



Shepwell Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131619
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 282237
Inspection dates 2 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Steven Parker AI

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

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|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Bilston Lane |
| School category | Pupil referral unit | | Walsall |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 | | West Midlands WV13 2QF |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01902 632719 |
| Number on roll | 1 | Fax number | 01902 632719 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | |
| Date of previous inspection | 23 April 2002 | Headteacher | Mrs Cath Ruane |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Shepwell Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) serving the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall. The centre provides support for vulnerable, secondary-aged pupils who have experienced a range of difficulties in mainstream schools, relating to their emotional, psychological or medical difficulties or pregnancy. Pupils are dual registered in both their home school and the centre. Most are expected to spend up to a year at the centre, before returning to school. A smaller number, who join the centre later in their school career, stay on to complete their studies, before transferring to college, training or employment at the end of Year 11. The centre is part of the authority's Complementary Education Service. The backgrounds of pupils on roll reflect the varied socio-economic character of the catchment area. None speak English as an additional language. The centre was rehoused in new accommodation in July 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shepwell Centre is a good PRU, where pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. The centre knows its strengths and weaknesses well, but judges itself to be only satisfactory, largely because its formal systems for monitoring pupils' progress are not yet strong enough. Teaching that is good overall, together with a good, relevant curriculum, helps pupils to make good progress in their studies. This means that they can return successfully to a mainstream school to finish their education or achieve creditable results in certificated examinations at the end of their stay in the centre. Pupils are very happy to attend the centre, often significantly improving their previously poor attendance. The excellent care and guidance pupils receive helps them to develop a belief in their own capabilities, so that they become much more confident and independent. Families are also very appreciative of the sensitive and very well focused pastoral support that they and their children receive. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to excellent. The centre's approach to assessing pupils' progress is also variable. In academic subjects it is particularly weak in science, and staff rely too much on anecdotal evidence when assessing pupils' personal development. The centre is well led by a manager who works in a very productive partnership with her capable service manager colleagues and an outstanding management committee. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection, ensuring that the centre has good, continuing capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good.
- Develop more formal and structured procedures to celebrate pupils' progress more accurately, particularly in their personal development.
- Ensure that assessment is consistently applied across the centre, so that pupils' academic progress is also more effectively tracked.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many pupils arrive at the centre performing well below the national average, because of their previous limited and often negative experience of school. The good teaching and encouragement that they experience helps them to make good progress in their learning, and many consequently attain national expectations in GCSE and other accredited courses. Even in science, where teaching is not as good as in other subjects, pupils' progress is satisfactory. The work they produce in art and design is particularly impressive. Whilst the formal systems for tracking pupils' progress are limited, it is clear that they make excellent progress in developing their social skills and improving their self-esteem. As a result, they have increasing confidence in their ability to learn, enabling them to work towards meeting challenging but realistic targets, so that they achieve results that most would previously not have believed possible. Basic skills are very strongly promoted, ensuring that those pupils who return to mainstream schools

continue to make good progress across a range of subjects. There are no discernable differences between the performance of girls and boys or those with additional needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent and many feel that their life chances have been transformed by attending the centre. They thoroughly enjoy lessons and work conscientiously to improve their skills. This positive experience of school changes their attitude significantly for the better, and many attend regularly for the first time in their school career, often travelling long distances, independently, on public transport. They speak highly of the outstanding relationships that are nurtured between staff and themselves, expressing particularly strong appreciation of the learning mentor's support and guidance. Clearly expressed, positive expectations of behaviour help pupils to manage their behaviour and keep safe. As a result, their behaviour is outstanding, and the buddy system that links new arrivals with more mature pupils enables continuity of the mutual respect that is encouraged across the centre. Pupils feel confident that any anti-social behaviour will be dealt with quickly and effectively, and pupils say they feel secure because of this. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is because the centre provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to consider issues of concern, work and play together and experience cultural diversity. Pupils are keen to take responsibility, demonstrating a very strong awareness of their role as citizens within the centre and in the wider community. They contribute much to the centre's life by influencing the way it operates, through membership of the school council. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their study and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some outstanding activity being balanced by less successful practice, most notably in science. In most lessons, staff encourage pupils to work successfully through their initial negativity, planning their work carefully to take full account of individual learning needs, teaching to pupils' strengths and providing lively, enjoyable lessons. The centre works collaboratively with pupils' home schools to ensure that targets take account of their prior learning, whilst challenging them to be ambitious for the future. Older pupils who are taking examinations that require course work are helped very effectively to build up their portfolios in, sometimes, short periods of time. Teachers' subject expertise is well used, so that pupils can enter successfully for a range of GCSE and other accredited qualifications. Where teaching is not so good, lessons lack pace and fail to bring the subject alive. Teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning is inconsistent, but satisfactory overall. The best examples of developing practice recognise and value pupils' varying

learning styles. Occasionally, however, planning does not take proper account of these considerations, expecting all pupils to do the same work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, because it is well planned to provide an interesting and engaging range of activities that are relevant to pupils' needs. It has been much improved since the last inspection. A major challenge for the centre is the wide range of ability that pupils have. Careful individual tailoring of learning programmes ensures that all pupils are appropriately stretched and experience successful learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to experience practical and physical activities through art and design, design and technology, and sports. A well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme plays an important part in helping pupils to understand the need to live healthily and stay safe. There are well advanced plans in place to expand the vocational aspect through, for example, the nearly completed, high quality food technology facility that will offer a catering course. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits that bring the humanities subjects to life. Pupils are very well prepared for work through a comprehensive programme of careers advice and a fast developing work experience programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. It is a significant strength of the centre's work and is much appreciated by pupils and parents alike. The extremely well focused pastoral work of all the staff ensures that pupils are nurtured sensitively and effectively. It focuses on helping them to deal successfully with their own difficulties, so that they can develop appropriate coping strategies, face the world much more confidently and, consequently, achieve well in their studies. Pupils' individual action plans provide a very good focus for the most important basic skills and personal development targets. The learning mentor provides extremely effective encouragement for pupils to work towards these targets, and highly regarded reintegration support for those who return to mainstream schools. Her work with parents and carers to enable them to support their children's learning is also highly valued. Child protection procedures are rigorous and secure, and all staff have pupils' welfare at the centre of their concern. Pupils benefit from very good guidance for courses and career progression and are helped considerably by the excellent collaborative links that the centre has with a wide range of professionals. The exchange of information between the centre, other schools and services and parents and carers is highly effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The centre manager has provided good leadership for her colleagues during the period since the last inspection and, in collaboration with the service manager, has managed the process of considerable improvements across all aspects of the centre's accommodation, resources and activities very well. She has a clearly expressed vision for how the centre should continue to develop, reflecting her long-standing support for the rights of vulnerable young people to be included in mainstream education, wherever possible. The multi-professional management committee has developed an exemplary approach to supporting the centre's work, whilst approaching its responsibility to hold it to account with rigour and sensitivity. This effective partnership has ensured that there are high quality multi-agency working practices. The centre's awareness of its strengths and weaknesses is good. The centre manager has worked in successful partnership with local authority colleagues to monitor performance well overall, and this has ensured that any identified weaknesses are being properly addressed as development priorities. The centre recognises, however, that there are some inadequacies in the way information is gathered and used to demonstrate the progress that pupils make over time in their academic achievement and personal development. There are plans in place to remedy this situation. The centre's resources are well managed and it has a good capacity to continue improving.

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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> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 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

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 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

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 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 | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | 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 | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 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? | 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 | 1 | 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 | 1 | 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

Dear Pupils

As you know, I recently visited your centre to find out how well you are doing and how effectively the staff help you. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, showing me your work, some of which really impressed me, and talking so openly about how you feel. I really enjoyed being with you and finding out your views. I particularly appreciated your honesty about some of the difficulties you have experienced in mainstream schools and was very pleased to hear how much you appreciate the support and guidance that you and your families get from the centre staff.

What I liked about your centre

- It is a very positive place, where good teaching and a range of activities relevant to your needs help you to learn well.
- Teachers encourage you to work hard and do the best you can.
- Those of you that stay in the centre until you are 16 achieve some creditable results in exams.
- Those of you that return to mainstream schools are helped to settle in very well with the sensitive support of centre staff.
- Teachers and other staff look after you exceptionally well. This helps you to mature into more confident young adults and feel good about yourselves.
- You particularly appreciate the support you get from the learning mentor.
- The centre is led and managed well.

What I have asked the centre to do

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good.
- Find better ways of demonstrating how well the centre is doing its job, particularly in relation to your personal development.
- Collect and analyse information more effectively to show the progress you make over time.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead inspector