



The Forest Education Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115847
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290343
Inspection date 24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Cabot Drive
School category	Pupil referral unit		Dibden
Age range of pupils	11–16		Southampton SO45 5UG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380423827
Number on roll (school)	37	Fax number	02380879468
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Ms Eve Ritchie-Fallon
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2005		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	24 January 2007	290343

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Forest Education Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) for students aged 11 to 16. The centre operates on one site. Most students are from White British backgrounds and all but one have English as their first language. There are twice as many boys as there are girls on roll. Most of the students have either been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, or run the risk of being excluded. Four students have statements of educational need and two are looked-after children. Many have regular access to other professional support services and all students experience a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Approximately a quarter of the students are in Years 8 and 9, the rest are in Years 10 and 11. Those students who are in Years 8 and 9 attend for afternoon sessions only, spending the rest of their time at their usual school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Forest Education Centre offers a good standard of education with many outstanding features. The centre is considerably improving the life chances for its students. The centre is very successful in reintegrating students from Years 7, 8 and 9 into mainstream education. Reintegration is not the prime objective in Years 10 and 11; the objective is to prepare students for the next step beyond Year 11 into further education or the world of work. This is done with much success, with about 90% of youngsters annually making this transition. Those who do not make this transition usually do not succeed for reasons well beyond the centre's control.

Prior to starting at the centre, many students have very poor attendance records. This problem is successfully tackled and, for many, the improvements in their attendance are excellent. As a consequence, their work and confidence improve markedly. Improvements on a number of other fronts also occur because the staff work hard and liaise well with many external agencies to provide the students with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The quality of care, guidance and support is excellent, and this significantly contributes to the students' good personal development. However, the students are offered too few opportunities to exercise responsibility and there are no formal arrangements for them to express their views. The students feel safe and appreciate the help offered. The few parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were supportive and appreciative of the work being done. They all acknowledged improvements in their children's attitudes and behaviour.

Though standards overall are below average, pupils achieve well and make excellent progress because of the challenges presented and the quality of monitoring provided. Students can complete accredited courses, including GCSEs in English, mathematics and science and other subjects including a range of vocational options. The students' behaviour is good and improving. The attendance rate is good and this is helping the students to improve their work. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know the students and plan their lessons well to meet their needs. The use of assessment and other data to monitor the students' work and their progress cannot be faulted. The students are set many challenging targets and their progress against such targets is monitored in considerable detail. The progress students make is further enhanced by the excellent curriculum. This has been considerably revised and improved and meets the needs of all very well. The staff would like to make further improvements, especially in terms of social education, but such developments are hindered by the unsatisfactory accommodation. The lack of social and catering facilities is an impediment. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources are satisfactory and used effectively to support teaching and learning.

Leadership and management are good. The head of the centre has worked relentlessly to secure improvements and she has been very well supported by her dedicated colleagues. She is aware of what the centre's strengths are and where improvements are needed. The centre's self-evaluation is excellent. The management committee is supportive and robust in acting as a critical friend, and it too has a clear vision about

how improvements can be secured. Thus the centre's overall capacity for improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance the opportunities the students have to contribute to the life of the centre by giving them more opportunities to assume responsibility.
- Provide better teaching facilities and provide catering and meeting facilities for the students by improving the accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry are variable but most start with attainment that is well below average. This is mainly because of poor attendance and negative attitudes towards education. Whilst at the centre many students make excellent progress in their learning, in improving their behaviour, and in developing their personal skills. This leads to most students in Years 7, 8 and 9 successfully returning to their original schools, and many Year 11 students progressing to further education or the world of work. Most successfully complete GCSE courses and other qualifications, so that by the end of Year 11 standards have risen from being well below average to below average overall. Target setting is rigorous and demanding. All students are set challenging targets for their academic work, their behaviour and their attendance. Their progress against such targets is regularly and thoroughly monitored and recorded on a daily basis.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. The students are developing their basic personal skills very well because the staff with whom they work are dedicated and committed to improving their motivation and raising their self-esteem. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural education is good overall. Social development is good because of the time and effort staff spend helping the students, but the poor accommodation limits opportunities for the students to socialise. There is no student common room and the lack of social areas impedes social interaction between students. This deprives them of the chance to manage part of the centre's site for themselves. Behaviour is good and the students get along well together and with their teachers. As one girl remarked, 'This is better than my last school because you're given time and respect here'. Attendance is good; the improvements made by many students in their attendance are excellent. Attendance levels are thoroughly monitored and the improvements are a significant factor contributing to the excellent academic progress that the students make.

The students feel safe, commenting positively on the lack of bullying and friction within the centre. Many say that they enjoy their education. Most students are appreciative of the support they receive. Some, in Year 11, commented on how grateful

they are to be able to take a range of GCSE subjects, and many praised the opportunities to improve their physical fitness. All students are given an individual physical fitness programme and this initiative, coupled with a good personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) is enhancing the students' awareness of adopting healthy and safe lifestyles. The citizenship programme is satisfactory and the students have an adequate understanding of relevant issues, but opportunities to exercise their rights are limited. There is no student council, though a head student has just been elected. At present the students' views are not canvassed sufficiently and this limits their opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the centre. The staff acknowledge that there is scope for the students to assume responsibility and make decisions. Vocational education is provided for well and this, along with a good careers programme and partnerships with local colleges, ensures that the students have a good platform for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, and some aspects of the teaching seen were excellent. Teachers are sensitive to the students' needs and are enthusiastic in their approach. In all lessons seen the students were challenged in their work, expectations were high and there were good opportunities for the students to work independently. These factors all contribute significantly to the progress that the students make. All lessons seen were well planned and key words were displayed and used. This offered the students good opportunities to develop vocabulary specific to the subject being studied. There were, however, some missed opportunities to develop general literacy skills, as the students were not consistently encouraged to write about, or record, their work in detail.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent and provides a highly effective framework for all students to progress. In Years 7, 8 and 9, there is very good collaboration between the centre and local schools, and this results in excellent curriculum planning. The quality of this cooperation also facilitates the smooth reintegration of students into full-time education. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 enables the students to gain a variety of qualifications, including GCSEs, and then to progress to further education or the world of work. The curriculum has developed well since the previous inspection and vocational provision has improved. The vocational courses offered in partnership with local colleges are specifically designed to help the youngsters prepare for working life. PSHE and citizenship, for example, help to develop personal skills and raise awareness of issues related to lifestyles and general behaviour. Provision is also made for enrichment activities, and the physical education programme that has been developed is innovative, very effective, and involves all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A real strength of the centre's work is its use of assessment data. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the centre works closely with the students' home schools. This ensures that progress against a number of measures, including attendance, behaviour and academic performance is closely monitored. Exacting targets are set and progress against such targets is thoroughly monitored. This detailed approach helps to explain why reintegration rates are so high. In Years 10 and 11 all students are set a range of very challenging targets again covering areas such as attendance, behaviour and academic performance. The students know their targets and they also realise that their progress against such targets is thoroughly monitored on a daily basis. Poor or indifferent performance is sensitively challenged. The students like these procedures as they see that their staff care about them. The detailed analysis undertaken enables the centre to highlight trends and to intervene at an early stage whenever necessary. The quality of these assessment procedures contributes significantly to the rapid progress of students on a number of fronts.

The centre provides a safe and supportive environment where learners can develop their personal qualities. It works closely with specialist outside agencies and this enhances the effectiveness of the support offered. Provision for health and safety is good. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place, and all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leaders are aware of the strengths and areas for development. The head of centre's leadership and management are outstanding. By establishing a good and united staff team, she has skilfully and successfully guided the centre from a very low base some four years ago. It is now in a position where there is considerable success and where the centre has the support and confidence of a range of stakeholders. As one secondary headteacher commented, 'This is the best PRU I have encountered. Exclusions from schools in this area are the lowest in south-east England and this is directly attributable to the work of the head of the centre.'

There is a strong ethos of fairness and equality of opportunity in which every student matters. Much work has been done to establish a settled and good quality staff. The management committee is supportive, keen to help and fulfil its role as a critical friend well. The staff know where improvements are needed. Their challenge is to help the head of the centre to tackle these few issues. Levels of self-evaluation are excellent and significant improvements have been made since their last inspection. There is also a good capacity to improve further.

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me recently to your centre. I enjoyed my visit and I would like to thank you for telling me about the things you liked and what you would like to see improved. I know most of you enjoy coming to the centre and you told me that you feel safe and are treated well. I agree with you and, overall, I have concluded that you are receiving a good education. You have a very good set of staff to help you. You are taught well and this is helping you to make good progress in your work. The centre's curriculum is excellent and this offers you a good range of subjects to study plus some excellent opportunities to keep fit. I was pleased to learn that so many of you are doing well in your work and that some of you in Year 11 have already made definite plans for next year. I list below some recommendations for improvement.

- You should be given more responsibility in managing the daily life of the centre.
- The accommodation should be improved so that teaching, social and catering facilities are of a better quality.

I would like to finish by wishing you every success in your future work at the centre.

Bill Stoneham

Lead inspector