



St David's Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130991
LEA Herefordshire
Inspection number 282159
Inspection dates 15 November 2005 to 15 November 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Coningsby Street
School category	Pupil referral unit		Hereford
Age range of pupils	14 to 16		Herefordshire HR1 2DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01432 274485
Number on roll	22	Fax number	01432 351695
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Julie Smith
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Steve THOMPSON

Age group 14 to 16	Inspection dates 15 November 2005 - 15 November 2005	Inspection number 282159
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This pupil referral unit caters for students excluded from the secondary schools of Herefordshire, those with medical problems that have hindered their attendance at school and pregnant school girls. At the time of the inspection there were 22 students, 17 boys and 5 girls. Five students have statements of special educational need. All students are White British. There is no specific programme for returning students to mainstream schools. Students enter the centre sometime during Years 10 and 11 and most move from the centre into further education or employment. The head of centre was appointed in September 2003, at the time the centre moved into new accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The centre's views of itself are too modest and are in contrast with the inspectors' findings. St David's Centre is an outstanding pupil referral unit that provides excellent value for money. The head of centre has made an outstanding start and is leading a centre that students and their parents report as 'brilliant'. The relationships between students and staff are excellent, as is the level of care and guidance. These, and very high quality teaching of a curriculum that matches very well with students' needs, help students make excellent progress in their learning and in their personal and social development. Over their time at the centre they become sufficiently mature and responsible to anticipate success at the next stage of their education or when they start work. Past students agree that the centre is a 'life changing' place. The centre keeps excellent records on the progress students make, but makes too little use of this information in judging their progress against those in other schools and units. The management committee needs to keep a closer watch on who is admitted to the centre. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure the management committee fully meet its remit, especially as this applies to the admission of students
- continue to develop the procedures for recognising the effectiveness of the centre.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The students make outstanding progress because the centre makes them feel very comfortable as young people and as learners. Those who in the past refused to go to school (for up to two years for some students) and others who had serious difficulties in dealing with the demands and expectations of their schools see the centre as giving them a second chance in education.

The outstanding way in which staff deal with students' personal and social issues helps them re-engage with their learning. This is the strength of the centre. Over the time they are there, students become increasingly self-confident and self-assured and learn to apply themselves more purposefully to their work. Many openly say that there were times when they thought education had passed them by and they would never sit an examination, let alone anticipate success.

They do outstandingly well. Last year, 92% of the 24 leavers left with a range of nationally accredited awards that reflected their capabilities and the extent of their learning. Sixty percent gained one pass at GCSE and 33% gained three or more passes. Most gained entry level awards and six students either the bronze or the silver ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network). Many completed Assessment and Qualification Authority (AQA) units and six students are working towards the junior sports leader award. The progress the students make in their personal and social

development and in their learning prepares them outstandingly well for life after the centre. Sixteen of last year's leavers enrolled on courses in colleges of further education or art, four gained employment, three continue to seek employment and one has moved out of county. These remarkably good figures show a placement percentage well above the expectations of the Connexions advisors for students in equivalent units.

A very small number of students do not attend regularly and consequently make very little progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The excellent relationships between students and staff underpin all the work of the centre. Students quickly gain confidence in the staff. They learn to trust and respect them and to confide in them. All staff are excellent role models. They are friendly and supportive and have very high expectations for behaviour and learning. They provide clear guidance on what is right and wrong, what are acceptable actions, the importance of belief and of developing positive attitudes to cultural diversity.

The centre is ordered and calm because students behave excellently. The code of conduct is made clear to students when they join and the expectation is that they will abide by this. They are helped by the information they gain from the precise records staff keep on their learning, conduct and emotional behaviours. These records show what behaviours they should focus on, for example showing more respect to other students or not engaging in verbal aggression. Also, they help motivate the students, as their week-on-week records show improvement.

Most of the students attend regularly, much more so than was the case in their previous schools. The importance of being punctual, especially once in employment, is stressed. The students accept this and learn to be at the centre for a prompt 09.00 start. There is little lost time.

The centre emphasises the need for a healthy lifestyle through lessons in physical education and outdoor activities. An increasing number of students are signing up for the 'healthy' lunch option. Links with the community are limited, but the visits organised by the Work Experience Coordinator to local businesses, shops and industries as part of the work experience programme are of considerable benefit to students.

Past students regularly visit to tell staff what they are doing and offer their thanks for the way in which the centre turned their lives around. Parents are grateful too and report that 'the centre is a brilliant stepping stone into the adult world because it teaches our children another way, a better way, of life'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Classes are small and the non-teaching assistants provide very skilled support for teachers. Because of this, lessons are friendlier and students gain more support than was the case in their other schools. They enjoy this and quickly become confident and comfortable as learners and work hard to do their best. For example, in one lesson in English, they had fun ordering the lines of a poem that they had been given as separate sentences. All students, including one who was initially reticent, enjoyed the task and learnt about strategies, such as repetition when discussing the meaning of the poem. Teachers know their students very well and most lessons are taught by those with specialist knowledge or skills in the subject. Both these factors help planning meet the needs of all students, even when they may be taking different awards in the same lesson.

The classrooms are attractive places in which to learn and the resources for most subjects are good. There is increasing use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Teachers are adept at using many strategies in dealing outstandingly well with students' learning and additional needs, but there is little use of ICT.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is relevant to students' learning and additional needs. It is successful in helping students re-engage in their learning as a first step to preparing them very well for life after they leave the centre. They are able to study a good range of GCSE subjects which include English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history and physical education. They take the entry level award in English, mathematics and science and other awards, such as the junior sports leader award, ASDAN and AQA units.

The curriculum is innovative because a local initiative, the St David's award, links life skills, such as getting on with people, making good use of time and living responsibly, with learning in the academic subjects. For the students, this is an excellent idea because often it is their inability to apply life skills, such as using time well, that gets in the way of their learning. They take the award at bronze, silver and gold levels and local colleges are beginning to accept the award as meaningful additional information when assessing students for admission.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and guidance for students are excellent. Child protection requirements and safety procedures are firmly established and understood by staff and students. The

outstanding relationships between staff and students provide many opportunities for them to talk informally about matters to do with learning, the way they are acting or planning for their futures. The detailed records kept for the St David's award are used very well in forming individual targets that have a powerful effect in developing the students as learners and as young people. Connexions advisers work very closely with the centre. They provide very effective advice and support on the opportunities available. The students greatly appreciate the practical help they are given, for example in enrolling on college courses, those who need it gain expert advice from the drug counsellor and the smoking cessation officer.

The procedures for ensuring that students attend regularly are exemplary. Telephone contact during the first hour of absence, parental visits to school, home visits by staff and the regular letters to parents that give their children's weekly attendance, and show how it is changing week on week, all contribute to making obvious the importance of attending the centre to both students and their parents.

Four pupils with statements of special educational need are wrongly placed at the centre. Two have a special school as the named school on their statements and are 'waiting' for an undisclosed period of time at the centre until places are available at the school. Two other students have curriculum requirements that cannot be met by the centre, which is not guided by National Curriculum orders.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The head of centre has had an excellent beginning. He sets the highest of standards and expects others to achieve the same high standards. He is fully supported by all staff, who work together as a very close-knit group. They have a detailed knowledge of their responsibilities and carry them out very effectively and with good cheer. The centre is a joy to visit. It is a happy and purposeful place for both students and staff.

The head of centre has a clear vision for the future and the confidence to make decisions in line with that vision. Establishing the St David's award to add coherence to the curriculum is a very good example. His capacity for leading further improvement is outstanding. He recognises, for example, the importance of self-evaluation in continued development and is in the process of implementing annual performance management procedures for all staff, equivalent to those already operating for teachers. Also, he is extending the procedures that record the progress of students so that they provide information on, for example, year-on-year improvement and allow comparison with information gained from outside the centre.

The management committee is supportive, but it does not challenge the head of centre enough to show how good the centre really is. The committee is not protecting the quality of the provision because students with statements of educational need are being admitted whose learning and additional needs cannot be met.

A key issue for action at the last inspection was to make the building fit for purpose. The local authority has fully achieved this by re-locating the centre into excellent new accommodation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	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

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

St David's Centre Coninsby Street Hereford HR1 2DY

18 November 2005

Dear Students

I very much enjoyed spending time with you and would like to thank you for talking with me about your work and St David's. I think, as you and your parents do, that you gain great benefit from being at St David's.

- You make outstanding progress in becoming more mature and responsible and in being better able to cope with day-to-day living, and this helps you make the same progress in your learning.
- The teachers and the non-teaching assistants are excellent at their jobs. They are exceptional at helping you deal with your difficulties, so that you become excited about your learning.
- What you learn in the subjects, and about yourself, is right for you and this helps prepare you very well for life after you leave the centre.
- You are looked after exceptionally well.
- You enjoy being at the centre and this shows in the very good way you behave in lessons, the polite way in which you talk to visitors and in your regular attendance.
- The centre is led and managed outstandingly well, which helps make it such a well organised and happy place.
- The new building is excellent. I like very much the way you respect it and the many presentations of your work that are displayed throughout the building.

I would like just two things to be done better.

- The committee that helps manage the centre does not help the head of centre enough.
- The procedures for recognising how good the centre is need to be more precise.

With best wishes,

Dr Alan Dobbins Lead Inspector