



# Dorchester Learning Centre

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 130316  
**LEA** Dorset  
**Inspection number** 282136  
**Inspection dates** 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jacque Cook AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	The Old Rectory
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit		Winterbourne Monkton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16		Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9PS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 261213
<b>Number on roll</b>	80	<b>Fax number</b>	01305 261505
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr Peter Gregson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Taylor

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The Dorchester Learning Centre is on three sites and provides education for pupils who are out of school. This includes children who are admitted to the County Hospital, which has a specialised hospital education unit. The two other sites are just outside Dorchester and in Bridport. Of the 85 pupils on roll, 73 are also on the roll of a mainstream school. Nineteen pupils have a statement of special educational needs, nine are looked-after children and there are two traveller children. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. Comparison is not made with the previous report because, since the previous inspection, the local authority has changed the provision. It is now radically different in age range, pupil numbers and sites.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall effectiveness of the centre is good, in keeping with its own judgement. The centre is very good at meeting the broad range of needs of the pupils through the many courses offered and the links with other providers, including work experience. There is a good capacity to improve further as the good leadership and management have introduced successfully many initiatives to improve the curriculum and raise pupils' achievement. Pupils make good progress overall, and very good and often outstanding progress in English. Information about how well they are doing, however, is not passed on regularly enough to parents. Good monitoring and evaluating procedures ensure the centre provides good value for money and have contributed to the good quality of teaching and learning. Strong relationships between staff and pupils support good personal and social development. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to contribute to the work of the centre and develop a sense of ownership. The opportunities for pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle are not fully effective because many choose not to act on what they have learned.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give pupils opportunities to influence the work of the centre.
- Make more effective provision to help pupils develop a healthy lifestyle.
- Provide parents with information about the progress their children are making at the centre more often.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. Many join the centre with low levels of attainment because of their previously disrupted education. From this low base a significant number achieve standards that are in line with or above national averages in the subjects they study. Most achieve well at the centre and make good progress in their lessons. Pupils often make outstanding progress in English. This is due to the high quality of the teaching, which successfully challenges the pupils to do their best. Work is very well tailored to pupils' needs and interests, and this leads to pupils from travelling families doing particularly well. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs also make good progress. Very good progress is made in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Pupils say they enjoy learning about the relevant topics that are taught. The standards of work in art and design are high and many pupils at the Bridport site achieve GCSE examination grades in this subject. Pupils in the hospital school make good progress whether working on their schoolwork or on specially designed modules. All pupils make good progress towards suitably challenging targets that are set on their individual education plans. The number of pupils who make enough progress to return to a mainstream school is good. Pupils are well prepared for their return and as a result, most do not need to come back to the centre.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The good personal development and well-being of pupils is reflected in the evident enjoyment that they take in their lessons and their improved sense of achievement and purpose. They begin to learn again and many do well in their examinations and gain key skills to help them in the future and at work. Those in the hospital school feel a sense of normality by keeping up with their schoolwork, which they look forward to. Pupils are polite to each other and to staff and they appreciate the respectful way they are treated. Because of this, their behaviour improves significantly and is good overall. Attendance for most of the pupils is good and much better than in their previous schools. Pupils do know how to keep safe and there is almost no bullying; any that does occur is quickly nipped in the bud. Pupils are well informed about how to stay healthy but are not always keen to make healthy choices. Many take advantage of eating the fruit that is available at the Bridport site at breaks, but not all pupils take part in sporting activities. More needs to be done about pupils smoking. Although some have successfully given up recently, a few continue to smoke outside the buildings. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. The development of pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent, resulting in a sense of respect and calm throughout the day. Pupils show a particularly keen enjoyment of art and understand how other cultures, in Africa, for example, develop. The pupils contribute to the local community well, through activities such as fundraising, helping primary pupils with football and organising a café offering locally produced food to the public. However, they do not have any real opportunity to contribute to the running of the centre, which limits their sense of ownership and responsibility.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good quality of teaching and learning is a major factor in pupils gaining self-confidence and striving to learn. There are instances where teaching and learning are outstanding, particularly in English and sometimes in art and design. Pupils' work shows that these lessons have exciting activities and pupils' interest is gained and sustained. The staff build strong relationships with the pupils and know how best to encourage learning. Pupils respond well to humorous comments which often contribute towards maintaining their good behaviour. There is a good level of subject expertise, and in most instances the quality of lesson plans is good. They are notably good at the hospital school, where a very good bank of prepared modules of work have detailed teaching plans included. Good use is made of resources. In information and communication technology (ICT), for example, pupils develop skills in using the interactive whiteboard, illustrating storyboards in preparation for making a 'scary movie.' Teaching assistants are effective in providing just the right level of support to ensure pupils' progress is maintained. In a few lessons, pupils' learning, although satisfactory, is not at such a good pace because teachers do not make sufficiently clear

to the pupils what they are expected to learn. Occasionally, there is not enough variety in the teaching methods used. For example, too many worksheets are used in science. Assessment procedures are good. Work is marked well and in the best examples, clear information is provided on what the pupil needs to do next. The effective use of a computer-based assessment process is very helpful in pinpointing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding so they can be remedied.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It is outstanding in the flexibility offered to enable each pupil to follow their interests, keep up with coursework and achieve important qualifications. A number of courses at the Bridport and Dorchester centres ensure that pupils are well prepared for work or college. They develop their basic skills, including a good knowledge of ICT, improve their interpersonal skills and provide a broad experience of the world of work, including vocational activities. PSHE and citizenship are particularly good in this respect. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Their individual education plans have clear targets that prioritise what needs to be developed. At the hospital school there is an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science. Although ICT is used, it is not taught specifically, so pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to improve their skills in this popular and important subject. For pupils who are in hospital for longer periods, there are good arrangements with almost all schools for work to be provided, so progress is maintained. There are several enrichment activities to broaden pupils' understanding, knowledge and enjoyment of the world around them. These include an exciting go-kart project and a 'community café.' This element of the curriculum is outstanding, with further exciting initiatives just beginning. The provision to help pupils keep safe is very good, but the work undertaken to help pupils learn how to keep healthy is less effective.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Rigorous systems to safeguard pupils' welfare ensure that all pupils are kept safe. The centre has a wide range of provision to help pupils develop personally, including breakfast and lunch clubs and visits to improve their social skills. Courses such as 'understanding anger' are valued by pupils. Arrangements to support students in achieving high standards are very good. There is a thorough system to monitor and support individual students in reaching their targets, overseen by a key worker. Information on pupils' progress is not yet shared well with parents so that they can continue the centre's good work at home, but the centre is beginning to explore ways of doing this regularly. The role of the pupil programme officer is very effective in ensuring that all pupils are appropriately placed in groups, their progress is monitored and attendance rigorously checked. Vulnerable pupils are carefully tracked to ensure they have every chance of being successful at the centre. Close and effective links are maintained with the looked-after

children team and with the traveller education support service. The centre also provides high quality information for pupils on which courses to take and what steps to take when they leave.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The good leadership and management of the centre have developed a cohesive team of staff who work well together and are committed to improving the education for the pupils. A clear sense of direction has led to a broad range of initiatives that have improved the quality of the curriculum. Courses have been successfully developed at the Bridport site and enrichment days and activity weeks introduced. Pupils with a history of underachieving are doing well and increasingly they are gaining qualifications. Links with the mainstream schools that make up the centre's catchment area are well developed. Through the recent invitation to join 17 other schools working together, the expertise of the staff from the centre is to be used further. The track record of improvement is good and the capacity to improve further is also good. The work of the centre is monitored and evaluated well. Subject co-ordinators, for example, are well aware of the standards the pupils are achieving, the progress being made and relevant targets. The local authority inspectorate and head of the service for children out of school provide a clear external perspective which complements the work of the headteacher and staff effectively. As a result, the self-evaluation process is accurate and comprehensive. The headteacher is rightly confident in the skills of the staff. However, because the hospital school runs so smoothly, visits are not made regularly enough. As a result, difficulties are not readily identified. For example, the part-time teacher-in-charge does not have enough time to carry out some important duties, such as attending multi-disciplinary meetings about pupils. Governance of the centre is good. The management committee and the Friends of the Zone are well informed and provide a good level of challenge to the head of service, who attends their meetings. Financial management is also good. For example, bids for funding or for new developments such as the refurbishment of the kitchen are well prepared and rigorously scrutinised.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 May 2006 Dear Pupils Thank you very much for making my colleague and I feel welcome when we visited recently. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with you. This is what we liked about the centre:

- there is an interesting range of courses available so that you can make good progress in your work
- the leadership and management of the centre are good and have introduced many new activities successfully
- links with schools and other providers work well
- you make very good and often outstanding progress in English
- your behaviour improves well
- the teaching is good.

This is what we have asked the centre to do now:

- give you more opportunities to influence what the centre does
- help you to develop a healthy lifestyle more effectively
- give information to your parents about how well you are doing at the centre more frequently.

Best wishes Jacque Cook Lead Inspector  
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