

Gillford Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112095
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289171
Inspection date	28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kym Allan
Headteacher	Mr Robert Hewson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Upperby Road Carlisle Cumbria CA2 4JE
Telephone number	01228 606957
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

All the pupils on roll are either permanently excluded or at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. Only five are girls. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 are also on the roll of a mainstream school. Seventeen pupils have statements of special educational need because of the severity of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some of the pupils stay at the centre for much of their secondary education. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A high percentage of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and a very small number are looked after by the local authority. Extended school provision includes a breakfast club and a wide range of after school activities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Gillford Centre provides a satisfactory education. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the centre has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as a result of adequate teaching and learning. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is carefully and accurately checked and this helps them to make good progress towards the challenging targets set for them. The centre makes appropriate use of assessment for the rest of the pupils and, as a result, they make satisfactory progress towards their targets. Occasionally, pupils are not managed effectively; where this occurs, they are not motivated and, as a result, make inadequate progress. Older pupils achieve well in the good quality vocational courses. Although higher attaining pupils are adequately prepared for moving on to the next phase of their lives, they do not have enough opportunities to attain more challenging qualifications. In Key Stage 4, the range of GCSE courses is too narrow for them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are satisfactory. Their cultural development is inadequate because too few opportunities are provided to ensure that pupils fully understand life in a culturally diverse society. Younger pupils enjoy their time at the centre, work hard and the vast majority return to their mainstream school. Lunch is a positive social event and teaches pupils how to prepare healthy meals. Pupils' views are listened to and they help to improve the school environment. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions is decreasing.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils respond well to 'hands on' activities, for example, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum and teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 2. This ensures pupils make good progress and are effectively prepared for their return to a mainstream school. The curriculum for the Key Stage 3 pupils is satisfactory, but has insufficient links to a mainstream curriculum. The engineering, catering and land based courses effectively engage the older pupils. However, a minority of them fail to attend their other courses and, as a result, attendance overall is inadequate. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 have limited access to GCSE courses; the range is too narrow to fully extend their learning. The provision of activities after school is an exciting initiative, which captures the interest of the older boys and girls.

Pupils receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. The staff team works hard to provide a safe environment for this vulnerable group of pupils. For example, despite the wide age range, younger pupils work and play without fear of being bullied. There is a regular monitoring of pupils' personal targets but they are not fully aware of what they have to do to make further progress in their work. Parents and carers acknowledge the positive contribution of the centre to their children's progress.

The staff team works well together and are provided with adequate support and challenge from the management committee. This makes a valuable contribution to the centre's satisfactory capacity to improve. The Key Stage 2 provision and extended school services are well led and managed. The centre's development plan is a comprehensive document but does not provide a manageable or sharply focused enough agenda for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils attend well.

- Refine development planning to focus more sharply on improving pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Broaden the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of life in a culturally diverse society.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of the boys and girls is satisfactory. The nature of pupils' difficulties means that they rarely attain national standards. Progress for different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils in public care, is consistent with their peers. Pupils at Key Stage 2 achieve well. Staff have high expectations and, as a result, pupils make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills with many working at a level appropriate to their age. There is good provision for ICT across the centre and pupils use the facilities well to extend their learning. For example, the younger pupils have enjoyed making compact disc copies of their music. Pupils' high quality artwork is displayed in the centre and the Year 11 GCSE coursework is particularly striking. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 make adequate, rather than good progress, which is largely a reflection of their inadequate attendance. At Key Stage 3, pupils respond well to practical activities, but their progress slows down when they are required, for example, to record the outcomes of a science investigation. Key Stage 4 pupils who attend regularly achieve well in the accredited engineering, catering and land based courses. They also complete a range of other courses that are appropriate for the majority of pupils, but these do not provide sufficient challenge to the higher attaining pupils so progress is satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils at Key Stage 2 have positive attitudes, work well together and enjoy attending the centre. They have a positive approach to their work, which prepares them well for their return to mainstream schooling. The majority of the older pupils enjoy aspects of their schooling, but a minority of them attend only the courses they like and consequently, attendance is inadequate. Breakfast is available and is a positive social event that helps to ensure that pupils are ready to learn. Older pupils work hard to prepare the healthy lunches and make good progress in their catering skills, including an understanding of the importance of health and hygiene standards. Pupils enjoy eating their meal with the staff and this helps to develop positive relationships. The school council provides pupils with the opportunity to express their opinions and many of their suggestions, including the need to redecorate parts of the centre, have been acted upon. The pupils have completed projects to improve the centre and local environment. Older pupils, including girls, are keen to participate in after school sporting activities as part of the exciting extended school provision. They also develop good work-related skills through their land based and engineering courses and they take great pride in their portfolios of work, but their negative work ethic in some other subjects means that they are only adequately prepared for the world of work and further education. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, but improving. Pupils' cultural development is

inadequate as too few opportunities are provided to extend pupils' understanding of life in a culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Typically, assessment is used to make sure that pupils' work is adequately linked to their learning needs. However, at Key Stage 2, the use of assessment information is more rigorous and ensures that pupils' work is more closely matched to their learning needs and progress is good. Expectations and the pace of learning are satisfactory, although pupils are, at times, reluctant to work independently. Where teaching is enthusiastic and expectations are high, pupils make good progress. On a few occasions, pupils' tasks fail to motivate them, behaviour management is inconsistent and, as a result, learning time is lost. Teachers use the good ICT resources effectively and pupils display increasing confidence and competence in their ICT skills. For example, the word processing of pupils' work in their vocational courses is of a good standard. Pupils enjoy active and practical activities and, as a result, make good progress in subjects such as art and design and their vocational subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good for the pupils in Key Stage 2 as it is closely linked to the curriculum in mainstream schools. Therefore, pupils' learning prepares them effectively for their full-time return to their school. The curriculum for the Key Stage 3 pupils is adequate and there is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' basic skills. However, the curriculum does not fully prepare pupils for their return to mainstream schooling and this is one of the factors that makes finding a mainstream place for some of these pupils difficult. Older pupils are provided with good vocational courses, which they thoroughly enjoy. Other courses are available, but some of them fail to motivate the pupils. Higher attaining pupils have limited access to GCSE courses, but the range is too narrow to fully extend their learning. The enrichment of the curriculum is good with a good range of visits and visitors. The extended school's provision provides an extensive range of activities in the centre and the locality.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. The staff team have a high level of commitment to the care of the pupils and ensure that arrangements for health and safety and the safeguarding of pupils meet requirements. The organisation of the accommodation and staffing ensures that younger pupils work and play without fear of being bullied. The teachers and specialist support assistants have appropriate behaviour management training and this has helped to reduce the incidence of fixed-term exclusions. Pupils are aware of their personal development targets and are actively involved in assessing their progress. However, they are not sufficiently aware of how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to make further progress. The level of support and guidance to promote pupils' attendance in 2005/2006 was successful and it is planned to reintroduce this next year. However, during the last year the time allocated to this role was halved and, as result, the level of pupils' attendance

fell. The centre involves external advisors well to prepare pupils for leaving the centre. Parents appreciate the work of the centre and one parent commented that they, 'are pleased with the centre and their son now has more good days than bad'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management committee provides adequate support and challenge to senior leaders and is making an increasingly strong contribution to the centre's satisfactory capacity to improve. The staff team work well together to support the acting headteacher and to manage the centre effectively on a day-to-day basis. The leadership and management of Key Stage 2 are good and this ensures that pupils make good progress in readiness for their return to mainstream education. The self-evaluation processes are adequate, but judgements are too optimistic. The centre's development plan has too many priorities. The measures for improvement are not focused sharply enough on pupils' achievement and personal development. The leadership of the centre's extended provision is good. The coordinator is enthusiastic and has a clear vision for developing the range of activities on offer, including some provision for the holidays. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

29 June 2007

Inspection of Gillford Centre, Carlisle, CA2 4JE

Dear Pupils

I enjoyed my visit to your centre. You made me feel welcome and I was impressed with the high quality meal that you prepared. Also, although I did not have the time to visit the engineering base I could see from your portfolios that you work hard and thoroughly enjoy your time there. Particular thanks to the pupils that gave up some of their lunch break to talk with me.

I think that you are provided with a satisfactory education. The younger pupils work hard and make good progress. All of you clearly enjoy practical subjects, for example, your use of ICT is good and the displays of your art work are very attractive. Staff care for you well and offer clear advice on how to stay healthy and keep safe. The activities provided after school are a really good addition to life at the centre. I am sure you are looking forward to the improvements to the centre suggested by members of the school council.

I left with some suggestions that can help the headteacher, staff and you to be clearer about how to improve the centre. The range of GCSE courses available for older pupils is too narrow and too many of them pick and choose their activities, which limits your attendance at school. It would also be worthwhile for you to have more opportunities to understand the way that people from other parts of the world live. Finally, the school's development plan is not focused enough to give a clear enough view of how well it is improving and what needs to be done next.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

(Lead inspector)