

The Springfield Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108139
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	288029
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Harris
Principal	Mrs Carol McDermott
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	St George's Road Lupset Wakefield West Yorkshire WF2 8BB
Telephone number	01924 303770
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Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Springfield Centre serves the whole of the Wakefield Metropolitan District. It provides up to 35 places for students aged 14 to 16 years who have been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools. Students start and leave the centre at different times of the school year. In 2007/08, 34 students were placed at the centre. All students are of White British heritage. Girls make up only 25% of the population. At 58% the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is high. A number of students are young offenders and others have mental health problems. Some students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a few students have a statement of special educational needs. When they are admitted to the provision, many students have a history of very poor school attendance and a negative attitude towards education. Since 2005, the centre has been managed by Wakefield District Community School under a partnership agreement with the local authority. The aim of the agreement is to offer greater flexibility to meet students' needs, share expertise of staff to develop high quality provision, enhance the capacity for improvement and strengthen safeguarding for vulnerable young people. This arrangement is currently the subject of discussion with the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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 an effective pupil referral unit (PRU), which is successful in re-engaging students who are disaffected with education. As a result, the outcomes for students are good, with a significant majority gaining and holding down employment or moving on to college. Parents and carers are positive about the impact which the centre has on improving their children's life chances. This view is typified by a parent's comment that her daughter 'now has a future'.

Attainment on entry is low and standards generally climb to below average by the time students leave. Because teaching is good, students achieve well. Students make good progress in achieving their targets for personal development, mathematics and English. This is confirmed by the centre's systems to assess and monitor how well students are doing. These systems have improved considerably since the previous inspection and enable staff to ensure that all students are doing equally well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result the centre implements successfully its policy to promote equality and diversity. Students gain a variety of accreditation in both Years 10 and 11 which is matched to their individual interests and learning levels. In 2008, this included GCSE passes in art; entry level certificates in English, history, science, mathematics and information and communication technology; the Computer Literacy and Information Technology award (CLAIT) and adult literacy and numeracy awards.

Strong links with a variety of agencies, such as the Youth Offending Team, enable students to receive very good care and support. Safeguarding procedures, including arrangements to ensure child protection, are robust and fully meet current government requirements. However, although students have clear targets to improve their behaviour, effort and attitudes to work, which they understand well, they are not so well involved in setting and reviewing their learning targets on a day-to-day basis. This is why care, guidance and support is good overall rather than outstanding. Students respond well to staff and good relationships are evident throughout the centre. Staff are skilled at defusing potentially challenging behaviour so that lessons are not disrupted. The number of exclusions has fallen considerably and the centre's records show that the number of serious behavioural incidents is very low. There are high expectations as to what is appropriate behaviour and effective and consistent reward systems are in place to promote good behaviour. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. However, students are not prepared as fully as they might be for living in a culturally diverse society. As a result, although students support the community by, for example, volunteering to work at a local junior school, the PRU's contribution to community cohesion is only satisfactory. The centre places a strong emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle and students are strongly encouraged to engage in sport and give up smoking. However, students do not always make healthy choices. This was evident during the inspection when none of the students selected the healthy meal option which was provided at lunchtime.

The curriculum is good and covers a suitable range of subjects and courses for a PRU. The range of vocational courses is increasing through good links with the 'ENABLE' project. There is a strong programme to promote personal, social, health and citizenship education and a carefully planned programme of work related learning. This enables all students to gain valuable work experience in a variety of settings such as the Wakefield District Housing maintenance department. As a consequence, they are prepared well to succeed in the job market. Students told the inspector that they enjoy coming to the centre and are pleased with the progress which they make in improving their attitudes and behaviour. Because good systems are in place to raise the level of attendance, many students make good progress in improving their attendance.

Considering the lengthy journeys undertaken by some students to reach the centre, which can include using up to four buses, their overall level of attendance shows how much they appreciate what the centre offers and how much they enjoy learning. For example, five students have a 100% attendance rate this school year. However, the attendance of a minority of students is still too weak.

Leadership and management are good. The principal of Wakefield District Community School and the management committee oversee and monitor the work of the centre well. All leaders are highly committed to improving the centre and providing a strong positive steer to all aspects of its work. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and the centre has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students understand and use their targets for learning as well as they use those for behaviour.
- Work with students and families to improve attendance.
- Provide more opportunities to prepare students for living in a culturally diverse society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students respond well to the good individual support which they are given in lessons. Consequently, although overall standards are below average, mostly as a result of the students' disrupted education, students make good progress and achieve well against their challenging learning targets. Students gain a variety of accreditation. However, the achievement of some higher attaining students is impeded slightly by their reluctance to do the necessary homework to support GCSE entry in subjects such as English. The centre is fully aware of this issue and has put in place strategies, such as offering accredited courses in adult literacy, to enable these students to gain alternative qualifications. Other strategies such as arranging for early college transfers and 'fast tracking' some Year 10 students are also used to raise the achievement of higher attaining students. The relatively small number of girls and those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students. The outcomes in 2008 for the 15 Year 11 leavers were impressive with seven students gaining and maintaining employment or apprenticeships and five students choosing to move onto a variety of post-16 educational placements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students respond well to the supportive and structured approach. Consequently, they make good progress in improving their attitudes and behaviour and acquire personal skills which enable them to become successful learners. Students are generally polite and keen to express their opinions. They take good care of the centre and there is no graffiti or littering. Staff work very closely with the Education Welfare Officer and have implemented a wide variety of strategies to improve students' attendance. This includes very detailed monitoring of attendance, setting attendance targets with the students and providing strong incentives for good attendance and punctuality. Some students respond well to these approaches. However, for a minority of students, attendance remains weak. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students come to understand their feelings and how to respond well to social situations. Students begin to realise that they can make a success of their lives. For example, a student

described to the inspector how she had learned to manage her feelings of anger and was now doing well with her course work. As a result, she hoped to move on to college and then to university. Students come to support each other in a more mature way and gain a better understanding of right and wrong. They do not yet have sufficient opportunities to prepare themselves fully for living in a culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships are strong and staff know the students well. As a result, students are managed sensitively and challenging behaviour is dealt with confidently before it escalates. Support workers are well deployed and effective. Teachers are skilled in making topics interesting so that students are well motivated to learn. An example of this was in a personal, social, health and citizenship education lesson where students were given good support to design high quality electronic presentations about the dangers of smoking. The students were highly motivated by this strategy, worked very well independently and were keen to deliver their presentations to the group. All students are assessed on entry and the information is used to plan their individual targets. The centre has recently introduced a system to re-assess students' progress termly to improve procedures for setting and reviewing learning targets. Information gained in the assessments is now collated and tracked to identify any underachievement. Teachers give students good verbal feedback as to how well they are doing. However, sometimes marking of written work does not show students clearly enough how they can make their work better and improve in relation to their learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The strength of the curriculum is in the clear focus on developing personal and work related skills which will enable the students to succeed when they leave the centre. There is a consistent emphasis on developing functional skills. This was evident in an English lesson where the students made good progress in learning how to compose an effective job application letter. Because the students see activities such as this as being useful for their future lives they are willing to try hard. The curriculum is enriched well through a variety of sporting and creative activities, some of which are led by outside specialists. For example, students have had taster sessions in Spanish, German and French; music sessions with a skilled drummer; dance lessons led by a dance troupe; and performing arts sessions led by students from Leeds University.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The PRU provides very good care and support for the students. Strong links with outside agencies ensure that even the most vulnerable students, such as those with mental health problems, are well supported. Pastoral support is very strong and permeates all aspects of the centre's work including support from staff and from outside agencies such as the Youth Offending Team. Systems to ensure students' health and safety, including child protection procedures and the safe recruitment of staff, are secure and meet all government requirements for safeguarding. Behaviour programmes and reward systems are effective in improving students' behaviour. Students are involved well in setting and evaluating their targets for behaviour

throughout the school day. However, they are not yet as well involved in planning and reviewing their learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The principal of Wakefield District Community School provides good strategic leadership which is supported well by good day-to-day management of the centre. There is a strong, committed team and all staff are clear about the centre's strengths and areas for development. Planning for improvement is effective and, as a consequence, there have been improvements in a number of key areas. The centre is now tracking students' progress better and has better systems in place to improve the quality of teaching. These developments have been supported by the enhanced role of the 'learning leaders' who are taking more responsibility for planning and monitoring curriculum delivery in their subject areas. The management committee is experienced and brings a wealth of highly relevant expertise to support the work of the PRU. There are good systems in place to ensure that the committee effectively monitors how well the PRU is doing. As a consequence, the committee is confident to challenge decisions of senior leaders when necessary and is an effective 'critical friend'. Leaders are successful in ensuring that students have equality of opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the centre's provision.

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of The Springfield Centre, Wakefield, WF2 8BB

Thank you for welcoming me to the centre. I enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about the centre. I judged that staff provide you with a good education.

There are some things that are particularly good about the centre. These are:

- the good opportunities which you have to prepare for the world of work
- the success you experience in getting jobs or moving on to college
- the very good care and support which you are given by the teachers and support workers
- the good improvements which you make to your attitudes and behaviour so that you achieve well.

I have asked your teachers to improve a few things to make the centre better. These are:

- to ensure that you all understand exactly what your learning targets are in every subject area and review how well you are doing regularly with your teachers
- to help those of you who take more time off than you should to improve your attendance. It is very important that you attend every day to improve your chances when you leave the centre
- to give you more opportunities to learn about the beliefs and cultures of people from different ethnic backgrounds.