



Wimborne Learning Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131827
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 282263
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Frank Price RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	School Lane
School category	Pupil referral unit		Wimborne
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Dorset BH21 1HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 886947
Number on roll	52	Fax number	01202 886 947
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Pratten
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr Ian Hedley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Wimborne Learning Centre provides educational provision and support for children who are not able to attend school because of permanent exclusion and medical problems. A few students are awaiting a suitable placement in an alternative school. Some students are taught at home, before either attending the centre or returning to their school. The centre supports students in other schools who are at risk of being excluded. The area from which students attend is a mix of urban and rural, with a number of pockets of deprivation. Forty per cent of students are in receipt of free school meals. No students have English as a second language. The centre covers three separate sites. An acting zone manager was appointed in September 2005 until the post can be filled permanently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wimborne learning centre is an improving pupil referral unit. The students who attend the centre are usually disaffected learners and it helps them to engage in learning again. Students make adequate progress. They gain satisfactory passes in examinations and other externally accredited qualifications. The time available for lessons has been too limited, although this has been improved recently. This has resulted in students undertaking a reduced number of examinations. Information on students' progress is not used effectively in setting challenging targets to encourage them to achieve at higher levels. Effective action has been taken by the zone manager and local authority management committee to identify and address these areas for improvement.

Students make good progress in improving their behaviour. They clearly enjoy learning and make good efforts to improve their attendance. They are encouraged to adopt healthier and safer lifestyles. They are effectively prepared and supported back into school, college, training or the workplace. Teachers develop close, supportive relationships with students and give them many opportunities to succeed. The accommodation places limitations on some practical aspects of the curriculum and there is not enough space for the needs of students. The curriculum offers imaginative experiences to students and gives them opportunities to develop their self-esteem. The centre has an accurate view of itself, judging all aspects of its provision as satisfactory. The inspectors agree with this view. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but it has accelerated rapidly with the appointment of the acting zone manager. The centre provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the assessment of students' learning by checking their progress more closely and use this information to set challenging targets
- manage the curriculum more effectively, enabling students to gain more passes in examinations
- improve the accommodation so that it meets the demands of the curriculum and needs of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' attainments are below average when they enter the centre. Their schooling has been disrupted, resulting in significant gaps in their learning. They make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of English, mathematics and in information and communication technology (ICT). In English, students develop their confidence in reading more fluently, and in mathematics they make steady progress in developing their financial skills. Students achieve their predicted grades, performing slightly better in mathematics than in English. Last year the vast majority of students gained a nationally recognised qualification. Restricted timetabling opportunities in the past have meant that too few students gained five or more passes at GCSE level. Not many gained one or more passes at the higher grades. Students gain passes in accredited

qualifications such as entry level certificates and the Youth Award Scheme. They are able to work toward bronze awards in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHEC). Students of all abilities and needs achieve equally well.

A number of students are able to successfully return to mainstream school, either on a full- or part-time basis. Increasingly students are able to avoid exclusion from their school through the input and support of the centre.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The centre works hard with vulnerable students who have had negative experiences of schooling. Consequently their attendance is much improved and is now satisfactory. One student improved attendance from 14% to 93%. Students enjoy their learning. One student stated that the staff at the centre 'fill you with confidence'.

Students' good moral development is evident by their improved behaviour in lessons. They are willing to contribute sensibly to discussions and listen to other people's views with respect. The positive relationships between staff and students make an important contribution to their good social development. Students reported that they felt safe and they show consideration for the safety of others. They are satisfactorily adopting healthier and safer lifestyles and take part in a wide range of physical and outdoor activities, although many still smoke. They are beginning to make a positive contribution to their own community, for example by making decisions about how to collect and donate money to charity from a 'bounce-a-thon' activity. Students' spiritual and cultural awareness is developed satisfactorily through learning about different beliefs and cultures and by demonstrating respect for themselves and others. They make satisfactory progress with the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and awareness of career opportunities. These skills will stand them in good stead for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, but has some good features. The relationship between teachers and students is good and this helps to diffuse potential behavioural difficulties. Teachers and assistants work well together to provide good levels of individual support to students. Lesson planning is good and ensures that learning objectives are clear. Lessons move along quickly and this encourages students to maintain their concentration. Often the use of a quick-fire starter activity at the beginning of a lesson engages students' attention immediately. The best lessons are marked by lively and enthusiastic teaching of subjects. In one English lesson, an interesting text based on the life of Michael Jackson was used to motivate and stimulate students' interest. This led to high levels of concentration and discussion by students. Through effective

teaching, students demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning and managing their behaviour.

Teachers know their students well and carefully match work to their needs. Day-to-day assessment of students' learning is satisfactory. However, information on how well students are progressing, and using this information to set challenging targets, is in the early stages of development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is effective in engaging disaffected learners. The accommodation restricts the teaching of some practical aspects of the curriculum, such as science, food technology and design and technology. The centre makes use of other facilities where possible, such as other schools, to meet the demands of the curriculum. The centre is working toward achieving the Healthy Schools Award. Leisure and outdoor pursuits such as kayaking and animal tracking provide valuable opportunities to promote students' fitness, health and self-confidence. Lifestyle issues of substance abuse, drinking and smoking are addressed through PSHEC. Staff from outside agencies come into the centre to inform students of potential dangers and risks.

The amount of teaching time has been increased recently, enabling students to have greater opportunities to take more examination-related courses. There is a suitable range of accredited courses available and there are plans to offer vocational subjects at GCSE level. Work experience placements are well organised and are successful in matching students' interests to local employers. The centre makes use of a number of local colleges, enabling Year 10 students to experience a good range of taster courses and Year 11 students to follow long-term courses. Coordination of subjects by teachers has just been implemented and they are eager to develop their areas of responsibility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The recently implemented tutor system is helpful in providing guidance for improving students' behaviour and dealing with their concerns. Clear targets for behaviour are set and students know what these are. However, students are not aware of their academic targets or how well they are progressing in different subjects. Targets set in students' individual education plans vary in quality across the centre and these are not reviewed regularly enough.

There is good careers guidance available from the Connexions personal adviser and effective support from the centre's pupil programme officer. Child protection procedures are clear and well known by all staff. There are effective links with outside agencies to safeguard students' welfare and to ensure additional personal and social needs are met. There is a designated teacher to ensure the needs of students who are looked after by the local authority are well met. Work experience opportunities and college options are made available to students and these are valuable in equipping students for their next phase of life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, although the acting zone manager provides good leadership and management. He has brought about improvements by providing stability and a clear sense of purpose and direction. He is enabling staff to take greater responsibility, so that the curriculum can be better managed. There is a good level of involvement with other schools, parents and the local community. Together with the head of service, he has identified and promoted good practice in teaching. He has also correctly identified assessment as a priority and more opportunities for higher achievement by students, so that all students can make as much progress as possible. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and a wide range of needs are effectively met.

The centre's development plan sets a clear agenda for improvement. It indicates the acting zone manager has a clear picture of strengths and areas needing development. However, as yet, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions upon standards and students' progress. Resources are suitably deployed, although subject coordinators have not been used to budgeting for their subjects.

The local authority management committee provides effective monitoring through annual reviews, which have highlighted areas for improvement. Appropriate action has been taken by appointing the acting zone manager and the capacity for improvement is satisfactory. A permanent zone manager has not yet been appointed.

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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
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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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

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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

Wimborne Learning Centre School Lane Wimborne Dorset BH21 1HQ

23 November 2005

Dear Students,

Thank you for making us welcome in your centre. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you over the course of the day. We were pleased by what we saw. Your behaviour was a credit to yourselves and all the staff at the centre.

These are the things we liked about your centre:

- the informal atmosphere, where you feel calm, safe and relaxed, which helps you to do better at your work
- many of you get into good habits of attending school and enjoying learning again
- all the staff work hard to look after you and enable you to go back to school, colleges or training
- many of you make good progress in behaviour and quite a lot of you go on to gain positive examination results.

To make things better, we have suggested the centre could:

- check your progress more closely and set targets for you to achieve
- enable more of you to gain more passes in examination subjects
- improve the accommodation, so that more subjects can be taught on site and to provide more space for your needs.

Thank you once again for your help and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Price, Lead Inspector Bill Robson, Team Inspector