



The Oswaldtwistle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134127
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 282461
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Union Road
School category	Community		Oswaldtwistle
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Accrington, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 231553
Number on roll	53	Fax number	01254 879544
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Valerie Watson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Smith

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	Inspection number 282461
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector

Description of the school

This is a 40 place pupil referral (PRU) unit for boys and girls in Years 7-11. It opened in February 2003 and registered as a PRU on 1 April 2003. Since then, the unit has had two headteachers and an acting headteacher. The current headteacher has been in post for just over a year. The current headteacher has been in post just over a year. Numbers fluctuate but during the inspection there were 53 on roll. Most pupils have previously been excluded from other schools and come from the less affluent areas around Oswaldtwistle. Fourteen pupils have statements of special educational need and five of these reflect the need for special school placement. Most pupils are white British but there are a few of Asian heritage. Three forms of provision are available: there are 21 full-time placements for Year 7-10 pupils at the main site, six part time pupils in the two 'high support units' and alternative Key Stage 4 provision for 26 pupils. This provision includes work experience, training and college opportunities and distance learning. Of the 26 pupils, two Year 10 and four Year 11 pupils were in full time provision.

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 evaluates itself as satisfactory. This is an accurate description of the main site but flaws in distance learning affect many Year 11 pupils, who account for almost half of the roll, and overall effectiveness is therefore inadequate. A new headteacher has had a positive impact on improving provision but has been seriously hampered by the absence of the two deputies, one of whom has responsibility for distance learning. There is thus no effective senior management team to support the drive for improvement and the expensive provision is not giving value for money.

As a result, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The main unit has good facilities. Pupils are frequently well-taught and the curriculum is varied. Achievement and personal development are satisfactory, limited by pupil absence more than any other factor. Pupils in the high support units make unsatisfactory academic progress because provision is half-time, subject specialist teaching is not available and the curriculum is limited. Nevertheless, personal development is satisfactory. There is no on-site provision for Year 11 pupils, but it is planned for the near future. College courses, work placements and army training are offered but almost a half of pupils are not involved in them. These pupils stay at home. They are provided with work but receive no teaching, their curriculum is restricted and the unit is not able to fulfil its duty of care.

The entitlement of pupils with statements of special educational need is not met. Of 14 pupils, five have been on roll for over a year and one for four years.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- creating an effective senior management team to speed up improvement, especially in relation to distance learning
- ensuring that all pupils are taught and receive full-time education to allow them to achieve as well as they can
- reducing the numbers, and length of stay, of pupils with statements of special educational need, to ensure that they receive the education they are entitled to.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The unit evaluates this as satisfactory but the inspection judges it as inadequate. This is mainly because the unit weights its judgement towards the achievement of pupils on the main site and does not take sufficient account of the impact of absence in the

centres or the lack of teaching for many pupils on distance learning. There is no evidence to suggest that either boys or girls or pupils from different backgrounds make better or worse progress than others.

On the main site, most pupils arrive from mainstream schools after long periods of underachievement. On admission they have typically attained a level slightly below that expected at the end of primary school. Those who establish a good pattern of attendance make good progress in relation to their personal targets. This contributes to a satisfactory, and improving, rate of success in returning to school. The frequent absence of a minority results in a slowing of progress for these pupils.

In the high support units half-time education limits progress, which is inadequate overall. The results of assessment show that although writing skills improve, reading and spelling sometimes deteriorates. The limited timetable also means that pupils' achievement is only over a very narrow range of subjects.

In Alternative Provision some pupils achieve satisfactory success through college, training placements and work experience. The achievement of pupils on distance learning is somewhat limited by the fact that they are not taught. Many gain accreditation through unit awards and also GCSE in English and mathematics, but the fact that they can do this without being taught is a clear pointer to the fact that they could achieve much more if they were. As such, their achievement is inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Given the extreme nature of pupils' problems on admission, this is satisfactory. Behaviour improves and there are few disturbances in either the main centre or the high support units. There are serious incidents on record but they are almost always the result of individuals in crisis. There is no evidence of escalation of situations by other pupils, so although the peace is occasionally punctuated by unpleasant behaviour, it rarely interferes with the learning of others and break and lunchtimes are relaxed. Attendance is a problem. Absence is about 25% on the main site and high support units. Thorough analysis of attendance in the centres shows that of 29 pupils, 23 have improved their attendance following admission. Figures for distance learning suggest that attendance is 85% but, in reality, there is no way of knowing. Pupils say they are happy and think they are getting a good education. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but the isolation of those Year 11 pupils who do not attend college, training providers and work experience gives them insufficient opportunities to socialise. Healthy and safe lifestyles are encouraged through a good programme involving specialist speakers, sound advice and good promotion of physical exercise in the centres. Careers guidance, work experience and the learning of basic skills help pupils who take advantage of these opportunities to have satisfactory prospects of well-being when they leave. Pupils raise funds monthly for charity and have been involved in clearing scrub from a public place to make way for a garden, as part of an accredited land based studies course for Key Stage 4 pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

As the unit evaluates, teaching is satisfactory. In the lessons seen on the main site, teaching was either good or satisfactory. Internal monitoring describes a similar picture, with a little being better. Pupils feel they are well taught. Teaching is best in English, mathematics and science, all of which benefit from specialist teachers. Many lessons are characterised by good planning which pays close attention to needs identified in individual education plans. Clearly stated learning objectives, linked to individual targets, enable the teacher to accurately assess the achievement of pupils at the end of each lesson. Support staff play an invaluable role in helping pupils who are demanding of individual attention. This contributes well to the management of behaviour and also helps pupils to learn. Records identify that a few lessons lack challenge and pace. The lack of subject specialist teaching in the high support units is evident in the limited progress made by pupils, especially in reading and spelling. The lack of teaching for pupils on the distance learning programme is unsatisfactory. Pupils are recorded as receiving 24 hours of education per week, each pupil is entitled to a half hour tutorial per week plus weekly key worker contact, but this does not include teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. It is satisfactory on the main site, where nearly all pupils have full-time education and learn in a good range of subjects. The extra attention that is given to literacy and numeracy is good in that it helps pupils to catch up. It contributes well to their successful return to school and their future economic well-being. There is insufficient enrichment of the curriculum. There are no educational outings other than for outdoor education. A few visitors support the personal, social and health programme and have also included drummers and kite makers. The curriculum in the high support units is inadequate. It is limited to 12.5 hours per week and there is insufficient time to cover subjects other than English and mathematics in depth. The distance learning curriculum is inadequate. It includes opportunities for pupils to attend local colleges, enter training or do work experience but many pupils do not engage in these activities. They educate themselves at home in a very limited range of subjects, with no enrichment. This falls far short of their entitlement outlined in the local authority curriculum policy. The curriculum entitlement of pupils with statements of special educational need is not met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

This is inadequate because procedures do not sufficiently extend to pupils on distance learning. In the centres, care, guidance and support are good. Care is taken to ensure

that the centres remain safe and that potential risks are carefully assessed. Child protection procedures are thorough and fully understood by staff. Pupils have good access to other agencies including the school nurse. The assessment, review and provision for special educational needs is good. Pupils' views are carefully listened to and the school council is influential.

Distance learning pupils do not fall within the remit of the special needs coordinator, yet all have special educational needs and three have statements. Their progress is inadequately monitored. A questionnaire about pupils' views was not circulated to distance learning pupils, nor are they represented on the school council. Attendance is not monitored. If a pupil is at home when the tutor arrives to collect and deliver work that pupil is registered with 100% attendance for the week. If the pupil is not present he is docked one session and registered with 90% attendance. There is no means of checking where such pupils are at any other time and this poses a risk to their well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The unit feels this is satisfactory but inspectors judge it to be inadequate. There has been no consistency in the senior management team since the unit opened. Since the current headteacher's appointment the long-term absence of the two deputy headteachers has left her relatively unsupported. As a result, the unit has not moved on as planned, in particular the development of full time, taught provision for Year 11 pupils. It is almost certain that some provision will be available very soon but many Year 11 pupils have not been taught for almost half of their final year in school and are unlikely to have achieved as well as they could. Equal opportunities have not been extended to all pupils. Nevertheless, teaching is well monitored and evaluated through regular observations. Good training opportunities are extended to staff and performance management is fully in place. Subject leaders are contributing well to unit improvement through developing planning and policy. The management committee is supportive but, alongside the local authority, has been slow to resolve senior management issues. Far too many pupils with statements of special educational needs are admitted and remain on roll for too long. The statutory entitlement of these pupils is not met.

With good premises, generous funding and an enthusiastic staff team, the unit should be well placed to improve rapidly but it is too early to be sure in the present circumstances.

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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?	4	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	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	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	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	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?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	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	4	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

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

Mrs Pauline Smith

The Oswaldtwistle School

Union Road

Oswaldtwistle

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 3DA

17 January 2006

Dear Pupils

I called in to the unit a while ago to see how you were getting on. One or two of you may remember chatting to me whilst you played pool at lunchtime. Thanks for your comments. It was good to hear that you think you're getting on well and enjoying your time in the unit

Over the couple of days I was with you I found out a lot of things; some of them good, some of them a bit worrying. I liked the way you were getting on in the main Oswaldtwistle School building. Most of you were working hard but it was a shame to see so few of you. If you're not in school you're probably not learning much and about a third of you weren't there on the Tuesday. I loved the building; bright, roomy and with displays of your best work. I'd like to see those of you in the high support units getting full time education instead of half time. It would mean you could do a lot more things than maths and English. If you're on distance learning you're probably wondering what I'm talking about. You didn't see me and I didn't see you. That worried me a lot and I think it's high time you came into the centre and got taught properly. That might not meet with your approval but everyone else of your age has to go to school and I bet you'd get better qualifications if it happened. I'm asking the management to get it sorted quickly because I feel they've hung about too long.

All the best

Alastair Younger (Lead inspector)