



# New Leaf Centre

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 134523  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 282596  
**Inspection dates** 24 January 2006 to 25 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew McDowall HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	EDC
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit		Pelsall Lane
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	15 to 16		Rushall, Walsall WS4 1NG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 686330
<b>Number on roll</b>	48	<b>Fax number</b>	01922 686349
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Andy Howslip
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Carol Owen

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
15 to 16	24 January 2006 - 25 January 2006	282596

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The New Leaf Centre provides education for students who are excluded from school or who are at risk of exclusion. Three students have statements of special educational needs and six are looked after children. The Alternative Curriculum Manager, who fulfils the role of headteacher, was appointed in March 2004. The great majority of the staff have been appointed since that time. This is the Centre's first inspection.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good and improving Centre that has established itself very well in a relatively short period of time. This is because there is a clear vision for the development of different ways of working with this particular group of students so that their needs are met. Leadership and management are good. The new staff team has bonded well and they provide good support to each other in what are sometimes stressful situations. More now needs to be done to track academic progress and to iron out the minor inconsistencies in teaching and learning.

Students feel valued and say the centre helps them in their education. The personal and social development of the students is good. This is because the staff are very flexible in the way they work and go to great lengths to meet the needs of all students. Teaching and achievement are good overall but there are occasional times when the work set is not challenging enough for some students. Attendance is unsatisfactory but is improving and is now far better than it was a year ago.

The Centre provides a wide and increasing range of on-site and off-site opportunities for the students to gain work experience and follow vocational and academic courses. Quality assurance has developed well. Plans are in place to make sure that teaching and support are of the highest order possible in all partner organisations where students are placed.

There is good capacity to improve because the Centre knows its strengths and development needs well and good systems have been established that are already bringing about improvement. The Centre provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further improve attendance, by developing the way data is collected and analysed and acting on this information.
- Improve the way staff use the information they have on the attainment of individual students to set them tasks that stretch them.
- Check teaching and learning more regularly to ensure teachers' expectations are consistently high in all lessons.
- Continue to develop the arrangements to ensure the high quality of off-site educational programmes.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of students who attend regularly is good overall. Students make good progress in their personal and social development during their time at the Centre. Those attending regularly gain significantly in self-confidence. Their social skills improve well and many students modify their behaviour and come to see the purpose in gaining qualifications. When they enter the Centre, students have fallen behind in their work because of disruption in their schooling. Students make steady progress in literacy and numeracy through a range of individual learning programmes. For example, one student at the centre was observed making very good progress in his reading and

spelling as a result of good one-to-one support that enabled him to confidently spell complex words.

Data held by the Centre shows that it is being increasingly successful in improving the rate of progress which students make. There has been a significant increase in the number of accredited awards. No students gained accredited awards in 2003. This has improved considerably and 53 accredited awards were gained in 2005, including some GCSE higher-level grades. The Centre makes effective use of a wide range of vocational and training places at other training organisations, businesses and colleges. This ensures the students have good opportunities to gain the key skills they will need to move into work, training or further education.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Centre has developed reliable ways to help the students develop their personal and social skills. Students have the opportunity to discuss cultural issues through themed days, such as Black History Day, and through studying the Holocaust. Overall behaviour is satisfactory and, although still variable, it is improving. The relationships between the staff and the students are good and behaviour is managed well through a good balance of praise and encouragement. The students are sometimes robust in the way they communicate with each other. The staff provide good role models and challenge inappropriate language and behaviour well. The recently introduced tutor system provides good opportunities for all students to reflect on their behaviour and set personal targets. Most students are successful in meeting these. Careful consideration of off-site placements ensures that experiences are well matched to the students' needs. This enables them to demonstrate their capacity to work well in team settings and gain understanding of the world of work. Some have difficulties in attending these placements but are well supported by the Centre to overcome any problems. The growing number of accredited courses has a positive impact on basic skills and the self-esteem of the students. This helps them to manage better in the next stage of their education or work placement.

Students take part in a good range of physical activities. The regular lessons in food technology and the allotment project successfully underline the need for healthy eating. The students are happy to attend the Centre and say they feel that the adults there have their best interests at heart and treat them well.

Attendance is improving quickly but remains unsatisfactory overall. Despite the best efforts of the Centre, individual attendance varies considerably. Most students attend much more regularly than they did at their last schools and some have excellent attendance records, indicating that these students enjoy their time at the Centre.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Overall, the quality of the teaching and learning is good.

Records of observations undertaken by the staff at the Centre show that the quality of teaching and learning has improved steadily since it opened. The strength in the teaching is in the way in which the staff take great care to help students develop their self-esteem and social skills. They have a detailed knowledge of the students and provide good opportunities for them to reflect on inappropriate behaviour and target improvements. The good adult-to-pupil ratio and the strong teamwork between all who work at the centre ensure that the students get plenty of help in lessons.

The quality of assessment when students first start at the Centre is good. This enables the staff to give students work at the right level. The ongoing assessment from that point is not rigorous enough to enable the Centre to know what academic progress each student has made during their stay. The systems to track personal and social development are good. This information is used consistently well to set personal targets for improvement and helps the students overcome some of their difficulties.

Lesson planning is good. Occasionally, in more academic subjects, the staff do not take account of the different abilities in the group and set work that is too easy for the more able students who could do more. Work is generally well presented and regularly marked, providing praise for effort and encouragement to do better. Sometimes insufficient guidance is given on what the students need to do to improve.

The staff plan interesting practical activities for the students to do. For example, as part of a discussion on the importance of a healthy diet, students sampled fruits from around the world, and then identified where they come from on a map of the world. Resources to help students learn are good and there are some attractive displays of students' work. The Centre makes good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to gain the interest of the students and develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The Centre aims to provide a high quality alternative range of activities and lessons that is inclusive and responsive to excluded students and those disenchanted with education. Although more remains to be done, a good start has been made. There is a suitable programme of personal, social and health education. The Centre makes good use of visitors to increase interest and variety in what the students do, a good example being the involvement of the Brook Centre in the students' sex education programme. The students have access to a range of local sports facilities providing good opportunities for physical education.

The growing range of off-site providers ensures that wherever possible the programmes are well matched to the needs of each student. There are increasing opportunities for students to access vocational and accredited courses at all levels. There are clear procedures for identifying the best placements for students away from the Centre. These are actively being developed to ensure that the teaching and help provided by all others is of the best possible quality.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The arrangements for keeping students safe are good. All staff have received training in child protection and the Centre's procedures are in line with local requirements. Appropriate risk assessments are completed and there is a range of up-to-date policies relating to health and safety. Suitable arrangements for students with learning difficulties are in place and the special needs coordinator has a good overview of which students need additional support and how to provide this. There are good links with other agencies to ensure the students receive the range of assistance they need.

Learning Mentors and Project Workers provide very helpful guidance to students and ensure good communication between everyone concerned. Their practical help and guidance during times of transition helps individual students to develop strategies to overcome difficulties. Career guidance is satisfactory. The centre provides clear advice for students about jobs and pathways to further education. However, students have had limited access to Connexions advice during the past year.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good.

The Centre has made rapid progress in the last five terms. From a low starting point, the leadership and management have successfully introduced policies and practices that are driving improvement. Everyone associated with the Centre feels it has made great strides and is becoming more and more effective in providing a relevant education for the students. The strategic leadership of the Alternative Curriculum Manager is outstanding. She has successfully established a team of professionals from different backgrounds who work well together to help students overcome personal barriers to learning. All involved in leading the centre have a shared vision.

The systems for checking on the personal and social development of the students are good. Those to measure academic progress and attendance are satisfactory overall. The Centre has rightly prioritised the development of these as an area for further development. Procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning are also satisfactory and have been effective in improving the overall quality. More now needs to be done to increase the focus of the monitoring to iron out the minor inconsistencies and ensure appropriate challenge for all students in all lessons. There are good links with other agencies and consultations take place with students and other providers

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as part of the development of the Centre. The small number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very positive about its work.

Members of the management committee visit the Centre regularly and know what is happening with the students. Their ways of working are developing well and the committee receives the necessary information to hold the centre to account. The Alternative Curriculum Manager and the Local Authority share an accurate view on the strengths and weaknesses in the organisation. The capacity for improvement is good because the systems introduced are already bearing fruit and good progress has been achieved in a relatively short period of time.



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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>	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	NA	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	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	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	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	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	2	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	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 Students,

I enjoyed my visit to the New Leaf Centre this week. Many thanks to all of you who spoke to me.

Here are the things the Centre is doing well

- It is a good centre that is improving quickly.
- Most of you improve your attendance while you are here.
- There are more opportunities for you to take courses and gain awards.
- The staff work hard to give you the support you need to improve your work.
- They find the right places for you to go to prepare you for your college or work.
- Most of you like the Centre and believe it helps you in your work.

There are some things that could be better

- Some of you do not attend regularly enough.
- Just occasionally some of the work is a bit too easy for some of you. I have asked the Centre to check that this isn't happening.

With best wishes for the future

Andy McDowall HMI