

INSPECTION REPORT

Aylesbury Vale Secondary Support Centre

Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110201

Headteacher: Mr T Millea

Lead inspector: Sarah Mascall

Dates of inspection: 25th to 27th April 2005

Inspection number: 274162

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	For students who have been or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream schools
School category:	Pupil referral unit
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	35
School address:	Unit 8 Abbey Centre Weedon Road Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP19 9NS
Telephone number:	01296 431989
Fax number:	01296 339125
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr Brenda Jennings
Date of previous inspection:	March 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTRE

This is a small pupil referral unit for students who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from their mainstream school. The Centre takes boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. At the time of the inspection 35 students were attending the Centre, 2 of whom were dual registered and attend a mainstream school as well as the Centre. Students come from mixed social backgrounds and, currently, two students are in the care of social services. A large majority of students are from white British backgrounds and there are no students with English as an additional language. Most students' attainment when starting at the Centre is below national expectations because they have missed schools for lengthy periods of time. There are two students who have statements of special educational need.

Recently, there has been an influx of students from Years 7, 8 and 9 and there are now 9 students in these year groups. The teacher for this age group is on long-term sickness and students are taught by a part time temporary teacher. The LEA has recognised that the Centre has limited space to provide separate teaching accommodation for these students and plans are in place to resolve this problem.

The Centre is responsible for a Home and Hospital Tuition service in the north of the local education authority, which is run by the Centre's senior manager. There is also a large outreach service organised by the deputy headteacher which, at the time of the inspection, supported 40 students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20536	Sarah Mascal	Lead inspector	English, media studies
14324	Michael Hudson	Lay inspector	
23643	John Ward	Team inspector	Mathematics, physical education
32836	Frances Crockwell	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education
33005	Nicolette Martin	Team inspector	Science
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Aylesbury Vale Secondary Centre is a **satisfactory** pupil referral unit. Teaching is good overall, but because of weaknesses in the curriculum and lack of time for teaching time during the day, students make satisfactory rather than good progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students value their time in the Centre and, as a result, their attendance and behaviour are good.
- An unsatisfactory curriculum does not ensure that students have access to their full entitlement of 25 hours education.
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not have the opportunity to study a wide enough range of subjects including personal, social and health education.
- The support provided to mainstream schools by teachers from the Centre is very good.
- Home and hospital tuition is very well managed and is highly valued by those it works with.
- Planning for improving the work of the Centre is not sufficiently rigorous and is not based on a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Parents are kept informed about how their children are progressing but the Centre does not have a prospectus or other written information about its work.

Since the last inspection in 2000, the Centre has made satisfactory improvements in its provision. It has improved accommodation and students' attendance and there are now appropriate procedures for recording students' punctuality. The school day has been extended very recently but the amount of teaching time continues to be insufficient. The Centre has still not developed a prospectus for parents.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Year 11	Good	satisfactory

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

Overall, students' achievements are **satisfactory**. They achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and many gain GCSEs in English mathematics, science and art. They also gain accreditation in City and Guilds numeracy and AQA literacy courses. Students achieve good accreditation through college courses. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieve well in art and satisfactorily in English, mathematics, and science, but opportunities to develop their skills in other subjects are very limited. Although students in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress in personal, social and health education, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not have any lessons in this subject. As a result their achievement is unsatisfactory. However, the temporary teacher ensures that students have opportunities to discuss their problems and talk about their concerns. Students enjoy attending the Centre and their attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is good and their personal development, including their social, moral and cultural development is **satisfactory**. However, there is insufficient focus on promoting students' spiritual development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to make lessons interesting and challenging for students. They manage behaviour well, have high expectations and, as a result, students learn effectively. Assessment of how well students are doing is satisfactory, but the systems used are relatively new and the Centre recognises that they need refining. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. It is, however, better for Years 10 and 11, where there are good opportunities for students to attend college and do work experience. The Centre, though, does not ensure that all students have access to the 25 hour education to which they are entitled. For students in Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum is limited and does not allow students to study sufficient subjects. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are unsatisfactory. Accommodation is also unsatisfactory; there is insufficient space for the increase in the number of students and rooms such as the science and art room are too small. Resources are adequate. The care, welfare, support and guidance for students is satisfactory. Individual education plans are in place for all students, but the targets set are often too broad to enable them to be of use in supporting students and checking how well they are doing. Links with parents are satisfactory, although new parents do not receive sufficient written information about what the Centre offers. The Centre's partnership with the community is satisfactory. Links with local schools and colleges are very good. The Centre provides very good support for students in mainstream schools at risk of exclusion and high quality training in behaviour management to staff. The home and hospital tuition service is very good and supports students very well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The headteacher provides a good role model in managing behaviour and ensures that there is a positive ethos for learning within the Centre. The deputy and senior manager provide good support for the headteacher and carry out their specific roles and responsibilities well. As a result, the day to day management of the Centre is adequate. However, the Centre is not effective in evaluating how well it operates and what it needs to do to improve. Its improvement plan is not sufficiently detailed or linked to its aims. The management of subjects is satisfactory. Governance by the management committee is satisfactory. They are supportive of the Centre, but they do not have a full understanding of what the Centre is providing and no targets have been set to help the Centre improve what it does.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

The majority of parents feel that the Centre has made a difference to their child. They consider that their children have improved academically and their behaviour is better. Students like the Centre and comment on the fact that they can talk to staff and feel they understand their problems.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the Centre and the LEA should do to improve are:

- Improve and extend the curriculum for students in Years 7, 8 and 9, ensuring that it includes personal, social and health education.
- Ensure that all students receive their full curriculum entitlement
- Establish systems to evaluate the Centre's effectiveness and take action to improve what it offers.
- Provide parents with written information about the Centre.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' achievements are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 gain passes in a range of examinations.
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not make the progress they should because they do not have the opportunity to study many subjects.
- The limited time available for teaching prevents all students from achieving better.
- Students make good progress in developing their communication skills.
- The lack of opportunities for students' to learn about personal, social and health education is inappropriate.
- The Centre is not able to measure its success effectively because there are no targets for students' achievements.

Commentary

1. Many of the students start at the Centre with very negative attitudes to their studies and low levels of achievement. Those who leave the Centre in Year 11 make good progress and gain between one and four GCSEs as well as passes in City and Guilds numeracy. A number also gain passes in Entry Level courses. Students do well because of good teaching and the positive relationships they have with teachers. Students have suitable opportunities to attend college courses and many gain accreditation for the work they do. Most achieve passes in an ICT examination (CLAIT) and others attend courses in decorating, painting and bricklaying.
2. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students achieve satisfactorily in literacy and numeracy because the focus of most teaching is on these subjects. However the lack of a wider curriculum and opportunities to study other subjects in depth limits their achievements. All students' progress is hampered by the limited amount of daily teaching time in the Centre. The time allocated for students to develop their skills in personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. Older students have two sessions whilst younger students do not have any lessons in this subject. Although the Centre does organise focus weeks, for example, on the risks of smoking, there is no specific planning to enable students to develop their skills.
3. Students are successful in learning how to communicate in different settings. Older students adjust their language to match the situations they are in. When talking in lessons they show a good use of vocabulary and can argue points and respond well to questions. They have also learnt the need to listen to each other and, during discussions, will wait patiently to put forward their ideas. Younger students are still developing this skill and do not have the same level of patience, often losing concentration if the teacher talks for too long. Students make satisfactory progress in reading. Several start with low reading levels and the individual programmes for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are having a positive effect in developing their skills. However, until recently, the limited opportunities for these students to read together and study texts hindered their progress. In Years 10 and 11, most students follow texts such as "Of mice and Men" and respond well to questions. They have gained confidence in their ability and most will read out loud to the class. Although their skills do improve satisfactorily, there is not a specific focus on helping those with very low reading skills to improve at a greater pace and this reduces their chances of becoming fluent readers by the time they leave. Much work goes into encouraging students to put pen to paper. There is an over reliance on worksheets in Years 7,8 and 9 which limits their progress but in Years 10 and 11, students learn to complete forms and more able students respond in detail to questions, for example, about Romeo and Juliet.

4. Good teaching in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 enables students to do well and all gain accreditation when they leave. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are improving their numeracy skills but the lack of opportunities for practical mathematics and the overuse of worksheets limits students' progress. Older students make good progress in science but the limited time in Years 7, 8 and 9 for teaching the subject reduces their opportunities to do well. All students make good progress in art and benefit from good, enthusiastic teaching.
5. The Centre has not had the benefit of consistent support from an advisor and this together with the fact that it has not been set targets for improvement prevents both the Centre and LEA from assessing how well it is doing.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are **good**, as is their attendance. Their personal development including their moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory**. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Attendance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value what the Centre has done for them and show a great deal of respect for staff.
- Relationships are good and students respond well to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour.
- There are limited opportunities for students to develop their spiritual awareness.
- Students enjoy attending the Centre and make every effort to arrive on time.

Commentary

6. All the students spoken to, were in agreement about how much the Centre had done for them and how it has given them opportunities that they wouldn't have had in mainstream school. They appreciate the way that they are treated and, because of this, they are keen to attend and learn. Older students settle quickly to work although younger ones are adjusting to the expectations of the Centre and, at times, take a bit longer to settle to tasks. Teachers are skilled at getting the best from students and as a result students work hard in lessons and develop good social skills. They learn to listen to other points of view and to respect those they work with. Playing chess and pool at break times encourages good social development as students learn to take turns and co-operate with other players.
7. Students are confident about approaching adults in the Centre about difficulties they may have, whether it is of a personal nature or about their school work. The trust they have in staff, based on the confidence that they will be helped, is encouraging them to be more positive in their attitude to learning, as well as to develop a respect for adults in authority. Students' behaviour is good in the Centre and students respond well to the staff's good humour. As a result, students learn to control their behaviour and their moral development is good. They show an understanding of right and wrong and conform well to the Centre's rules. This is evident in their discussions, for example, when talking about keeping safe they recognise what is the best action to take. Students value the Centre's system of rewards and are keen to do well. This has a positive effect on individual students who increase their self-esteem through gaining rewards. They feel that the staff in the Centre deal with harassment in an effective way. There has been only one permanent exclusion from the Centre this year.

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	5	1

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

8. Students develop their cultural awareness through subjects such as art and design studies. Their work shows an understanding of African and American Indian cultures. However, there is no planning to promote students' spiritual development and although there are occasions, for example, when looking at the model of an eye that students express awe, these happen by chance rather than through lesson planning.
9. Attendance has improved since the last inspection. The Centre is successful in promoting good attendance and it gives rewards for regular attendance. Most but not all parents comply with the Centre's absence procedures. Punctuality is satisfactory. Students attend the Centre from a wide area and those who depend on public transport or taxis for their journey are at times delayed in their arrival at the Centre but the majority arrive punctually.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

	Attendance rate	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Centre data:	88%	8%	4%

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory**, overall. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** as are opportunities for enriching the curriculum. The welfare, care and support of students is **satisfactory**. There are **very good** links with schools and colleges. Links with parents are **satisfactory**. Links with the community are **unsatisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to encourage students to take an interest in learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour.
- Resources have been developed well to support teaching.
- Planning for what students will learn is not always effective.
- New systems for assessing the progress students make have been recently established and are being developed further.

Commentary**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor	Unsatisfactor	Poor	Very Poor
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			y	y		
0	3	9	8	0	0	0

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

10. Teaching is good because, despite limited teaching time, teachers ensure that students achieve satisfactorily and gain accreditation. They work hard with individuals to enable them to become motivated and interested in their work. Teachers' skills include their good subject knowledge, which they use well to provide very clear explanations and make lessons interesting. In mathematics, for example, Year 11 students develop a good understanding of tangent ratios because of the teacher's very clear and careful explanations. Constant checking and questioning ensures that students understand what they are doing and they show good recall of what they have learnt.
11. Staff have good relationships with the students and students have a good understanding of the expectations of teachers. As a result, students behave well and respond quickly to any reminders, such as removing hats or minding their language. On occasions less experienced teachers are not consistent in managing behaviour, allowing students to dictate the pace of lessons and set the agenda for what they want to do. Praise is used well, teachers value students' contributions and this gives students the confidence to answer questions without worrying if they will get it wrong.
12. Teachers use resources well to make learning interesting. This is particularly evident in subjects such as English and science. In English, teachers have produced high quality support documents, which enable students to develop a good understanding of several texts including work by Shakespeare. In a very good science lesson, a model of an eye is used well so that students develop a very good understanding of how the eye functions.
13. For students in Years 7, 8 and 9 planning for each lesson is good because it is based on their individual needs. Although for older students the work is planned around the examination courses, it is not always matched to students' abilities and activities are often the same, regardless of each student's knowledge and understanding. At times, this results in students struggling to do the work and requiring a lot of support from the teacher. Time is not always managed well to ensure that the aims of the lessons are achieved and there are opportunities to check what students have learnt. In addition, the short lessons limit what can be achieved by students.
14. The marking of students' work provides students with positive comments on their work. However, because work is not graded or moderated it is difficult for the Centre to measure individual progress. In addition, students following accredited courses do not always know which grades they are working towards. Students receive oral feedback in lessons and there are areas of good practice, such as in art where there are specific targets for students, managed sensitively, using post-it notes which can be removed and so do not spoil the presentation of students' work. Teachers do not ensure that students' work is dated and this also makes it difficult to judge the progress students are making.
15. There are appropriate systems in place for assessing students' knowledge and understanding in literacy and numeracy when they arrive at the Centre. In addition, there is an 'in house' programme for tracking behaviour and a recording system which enables students to know how well they are doing. Newly developed systems for producing and monitoring students' targets have been established but are at an early stage of development. At present, work to address the gaps in students' skills, knowledge and understanding are not planned for and so progress cannot be monitored accurately. However, the Centre realises that the new systems need refining to provide consistency and coherence to the assessment process.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**, as are activities to enrich the curriculum. The accommodation is **unsatisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not prepared well academically for returning to mainstream schooling.
- Not all students have access to their full entitlement to a full time education.
- Opportunities for work experience and vocational courses prepare students well for the world of work.
- Students have very limited taught opportunities to develop their skills in personal, social and health education.
- The Centre has insufficient space to meet the increasing number of students it now admits.

Commentary

16. The curriculum was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and there is still insufficient breadth and a lack of teaching time. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students attend the Centre for three and a half days per week and, in some cases, for less which is below statutory requirements for this age group. Subjects such as humanities, design and technology are not offered to them because of a lack of teaching time. The ample amount of time provided for breaks, a total of two hours per day further reduces curriculum time. The needs of the small number of students with statements of special educational needs are not being met because the Centre does not meet their statutory requirements to ensure they have access to the full National Curriculum.
17. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is better because there are a satisfactory range of opportunities for accreditation. Students can follow GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science and art together with Entry Level courses. All students are entered for City and Guilds certificate in numeracy. Most students have access to vocational opportunities such as attending courses at a further education college or training provider or work experience but where students do not take these opportunities they, too, do not receive the recommended 25 hours of supervised education. The vocational educational programme is developed well and there are good links with Aylesbury College for sports, computer studies, catering and hair and beauty, The "Skidz Project" for motor mechanics is successful in motivating a small number of students.
18. Although the Centre lacks its own facilities for physical education and sport, good opportunities are arranged regularly at a local sports Centre and at an outdoor activities Centre. There are a variety of sports activities which students can take part in beyond normal classroom lessons. Some interesting art projects have been developed between the Centre and other organisations but due to a lack of overall planning there is not a consistent approach to running them each year.
19. Two support co-ordinators place students in Further Education College, training and work experience placements and do a thorough job in monitoring the progress of students off site and ensuring that good partnership arrangements exist to improve students' achievement. This flexibility to tailor courses to each individual is a key factor in getting these disaffected students back into education and achieving vocational qualifications prepares them for the next stage in their lives.

20. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory because younger students are not offered the subject. The time allocated for older students in these aspects is variable, but just sufficient. The good relationships between staff and students supports students' personal development and students who access one-to-one sessions with staff, for example when playing chess, have opportunities to talk informally to staff.
21. There are limited opportunities for students to do extra curricular activities because of transport difficulties. The Centre has made arrangements for students to attend a weekly swimming club or play football fixture matches with a local comprehensive school. Students are encouraged to mix together at breaktimes through, for example, playing pool, but there are not enough leisure activities for younger girls, who would benefit from these leisure activities in breaktimes.
22. The careers and work experience programme is carefully thought out and well structured. Every student has an interview with the 'Connexions' personal adviser during which an assessment is made of the individual support needs of that student. In Years 10 and 11, students are encouraged to make career choices and this is followed up with help in applications for further education or employment. Contact is maintained by the Connexions service with all students past school leaving age in order to help them to continue in training or employment. The extended work experience programme provides good opportunities for students to develop skills and knowledge of the workplace, which informs their career choices. Individual packages of study are being developed for all students which, when appropriately designed are successful in integrating work in the Centre, work experience placements and accredited college courses. However, these can break down resulting in students' spending too much time out of education and training, usually remaining at home for a large part of each week.
23. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection, but it is still inadequate to meet the needs of students, particularly those in Years 7, 8 and 9. The local education authority has recognised this and is in the process of acquiring further teaching areas. Also, both the art and science room are too small and limit the range of curriculum in these subjects that teachers can offer. Resources are satisfactory overall and teachers have made their own good quality resources to support learning.

Care, guidance and support

Provision of care, guidance and support is **satisfactory** overall. Procedures for the health and safety of students are **satisfactory**. The involvement of students in the work of the Centre is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Centre ensures that students' health and safety is closely monitored.
 - Good relationships between staff and students provides students with effective support when they have concerns.
 - Targets to enable students to improve are not easily measurable.
 - The Centre has been successful in getting younger students back into school.
24. Statutory requirements for health and safety are met and off-site activities are risk-assessed. A senior member of staff has responsibility for child protection and staff are aware of procedures relating to this. Students are properly supervised both on the school site and at work experience and college placements with members of staff having specific responsibilities in these areas. However, the practice of students having a fresh start on entry to the Centre can mean that staff are not made aware of students' previous difficulties. As a result, staff are unaware of strategies that they may need to ensure their own and students' health and safety.
 25. Overall, the school's procedures for supporting students in their personal development are satisfactory. Students are well supported in improving their behaviour whilst at the Centre because of the good relationships between staff and students. These are based on mutual

respect and students know and trust adults with whom they can share personal and academic concerns and are openly appreciative of this. The feeling of students of all ages is that they do better at the Centre because they are listened to. Students are fully involved in the personal merit target system which is seen as fair by all students.

26. Systems for assessing students' needs when they start at the Centre are still being developed and improved. Currently there is a time lapse between students starting the Centre and collection of relevant information which means that for several weeks, staff are unsure of students' learning needs. Although all students have an individual education plan, many of their targets are difficult to measure. Not all students are aware of what their targets are and these targets are not always included in the planning of students' work. The Centre has identified this as an area for improvement.
27. Students' views are taken into account in the planning of sport activities. For instance, there is single sex provision for go-karting at the request of the girls. Students are also given the choice of opting into specific curriculum activities such as following a GCSE Intermediate maths course. However, this results, on occasions, in more able students, if they wish, avoiding academic challenge.
28. The Centre works with the local education authority on the development of planning to re-integrate students into mainstream provision or to secure places in alternative specialist schools. It has been successful in placing a number of students back into mainstream or special school education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parental links are **satisfactory** overall. The information parents receive is **satisfactory** as are links with the community. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although verbal communication is satisfactory the Centre provides unsatisfactory written information to new parents.
- Parents' views are not actively sought and they are not closely involved in Centre life.
- Educational links and partnerships are a notable strength of the Centre.
- Transfer and management arrangements with schools and colleges are very good.

Commentary

29. Although the aims and procedures of the Centre are explained to parents at an induction meeting there is no prospectus or other written format that provides additional information. There is, though, a Centre website which is updated regularly. Parents are always welcome to visit the Centre and are asked to visit if a major problem occurs with a student and this they do. They are also kept informed on a regular basis through phone calls from staff and this is appreciated. The Centre has, in the past, had parents' evenings and set up information evenings but these have been so badly attended that the Centre no longer organises them. Parents are invited to the Year 11 record of achievement awards and this is reasonably well attended.
30. Most parents are happy with their children's progress at the Centre. Staff are said to be approachable and supportive, for example, about work experience placements. Parents are sent students' subject reports at the end of each term and individual education plans twice yearly. Within the reports attainment and progress are clear, but priorities for improvements are not highlighted. The Centre recognises the importance of, but does not actively encourage, parental involvement in students' education. For example, parental surveys are planned but not, as yet, in place.

31. The Centre has several external contacts in the community although it does not always make best use of visits or visitors to enrich the curriculum. Football matches are played against local schools and the Centre is collaborating with another school in an art project. A drama group visits the Centre to perform an anti-drug playlet but the Centre acknowledges the need to develop further links, including those with multi cultural groups.
32. The Centre has developed an impressive range of links with other schools, colleges and employment agencies. These significantly enhance the learning opportunities and skills of students. For example, a wide range of career training, jobs and apprenticeships are available. In addition, as a motor project offers challenges that give students a sense of achievement. Business partnerships are used well to provide many work experience placements. The Centre has very close links with a local college which widens the courses available to students in Year 9 to Year 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Governance by the local education authority, in conjunction with the management committee is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has developed a positive learning environment and smooth day to day management of the Centre.
- Senior managers are very effective in their management of the outreach and hospital and home tuition services.
- Information about students' learning, teaching and the work of the Centre is not used to inform developments and judge if the Centre has been effective.
- The lack of clear improvement planning, including financial planning by senior managers has held back necessary improvements.
- Staff induction and training opportunities are not planned sufficiently well to encourage the professional development of its staff.

Commentary

33. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior manager share a desire to raise standards, particularly for older students. They are effective in establishing a staff that work well together as a team. The headteacher leads by example in his teaching and ensures that there is a good ethos for learning within the Centre. The day to day running of the Centre is calm and orderly. Even after attending the Centre for a short time, most students recognise that the Centre offers a purposeful experience and quickly establish good relationships with staff. This is very much a result of the headteacher's open, friendly approach to the students who know that when they are in the Centre, they are safe, secure and valued. Parents and carers consider this to be a strength of the Centre.
34. The headteacher teaches for much of the week and this impacts on the time spent on planning for overall improvements to the Centre's work, including the development of a suitable curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9. In many respects subject areas have developed on their own. Because of this there is a lack of systems which recognise and check the progress students are making. Although the Centre monitors its activities well through daily briefing meetings and regular, purposeful whole staff meetings, formal observation of class teaching has only occurred recently. As a result, it has not been effective in supporting the development of less experienced teachers.
35. The senior manager and deputy headteacher have responsibilities for the outreach service to mainstream schools as well as the hospital and home tuition services. They manage these very well and are held in high regard by those with whom they work. They ensure that these services are very well organised and that students achieve very well.

36. The Centre improvement plan identifies relevant priorities over a three year period and is produced by the senior management team. However, other staff, and the Centre's management group have not been involved in deciding priorities and, thus, it is not fully effective in assessing the quality of the Centre's work and deciding what it needs to do to improve. The plan is not underpinned by links to any set of aims which would establish a firmer vision for the Centre's future, nor are the actions under each priority area specific enough to achieve the improvements required. There is no clear link to improving students' achievements.
37. Performance management procedures are good and well established for teachers and support staff, but the planning of professional training opportunities are not sufficiently well linked either to the budget or to any plan for improving the Centre. Teachers are given responsibilities for subjects areas, but their roles are not identified in job descriptions nor are they given opportunities to observe colleagues' lessons and for good practice to be shared. There are no formal procedures for the induction of staff in any systematic way and this does not support them in quickly becoming effective in their work.
38. The Centre has yet to establish a strong culture of self evaluation. Information gained through checking different areas of the Centre's work is not systematically collected or used effectively to plan the next steps in learning for all students, adapt the curriculum, inform decisions about developments or check how effective it is. Progress, though, since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There have been good improvements in attendance levels amongst students, but progress in providing information to parents and increasing the length of lessons to improve access to the curriculum has been slow.
39. The local education authority provides satisfactory support for the management of the Centre. From a review of the secondary student referral units in Buckinghamshire, the Strategic Management Board has a strong vision for the future of the Centre and for its organisation and ethos. However, the Centre has not benefited from regular support from an advisor and this has prevented the Centre from moving forward as quickly as it should. The headteacher reports accurately and fairly to the Management Group as to what is happening at the Centre, and there are occasional visits by some members of the committee. However, the management group has not contributed to setting targets for improvement and their knowledge of the Centre's strengths and weaknesses is not adequate.
40. Financial planning is unsatisfactory as systems to ensure that expenditure reflects planned priorities are not in place and allocation to cost Centres are usually based on the previous year's spending rather than need. The bursar, though produces clear figures and expenditure is efficiently monitored.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	487,356	Balance from previous year	-257
Total expenditure	487,379	Balance carried forward to the next	nil
Expenditure per student	13,925		

THE HOSPITAL AND HOME TUITION SERVICE

The support provided by the hospital and home teaching service to children who are ill and temporarily unable to attend school is very effective and has a strong impact on maintaining the continuity of their education.

- The leadership and management of the service is very good and has led to improvements in provision.
- Teaching is effectively organised and of a high quality, which impacts positively on students learning.
- The quality of information about children and its use in planning individual programmes is good.
- Students benefit from the excellent links with the nursing and medical staff, schools and families.

Commentary

41. The senior manager of the Hospital and Home Tuition Service has a strong commitment to the development and improvement of the service and is very effective. The recent establishment of the home tutor base has successfully supported the reintegration of students to schools or colleges of further education. The 5 hours minimum entitlement to education has been added to by opportunities for students to attend work experience and College courses. The provision of the base for home tutors to visit and collect learning resources is also a further positive development. The senior manager has developed good systems to monitor the work of the Service. Regular reports are written by home tutors with information on attendance, students' progress and specific targets for improvement. Good links are also in place with staff at Stoke Mandeville hospital, though much of this is informal and does not include sharing good practice through lesson observations in order to develop practice still further.
42. The teacher in charge at the hospital is highly committed and leads her small team of staff very well. The art therapist and learning support teacher carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and make contact with newly admitted students as soon as possible and quickly set up very strong and trusting relationships with them. This not only re-engages students with education but, in collaboration with the medical and nursing staff, supports students in overcoming some of the difficulties imposed by their illness. The service is particularly good at maintaining continuity for students with long-term illnesses, which necessitate recurrent admissions to hospital.
43. Teaching and learning is very good. Staff go to great lengths to obtain relevant information about students from the school they are attending. Requests for appropriate work are made and, when this is provided, students make good progress because their studies are only minimally interrupted. For example, a course work text book was obtained for one long stay student who opted to continue his GCSE modular science course. Very good planning and interesting resources, including a model eye to explain its functions, were used to support teaching and develop understanding. However, in spite of the service's best efforts, a few schools are not always co-operative in providing information and resources. Resources, overall, are good, support learning well and include video conferencing facilities at the hospital.
44. The quality of written information is good and regular reports to parents provide updates on progress in learning, subject areas covered and where additional support is required. Each student has an individual file which includes useful records of home and Service meetings. There are regular meetings between staff and as a result of these relevant long term goals are agreed. Personal education plans also include short term targets although many of these need to be clearer if they are to be useful. Students are also assessed at the end of their stay as to what they have achieved and this supports their return to schools.
45. The service has established an excellent working relationship with medical and nursing staff, and very good liaison with the external agencies. This underpins the excellent care and welfare provided within the secure environment of the hospital, and extends to the individual and small group teaching and support provided in the home tutor base at the Centre.

The outreach programme

46. The outreach programme is very well led and organised, with very effective communication

between the mainstream schools and the Centre staff. Nine schools are involved and each school is assigned half a day support. The service agreement identifies the nature of intervention, monitoring and review and the mainstream school agrees to gain parental consent, provide a suitable room and ensure that there are effective means of communication. As well as individual support, the Centre has organised suitable work experience places for students and has contributed to personal support plans. The schools are unanimous in their praise of the reliability of the service and the high standard of feedback. The schools consider that the partnership is very effective and that the intervention strategies and support for staff have resulted in improved behaviour and helped inclusion within the school. For example one school says that the invaluable support has guided the school to make more flexible provision in Years 10 and 11 and therefore enabled all students to access the curriculum. The service is also of benefit to the Centre, as more students are able to stay in their mainstream school and consequently there are fewer referrals to the Centre.

47. Students are eager to attend the one-to-one session with the teacher and all arrived on time and appeared calm and relaxed. Teachers have reports from all lessons and give positive praise for any good behaviour, enabling the students to identify areas of strength and look for strategies for behaving better in more difficult areas. Students are either given, or give themselves, realistic targets for improvement.
48. The programme for supporting students has been very effectively extended to give support to staff in mainstream schools with in-service training on various aspects of managing students' behaviour. This was begun five years ago in response to a perceived need and has grown from there to a service strongly valued by the schools involved. In order to give relevant training in areas related to behaviour management, the teachers carry out observations in a school, complete a needs analysis and create a programme which is specific to that particular school. The teachers involved have been invited to be part of the Department for Education and Science working group for the development of a specific training programme on behaviour and attendance. The in-service programmes are of high quality and these, together with the outreach programme, are a strength of the Centre.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH

Five lessons were observed, students' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinators.

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain in confidence and make good progress in their speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to make lessons interesting.
- Although leadership of the subject is satisfactory, the support for the teaching of younger students has not been sufficient.
- Teachers in other subjects promote speaking and listening well but there is insufficient focus on improving students' reading and writing skills.

Commentary

49. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory. This is a similar judgement to the previous inspection. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well because teaching is based on examination syllabi. As a result, by the time they leave, the majority of students gain passes in GCSE. For those with limited reading and writing skills, the Centre ensures that they gain accreditation in basic literacy skills. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory rather than good progress because there are no long term plans for what they will learn in lessons.
50. Students throughout the Centre make good gains in their speaking and listening skills because teachers encourage them to talk through their ideas and clearly value their opinions. Students listen well to each other and enjoy opportunities for discussion. Students make satisfactory progress in their reading. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of students gain confidence in their ability to analyse and consider books such as "Of Mice and Men". However there is not a structured approach to support those students with very low reading ages. For students in Years 7, 8 and 9 the teacher ensures that there is a good focus on developing the skills of each individual student. Until recently, there have been insufficient opportunities for students to study texts but students are now reading books such as "Deep Water". Students need a lot of encouragement to put pen to paper. The most able write in detail analysing for example, scenes from "Romeo and Juliet" or producing their own poetry. Overall students make satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills but there are not always a range of strategies used to encourage the more reluctant writers to ensure that they improve their skills.
51. Teaching is good overall and has a number of strengths. Lessons are interesting and students are encouraged to develop their ideas. This was very evident in a very good lesson in which Year 10 and 11 students had to give advice to someone thinking of going into teaching. The discussions were handled very well and students encouraged to expand on their thoughts and ideas. On the whole, students are managed well and they clearly understand what is expected of them. They know their contributions are valued because teachers use praise effectively and this gives them confidence. A strength of teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is the careful planning to develop each student's skills. Work is matched to their ability and assessment used well to identify areas for improvement. Although teachers check students' work regularly and make constructive comments, work is not graded and students have no understanding of how well they are achieving. The lack of consistency in ensuring that work is dated and annotated to

show the amount of support given makes it difficult for teachers to assess how well students are doing.

52. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is no one person appointed as co-ordinator and the two teachers of Years 10 and 11 manage the subject jointly. They have ensured that resources are good and have produced high quality workbooks to support students' learning. However, there is no development plan for the subject and support and planning for the teaching of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 has been unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. There is no formal approach throughout the Centre to ensure that students' literacy skills are developed in lessons. However, teachers are good at encouraging students to contribute in discussions and, in a few subjects such as science, key words are displayed around the room. Writing skills are not as well developed and, at times, there are limited opportunities for students to write at length and because of an overuse of worksheets.

MATHEMATICS

Four lessons were observed, students' work was scrutinised and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are developing their basic numeracy skills they have limited opportunities to improve their skills in other aspects of mathematics.
 - There are good opportunities for students to pass examinations at the end of Year 11.
 - Teaching is consistently good and students have positive attitudes to this subject.
 - The use of assessment is good for older students but is not sufficiently developed for younger students.
 - The opportunities for students to use their numeracy skills are not sufficiently reinforced in other lessons.
54. Achievement and progress in mathematics is satisfactory overall. This is in line with the previous inspection. For students in Years 10 and 11 achievement is good. In the most recent national test results in 2004, students achieved passes in GCSEs and a few attained grades as high as grade D. Students in Years 10 and 11 also achieve passes in the City and Guilds Numeracy Certificate; thirty two students achieved passes last year. This represents good progress. Appropriately, higher accredited course work for students is in place though. By the end of Year 11 students understand the language of mathematics and develop their skills, for example, by working out tangent ratios using the correct key pads on calculators.
55. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students make satisfactory progress. Much of their work is based on learning basic numeracy skills. They are also developing an appropriate understanding of a range of skills and knowledge of various shapes. They can identify angles using the correct language, such as obtuse and acute and calculate degrees using protractors. Since lessons are short, and the teacher also has to work with older students studying English in the same lessons, there is a lack of planned practical application of numeracy which limits the progress students make. This is consistent with the findings from the previous inspection and improvements in the curriculum for younger students have not been effective.
56. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A strength of teaching for Years 10 and 11 is good subject knowledge, challenging activities linked to course work requirements and an understanding of the needs of students. Questioning is used well to develop and improve understanding, sensitively targeting individuals to ensure their involvement. Praise and feedback successfully encourage and motivate students. Students like lessons in mathematics

because they know they will receive good support. They are interested and work conscientiously. Although lessons for Years 7, 8 and 9 are planned to meet the needs of individuals there is a lack of joint planning with the subject co-ordinator to ensure students get a sufficiently wide curriculum. The lack of a plan for what work students will follow and systems to check their progress for those students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are unsatisfactory. Assessment is better in Years 10 and 11 and students' progress is closely monitored. Marking is satisfactory, although it does not sufficiently include what students could do to improve. Plans to include the use of computers in lessons are well advanced, but, as yet, they are not sufficiently included in lessons.

57. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The mathematics co-ordinator is a good subject specialist and enthusiastic about the subject. An appropriate syllabus is followed for older students and range of accreditation opportunities is offered. There is, however, a lack of communication and support for the temporary teacher which means that good practice is not shared. Resources are satisfactory overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Numeracy is not well promoted across the curriculum and is unsatisfactory overall. There is no formal planning to ensure that students have opportunities to practice their mathematical skills in other subjects. This prevents students from understanding the relevance and importance of mathematics in everyday life.

SCIENCE

Six lessons were observed, students' work was scrutinised and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator.

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain good passes in the accredited courses they undertake.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to develop students' knowledge and understanding.
- Students have limited opportunities to improve their own experimental and investigative skills because the science room is too small.
- The subject co-ordinator has ensured that the subject is developed well.

Commentary

59. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall which is unchanged from the last inspection. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and last year the number of passes achieved by students in Years 10 and 11 doubled and those entered for GCSE in Year 11 achieved higher grades overall. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the achievement of students is satisfactory. This group is offered extra help at lunchtime by the science department, but the shortage of teaching time in lessons limits the amount of progress they can make.
60. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have the expertise and confidence to answer students' questions about particular topics and effectively extend the learning of all students. The specialist room is too small to provide enough opportunity for students to become involved in investigative work. For this reason, the practical work conducted by teachers is often restricted to a demonstration involving individual students and group work is not attempted. Lessons are carefully planned with precise learning objectives based on assessments of what each student can do and where they need extra help. The use of appropriate praise and encouragement by teaching staff helps to maintain a positive atmosphere for learning. Lessons are imaginative through good use of ICT to support students' learning. Short topic videos and CD Rom resources are used well to explain and illustrate

experimental work, which provides varied activities that maintain students' interest. Worksheets and books are at a suitable level and students are expected to read instructions and record their findings. However, in short lessons it is difficult for teachers to assess what students have learned and set appropriate homework.

61. Leadership and management of the subject are good because the subject leader has a clear idea of strengths and areas for improvement. For example, she has identified the need to develop the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 in order to prepare them better for return to mainstream school. The use of key word cards in each science lesson is an effective way to help students broaden their knowledge of scientific terms whilst improving their literacy skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

62. Information and communication technology is not offered as a separate subject in the curriculum. Work by most students shows that they make good use of word processing, where they can change font type, colour and size and use Word Art. In maths, students use word processing and software to support learning. Students use the digital camera in media studies to produce storyboards for creating and editing videos. However, although the ICT suite is well equipped and there is a good range of resources to support learning, students' experience of ICT does not include learning about spreadsheets, databases or using computers for control and measurement. Groups of students who wish to follow a structured course (CLAIT) attend a college course and there is the option for them to follow this with ECDL. One student who is studying for GCSE is achieving very well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Two lessons were seen. Students' work and portfolios were analysed and discussions held with staff and students.

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities and interesting programmes are well planned and result in students making good progress.
- Teaching is consistently good and leads to students becoming increasingly confident in the use of a variety of media and producing high quality expressive work.
- Enthusiastic leadership has ensured that there have been good improvements in the subject in a short space of time.
- There are few opportunities for students to use ICT in a design context.

Commentary

63. All students made good progress in their drawing, painting and craft skills. They show an understanding of the work of a range of artists and how it can influence art and design. For example, the use of various media in the style of Van Gogh and Magritte, among others, was evident in the students' work. They have worked well with a range of multi-cultural resources to gain an understanding of art and design in other cultures. Students are also given the opportunity to explore current trends in art, such as graffiti and graphic novels. They are using sketchbooks effectively for practising techniques and recording thoughts and ideas. By Year 11, students are working in a range of styles and produce work which shows very good observation and handling of materials, including ceramics. Those working for GCSE are completing acceptable portfolios. They are increasingly able to work independently, but there are insufficient opportunities for collaborative work, where students can share skills and ideas.

64. Very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject is communicated to the students. This has made it possible for them to feel secure in the subject and grow in confidence and, as a result, they persevere well and are able to complete their work. This work is displayed effectively and students are proud and delighted with the results. Students are well managed and the teacher's expectations are high. Consequently students show positive attitudes, work well and show respect for each other's work. There is good individual support to each student, giving them verbal feedback and suggestions for improvement. This, together with notes attached to work, ensures that students are made aware of further opportunities for development. However, formal assessment needs further development. The curriculum is extended by developing ideas through the use of photography, but at this time the use of ICT for design is limited, although there is suitable software available. Effective use is made of the Internet to search for images and information on artists.
65. The co-ordinator has only been in post for a short time, but has made a considerable impact on the subject. She has a clear vision of how she would like to see the art and design develop within the Centre. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The subject benefits from having a dedicated area. However, this is too small, as it is not possible to accommodate more than five students comfortably, although good use is made of a small adjoining area. The subject is making a good contribution to students' cultural development, as students produce work based on African art and have the opportunity to study Native American art. Literacy skills are reinforced with the use of extended writing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (P.E.)

66. Students are currently being offered a recreational physical education programme and use local sports and leisure facilities. They enjoy the experiences and the sessions are making a positive contribution to developing their skills in a range of activities including swimming, football, unihockey, volleyball and badminton. Occasional matches are played with other teams and this develops students' social skills and their ability to cope in challenging and competitive circumstances. There are appropriate plans to develop the range of activities available to include kayaking, climbing and mountain biking.
67. There are four physical education lessons available to students each week, but not all students choose to attend. It is possible for them to avoid all physical and sporting activities. The Centre does not offer a wide range of activities for those who opt out of physical education. Currently, there are no opportunities for outside field or playground activities at break or lunch times, though a good initiative is the lunch time swimming club which enables four students to have coaching from an instructor.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Media studies

68. This year the Centre is trialling media studies GCSE with a small number of students. Students are developing an understanding of how media, such as television and newspapers, work. Students express opinions about how television adverts are used to sell products and compare and analyse two adverts to assess their merits. ICT is used very well by students to produce their own adverts such as discouraging people from smoking. Students are also developing an understanding of how to use a storyboard and have produced their own advertisements. Digital cameras are used well to show each scene and these are captioned by the students. Students receive written feedback on their work which encourages them to improve their ideas, but there are no grades to enable students to understand how well they are doing. Students do not often date their work, which makes it difficult for teachers to assess the progress they are making over time. The subject is enthusiastically led and there are good plans for further developments.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

No judgement has been made on the overall provision for this subject as not enough lessons were seen and there is very limited evidence of students' work.

69. Insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of PSHE and citizenship. As a result it is not possible for the Centre to teach programmes that adequately support students' personal development. In Years 7, 8 and 9 limited time is allocated on the timetable for PSHE and citizenship and this is unsatisfactory. However these students benefit from informal occasions with the teacher to talk about current events and matters that are concerning them. Whole Centre projects such as an anti smoking week support students well, but these are not held on a regular basis. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good programmes for drugs education, which is supported by a member of the Youth Offending Team. There are plans in place to develop provision and resources are being improved.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the Centre	4
How inclusive the Centre is	4
How the Centre's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the Centre	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Students' achievement	4

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

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 students' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-Centre activities	5
Accommodation and resources	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for students	4
How well the Centre seeks and acts on students' views	4
The effectiveness of the Centre's links with parents	4
The quality of the Centre's links with the community	4
The Centre's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the Centre	4
The governance of the Centre	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
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).

* In a Centre such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to students' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.