



# Educational Diversity

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131772  
**LEA** Blackpool  
**Inspection number** 282255  
**Inspection dates** 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Alastair Younger

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit	<b>School address</b>	278a Whitegate Drive
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit		Blackpool
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16		Lancashire, FY3 9JW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 476563
<b>Number on roll</b>	244	<b>Fax number</b>	01253 476665
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr Alan Matthews
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Kathryn Boulton

<b>Age group</b> 5 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 282255
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a large and complex pupil referral unit for pupils from Blackpool. It operates on eight different sites. All pupils have experienced difficulties in coping with school life, and attainment on entry is usually low. About three quarters have been permanently excluded from previous schools. The rest are also on the roll of other schools. About a fifth of pupils attend because they have experienced great difficulty in attending school on account of medical or mental health problems, or because they are pregnant schoolgirls. Most pupils are from very disadvantaged backgrounds. Many pupils are new to the area, reflecting the highly transient population of Blackpool. Thirty five pupils have a statement of special educational need. Almost three quarters of pupils are in Years 10 or 11. The unit is led and managed by a recently appointed local authority officer who has many other responsibilities. An assistant manager is responsible for the day to day running of the unit.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

The unit judges itself to be satisfactory but inspectors feel that it is not sufficiently effective because in most centres the curriculum is not varied enough and pupils do not spend enough time learning. Teaching is satisfactory, so pupils make satisfactory progress but the range of subjects they are taught is narrow. This means that the full potential of many pupils is not realised and they are not achieving as well as they could. Consequently, this contributes to the difficulties with reintegration and too many, including those with statements of special educational need, remain on roll for long periods.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the management and development of the curriculum and in reducing the length of stay of pupils.

Teachers show a good understanding of pupils' personal needs and most are skilled in preventing bad behaviour in class but many are not using assessment effectively enough to help pupils achieve more. Parents are happy with the progress their children are making. Most pupils behave well and the unit is good at helping them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Attendance is a problem. About one in four days is lost through absence.

The new head of the unit has been successful in merging the eight centres but management of the curriculum has been neglected and there are inequalities in the opportunities offered to pupils. Comparisons between centres are being made to help overcome the current inequality of opportunity for pupils. The head is being well supported by the local authority and the management committee. This joint involvement puts it in a position to take the necessary steps to improve. At the moment the unit is not making the best possible use of staffing or resources and is not giving enough value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Bring greater variety to the curriculum and improve its management.
- Work more closely with schools and colleges to speed up return to mainstream education.
- Improve the quality, accuracy and use of assessment of pupils' learning.
- Make more efficient use of staff and resources.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Information about prior attainment rarely accompanies pupils when they first arrive but pupils are quickly assessed and realistic individual targets are set. Progress towards

these is reviewed frequently and confirms that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. The greatest success is seen in English. In all centres a good amount of time is spent helping pupils to improve their reading and writing and teaching is often good. Last year, all Year 11 pupils gained a qualification in English and for many this was a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Pupils also meet with success in mathematics and personal, health and social education. In most centres insufficient time is spent teaching subjects other than these, to give pupils all pupils a realistic chance of making the progress they are capable of. For instance, at the Cherwell centre only four hours a week is given to teaching all other subjects. A notable exception is the Speedwell Centre, where last year's leavers achieved an outstanding degree of success in GCSE examinations and awards scheme development and accreditation network (ASDAN) assessments in a wide range of subjects. There are other exceptions; opportunities at Isis and Winstone are expanding and last year, three pupils gained GCSE passes in art and many others gained awards recognising skills such as working with others, problem solving and citizenship. The progress being made by older pupils is evident in the high numbers who enter college, training or work when they leave but there is much less success in returning younger pupils to school. Differences in the achievement of groups of pupils relate more to their attendance and time spent in the unit than to their personal circumstances or ethnicity.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the unit that pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The unit has notable success in improving pupils' behaviour. No misbehaviour was seen by inspectors other than at the Oxford Centre; at Isis, Cherwell and Speedwell pupils were particularly well behaved and polite to their visitors. Pupils have been involved in raising money for a variety of good causes and show a growing awareness of social and moral responsibility and cultural diversity. They are helped to look after themselves physically and in their relationships. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to the unit but absence remains a big factor in slowing progress and reflects the lack of enjoyment of others. Pupils enjoy a good amount of physical activity and are strongly encouraged to lead healthy lives. The progress they make in improving their numeracy and literacy skills and developing better attitudes and behaviour is greatly helping to improve their future prospects but the curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not include enough work-based opportunities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the unit that teaching is satisfactory. One of the keys to success is the way that teachers show an in depth understanding of pupils' difficulties and circumstances and this helps them to form relationships in which pupils accept that

teachers are there to help them learn. Many pupils are easily discouraged if things go wrong but most teachers are preparing work which challenges them without out-facing them. There are occasions, however, when the challenge is not sufficient and pupils become bored and uncooperative. One of the few instances of misbehaviour seen was the result of this. Teaching assistants help pupils and teachers alike. They offer satisfactory support for behaviour as well as learning. Some of the best teaching was observed at the Cherwell Centre, which was well planned, fun and enthusiastic.

The unit has identified the need to improve the assessment of pupils work. Its own monitoring of teaching has shown that too much work is marked without enough guidance being given as to how pupils can avoid making the same mistakes and without enough encouragement being given to help them achieve more. It was evident in a few lessons, and in teachers' records, that improved assessment would enable teachers to set more challenging tasks which recognise pupils' previous learning and encourage them to put what they have learned in earlier lessons to better use.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 4**

The unit feels that the curriculum is satisfactory but this is not the case. It is the main contributing factor to the unit's lack of effectiveness and is one of the reasons why attendance is so low. Timetables show a huge emphasis on numeracy and literacy and an allocation of time that at least matches recommendations for all schools. There is also a good, much needed range of activities to help pupils in their personal, social and health education. As a result, in all of these areas pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. However, pupils spend much less time in lessons than they would in mainstream schools and the results are that there is insufficient time for them to learn and develop skills in many other subjects, and very little opportunity for enrichment activities. This denies pupils the opportunity to achieve success in areas that they may particularly enjoy or be good at, and results in a rather boring diet for many. The Key Stage 4 curriculum pays insufficient attention to work based activities. There are very limited college links, and work experience and training opportunities are few and short term. At the Isis Centre all pupils have the same curriculum, irrespective of their ability. This results in higher attaining pupils not having the same opportunities to gain qualifications to reflect their achievement as their counterparts in the Speedwell Centre do, where the curriculum is the strongest in the unit.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are well cared for. The unit has a good record of chasing up reasons for pupil absence. It does what it can to establish the whereabouts of all pupils and when necessary other agencies are quickly alerted to problems. There are good health and safety procedures. All staff have appropriate training in child protection and procedures are rigorously followed. Activities are risk assessed and this extends to pupils with extreme behaviour difficulties to ensure that they are handled with minimum risk to themselves or others. Pupils enjoy good, supportive relationships with staff, especially

with their 'project workers' who transfer with class groups from lesson to lesson to offer continuing, consistent support throughout each day. Progress is reviewed regularly, with the full involvement of pupils and parents. Older pupils receive the careers guidance they are entitled to and all pupils are given good advice on protecting their health and safety. Weaknesses in assessment of progress contribute to teachers not always offering sufficient guidance to pupils as to how they can make better progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The unit feels that leadership and management are satisfactory but inspectors feel that, although there are many signs of improvement, there are still weaknesses and that leadership and management overall are unsatisfactory. The headteacher has quickly succeeded in drawing together a wide range of provision into a more coherent service. The result of this is that a more professional atmosphere has been created and staff morale has risen. A good business plan, laying out a clear agenda for improvement, has been produced. Monitoring and evaluation, especially of teaching, has been improved, with a good contribution from the local education authority. Suitable performance indicators have been identified and a start has been made to comparing the effectiveness of different centres. The senior management team receive good support from the management committee. These factors all lead to the judgement that the unit has the capacity to improve.

Although improving the curriculum has been included as an objective in the business plan, sufficient progress has not been made. The local authority has not provided a curriculum policy for the unit, so there is no way of establishing what pupils' entitlement is. There is no overview of the curriculum and no staff have responsibility for monitoring and developing each subject across all centres. Therefore, the curriculum is a weakness. This has contributed to pupils not achieving as well as they can because of the limited opportunities they are given. An audit of use of staff time has been commissioned, showing that the management are aware of inefficiencies, largely the result of the short unit day. Pupil absence also leads to inefficiencies because it means that many classes end up much smaller than they need to be. These weaknesses in leadership and management result in the overall judgement being that it is inadequate.

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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>	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	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	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	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>	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	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

<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	No
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	No

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

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Dear Pupils

A few of you may remember one or two of us who visited your centre the other day. We came to see how you were getting on with your work and how well staff were helping you. Thanks to all of you who spared a bit of time to talk to us.

We went away with mixed feelings and we are looking for improvements. We think you're getting on OK and doing particularly well in English. We thought your behaviour was good (most of you), so good in fact that it made us wonder why more of you aren't getting back to school more quickly. Our biggest worry was that we didn't think you were being taught enough subjects. We think that most of you ought to be in class a bit longer each day to prepare you for the world of work or for going back to school. We're not suggesting yet more English and maths but we are asking your centres to make sure that any extra time is used to give you a bit more variety. With a bit of luck this might mean that you are keener to attend, because at the moment a few of you aren't attending as much as you could. We are also asking teachers to check your work a bit more thoroughly and make more comments to explain how you could improve it. We hope that at the same time it will help teachers to expect a bit more of some of you.

All the best

Alastair Younger  
Lead inspector

Annex B