully in their learning and develop positive attitudes to themselves and to their futures. The centre provides good value for money.

# The centre's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Many pupils begin to regain their self-respect and to see education as meaningful again.
- All staff provide excellent role models.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning; their behaviour is very good and they are committed to doing their best.
- Many parents work hard to ensure that their children attend the centre.
- The absence of specialist teaching rooms in the centre's main building limits the subjects that can be offered and how they can be taught.
- Target setting is not being used well enough to compare pupils' work and progress with that
  of pupils in other equivalent centres and schools.
- The management committee need to work harder to meet their responsibilities to the centre, and the local educational authority (LEA) needs to clarify in detail its role for the centre.
- The procedures for financing the centre limit its potential for development.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at	In relation to individual targets in:			
the end of:	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education		
Year 11	Good	Very good		

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

**Overall, achievement is good.** Pupils **achieve well** in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). The limitations imposed by the accommodation on what can be taught in science also limit how well pupils achieve, and this is satisfactory. In the other subjects, pupils achieve very well on vocational courses and well over the subjects of the alternative curriculum, which includes animal husbandry, basic biology, leisure and tourism, food studies, global communications, history, music and physical education. Overall, pupils make good progress in gaining a wide range of nationally accredited awards which appropriately reflect their hard work. The primary aim of the centre is to re-engage pupils in their learning and to develop their personal and social skills so that they are well prepared for life after the centre. This aim is substantially achieved for many who make very good progress towards becoming mature and responsible.

**Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.** They fully accept that the centre is a place which is good for them. In most lessons, they work hard to do their best and mostly achieve this because of their very good attitudes to learning and their very good behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory, but for almost all the pupils it is much better than it was in their other schools.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is good, as is the quality of learning. Teachers set very high standards for behaviour and learning and they and the other staff support pupils very well by routinely encouraging them to be successful. The excellent relationships that staff have with pupils are based on trust and respect and this contributes to pupils taking action on the very good advice and guidance they are given. Many parents and carers give very good support by ensuring that their children attend regularly enough so that they gain from the centre. The curriculum is good. It contains a broad range of relevant learning and additional experiences and good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate the extent of their learning on nationally accredited awards. The range and quality of resources are good, and the staffing level is generous. The NightSchool outreach and peer mentoring initiatives provide very good opportunities for some pupils to extend their learning in construction trades, and for all those who take part to make gains in their personal and social development. The links with other schools and colleges are good. The centre's main building has some advantages, but the lack of specialist teaching facilities imposes serious limits on which subjects can be taught and how teaching can occur.

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge has very high aspirations for the work of the centre and for the learning and behaviour of pupils. He and all the staff are excellent role models who inspire pupils to think about themselves as a first step in changing their lives. Certain aspects of governance are unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements, which relate to the four pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN), are not fully met. The LEA's role for the centre is not sufficiently clear and detailed. The management committee are unable to judge the effectiveness of the centre because they do not operate procedures to allow this. The chairperson of the management committee is newly appointed, as are others on the committee. He is committed and keen to make the management committee effective in its role to ensure the continued development of the centre, including checking its effectiveness against other equivalent centres and schools. The way in which the centre is financed limits the potential for development.

### PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

The parents and carers have very good views of the centre. They appreciate very much that their children like the centre and that they attend as regularly as they do. Most importantly, they enjoy the way their children are beginning to gain self-respect and to see education as meaningful again. Pupils say they like attending the centre and like the staff very much.

# **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

# The most important things the centre should do to develop further are:

- Improve the effectiveness of the management committee in checking the work of the centre and help in developing the LEA's detailed role for the centre;
- link the centre's income more clearly with its provision and development;
- use target setting more effectively for judging the effectiveness of the work;

# and, to meet statutory requirements,

• make proper provision for pupils with statements of SEN.

# PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

# Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress towards gaining accreditation for their learning.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- Almost all pupils leave with a range of nationally accredited awards.
- Pupils gain very good experience of work in the construction industry.
- Most pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development.

- 1. Many pupils leave the centre with more accredited awards at better levels than they thought possible when they entered. There are a number of reasons for this, but the most important is the pupils' change in attitude to education, and to themselves. They commit themselves to their learning, work hard, and achieve success beyond that which was possible when they entered.
- 2. In English and mathematics, pupils work toward the intermediate and entry level examinations of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), or, if relevant, toward units of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) or Key Skills. Most pupils last year gained some form of accreditation. The highest attaining pupils gained GCSE grades from C to F in English and grades D to F in GCSE mathematics. Most gained units of AQA in the other subjects and a small number the key skills award. Only those who did not regularly attend failed to gain some form of accreditation for their learning in English and mathematics. Pupils do not do as well in science because the lack of a specialist room seriously limits what can be taught. They take AQA units in topics that mostly have to do with biology. In ICT, pupils take the new Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) award or AQA units, and most of last year's pupils gained a good level of success. In the other subjects pupils take only AQA units. They do well. The 13 pupils who left last year, collectively, gained more than 150 units. These included units in drugs education and careers education as well as in subjects such as food studies, history, music and physical education.
- 3. Pupils do very well on the vocational courses. In bricklaying, roofing, glass work and joinery they take the Further Accreditation in Vocational Education (FAVE) award of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Invariably, all pupils do very well. Many make very good use of the award in helping them continue their studies on courses leading to Level 1 of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in local colleges.
- 4. Pupils do not study for a specific award in personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, but some do take AQA units on topics such as drugs education. Many pupils make very good progress in redirecting their life style, so that they are able to prepare themselves purposefully for the next stage of their education and the world of work. They become more mature and responsible and deal very well with their own particular difficulties. Because of this they are able to commit themselves to their future. This is the strength of the centre and it is shown in the destination of pupils when they leave the centre. For most this is either employment or further training in a field of their choice, something beyond their imaginings when they entered the centre.\*

Pupil	Route	Place	
1	Training	Further education	
2	Employment	Tiling	
3	Employment	Bolton Metro	
4	Employment	Plasterer	
5	Training	Further education	
6	Employment	Car mechanics	
7	Employment	Window cleaner	
8	Training	Further education	
9	Employment	Retail	
10	Training	Further education	

<sup>\*</sup> The destinations of three of last year's leavers are not known.

5. For a good number of pupils, the standards they achieve and the awards they gain reflect the way in which the centre has turned their lives around, so that they can look to a future with hope and enthusiasm. This is the perception of many parents. Inspectors agree with them.

# Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their learning, and their behaviour in lessons and around the centre, are very good. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships with staff are a major factor influencing pupils' very good attitudes towards the centre and their own learning and development.
- High expectations for behaviour and the consistent efforts of staff ensure that the centre is a calm and orderly environment.
- The centre helps pupils very well to understand and accept the responsibilities of living in a community
- Procedures for improving attendance are very effective.

- 6. All pupils are equally valued at the centre and staff deal with pupils as mature young people. Pupils readily adapt to the daily routines, and they lose inhibitions, gain self-esteem and self-confidence, and develop very good attitudes to their learning and their personal and social development. The excellent and trusting relationships that staff develop with pupils enable pupils to readily seek support if they have any concerns. The teacher in charge accurately describes the centre as providing an environment of 'tough love' and the relationships between staff and pupils as that of 'professional friends.' That it works is easy to see from pupils' improved attendance and the way in which they focus on gaining accreditation that provides access to the next stage of their education or the world of work.
- 7. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Staff work consistently and effectively in helping anyone who is experiencing difficulties in controlling his or her behaviour. Pupils are fully involved in assessing their own behaviour and, if necessary, agreeing targets for improvement for inclusion in their individual educational plans (IEPs). The result is that the centre is a safe and orderly environment in which pupils know routines, respect the code for behaviour, and respond very positively to praise, encouragement and the opportunities to take responsibility. In lessons, pupils share resources amicably, take turns patiently and are helpful to one another. Around the centre, at break and lunchtimes, they interact in a polite and socially mature way and are happy to engage in friendly and open conversations with visitors. No examples of oppressive behaviour were seen during the inspection, but records show there are occasional incidents. Pupils themselves confirm that these are quickly and effectively dealt with and that bullying is not an issue.

- 8. The centre successfully broadens pupils' understanding of themselves and the society in which they live. The daily papers provided in reception encourage them to express views and discuss and reflect on events and items of news. Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship permeate the whole curriculum throughout each day. For example, pupils are taught to recognise, tolerate and respect the feelings of others, and to understand their own rights and responsibilities and those of others in an orderly society. As they gain in self-confidence and begin to like themselves more they become more involved in the work of the centre and the wider community. They take responsibilities for the routines around the centre, volunteer help for redecoration and refurbishment, and make a contribution to organising the management of the day by having a representative who attends staff meetings. Four pupils have been trained in peer tutoring and gain from helping to teach reading to younger pupils in a mainstream primary school. Personal and social development is encouraged very effectively through the programme of work experience, during lessons at the vocational centre, and on local and residential visits.
- 9. Pupils entering the centre usually have poor attendance records. The initial contract agreed between pupils, parents and carers and the centre establishes the expectations for attendance. Very good records of attendance are collated for each pupil, and staff monitor the rate of attendance of each pupil very closely. In cases where pupils have genuine difficulties in attending, staff become quickly aware of this and use a variety of flexible and sensitive strategies to improve the situation so that the pupil is able to attend more regularly. Attendance rates for all pupils currently at the centre show dramatic improvements over those for their previous schools. They report that they attend more regularly because they have real interest in their learning.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence			Unauthorised absence		
Centre data	9.0		Centre data	18.0	
National data	*		National data	*	

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

\* No national attendance information is available for equivalent centres.

10. Last year nine boys were excluded for 11 fixed periods. These figures are below those for pupils in many equivalent centres.

# QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE CENTRE

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The curriculum is very good because it meets pupils' learning and their additional needs very well. Pupils gain very good advice and guidance. The procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and security are very good. The links with parents are very good and those with the local community and other schools are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teachers have high expectations for learning and behaviour. Pupils' very good attitudes to their learning result in their working hard to gain the best accreditation results.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff have high expectations for behaviour and learning.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute to making pupils want to work hard and do their best.
- The way in which staff encourage pupils is very effective, especially at times when they are troubled.

- 11. The learning needs of pupils are met very well in the lessons in all subjects. This is because teachers plan well and have high expectations for learning and behaviour. The generous staff-pupil ratio means that class sizes are small, sometimes as small as four pupils. As a consequence, staff know the pupils very well both as individuals who are dealing with their difficulties and as learners. They make very good use of this information to present lessons which are interesting and relevant to pupils and which link closely with their requirements for life after the centre. For example, the lessons in vocational courses do not only relate to gaining skills in, for example, bricklaying or joinery, but are organised to reflect the routines and expectations of a construction site. Pupils are expected to enter the class on time, to take responsibility for dressing in the appropriate clothes and shoes and to socialise with each other in an adult fashion at tea breaks. Pupils like this, and it helps them to behave maturely and to work hard at their tasks.
- 12. Pupils know that lessons will result in new learning. For many this is a new experience, as records in their previous schools suggest that they did not achieve great success as learners. Some are excited about making progress and show this by regularly attending NightSchool classes on Monday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. The excellent relationships staff have with pupils result in pupils wanting to do well for staff. Most of the time they behave very well and achieve their best work. Only occasionally do they have difficulties in controlling their behaviour. When this is the case they are dealt with fairly and consistently by staff and usually return to their work without disrupting that of others. The very good and varied displays throughout the building are respected and looked after, and this reflects the very good attitudes pupils have to all resources. For example, they treat books and equipment such as computers, trowels, set squares and measuring tools very well.
- 13. All staff are very good at encouraging pupils by quickly recognising their successes. Pupils like this and respond very well. For many, this is the reverse of the experience they gained in their previous schools, where they were chided for not being successful in their learning, as a consequence of which many did not try very hard. As a result of their friendliness, their obvious concern for the pupils and their expectations that pupils will learn, staff are successful in getting pupils to focus on their work, even where pupils are having a troubled time and show little enthusiasm for learning. Most lessons teach the content of an accredited award and pupils know very well what they have to do to complete the module they are working on. They also know that not doing well in the lesson and not completing the module might result in their not gaining the award. They become committed to their learning after a short time at the centre and want to do well.

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

ĺ	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Ī	2	5	7	0	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 very good. It meets the requirements of the LEA's curriculum policy for pupil referral units.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced well enough to meet pupils' learning and their additional needs.
- The primary aim of the curriculum to re-engage them in their learning is met in full for most pupils.
- The courses in vocational subjects help make the curriculum relevant for many pupils.
- The alternative curriculum adds interest to pupils' learning.
- The NightSchool is an innovative feature, which adds value to the curriculum.
- The outreach programme makes a good contribution to the personal and social development of pupils from other secondary schools.
- Resources to present the curriculum are good; however, the centre's main building limits the subjects that can be taught.

- 14. The curriculum is very well planned and organised to meet the very wide range of pupils' learning and their additional needs. It helps pupils who are re-engaging with their learning and offers them a good range of relevant accredited awards, all of which gives their learning a sense of purpose. The programme of vocational courses gives many pupils opportunities they value for practical and work related learning. The additional needs of pupils are met very well through the regular informal and planned opportunities they are given to talk with staff and with specialists from outside agencies, such as the Youth Offending Team and voluntary organisations like Project 360 and Parallel.
- 15. The primary aim of the curriculum is to help pupils to re-engage with their learning. For most pupils, this is achieved in full. They leave the centre with a range of accredited awards at levels of learning beyond what they thought possible when they entered the centre. The focus on English and mathematics is sensible. Many pupils make significant gains in reading, writing and number work and become sufficiently literate and numerate to choose whatever work they want. The centre's ethos, which includes rewarding pupils for their learning, is reflected in the good range of relevant nationally accredited awards that pupils are able to take. By gaining these awards, pupils create a statement of what they have achieved in learning, and this is helpful to college admission officers and prospective employers. Perhaps more importantly, the awards act to show pupils what they are capable of when they try hard and make a serious effort, and this makes a significant contribution to their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- 16. Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are not taught as separate subjects but permeate all aspects of the centre's work and organisation, and they are promoted very effectively. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils provide a very strong foundation for offering advice and guidance. The friendliness of staff and their clear concern for the

pupils also help. The same is true of the specialist advice and knowledge of people who visit the centre, such as the nurses, those from Project 360 and Parallel, and the Youth Offending Team. Targets for personal and social development in IEPs provide specific directions for improvement. Each contributes to making the provision for developing personal and social skills very effective.

- 17. The vocational courses make an important contribution to breadth and relevance. Pupils follow courses in bricklaying, glasswork, roofing and joinery in a work related environment in very good accommodation. Many pupils see these courses as relevant to their futures. Destination records for last year's pupils show that most leave the centre for further training or employment in the construction industry.
- 18. The alternative curriculum adds appeal by giving pupils opportunities to study subjects in which they have a talent or interest. These include animal husbandry, biology, leisure and tourism, food studies, global communications, history, music and physical education. The teacher in charge works hard to ensure that all pupils follow courses they see as important, and makes every attempt to ensure that they are rewarded for their efforts by being able to take an appropriate accredited award, most often a unit of the AQA system.
- 19. The NightSchool is innovative and effective. On Monday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings, pupils from the centre attend with pupils from a small number of local secondary schools who are on the outreach programme. They mix well with each other and work enthusiastically and carefully in learning the skills of bricklaying, glasswork, joinery and roofing, as a taster of what is required of these occupations. The pupils from other schools experience difficulties in dealing with the demands and expectations of their mainstream schools and are close to permanent exclusion. They gain from taking part in the programme because they see their experiences as relevant to them. Despite their disaffection with education in their own schools, they work with commitment and enthusiasm, show respect to staff and behave impeccably.
- 20. The range and quality of resources to support teaching and learning for most of the subjects are good. These include a good range of books and equipment and sufficient computers. The main centre is bright and welcoming and the very good displays show the high standards pupils achieve in many subjects. However, the building is in many ways unsuitable for its purpose. It has no specialist teaching rooms for any subject, no common room, no counselling room, and no library, and most of the teaching rooms are small. At break and lunchtimes staff and pupils share the entrance area. There is no outside area at all. Staff work hard to adapt their teaching to the situation and, in the main, succeed in overcoming the difficulties imposed by the accommodation. But it is not suitable for teaching any subject, such as science, that requires specialist facilities. The potential for curriculum development is limited because of this. There are advantages. The building is centrally located and because the local area is richly served by public transport, pupils travel easily to it. The building in which the vocational courses are taught matches its purpose very well and provides a very good base for giving pupils an awareness of the demands of some of the occupations of the construction industry.

# Care, guidance and support

The pupils are cared for very well. The arrangements to ensure their health, safety and welfare are very good and they gain very good support and guidance. Good account is taken of their views.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel valued at the centre.
- There are very good links with a number of relevant agencies that help to provide good advice and guidance.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very effective.
- Pupils have good opportunities to present their views to staff.
- Some statutory requirements that relate to pupils with statements of SEN are not met.

- 21. Pupils feel valued, supported and safe because of the way they are treated. They have no hesitation in confiding in members of staff and seeking their help and guidance. Staff know the pupils very well and work very hard in providing for their needs. Pupils know this and respect staff for it. This gives pupils a sense of security and a friendly and supportive base for rethinking their life styles.
- 22. The procedures for health and safety are very well established. Risk assessments are in place for each pupil and situation. All members of staff receive training on child protection. Through the tracking system, they keep detailed records of pupils, including noting any mood changes, and fully report any incidents. The requirements for children in care are complied with. Full advantage is taken of the services of the educational psychologist and many specialists. For example, two nurses run a weekly drop-in centre where pupils discuss in confidence matters that concern them, as well as gaining information on sex and drugs and alcohol abuse. The links with Connexions, and with voluntary organisations such as Project 360 and Parallel, and the Youth Offending Team, are very strong and benefit many pupils.
- 23. The procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are very good. The cumulative attendance of each pupil is known, as are any trends for change. Staff regularly celebrate the increasing attendance of pupils and become concerned for those who are not at the centre. There have been some dramatic successes. One pupil, who did not attend the last school at all, achieved four per cent attendance during the first term at the centre but is now attending at 73 per cent of the time and still improving. The set procedures for checking on pupils who do not attend on any day are very thorough. Within 15 minutes of the start of the day, the pupil's home or mobile telephone is called to establish where the pupil is. Thereafter, procedures include a letter to the home, visits to the home by staff and ultimately the involvement of the education social worker. The very good links with parents and carers help, because (more so than in many equivalent centres) parents and carers actively work at getting their children to attend.
- 24. Behaviour is checked equally well. The ethos of the centre includes promoting and celebrating appropriate behaviour. The specific routines designed to improve behaviour work very well. These include one-to-one consultations with the teacher in charge, very good liaison between staff and parents, the setting of clear rules and regulations through the Code of Behaviour, a reward and sanction system that is seen as meaningful by pupils, and close links with the educational social worker. That these procedures are effective is easily seen, because from day to day the centre is a friendly, calm and organised place where staff care for pupils and pupils gain from realising this.

- 25. The teacher in charge has decided that there is little benefit in having a 'school council' because the number of pupils is small and each pupil has the planned opportunity, for example through one-to-one study periods, to talk to staff about any matter of concern, including issues to do with the running of the centre. However, there is a formal link to staff because one pupil is invited to attend management meetings and is able to talk about any views held by pupils. This is working well. The teacher in charge values the views of pupils and, very often, acts upon them.
- 26. Provision for the four pupils with statements of SEN does not meet statutory requirements in full. The procedures for ceasing to maintain the statement are not followed as they should be. The provision in the statements cannot be met because the centre's curriculum does not contain sufficient National Curriculum subjects. Statements have not been updated or amended since pupils entered the centre, and annual reviews have not been held.

# Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and carers is very good. Links with the community are good, as are those with schools and colleges.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships staff have with parents and carers makes a good contribution to the overall effectiveness of the centre.
- The links with the community and, especially, the residential trips provide good help in the development of personal and social skills.
- The local college and other training providers are suitably, but sparingly, used in providing learning experiences for pupils.

- 27. Staff work hard to establish and maintain a positive partnership with parents and carers. In this, they are very successful. Parents and carers confirm the centre is open and welcoming. They express widespread pleasure at the involvement they have in their children's education and the value that is placed on their own views and opinions. They are very satisfied with the support they receive and the information they gain on the progress of their children. After the experiences most parents and carers have had with their children's previous schools, they are especially pleased that their children like attending the centre and feel that it is helping them to be better prepared for later life. The very effective links are maintained through telephone calls, text messaging and e-mails. It is not unusual for there to be a daily contact with home. The termly report to parents and carers is very informative and the follow-up meeting is an opportunity to discuss the report in detail. The parents and carers of most of the pupils regularly visit the centre for discussions and social events. A good number attend NightSchool with their children. By joining closely with the work of the centre, they are making a good contribution to their children's progress in learning and in their personal and social development.
- 28. The centre is outward looking and has established good links within the local community, which benefit the learning experiences of pupils. Work experience placements bring pupils into contact with local employers. Learning in the subjects is regularly supported by visits to the community sports centre, the local shops, the riding school, and libraries and a museum in Manchester. Besides helping in the pupils' learning these, and in particular the residential trips such as the three-day visit to Dublin, also make an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
- 29. Four pupils gain from helping primary school pupils learn to read. They enjoy doing this. They take their peer mentoring responsibilities very seriously and gain benefit because it helps them look at how they learn. At this time, the links with colleges and other training providers are limited. A small number of pupils take courses at the local college, including courses in hair and beauty that cannot be offered at the centre. Arrangements are made to suit the interests of pupils. Most of the

pupils at the centre are interested in finding out about the construction industry. The centre's own vocational courses provide very good opportunities for this, whereas in other equivalent centres the pupils may need to take college courses to gain this experience. Nevertheless, the teacher in charge is always looking to use courses presented by local colleges, and those of other providers, to extend the range of accredited vocational experiences to suit pupils' interests.

# LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge is committed, knowledgeable of all aspects of the work, and always available to pupils and staff. The teacher in charge has the full support of all staff. Staff morale is very high. The management committee do not fulfil their role well enough.

# Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher in charge sets high standards for the work of staff and pupils.
- Day-to-day routines are very well managed.
- Assessment procedures are having a good effect on pupils' progress.
- The management committee need to work harder to fulfil their responsibilities, and the LEA needs to clarify the role of the centre.
- The procedure for funding the centre limits the potential for development.

- 30. The teacher in charge is committed to fully meeting the learning and the additional needs of pupils by ensuring very high quality provision. He inspires, encourages and motivates staff to achieve their best. Staff do this regularly because they feel valued as individuals and as part of the staff team. All members of staff are excellent role models. They are consistently friendly to pupils and set the highest of standards in discharging their own duties. Collectively, they are very effective in helping pupils to take increasing responsibility for their actions and their lives. As a consequence, most pupils re-engage with education and become motivated to succeed in their life after the centre. The very good leadership and management of the teacher in charge provide the context for this to happen.
- 31. Very good management means that from day to day the centre is calm, ordered and well organised. Pupils are stimulated to learn across a curriculum that interests them, is relevant to them and rewards them for their efforts. Their additional needs are met very well and they feel safe and valued at the centre. The quality of teaching is good, as is the quality of the curriculum planning documents for many subjects. The advice and guidance offered to pupils are good, and the links with parents and carers are very good. Each contributes to adding considerable value to the progress pupils make in first re-engaging with education and then making good progress with their learning.
- 32. Assessment information is used well in planning for teaching and for development, but not in judging the effectiveness of the centre against that of other equivalent centres or schools. Baseline tests, given when pupils enter the centre, establish their reading and number capabilities and assess their personal and social development. This information starts the tracking record for each pupil, which includes their National Curriculum Levels on English and mathematics for each of the attainment targets and detailed records of the pupils' behaviour during their time at the centre. Attendance is recorded in detail and any action required is quickly taken. The targets in pupils' IEPs are checked regularly and the records are sufficiently detailed to recognise the progress pupils make. The thrust toward recognising gains against specific targets, which characterises the orientation of the teacher in charge, is reflected in the link between subjects and the range of relevant nationally accredited awards. Most pupils 'buy into' the idea that if they work hard it will be recognised against a specified target, whether that be to do with attendance, some aspect of behaviour or, more generally, a grade on an award they are working to. The assessment

procedures are robust enough to show pupils the gains they are making. Many pupils become motivated by these gains, want more success, and work harder. When this is the case, the way they see themselves also improves and this is an important first step toward fully re-engaging with education.

- 33. The teacher in charge is very capable and would like to establish a detailed vision for the future of the centre. However, he is having difficulties in doing this. The LEA's perception of the role of the centre is not clear enough, within the overall provision for pupil referral units, for the teacher in charge to be able to develop the centre according to the remit. In part, this may be because the management committee has been in a state of some change. It is now chaired by a committed local businessman who is an elected member. He is enthusiastic about his appointment and determined to ensure that the good provision already established at the centre is secured and can develop further. To do this, he needs to look at the membership of the committee to see if, collectively, it holds sufficient knowledge to be able to discharge in full its role, for example consulting with and challenging the teacher in charge and other staff, forming and implementing procedures for checking the quality of the work, and querying the relevant professional officers of the LEA. The LEA can help by establishing a clear role for the centre, which includes outlining the procedures for referring pupils to the centre.
- 34. Financial Management is satisfactory. Within the centre the teacher in charge carefully tracks all spending. Control of the budget is with the LEA, which determines how money is spent. However, without better procedures for funding the centre, it is difficult for the teacher in charge to make long-term plans that are linked with projected expenditure. Also, the current retrospective funding procedures increase the likelihood of an underspend, as was the case this last financial year to a level of £24,000.00 with no facility to carry this figure forward. This is an unsatisfactory situation which makes effective financial planning impossible.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of a consistently high standard and as a result pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their good progress.
- The range of accredited awards is appropriate for pupils' learning.
- The high standards in English will be difficult to maintain without the appointment of a permanent co-ordinator.

- Pupils make good gains in their speaking and listening, reading and writing because the temporary specialist English teacher has a good understanding of the subject and the content of the examination courses. He interests pupils in English by the suitable choice of texts, teaching approaches and tasks, which foster in them a liking and enjoyment of learning. For example, he shares his enthusiasm for poetry by reading poems sensitively and by clearly explaining techniques such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, imagery and metaphors. Skilful questioning, for example "How do you think the poet felt about the slave trade?", encourages pupils to read carefully and express their ideas confidently. He presents the objectives for learning at the beginning of lessons, so pupils know what is expected of them. He is calm and assured in his approach and lessons are well paced. The excellent relationships established with pupils are based on mutual respect and provide a very good foundation for learning. Speaking and listening skills are reinforced through role-play situations and debates, for example on crime and punishment or through an adapted version of the radio programme 'Down Your Way'. Writing skills are developed through a range of tasks that require pupils to inform, explain, persuade and describe by making reference to works by Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson and other authors. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in supporting teaching and learning, especially for drafting and redrafting work.
- 36. Pupils show a genuine interest in their work. They sustain concentration well and think deeply about many of the topics. They behave very well and show a willingness to work hard. They listen carefully to instructions, answer questions readily and are confident enough to disagree with the teacher and express their own views. Completed work is neat and tidy and reflects the positive attitudes they have to their learning. Pupils understand what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve, because their written work is quickly marked with comments that are helpful to their learning. In some lessons too little attention is given to the targets in pupils' IEPs, and the standards achieved and the progress of a small number of pupils are limited by their irregular attendance.
- 37. The centre places great importance on accreditation so that pupils are able to achieve in line with their mainstream peers. Pupils value this and it contributes to their very good attitudes to learning English. The best at English prepare for the GCSE examination and this year are predicted to gain grades from C to F. The lowest attaining pupils gain accreditation for their learning by taking the Entry Level examination.

38. English is being well managed, but a permanent specialist teacher needs to be appointed to secure the high standards. The classroom is well organised and the high quality of the displays reflects the teacher's expectations for learning. It has a good number of computers that pupils can access quickly and easily when they need to use them. Other resources are satisfactory in range and quantity to support the examination based curriculum. There is no library, but the centre supplies a selection of daily newspapers, which are appreciated and regularly read by pupils. A wider range of materials such as plays, videos, fiction and non-fiction books would provide pupils with a richer experience, extend their repertoire of text types and develop their skills still further in reading for information.

# Language and literacy across the curriculum

39. Language and literacy are supported in a satisfactory manner in the lessons in the other subjects. Class sizes are small, and because of this the pupils have many opportunities to discuss with staff any topics to do with their learning and their concerns and problems. As a consequence, pupils have more opportunity for developing their speaking and listening skills than is the case in lessons in mainstream secondary schools with many more pupils. However, chances to reinforce reading and writing skills are not routinely planned for and arise incidentally.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and interesting lessons result in good progress.
- Pupils' very good attitudes help them work hard to do their best.
- The accredited awards available match well with the pupils' learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in supporting teaching and learning.

- 40. The quality of teaching is consistently good; consequently, the quality of learning is good. Teachers have high expectations for both learning and behaviour. Teaching groups are small and teachers plan very carefully. This means that lessons are made up of tasks and activities that match well the pupils' needs and capabilities. Behaviour is managed well, in a way which leaves pupils little doubt as to what is expected of them. As a consequence, lessons interest pupils and they work hard to do their best. This has a positive impact on the standards they achieve. Pupils who found the subject difficult and frustrating in their other schools enjoy being successful in their calculations and in the procedures they follow. Pupils know that they are making better progress than was the case in their previous schools. This makes them eager to work harder and this in turn contributes to the good progress they make. The excellent relationships they have with staff means that lessons are friendly occasions characterised by mutual support. For many pupils they are the opportunity to make up for lost time in their learning.
- 41. The subject is led and managed well. The extent of learning is appropriately recognised for all pupils because they are able to take either the Entry Level or Intermediate Level examinations of the GCSE, and for some AQA units to gain recognition for the extent of their learning. All classrooms have computers linked to the Internet. Computer use is planned well into lessons so that pupils can learn how to make progress by working independently. Assessment is effective because it is closely linked to the modules of the examination syllabus. Recording is good and information gained is used well in the planning of further work.

42. The quality of work in mathematics is exemplified in the perspective of one pupil who said that he is going to gain a GCSE grade in mathematics, which he did not see as a possibility before he joined the centre.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

43. The use of numeracy skills in lessons in other subjects is satisfactory. Numeracy skills are spontaneously used. For example, in the vocational courses, pupils judge the correct amount of mix to build a wall to a plan; they cut wood to length to create plant baskets and measure felt when they roll it out for a roofing task. They do this well, and because classes are made up of small numbers the teachers and other staff quickly recognise the level of pupils' mathematical skills and provide the right amount of help them complete a number task. However, opportunities are missed to reinforce learning by applying the skills of mathematics in the lessons in the other subjects in accord with the recommendations of a policy document.

### **SCIENCE**

- 44. No lessons were observed during the inspection and no judgement can be made on the quality of the provision, although planning documents, completed work, displays, and discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator show that pupils achieve satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress.
- 45. There is no specialist room for teaching science, and few resources. Serious limitations are imposed by the absence of a specialist teaching room; for example, the absence of water and gas taps restricts the scope for teaching science. Pupils follow a scheme of work developed from the Edexcel programme, which provides them with the opportunity to gain AQA units. The emphasis is on the biology element of science. This is necessary because topics in physics and chemistry are more difficult to present without specialist facilities.
- 46. The science teacher has good subject knowledge and despite serious shortcomings in the accommodation does well to make opportunities available for pupils to complete experiments and other investigative work. Pupils in some similar centres, with similarly poor accommodation, study human biology to GCSE Levels. The completed work of higher attainers in science at Youth Challenge suggests that they are capable of gaining comparable success.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well over an appropriate range of nationally accredited awards.
- Good teaching is inspiring pupils to do their best.
- Good leadership and management are helping ICT develop well.
- Good use is made of computers to support teaching and learning in English and mathematics.

### Commentary

47. All pupils achieve well. Pupils enter the centre with widely different experiences of ICT. Some are computer literate and did very well over all the topics of the programme of study they followed between Years 7 and 9. Others have little experience of computers and have difficulty in controlling the screen well with keyboard or mouse. In addition, pupils spend varying degrees of time at the centre, so the task of providing a portfolio of accredited awards that reflect the capabilities of all pupils is a challenging one. The co-ordinator has succeeded very well in providing a relevant

portfolio. Most pupils follow the new CLAIT syllabus. This has caught their imagination and they are working hard to achieve full accreditation at Levels 1 and 2. Others with less experience of computers complete AQA units. Those with most experience are capable of gaining success in the GCSE examination.

- 48. The good quality of teaching is characterised by the selection of challenging tasks that enable pupils to make good progress in their learning. For instance, in a Year 11 lesson one pupil made a very effective presentation based on PowerPoint. The other pupils found the work very stimulating and applauded the high standard of the presentation. The relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are excellent and contribute to pupils' very good behaviour, their very good attitudes to learning and the respect they show to the equipment. Pupils enjoy using computers and being active in their learning. They are keen to improve their skills and show confidence in choosing and in making decisions.
- 49. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator provides a very good level of advice and support to other staff and is enthusiastic about extending their skills and knowledge of computers and peripheral devices, such as scanners, through on-going training. All classrooms have good quality computers that are linked to the Internet, and the action plan includes acquiring interactive whiteboards to provide increased help for teaching and learning.

# Information and communication technology across the curriculum

50. Computers are used well in English and mathematics. In English, pupils are adept at using word processing in improve the presentation of their work. They are competent in using graphics, design, and desk top publishing programs in completing posters and other presentational material. In mathematics, pupils use spreadsheets and databases for learning about recurring calculations and formulae and for presenting information visually. All are competent in using the Internet for research purposes. Lessons in science do not make full use of computers. This is because there are too few CD-ROMs to bring topics alive with animation, colour and sound. This is disappointing, because greater use of CD-ROMS and the Internet would help minimise the disadvantage of having no adequate specialist teaching room.

### **OTHER SUBJECTS**

Animal husbandry, basic biology, leisure and tourism, food studies, global communications, history, music and physical education.

- 51. There is insufficient evidence to make possible a judgement on the provision in the other subjects of the curriculum. Collectively, they contribute to adding breadth, balance and enrichment to the curriculum and help to meet pupils' special interests.
- 52. Some of them, including leisure and tourism, global communications and biology, contribute to the alternative curriculum available to pupils who do not take vocational courses. Others, notably physical education, are available and enjoyed by all pupils. The aim of the centre to reward pupils for the efforts they make at their learning by making available nationally accredited awards at appropriate levels applies to most of these subjects, which pupils take for AQA units.
- 53. These subjects make an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development. In physical education, for example, pupils go horse riding, play football and badminton and take part in cardiovascular training and outdoor activities. All these physical education activities have to take place in the community, as the centre's accommodation is totally unsuitable. In food studies, which is organised and led by the Connexions adviser, pupils learn how to shop and to prepare and cook

meals for themselves. One pupil follows his interest for developing skills in music, while another is involved in animal husbandry in preparation for a college course. History and music are good examples of how the curriculum can be adapted to suit the interests and talents of individual pupils, all of whom follow courses leading to AQA units.

### **VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Provision in vocational courses is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in bricklaying and other building trades activities.
- Teaching is very good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are exemplary.
- The subject makes a major contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The accommodation and resources for teaching vocational education are very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

- 54. Vocational courses focus on the activities of the construction industry. They include bricklaying, glasswork, joinery and roofing, which are taught very well by experienced and knowledgeable staff. Pupils take the courses to gain entry level qualifications to the National Vocational Qualifications scheme through the Further Accreditation in Vocational Education award. The very good teaching leads to very good learning and a very high success rate on the further accreditation award. Other significant factors include the very good accommodation and the high quality and range of resources, such as tools and safety shoes and glasses. Much of the completed work is at a standard which would satisfy the more demanding requirements of the NVQ. The coordinator rightly recognises this and is working towards assessor qualifications, so that from September 2005 pupils will take Level 1 of the relevant NVQ. Inspectors agree that this is a very good development.
- 55. Pupils work very hard on these courses. Their workplace operates with similar expectations to those of a construction site. Pupils are expected to be promptly into their work at the start of lessons, to be dressed appropriately, to be respectful to each other and to the staff, to work quickly at their tasks and to enjoy talking with each other and staff when they have a cup of tea together at break time. They see the courses as very relevant and like the way in which their teaching is organised. The very high expectations of staff for learning and behaviour do not get in the way of their having fun with the pupils, and the pupils enjoy this. Pupils work very hard and take great pride in completing the tasks to their best level. They also take pride in explaining to visitors in appropriate language how a plan is translated into a 90 degree joining wall. or how the way in which roof tiles are joined prohibits the leaking of water. They are helped in doing this by precise teaching and the very high quality of the demonstrations.
- 56. The pupils are excellent learners. They are highly motivated, listen very well to instructions and advice, and work very hard at their tasks. They are very respectful to staff and to each other and value discovering what life is like on a building site. Lessons in vocational courses are characterised by the sounds and activities associated with very effective learning. By showing respect, behaving appropriately and persevering with their work, they are making a significant contribution to their personal development and preparation for the world of work.

57. Vocational courses are very well led and managed by a member of staff with wide experience of the building trade who has excellent rapport with the pupils and very good behaviour management skills. The other staff who lead on vocational courses have similar attributes. The vocational courses give a very good taster of work in the construction industry, can lead to awards that ultimately result in jobs in the industry, and provide rich opportunities for pupils to show maturity and responsibility. They are very highly rated by pupils.

# PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strength of the centre is the way in which staff reorientate pupils' thinking about themselves and their futures.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils make an important contribution to the very good progress pupils make in their personal and social development.
- The provision for personal and social development permeates all the work of the centre and is supported very well in the lessons in the other subjects.
- The personal and social development of pupils is supported very well by specialist staff from a number of different agencies.
- Lessons in the other subjects provide valuable help in developing personal and social skills.
- The very good leadership and management enable the needs of all pupils to be met.

- 58. The development of pupils' personal and social skills is central to all the work of the centre, including improvements in their behaviour, their attitudes to education and their futures, and the way in which they see themselves. Pupils join the centre after experiencing difficulties in dealing with the expectations and routines of their previous schools. Many did not attend regularly and most were disaffected by school; some were angry. The great strength of the centre is the way in which staff help pupils to redirect their life style very quickly so that they are able to prepare themselves purposefully for the next stage of their education and the world of work.
- 59. The biggest contributor to pupils reworking their attitudes to themselves, society and education is the excellent relationships they establish with staff. The teacher in charge, and all other staff, care about the pupils. Pupils know this and regard them as adults they can trust, who will celebrate their achievements with them but who will also tell them about their wrong decisions. For some, this is the first time they have built a relationship based on trust and respect with adults outside of their families. This is easily seen at many times throughout the day, for example at break and lunchtimes, when pupils talk freely with staff about matters that are personal and important to them; in tea breaks during the vocational courses; at NightSchool; and when the pupils call or text staff from their mobiles to tell them not to worry about them because their bus has been held up in traffic and they will be late to the centre. It is clear that pupils respect staff and the advice and guidance they are given. Most pupils gain considerably by readily accepting the advice and acting on it.
- 60. Personnel from a number of agencies provide specific advice and guidance relevant to pupils' needs. The Thursday afternoon drop-in sessions are taken by members of a number of organisations. The Youth Offending Team talk about issues to do with the law as it relates to drugs and alcohol, and the procedures followed in magistrate courts. The nurses attached to the Youth Offending Team give valued information on sex and relationships, as well as on matters to

do with a healthy life style that excludes the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Members of the Committee for Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS) talk about issues to do with mental health, especially depression. Two local volunteer organisations, Parallel and Project 360, help meet the problems of pupils either in centre or at their drop-in centres.

- 61. Lessons in the other subjects help also to reinforce emerging decisions on their personal and social lives. For example, lessons in physical education emphasise the importance of good physical health and help pupils work with each other as team mates. In lessons in food studies, pupils learn about healthy eating. In the vocational courses, they learn how to behave in a simulated work environment, including how to deal with those in promoted positions and the necessity of being on time and not missing work.
- 62. Leadership and management are very good. The provision is very good at meeting the specific needs of all pupils because it permeates all the work of the centre and is supported by the powerful messages presented by those with specialist knowledge. Targets for personal and social development in pupils' IEPs also help. These work very well because they are agreed by the pupils and known to all staff. They are clear and precise and provide very good guidance in dealing with specific behavioural

# PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the centre	3
How inclusive the centre is	3
How the centre's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the centre	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the centre	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the centre seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the centre's links with parents	2
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	2
The governance of the centre	5
The leadership of the head of centre	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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