



Avenue Centre for Education

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134525
LEA LUTON LEA
Inspection number 282597
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Charlie Henry HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Tomlinson Avenue
School category	Pupil referral unit		LU4 0QP
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 662505
Number on roll	37	Fax number	01582 662500
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Hazel Simmons
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Chris Day

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 27 June 2006 - 28 June 2006	Inspection number 282597
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Avenue Centre for Education (ACE) is a pupil referral unit. At the time of the inspection it provided full-time education for four pupils aged 11 to 14 who were excluded from mainstream secondary schools. In addition it provided eleven part-time or short term full-time places for pupils who were also registered at other schools and who need support to help them to return to their schools full-time. ACE also supported 22 pupils in their own schools through an outreach programme. These numbers vary significantly during the year. The number of pupils who are supported part-time or through outreach has increased in line with the decrease in the need for full-time places. Occasionally it also provides short term places for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. The centre supports pupils from across the borough of Luton. Some pupils have not attended full-time school education for a significant lengthy period prior to the centre's involvement. About three quarters of pupils are boys. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds; there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. A few have statements of special educational needs; many are undergoing statutory assessment. Four pupils were looked after by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Avenue Centre for Education is an outstanding pupil referral unit. The centre had evaluated itself to be good as it had not taken sufficient account of the full extent of its achievements. It is extremely successful in helping pupils remain in and return to mainstream school education. Since the centre opened just over two years ago it has rapidly developed into providing excellent education both for pupils who attend its centre and, through its outreach support, for those who remain in their own mainstream schools. This development is due to the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and other members of the senior management team, and the exceptional support from all staff. Pupils make good progress and begin to catch up to the standards that are expected of their age. They make very good progress in English due to the quality of assessment, target setting and teaching. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and well being. The improvement made in their behaviour and attitudes to education and learning are excellent. Teaching and learning are good overall; some lessons are outstanding. The quality of the relationships between pupils and staff, built upon trust and respect, is excellent. Staff teamwork is very effective ensuring the centre's strategy for behaviour management is consistently followed. Occasionally insistence on high standards slips or planning does not meet its usual high quality. The curriculum is excellent, especially for physical activity, and provides a wide range of subjects that enables pupils to regain their enthusiasm to learn and also to prepare them for returning to school. Outreach work focuses very well on aspects where pupils are having most difficulty. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The commitment of all staff to re-engaging pupils with education and learning is impressive. Risk assessments are undertaken for pupils' activities although these are not always recorded thoroughly. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is an exceptionally clear view of the centre's role and how this can best be achieved. Self evaluation and improvement planning towards achieving its aims are very good. Monitoring of the progress in subjects across the centre is very good in some areas, though not in all. Similarly, centre target setting within subject development plans is at an early stage. The management committee is supportive and monitors closely the centre's effectiveness in returning and maintaining pupils in school; it would value extending the information it has about pupils' curriculum progress to further monitor this aspect. Improvement since the centre opened has been excellent and there is very good capacity to improve further. The centre provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve subject development planning with clear targets based on evaluation of pupils' progress across the curriculum.
- Rigorously record all risk assessments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As a result of their learning needs pupils enter the centre with standards at widely varying levels; most are at levels significantly below what they are capable of. Overall, pupils make good progress and begin to catch up to the standards that are expected for youngsters of their age. The centre accurately evaluates the extent of its pupils' achievements. Pupils make very good progress and achieve well in English, as a result of the detailed assessment, target setting and quality of teaching that they receive. Many make very significant gains in their reading and spelling that contribute well to their successful return to mainstream school education. Pupils make good progress in other subjects, although this progress is not tracked as effectively as it is within English. They learn a valuable range of skills across the wide range of subjects that they study. They make important developments in physical activities, including outdoor pursuits, that contribute effectively to the growth in their self esteem. Important gains are also made in developing work related skills. Pupils make good progress towards the challenging targets that are set in all subjects. There are no significant differences between the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those who are looked after by the local authority.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The progress made in personal development and well being is outstanding. The centre had underestimated this progress because it had not fully taken into account the achievements of the current year. The extent of this progress applies both to those who are supported as part of the outreach programme and those who attend the centre full or part-time. Pupils make excellent improvements in their behaviour and their attitudes to education and learning. Most impressive is the happiness they show at the progress they are making and the expectations they have that learning should be enjoyable. The success of the centre in helping pupils remain in or return to mainstream schools is impressive and this success is still improving. Most of those who are supported within their own school as part of the outreach programme, as well as those who attend the centre part-time, successfully remain in mainstream school education. A substantial number of those who have been permanently excluded before attending the centre are successfully helped back into a mainstream school. There is a dramatic decrease in the number of exclusions, compared with those before the pupils join the centre. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the centre and short fixed term exclusions are rare. Parents are extremely appreciative of the way it helps their children, for example as one parent expressed her feelings, 'They've given me my son back'. There is excellent improvement in attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have contributed very well to the development of the centre's behaviour management approaches. Where opportunities occur, they contribute readily to the local and the wider community, for example helping in the neighbouring primary school and in charity events. Pupils make good progress in adopting more healthy and safe life styles. There is very good development of skills for their economic

well being, including their attitude to learning and to listening if things go wrong, improved attendance and punctuality, and their achievements in their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This judgement is in line with the centre's own evaluation, including that some lessons are outstanding, and occasionally some are satisfactory. The most important feature of the very best lessons is the quality of the relationships between pupils and staff, built upon trust and respect. Teachers and support assistants work really well together, ensuring the centre's strategy for behaviour management is consistently followed. Maintaining good behaviour together with keenness to learn are rightly viewed as important and staff are successful at these. Occasionally insistence on high standards slips, such as allowing calling-out, albeit due to enthusiasm. Lessons are usually well planned. They involve a range of interesting activities and the pace of lessons is brisk. These aspects help both capture and maintain pupils' interests, as well as enabling pupils to gain important skills and knowledge for when they return to school. A few parts of lessons are not matched as well as they could be to pupils' levels of attainment. Each pupil has targets set for his or her behaviour and subject work. Pupils are routinely involved in assessing their own progress towards these targets and talk about how to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent and provides a wide range of subjects that enables pupils to regain their enthusiasm to learn and also to prepare them for when they return to mainstream schools. Outreach work focuses very well on those aspects of subjects causing pupils most difficulty. The centre is aware that its curriculum is of high quality. It rightly emphasises the need for many pupils to improve their literacy skills and so ensures this is a substantial part of the timetable. Furthermore, all staff ensure there are opportunities to extend these literacy skills within other subjects. A particular strength of the centre's curriculum is its emphasis on physical activities. In addition to three timetabled sessions each week there is an excellent range of out of school activities that are often based on outdoor pursuits, such as sailing and rock climbing and are used as rewards for the substantial progress and improvements in behaviour and attitude. These physical activities, together with social and personal education and cooking programmes, contribute well to helping pupils to take care of their health and have regard for their own safety. Pupils have increasing opportunity to take part in work related learning through the centre's links with the local community. These help prepare them for when they leave school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The centre is rightly aware of the quality of its care, guidance and support which is outstanding. The commitment of all staff to re-engaging pupils with education and learning is impressive. At the heart of this is the building of effective relationships and the establishment of high expectations. Before pupils start at the centre, or at the outset of outreach work, there is an excellent initial assessment that provides a baseline from which targets can be set and progress evaluated. Pupils take part in a careful induction programme, designed to build confidence and trust. The same level of care is also given to planning for when pupils move back to school or to their next placement. Detailed discussions with other schools and agencies, especially Connexions, take place that try to ensure the progress that has been made is continued. Involvement of parents in their children's education is very good indeed. The centre's approach to behaviour improvement is very successful and is designed to improve self esteem through involving pupils in setting and monitoring their own targets. These targets include ones for behaviour and attitude, as well as curriculum progress. Assessment related to behaviour and attitude is exceptionally well done. Success in achieving targets results in praise from staff, details sent to parents and activity based rewards that still further increases interest in learning. There is an excellent emphasis on encouraging healthy eating, including the breakfast club, the meal that all pupils and staff share at lunchtime and the ready availability of fruit and water throughout the day. Similarly there is very good regard to encouraging safe lifestyles, including work on drugs and sex education. Input from specialist agencies is used effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe in the centre and they trust their teachers to 'sort out' any difficulties that might arise. There are appropriate arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. The centre has written confirmation that all staff, including part-time ones, have undertaken appropriate checks. Risk assessments are undertaken for pupils' activities although these are not always recorded thoroughly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the centre are outstanding. Based on an exceptionally clear view of the centre's role and how this can best be achieved the headteacher and senior management team have successfully developed the centre over the last two years. These changes have been supported extremely well by all staff. This impressive development has resulted in increasing numbers of pupils who have either returned to or been maintained in mainstream schools and has the support of partner schools. The centre did not fully recognise the extent of its achievements and underestimated the quality of its leadership and management. The centre runs very smoothly day to day. It has a very good understanding of its effectiveness in achieving its main aims and has used this information extremely well in directing improvements. Monitoring of the progress in curriculum subjects across the centre is very good in some areas, particularly English, though is not as good in other areas. Centre target setting in these areas within development plans is at an early stage. Equality of

opportunity is promoted very well through the detailed knowledge that is held about each pupil and the rigorous review and planning procedures. The management committee is effective and supports the centre's work well and monitors closely its effectiveness in returning and maintaining pupils in school. The committee routinely reviews its role in order to become even more effective and as such would value extending the information available about pupils' curricular progress. Improvement since the centre opened is excellent. Effective use is made of its resources and there is very good capacity for further improvement. The centre provides very good value for money.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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

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

As you know we recently visited ACE to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed it and learned a lot about the centre. Thank you for telling us about the things you do and how you think your teachers and other staff are helping you to learn. The Avenue Centre for Education is outstanding. It is extremely successful in helping you stay in and return to your school. Here are some of the things that we thought were really good: - the progress you make, especially in English. This is due to the outstanding progress you make in improving your behaviour and in your attitude to learning, although just occasionally your high standards can slip - how hard you work and the way you enjoy what you do. - the trust and respect that there is between pupils and staff - how well staff work together, the quality of the teaching and the outstanding care, guidance and support that they give you - the range of things you learn, especially the outdoor and other physical activities - the way ACE is led and managed. There are a few things that we discussed with staff that could make the centre even better; here are the most important ones: - improving the targets for the progress you make in the different subjects - improving the records they keep about ensuring what you do is safe. Best wishes