

The Coningsby Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101706
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	286155
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	85
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Teacher in charge	Mrs B Gonella
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	45 Coombe Road Croydon CR0 1BQ
Telephone number	020 8680 0949
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Coningsby pupil referral unit (PRU) was registered in 1996. It provides a full-time education for up to forty pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schooling and for those who require a considerable amount of time away from their secondary school because of their behaviour. Most pupils come from the south of Croydon but a few others from further afield. Most pupils are White British but about a third are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Eleven pupils currently have a statement of special educational need and eleven are in local authority care and receive their education at a separate unit, 'Get Connected', about five miles away. These pupils have an individual programme and attend for a morning or afternoon session. The PRU also provides specialist home tuition for a number of pupils who have particular medical needs, learning difficulties or disabilities or are awaiting a placement elsewhere. A very high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals and nearly all have a background of significant social deprivation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this pupil referral unit (PRU) requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than, in all the circumstances, it could reasonably be expected to perform. The PRU is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and its monitoring and evaluation, pupils' attendance, and the challenge and support provided by the advisory committee.

The PRU is inadequate because significant weaknesses exist, particularly in the teaching of mathematics and science and in a number of lessons the work set is not well matched to all the pupils' needs. There has been little formal monitoring of teaching by the headteacher. A deterioration in pupils' attendance has significantly reduced the progress that pupils make and hence their chances of examination success.

Most pupils join the PRU having significantly underperformed in a mainstream school. Information from pupils' previous schools is often slow to reach the PRU and is frequently incomplete. During the last academic year an effective system has been put in place to assess pupils, from which subsequent progress can be judged. The new assessment system helps to create an effective baseline. Pupils' academic and behavioural progress are subsequently tracked on a regular basis but this does not yet, in all cases, inform teachers' planning. Consequently, in a significant number of lessons the teaching does not meet pupils' specific learning needs. In some instances, the expectations of what individual pupils are capable of achieving, is too low and pupils fail to make acceptable progress. This is especially so in mathematics. The quality of teaching is too variable with some lessons being inadequate, often because steps in learning are not well enough explained by the teachers and too little good quality visual stimulus is provided. However, very effective teaching was also seen, for example in an English lesson, where a number of pupils were developing their literacy skills well when drafting an essay relating to *Pride and Prejudice*. Pupils also show good achievement in practical lessons such as food technology and art.

By the end of Year 9 pupils have made some progress in the core areas of English, mathematics and science but the irregular and often poor attendance of a number of pupils limits this progress. Attendance issues are followed up with parents and carers on the first and subsequent days of absence and appropriate referrals are made to the education welfare service. A good reward system for improved attendance has recently been devised. Despite this, the attendance of pupils has dropped significantly over the last two terms and is sometimes lower than the attendance these pupils achieved at their mainstream school. A number of pupils have achieved GCSE success and have also achieved unit awards at the end of Year 11. However, irregular attendance has often resulted in incomplete coursework and failure to complete courses.

Pupils' frequently challenging behaviour is a clear and appropriate focus of teachers' attention. During the inspection the behaviour of pupils was mostly satisfactory and significant instances of very sensitive management of behaviour by teachers were seen, helping to refocus pupils on their work. Pupils report that they generally feel safe in the school and that there are adults to whom they can turn to when they need help. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils is good, they are very well supported and the PRU provides a safe environment. The quality of care and support provided for those pupils who return to main stream schools is good, as is the care and attention paid to health and safety issues in relation to work experience.

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides an adequate range of activities including those of a practical nature.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, inadequacies exist in some areas, in particular, in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in order to bring the less effective lessons up to the standard of the best. However, the day-to-day management of the centre is effective, with appropriate sanctions and rewards for pupils in place and the weaknesses and strengths correctly identified in the schools' self-evaluation. The advisory committee was identified as a weakness in the last inspection and is still failing to provide sufficient support and challenge.

Capacity to improve is satisfactory and has been clearly demonstrated in the recent past. For example, suitable action was taken to address significant issues at the 'Get Connected' centre last year and the introduction of an appropriate baseline assessment strategy. A clear action plan to improve teaching and learning was swiftly put into place following a recent local authority inspection. The headteacher identifies improvements in behaviour resulting from this action.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it enables all learners to make better progress, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Undertake regular formal lesson observation in order to improve the quality of teaching bringing it up to the standard of the best.
- Improve attendance.
- Ensure that the advisory committee provides sufficient and well targeted support and challenge for the headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate overall. Pupils enter the PRU with reading ages often below and sometimes, well below, their chronological age and this has affected their literacy skills in general. Low prior attainment is not so apparent in mathematics and science. The PRU has recently started to use an electronic system of recording pupils' progress but it is at an early stage of development. Assessing pupils on entry is helping to create a secure baseline assessment.

In 2006, at the end of Year 9, despite many pupils having only been at the PRU for less than a year, they achieved reasonably well in national tests considering their starting points. Some pupils achieved the expected level for their age in English, mathematics and science.

In 2006, out of sixteen full-time pupils, one achieved seven A*- C grades at GCSE and twelve achieved five or more GCSE at grades A*-G. Three other pupils did not achieve quite as well. Out of the part-time pupils at 'Get Connected' and on home tuition, only one pupil achieved five or more A*-G GCSE grades but the majority gained other accredited unit awards in a variety of topics. Many pupils, however, only achieved the lowest GCSE grades in mathematics and science, reflecting inadequate progress in these subjects. In English, although only one pupil achieved a grade C, a significant number only just missed this grade. The two pupils who took English literature achieved grade C. The best results were in citizenship, where nine pupils achieved an A-C grade and a further eight just missed a grade C. Art results were also creditable.

Progress seen in lessons was inadequate for a small number of pupils who were underachieving because the teaching was not well matched to their needs and for those with particularly

irregular attendance. Where the teaching caught their imagination, the pupils achieved well and made good progress, for example in practical food technology lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are satisfactory. Most pupils engage in a friendly manner with each other, with staff and with visitors. Whilst many enjoy the security of the unit and feel safe, attendance remains irregular. Over the course of this academic year, the attendance of each year group has deteriorated and is now unsatisfactory. Whilst students' social, moral and cultural awareness is satisfactory their spiritual development is less strong.

Pupils' behaviour around the site is satisfactory but in some lessons they behave erratically and show casual attitudes to learning. Some fail to respond to adults' reasonable requests even when they are clear as to what is expected of them. Pupils are positive about the good personal guidance they receive through an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Participation in physical activities is satisfactory and students understand its importance in keeping healthy, through the effective lessons in food technology and PSHE. They know about balanced diets even if not always able to match knowledge with practice. They similarly understand the ill-effects of smoking although some tend not to want to stop. Pupils are confident that their views matter and consider they have good opportunities to talk to adults when necessary. Through charity fund raising, they make valuable contributions to the wider community. They are prepared well for their future in the work place, in education and training through effective work-related learning and well managed work experience opportunities in both Year 10 and 11, often leading to further job opportunities or apprenticeship schemes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. Lessons, however, range from outstanding to inadequate. The headteacher acknowledges that a number of lessons are unsatisfactory. This inconsistency is reflected in the pupils' variable behaviour and attitudes to learning across subjects.

The PRU has models of good teaching. The most successful lessons stimulate and challenge pupils. In a Year 10 English lesson for example, a pupil was fully engaged in improving her understanding of a novel in an essay task. A very well-judged intervention by the teacher enabled a very reluctant learner to begin to engage in learning. In some lessons working relationships were very positive and pupils responded well to praise.

A common feature of most lessons is the good individual support for pupils. Some lessons make good use of technology, such as the interactive whiteboards, to stimulate pupils' interest. However, in too many lessons, teachers' planning fails to identify precisely enough what pupils should learn and activities to help them make progress are not well enough matched to their needs or interests. The school's focus on improving literacy skills is not considered carefully enough in all lessons. Key words are sometimes ignored or simply listed, for example, and not used in assessing pupils' understanding of new learning. In inadequate lessons there is insufficient attention paid to the necessary steps needed in the teaching process to ensure

that the learning is secure. Consequently, pupils arrive at an outcome but do not know how they got there. In some other lessons, teaching fails to engage students' well enough so that their behaviour deteriorates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is reasonably broad; the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are mostly taught in the morning sessions and physical and creative activities in the afternoon. All pupils have a lesson of PHSE, which covers drugs and, sex education and alcohol abuse well. The curriculum is appropriately enriched with activities such as music at a local recording studio. Years 10 and 11 are provided with a good range of activities on a Friday afternoon, which include football, aerobics, dance, art cookery and film editing. A breakfast club is provided each day and staff are on hand at break and lunchtime often providing impromptu counselling to pupils.

The curriculum is being considered by staff this year with a view to devoting whole days to curriculum topics so that pupils can spend longer on a particular theme. Pupils reported that when day-long option session took place in the past they have enjoyed them. The curriculum is suitably enhanced by opportunities in work related activities such as a City and Guilds course in building skills and college links which are appropriately used for motor vehicle engineering.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff, including the headteacher, work very effectively in providing personal guidance for vulnerable students and their families. Extensive links with other agencies are very well orchestrated to deal with the individuals' social and emotional circumstances. The 'Get Connected' unit offers very good support for students in local authority care, enabling some to gain essential academic qualifications to underpin future economic well-being. Good careers advice and guidance helps students back into mainstream school or into the best options available in education, work or training. Arrangements for promoting pupils' health and safety are good throughout. Staff act swiftly to address any anti-social behaviour such as bullying. The re-integration of pupils back to mainstream education is exceptionally well managed with individual follow up of pupils for several weeks or longer, if necessary. Similarly, pupils are followed up after enrolling on college courses and the good guidance that they receive enables a significant proportion of pupils to take up college courses or training routes.

Termly reports and reviews record each student's personal and academic progress, including attendance and recently, politeness. Students have personal targets and most know by when they should be achieved. The use of baseline and other assessment information to chart academic progress is, however, not yet sufficiently well used to inform all lesson planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Day-to-day management of the PRU is good. The headteacher's contact with parents, carers and families, which consumes considerable time, is very much appreciated by all concerned. The headteacher is very ably supported by the

deputy headteacher in these management issues. However, insufficient and rigorous attention is given to lesson observation, scrutiny of pupils' work and teacher's planning, so that clear well targeted advice for improvement can be given to teachers. The leadership and management by staff with key responsibilities such as English, PSHE and citizenship, art, the work-related curriculum, reintegration to mainstream and the 'Get Connected' centre are good. Although the headteacher and deputy meet informally but regularly to discuss such concerns, the senior leadership meetings focus on day to day management rather than strategic issues of challenging behaviour, quality of teaching and overall vision. The involvement of the advisory committee was an area for improvement at the last inspection. It is still not providing sufficient support and challenge to the current headteacher.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Coningsby Centre, Croydon, CR0 1BQ

I would like to thank you for talking to me when I visited Coningsby PRU just before half term. It was good meeting you and seeing the progress you made in lessons. I was especially pleased to see some of the very good art work, English, citizenship and cookery that you were doing. I learnt a great deal from two pupils in particular about the differences between types of pizzas!

Many of you are working well and you try hard in lessons. Some of you, however, do not attend regularly enough to make the progress you should. It is important that you take some responsibility to get to the PRU regularly and on time if you are to achieve the examination results of which you are capable.

Staff care about your safety and provide you with good guidance and support. This is particularly so when you undertake work experience and for some of you when you return to a secondary school.

I have asked the PRU to make some important improvements because at present there are some weaknesses, which you can also help to rectify. These are:

- To make some of your lessons more interesting in order to help you make greater progress.
- To increase the number of lessons that your headteacher observes, in order to see how you are all doing and to offer advice about teaching.
- To help you to improve your attendance. To ensure that the advisory committee (it is a bit like a governing body) becomes more involved in the PRU.

Another inspector will come back in six to eight months time to see how things have changed.

I wish you all good luck for the future and hope that Year 11 do well in the examinations they are taking now.

Jennifer Smith Her Majesty's Inspector