



Will Adams Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133767
LEA Medway
Inspection number 282376
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006
Reporting inspector Robert Ellis HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Woodlands Road
School category	Pupil referral unit		Gillingham
Age range of pupils	14 to 16		Kent ME7 2BX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 337111
Number on roll	47	Fax number	01634 337120
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Steve Williams
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Patterson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

Description of the school

The Will Adams Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) that educates pupils who have complex needs and who have been excluded from mainstream schools. The pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds but most are from homes where there is some degree of deprivation. All pupils have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties and some have learning difficulties or disabilities. There are no pupils who are from minority ethnic groups and all speak English as their first language. The centre opened in September 2002 with management contracted to a charitable foundation. The centre returned to local authority management in September 2004 and moved to its current accommodation in January 2005. The headteacher was on sick leave at the time of the inspection and the centre was being managed by her deputy, with support from the local authority. The centre had not previously been inspected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the Will Adams Centre is satisfactory, with some good features. The rapid pace of improvement since January 2005 demonstrates that the centre has the capacity to improve further. The centre's provision for the pupils' personal and emotional development is good. There are good opportunities for the pupils to prepare for employment, and further training and good links have been developed with other organisations to make this possible. Behaviour is satisfactory and good relationships are evident. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Systems and procedures to assess the pupils' achievements and to track their progress are underdeveloped. The curriculum is developing but does not meet the needs of all pupils. Monitoring and self-evaluation are improving but are not rigorous enough and do not accurately identify all the strengths and areas for development. The local authority has provided good support and has monitored the progress that the centre has made. The unit provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- develop the curriculum so that all pupils have access to courses that lead to appropriate qualifications
- increase the rigour and frequency of monitoring and evaluation to provide a clear picture of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning
- ensure that the pupils' achievements are accurately assessed and systematically recorded and this information used to track progress and set challenging targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Although starting from a low base, mostly because of previous patterns of poor attendance, the pupils make satisfactory progress and this enables most pupils to find employment or places on further education or training courses when leaving the centre.

The attainment of most pupils is below or well below the standards expected for their ages. In the 2005 examinations, most pupils sat an entry level examination in English but only around three quarters were entered for GCSE mathematics and around one third of those failed to achieve a grade. However, pupils were more successful in achieving accreditation in skill-based courses leading to a vocational qualification.

Well-constructed individual programmes enable the pupils who have learning difficulties of disabilities to make similar progress to that made by other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development of pupils is satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory and most pupils treat each other and adults with respect. The good relationships between staff and pupils are a positive factor in the progress that pupils make. Pupils feel safe and valued and report that they enjoy attending because "adults treat us with respect". Most pupils attend regularly and around one in three have good attendance. However, despite the appropriate systems and procedures in place to challenge poor attendance, a small minority of pupils have very poor attendance.

Most pupils are prepared to participate in lessons and many enjoy the tasks and activities. This was most apparent when pupils are working one-to-one with an adult and when tasks were challenging.

Review days provide the pupils with opportunities to be involved in setting their personal targets, which include negotiated behavioural targets, but some of these targets are too broad and lack precise success criteria that pupils can use to judge if their targets have been achieved. Other opportunities for the pupils to participate in decisions which affect them are more limited, although the centre has planned to introduce an elected pupil council.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding about keeping safe, healthy eating, economic well-being and the merits of exercise. They demonstrated an understanding of the healthy eating agenda when acknowledging that although there have been improvements in the lunch arrangements, more could be done to encourage pupils to eat healthily. There is good provision for their moral and social development but fewer opportunities for their spiritual and cultural development. Although the personal, social and health education programme that the pupils follow discourages pupils from smoking, it has had limited success in changing their personal attitudes to smoking and smoking outside the centre is too readily condoned.

Pupils have opportunities to contribute to the local community and a group of Year 10 pupils worked with a local nursery to repair a boat for children to play with in the playground. Other groups of pupils have worked to restore woodland or participated in activities with local artists and the BBC.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but its impact was sometimes limited by low expectations of what the pupils could achieve in some of the lessons seen. It is clear that the teachers care about their pupils and work hard to help them learn.

Effective behaviour management strategies ensure that time in lessons is used effectively and the few instances of low-level inappropriate behaviour that were observed were mostly managed quickly and effectively.

In the best lessons, the pace was brisk and the teachers provided the pupils with clear learning objectives; pupils were encouraged to evaluate their own work, teachers knew their pupils well and tasks were well matched to their needs, and teachers used questioning effectively to help the pupils develop their understanding.

Some teachers make consistent use of assessment information to help them plan work at a suitable level for pupils of different abilities and to track their progress accurately. However, consistent use of assessment information is an area that has been identified as needing improvement and although individual teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' achievements, recording of this information on a central computer database is still at the planning stage.

Teaching assistants provide very good support for individual pupils and work in effective partnerships with the teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

Although steps have been taken to ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced at some levels, and good use is made of alternative providers for vocational courses, the design of the building and the limited range of subjects that the staff can offer prevent the curriculum from being satisfactory overall. Those responsible for the unit recognise the shortcomings of the current curriculum and have planned to improve it further from September 2006 and there are good plans for the further development of work-related learning.

The unit has good links with a local college and other work-based learning providers. This enables many pupils to follow a range of accredited vocational courses that are well matched to their needs and interests.

The range of subjects that can be taken at GCSE level is more limited and, unlike the arrangements for vocational courses, relationships have not been developed with other providers, including local mainstream schools, to enable some pupils to follow accredited academic courses which the unit cannot offer on site. For example, there are no opportunities for pupils to study science.

Although pupils are encouraged to eat healthily, the lunch arrangements do not enable them to do so and this does not support the centre's aim to achieve the Healthy Schools Award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The centre has adopted a sensible multi-agency approach to providing for the pupils' personal and emotional development and pupils receive a good level of individual support. The pupils feel that they are well supported and that there is "always someone you can go to if you have a problem". Pupils also benefit from careers advice and increasing opportunities to participate in a well-planned programme of work experience.

There are appropriate systems and procedures to minimise risk and to ensure the pupils' well-being. Child protection procedures are known and understood by staff. The site is properly supervised at break and lunchtimes and staff often take advantage of the opportunities this offers to engage the pupils in conversation and, in doing so, get to know their pupils.

Academic guidance is less well developed because the unit has only recently started to develop systems to track the pupils' progress. Most pupils arrive at the unit with poorly documented attainment levels because of their history of poor attendance, and testing has only recently been introduced to provide a secure base from which to track their progress and to provide data which can be used to set individual targets. Existing assessment information is held by individual teachers which makes it difficult to get an overview of the progress that each pupil is making. However, there are plans to introduce a computer-based system so that progress can be monitored more effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Since the headteacher joined the centre in January 2005, the pace of improvement has been rapid and those responsible for the leadership and management of the unit have identified areas for improvement and put in place systems and procedures to address them. The result has been a significant improvement in the ethos of the unit and its overall effectiveness. Leaders are clearly focused on raising standards and promoting personal development. While the headteacher has been absent, progress has continued but the pace has slowed and this has resulted in some planned improvements not being implemented.

The headteacher has an accurate picture of most aspects of the centre's overall performance and uses self-evaluation to identify priorities for improvement and the deployment of resources. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous or frequent to enable managers to have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses or to precisely measure the progress that the centre is making in relation to the targets in its action plan.

The management committee has no statutory powers or responsibility and its terms of reference are being reviewed. The local authority has worked well with the centre's management committee and the leadership and this has brought about significant and sustained improvement.

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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?	2	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

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	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	4	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?	4	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	4	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	No
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	No
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	No
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 visited your centre to check on how well it was doing and I am pleased to be able to report that I found no major weaknesses, and some things that were good.

Thank you very much for letting me observe your lessons and a special thank you to those of you who spoke to me about your activities.

Your teachers and other adults work hard to help you learn and develop and they demonstrate considerable good humour, patience and skill. Some of you are making good progress but there are a few of you who do not attend often enough or who make your teachers' work more difficult than it should be when you do.

The people who lead and manage the Will Adams Centre have some good ideas and have already made a lot of improvements, but they do not have enough reliable information to know precisely how lessons are going and how well you are doing. I have asked them to keep a closer check on lessons and better records of your achievements. I have also asked them to think about giving a wider choice of subjects to choose from, particularly those that can be studied at GCSE level.

I particularly enjoyed looking at your folders of work and seeing the progress that some of you have made.

Yours faithfully

Robert Ellis HM Inspector