



# Horizon Centre

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 133572  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 285522  
**Inspection dates** 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Eric Craven HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit	<b>School address</b>	Horizon House
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit		Grappenhall Hall Campus
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Church Lane, Warrington WA4 3ES
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 860249
<b>Number on roll</b>	37	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 860982
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Norma Cadwallader
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Frost

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23 May 2006 - 24 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 285522
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an Additional Inspector. An inspection over two years ago made the unit subject to special measures and the unit's progress was monitored by HMI.

## Description of the school

Warrington Horizons is a pupil referral unit for pupils aged 11 to 16. The majority of pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, although a small number at risk of permanent exclusion attend the unit for a period of 6 weeks as a preventative measure. Currently there are 37 pupils on role, including four girls. All of the pupils are of White British heritage. One pupil has a statement of special educational need and four others are being formally assessed. Key Stage 3 pupils are taught on the site of a special school and Key Stage 4 pupils are taught two miles away in recently refurbished accommodation. Following a period of staffing difficulties, a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher were appointed in 2005. The unit now has a full complement of teaching and support staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is an improving unit and the inspectors agree with the unit's judgement that it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Since the last inspection, there have been marked improvements in teaching, leadership and management and in the procedures for managing the pupils' behaviour. As a result, the pupils are enjoying their schooling and achieving more. All of the pupils are offered full-time provision and the curriculum meets the specification laid down by the local authority. However, weaknesses remain in Key Stage 4 in the assessment and tracking of pupils' learning.

With good support from the local authority, the headteacher is developing his strategic and operational roles. He has greatly benefited from the recently appointed deputy and assistant headteachers who are providing solid support; they are managing their respective key stages effectively. A positive climate for learning has been established and the pupils are responding well. The unit has set a clear direction for itself through its strategic plan and, overall, staff are responding to the challenges facing them. They work hard and are committed to providing the best they can for the pupils. Teaching is satisfactory overall but ranges from outstanding to less than adequate. The roles of subject coordinators are underdeveloped; few are influencing the development of their subject sufficiently. The arrangements for keeping the pupils safe are robust and the pupils who attend regularly enjoy their education; their behaviour and relationships are satisfactory. However, the rate of attendance is too low. The management committee has an accurate view of the unit's strengths and weaknesses and are supporting and challenging the unit to good effect.

The improvements made by the unit, its strategic plan and the stability of staffing mean that the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. The unit provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the majority of it is good.
- Improve the assessment of the pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Develop the roles of coordinators so they influence the development of their subjects more.
- Improve the pupils' attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The standards reached by the pupils are generally low when compared to those achieved by pupils of a similar age in mainstream schools. Their chequered educational histories mean that until now few have made the progress of which they were capable. However,

because of the improvements at the unit most of the pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress.

Encouragingly, 12 pupils are entered this year for GCSEs in English, mathematics, human biology and information and communication technology. This is a greater range of subjects compared to 2005. Three of the Year 9 pupils sat the 2005 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, with one pupil gaining the nationally expected Level 5 in mathematics and this was a good achievement. The three pupils taking the 2006 Year 9 National Curriculum tests are likely to achieve levels generally well below those expected of pupils of the same age nationally.

Teachers are using assessments of pupils' capabilities to help them set work which is suitably matched to the pupils' abilities, notably at Key Stage 3. The unit's assessment and tracking records at Key Stage 3 show that overall pupils are making satisfactory progress in English, science and mathematics. In Key Stage 4, assessments are less secure but there is enough evidence to show the pupils are making satisfactory progress. Moreover, inspectors' observations in lessons also suggest that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. There remains some underachievement, notably for pupils who are poor attenders.

As a result of effective behaviour management systems and the staff's care and support, the pupils are making sound progress in addressing their personal, social and emotional difficulties.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Overall, pupils who attend regularly enjoy their learning. They say, 'We enjoy school because we are treated like adults and our teachers make us laugh'. Attitudes to learning are positive when the teaching is good, but deteriorate when the teaching lacks pace and sparkle. Behaviour and relationships are satisfactory; many pupils entered into polite and mature conversation with inspectors. Fixed-period exclusions are dropping rapidly because of the high quality counselling support pupils are given to help them manage their anger. The numbers of pupils being re-integrated into mainstream schools in Key Stage 3 is increasing because of early intervention from the school's educational psychologist and robust programmes to support the pupils. Attendance is unsatisfactory, but improving because of the rigorous strategies put in place to raise it.

The pupils' voice is heard and acted upon through the 'centre forum' in Key Stage 3 and in tutorial sessions in Key Stage 4. There is regular and frequent consultation with pupils about their targets for improving behaviour. Social development lies at the heart of the school. Pupils respond well when given the opportunity to take responsibility in the unit's community as evidenced by the 'buddy system' in Key Stage 3. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. The unit raises pupils' awareness of cultural diversity successfully.

There is focused attention on encouraging pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle; pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and very good provision is made for physical

exercise. Smoking is not allowed on site. Sex education and education about the misuse of drugs promote pupils' health and safety really well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, during the inspection it varied widely with some being good and even outstanding but with a small amount that was less than adequate. In the best lessons activities are planned to meet the learning styles of the pupils. In a Year 11 science lesson, for example, the teacher's focus on a visual approach, engaging pupils in the dissection of a lamb's kidney resulted in pupils making rapid gains in their understanding of its functions. Skilful behaviour management, clear instructions and timely teacher interventions characterises the best teaching. Excellent relationships result in pupils having confidence to ask questions of their teachers. Overall, lesson plans are good, notably specifying clear learning outcomes and work for the learning support assistants. Where lessons are less effective, there are two main reasons; the pace is pedestrian resulting in dull teaching, and the management of behaviour is inconsistent.

Recent involvement of pupils themselves in the assessment of the quality of their own work is increasing their confidence and improving their motivation to learn. Marking, however, is inconsistent. The best marking gives pupils clear and precise pointers about what they need to do to improve, but the worst marking is of little help to pupils in improving their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and is improving. At Key Stage 3, the pupils are able to study the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Schemes of work, based on the National Curriculum, are sound.

At Key Stage 4, there is a suitable mix of academic, personal, social and vocational courses. All pupils undertake GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science and these are complemented by subjects such as personal, social and health education, citizenship, expressive arts and food technology. Some bespoke vocational courses have been provided this year by external providers, but these have generally been for pupils the unit has found most difficult to engage. College courses were temporarily terminated this year although Year 10 pupils have signed-up to a range of vocational courses from September 2006. All of the Year 11 pupils leave the unit with some form of external accreditation.

The extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and at the end of the day are good. They are tailored to the pupils' interests and are valued by them. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide array of interesting visitors and relevant off-site visits, which complement the formal curriculum well.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall; some aspects are good. Parents are pleased with the care their children receive. One parent wrote, 'I think that my son has improved 100% in the time he has spent at Horizon House. I also think it has made him a better person'.

Pupils' behaviour targets are reviewed regularly. Academic progress is tracked rigorously in Key Stage 3 using the tests that the pupils are given in literacy and numeracy on entry as a baseline. In Key Stage 4, many pupils arrive without assessment data from their mainstream schools. However, they are not tested on entry and therefore the accurate tracking of progress and subsequent setting of suitable targets is made difficult; this is a significant weakness.

Robust child protection procedures are in place. There are clear protocols for restraint and thorough risk assessments are carried out. Checks are undertaken to ensure all adults employed are suitable to work with children. Because teachers and support staff know the anxieties pupils face, support and advice is targeted very well. Good support is given to pupils when re-integrating back into mainstream schools. An effective partnership with a range of agencies and voluntary organisations makes a valuable contribution to the care and support pupils receive. However, the unit reports that liaison with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, over pupils who present mental health difficulties, is somewhat slow. Career guidance is good and pupils are prepared well for college placements or a place of work when they leave school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Following the appointment of a deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, and more stable staffing generally, the unit has improved considerably since its last inspection. The headteacher has benefited from having the support of the local authority and two new members of the senior leadership team and is progressively improving his skills at strategic and operational levels. The deputy and assistant headteachers have clear roles and responsibilities and are managing their respective key stages suitably. A well constructed strategic plan sets a clear agenda for improvement. Morale is good and staff are working hard; they share a vision for the unit and are committed to continuing its improvement. Designated staff have responsibility for each area of the curriculum and a start has been made in making the role of coordinators clear. However, not all coordinators are sufficiently influencing the development of their subject.

The day-to-day running of the school has improved and it now operates quite smoothly. The management of pupils' behaviour is better and consequently they are engaged more and their learning has improved.

Monitoring and evaluation is improving steadily. Lessons are regularly monitored by the headteacher, with other senior staff increasingly taking on this role. Evaluations

of other aspects of the unit's work are becoming a more regular occurrence. Peer observations have been introduced as a professional development activity, although this is in its infancy and it is too early to be able to judge its value. The analysis of data has been slow to develop and the use of pupils' progress data is at an early stage of development.

There is a wide representation of stakeholders on the management committee. The links between the committee and the unit has been strengthened by the local authority's school adviser who is a member of the committee. Increasingly, the reports received are enabling them to support and challenge the unit appropriately. The local authority has sensible plans to maintain a good degree of support for the unit for the immediate future.

The unit has improved considerably since its last inspection; good progress has been made in addressing most of the weaknesses identified in January 2004 and there is satisfactory capacity to improve further.



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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>	3	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	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	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	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	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>	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	3	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

<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**

Thank you for welcoming us to Horizons. We enjoyed spending time with you and the staff and we are grateful to you for the valuable comments you made.

We came to the following conclusions about the unit:

We thought your behaviour and attitudes have improved since the last inspection. It is pleasing that the number of times pupils are excluded is reducing. However, we do have some concerns about the attendance of some pupils and how this is not helping them achieve as much as they could.

You told us you feel safe at the unit and we think the systems the unit has to protect you and support you when you are in need are effective.

We think that teaching has improved since the last inspection and as a consequence most of you are making satisfactory progress in your learning. However, we do think that some of the teaching could be better still and we have asked the staff to work on this. Teachers are assessing your progress better at Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 and we have asked them to improve this as well.

The subjects and courses you follow are appropriate and help you develop the skills you need. We think that there are some useful opportunities for those of you in Key Stage 4 to develop your interests in courses at other places such as the Peace Centre. We are pleased to hear that college courses are available to you once again from September.

We think that the headteacher has benefited from having a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher to help him manage the school. The staff now have a plan in place to make further improvements. The teachers who are responsible for particular subjects have made a start in developing them but we still think there is more they could do.

Finally, we think that the improvements made at Horizons now mean that it no longer requires special measures.

Thank you again for your courtesy and your comments.