



Mendip Tuition Group

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134694
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 282646
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 28 February 2006
Reporting inspector John Lilly Al

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Wells Road
School category	Community special		Glastonbury
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		BA6 9BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01458 832 425
Number on roll	12	Fax number	01458 831 220
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Gloria Cawood
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Patsey Palmer

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Mendip Tuition Group operates as part of the Somerset Medical Tuition Service, which was formed two years ago. The Group moved under a year ago into permanent accommodation in Glastonbury; this is on the campus of a comprehensive school. The group supports pupils who cannot attend mainstream schools either because they have short-term and longer-term medical problems, have significant psychological problems or they are girls of school age who are pregnant or have just given birth. Some pupils attend the centre for lessons, but the majority are supported at home or in other places such as a satellite location in Frome.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Mendip Tuition Group provides well for the pupils and this support is at times outstanding. Working very productively within the Somerset Medical Tuition Service, managers and staff have a very clear understanding of what the pupils need and how they can meet these needs; standards are rapidly improving. Whatever the setting, teaching and learning are good and often excellent. Staff are outstanding at developing the pupils' self-confidence and independence. This excellent personal development helps pupils to play their full part in their own learning and development, even though progress at times can only be in small steps. Pupils say they hugely enjoy their work and being part of a safe and caring community that helps them achieve. This shows in both their very good behaviour and also their good attitudes towards learning and other people. Attendance is good and shows a strong improving trend, even when other factors work against it. The Mendip Group has a well-planned improvement programme that is very well led and managed; self-evaluation is continuous, rigorous and accurate. Already outstandingly good are the internet-based 'virtual classroom', the partnership with mental health professionals and the management that overcomes the geographic problem of 'isolation' facing many pupils and staff. This problem can also affect parents and carers, who say they value highly the support their children receive and their own partnership with staff, and that they no longer feel 'isolated'. Less developed, whilst already satisfactory, are specialist careers education and partnership with mainstream schools. The Group offers good value for money and has high capacity for future improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- develop specialist careers education so that it provides more continuous support for pupils
- develop further the partnership with mainstream schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. The pupils' attainment when they join the service varies considerably from extremely low to, in some cases, above average. Teaching is highly individual and based upon very accurate initial assessment of what the pupils already know. Continuous assessment, often involving the pupils themselves, celebrates progress made and leads to very precise objectives for the next steps in learning. Consequently, pupils make good and often very good progress whatever their starting point and whatever severe barriers to learning and personal development need to be overcome. When the barriers are great, parents told the inspector of their joy in their child learning to read and write; more able pupils spoke of the confidence their success gave them and how this would lead to further education and training in preparation for future careers. Pupils working with the service reach their potential and as their

personal development improves, that potential increases. Staff recognise this increasing potential and set more challenging objectives to meet.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding, equally so for each of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Pupils move forward with their teachers' help, even when these pupils face severe psychological challenges and frequent setbacks. There are many examples of pupils moving from being completely isolated by their problems to becoming sufficiently confident to join others in community life and learning. Evidence includes pupils gaining the confidence to access the 'virtual classroom' and others moving on to learn with others within the Centre. Their personal development shows in their ability to become highly involved in their learning and very perceptive in their attitudes towards others. Behaviour in the centre is very good. Attendance is good. The pupils face many more barriers to good attendance than pupils in mainstream, and yet these are mainly overcome both at the Centre and also when joining the 'virtual classroom' or more one-to-one support. At an individual level, records of attendance show steady improvement, often resulting in 100% attendance. When other factors reduce attendance, once these have been overcome, pupils return to the improved attendance they had achieved before. The strongest evidence of their personal development is the way most pupils successfully progress to further education and training after they leave the centre. Others are equally successful when they return to mainstream schooling.

Pupils say they succeed because they feel safe and cared for as individuals. They value highly the way that they are helped to manage their own learning and behaviour, seeing their teachers as partners. They explain how what they have learned helps them to be safe and healthy, to play their part in the community and to prepare for their future lives. They are happy and enjoy their learning because they feel that they are achieving much more than many had done previously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and often outstanding. Consequently, learning is also good, overcoming the many difficulties the pupils face. All teaching is very well planned. It is based upon accurate and continuous assessment, a process that usually involves the pupils themselves. This information is drawn together in a single document that is continually updated. This means that each pupil is on a unique individual programme of learning that is highly focused on their core needs and ever-changing day-to-day requirements. Teachers and teaching assistants build a very strong rapport with their pupils and therefore learning becomes a shared activity. Outstanding is the way the interactive 'virtual classroom' enables pupils wherever they may be to 'come to school'

and relate through text and conversation with the central teacher. They receive immediate feedback and help, and the teacher can continually track and aid progress. Teachers working one-to-one with pupils in their homes or other locations are very skilled both at teaching and in building the confidence that learning requires. When teaching is good but not outstanding, teachers have a tendency to speak too much, preventing the pupils from making their full contribution.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in its many forms is satisfactory and has many good features. Despite the limited time available, it has breadth, including art, music and physical education, while focusing on English, mathematics, science and information technology. There is a strong 'enrichment' element that includes visits and other activities, and these are underpinned by a core programme of personal, social and health education, including citizenship. Careers education is adequate but could usefully be developed to become more continuous. Pupils feel that although most of which they learn is very relevant to their needs, better careers education would be helpful.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with many outstanding features. Taken, together, it is these elements pupils value most and that they feel are, above all, helping them find success. Provision meets statutory requirements. Every pupil has an individual education and support plan that is regularly reviewed. These reviews now largely involve parents and carers and the pupils. The benefits of this are becoming clear - for example, the understanding of a pupil's problems is greater and objectives to meet are more relevant. A great strength of the provision as a whole is the partnership with mental health professionals. These professionals find their partnership with the Tuition Group "very useful" because Group staff can use specialist insights on mental health to support pupils continually. Similarly, educational staff have benefited greatly from training provided by mental health professionals. The Group's own self-evaluation has identified a need to make careers counselling and guidance more continuous, and the inspector and the pupils agree. There are positive relationships with mainstream schools but difficulty with communication sometimes causes problems. As a result, support and guidance is not as seamless as it needs to be. The partnership with parents is close and continuous, and a major factor in the pupils' success. Overcoming the problems posed by 'isolation', the Group ensures pupils' safety

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good; the Mendip Tuition Group is on a powerful journey of improvement. Rigorous, accurate and continuous self-evaluation shows managers, however, that this journey has made a very good start but is not finished.

There are sensible performance management systems in place and this means staff receive regular feedback on their work and on how to improve. The key gain has been the willingness of staff to gain feedback that helps them improve – in the past, one effect of ‘isolation’ was that this sort of systematic feedback and accountability was not routine. Even now, they find it difficult to compare their work with others because there are so few doing similar work. Managers realise this and are planning ways to overcome this problem by, for example, observing teachers in mainstream. Some staff, however, feel that there needs to be something between the annual cycle of reviews and day-to-day support – for example, more frequent mentoring sessions. Staff have been involved in drawing up a very appropriate programme of training.

Clarity of thinking gives the service a vision of what is needed and clear direction in which to move. Strategic planning is good and has clear measurable objectives against which to test outcomes. The ‘team leader’ of the Mendip Tuition Group is exactly that, and has created a team of professionals who meet regularly and frequently to share ideas and find solutions; staff both within the centre and also in other locations work as a highly determined and close-knit team. This balance of clear planning guided by feedback from pupils and parents and empowered by a shared determination gives the Group high capacity for further improvement. Signs of this capacity are already clear because data shows the success that current improvements and innovations have already made for example, the impact of the ‘virtual classroom’ on pupils’ progress and engagement.

Key to the service’s success is the staff’s complete commitment to providing every pupil with equal access to ways to succeed. This leads managers to be highly innovative, to initiate close partnership with others and not to accept things that might otherwise hold them back, for example problems with transport. The service management committee includes key people within the partnership as a whole and this has created great clarity of thinking as to how people can and need to work together. They have yet to visit the Mendip Group, although this is planned for the near future.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ 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

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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	3	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?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	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	2	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	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

Thank you for making me so welcome in your lessons and during the time some of you spent talking with me. I enjoyed my day in the Mendip Tuition Group very much. You told me you felt happy and safe at the Centre, and that you felt you were learning a great deal because you are valued as individuals. Most of you said that you were much more confident about going on to Further Education and about getting good examination results. Parents of pupils who do not work in the centre were equally positive about the help their children receive.

I think that the Mendip Tuition Group supports you well and you told me that you agree. You are making good progress because you are well taught and you are growing in self-confidence. You are rightly proud of your work. You learn interesting things and feel teachers understand and help with any problems you are trying to overcome. I felt the Unit was well led and managed and that you are playing your part in making it a good place to be.

To become even better, I suggested that your teachers:

provide you with more advice and information on your future careers

work even more closely with the schools you have come from and to which you may return.

Thank you again for making my day in your Centre such a good one.