



Stratton Education Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126171
Local Authority Swindon
Inspection number 293485
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Price

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	St Phillips Road
School category	Pupil referral unit		Upper Stratton
Age range of pupils	5–19		Swindon SN2 7QP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01793 828941
Number on roll (school)	224	Fax number	01793 820267
Number on roll (6th form)	9		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Nigel Pickering
		Principal	Laurie Griffin
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group 5–19	Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006	Inspection number 293485
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Stratton Education Centre is a large pupil referral unit (PRU), catering for a wide range of needs. These include: pupils with medical needs, including emotional/anxiety difficulties; pupils admitted to hospital; disaffected pupils, many of whom have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion; and pregnant and school aged mothers. The PRU also co-ordinates home tuition and behaviour support services. The nine post-16 students include students with acute mental health issues, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. The service is based on six different sites across Swindon.

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 a good pupil referral unit (PRU), which meets the wide range of needs of pupils very effectively. Achievement is good. The vast majority of pupils make good progress and often exceed their predicted targets. Their academic attainment does much to promote pupils' good personal development. However, the wider cultural and multicultural development of pupils is inadequate. Pupils feel safe and valued through good levels of supervision. Their development of healthier lifestyles is satisfactory, through learning about key risks associated with sexual health, alcohol and substance misuse. Parents rightly hold the PRU in high regard. One parent described the provision as 'wonderful' and commented that, 'My son would be a lot worse off if he hadn't attended the PRU.'

The leadership and management of the PRU are good. Each separate unit is well led by a manager. This, together with the good overall leadership of a complex service by the head teacher, has resulted in consistently high quality provision across all aspects of the PRU. However, the lack of clear information on how well all types of pupils achieve makes the monitoring of the effectiveness of the PRU by the local authority management committee more difficult. It also does not allow the headteacher to easily track the progress of all types of pupils to identify how well they perform in order to refine plans for future developments. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good overall, particularly because the headteacher has forged excellent working relationships with a wide range of external partners. This results in improved outcomes for children because their needs are met quickly and effectively, so pupils are better prepared to access learning. Many pupils are enabled to return to mainstream schools as a result of the good partnership work carried out by the PRU and other agencies, such as schools, the health service, youth offending team and social services.

Teaching is good and takes place in a variety of different situations, such as in pupils' homes, in the hospital as well as in the centres. When pupils enter the PRU they have mostly experienced a disrupted education and standards are exceptionally low. Pupils' needs are quickly assessed, enabling work to be matched to the right level, so that pupils experience success and start to make rapid progress. Pupils are valued and respected and staff work hard at getting pupils back on track. One teacher summed this up to a group of pupils by saying, 'I can't do anything about your past, but I certainly can influence your future.' When pupils leave, results are still well below national averages, but there are many individuals who gain GCSE passes at C or above. The curriculum is good. An excellent feature is the way work is tailored to individual circumstances.

Not all Key Stage 3 permanently excluded pupils receive 25 hours of education and this, together with limitations in the accommodation at the Stratton Centre, restricts pupils' access to some subjects. With a strong leadership team, and stable and committed teachers with considerable expertise, the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The provision for these students is good and enables them to achieve creditable results, including A Levels. Good care, such as specific counselling or the provision of a crèche, enables students to come to terms with the disruption to their life and to continue with their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of pupils' attainment information to assist with monitoring.
- Work with the local authority to improve the accommodation so that practical aspects of science and physical education (PE) can be taught and so that Key Stage 3 permanently excluded pupils can receive 25 hours of education.
- Provide more cultural and multicultural opportunities for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils benefit from good teaching and a good curriculum that is well matched to their complex needs. As a result the achievement and progress of pupils across the different aspects of the PRU are good. The vast majority of pupils make good progress against their personal academic targets and most make rapid progress and exceed predictions. The highest attaining pupils are usually those in the Adolescent unit for pupils with acute mental health issues. Some of these post-16 students achieve well at A-level standard, with some achieving A to C grades in a range of subjects. Some pupils make exceptional progress, for example from entry at Year 10 with no expectations of national examinations, to leaving in Year 11 with A* grades in mathematics, science and English. Key Stages 3 and 4 excluded pupils make good progress considering their disrupted education; they often achieve entry-level grades, and some achieve higher. Last year, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers achieved E to B grades at GCSE level. Where appropriate, Key Stage 3 pupils return successfully to mainstream schools, initially with support. Key Stage 4 pupils go on to local colleges and some gain employment. A few remain unemployed. Over the last 12 months, the progress of some pupils at the Stratton Centre has been limited by disruptions to teaching staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. Many pupils change their attitudes to learning dramatically. The success pupils achieve gives them a feeling of self-worth and increases their prospects of employment significantly. Attendance improves greatly with some pupils having no absences. Pupils respond positively to the individual support

and guidance they receive and benefit from the excellent adult role models they meet. Pupils appreciate the sensitive support and understanding they receive. For example, anxious or vulnerable young people are reintegrated very gradually to an educational setting and pupils with challenging behaviours are enabled to regain self-control.

The development of pupils' academic skills does much to promote their emotional health and well-being and this is extremely important in preparing them for the future.

The personal, social and health education programme is thoughtfully planned and successful in helping pupils keep safe and adopting healthier lifestyles. Planning for life beyond school is good although college links are underdeveloped. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall although there is too little planning for cultural development, and multicultural education is still unsatisfactory. Pupils generally make a satisfactory contribution to the community, although some individual pupils with health issues have had a powerful impact in their local community by organising fund raising events for cancer charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good teaching across a wide range of settings enables pupils to make good progress. The relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers are very successful in instilling confidence in pupils, so that they feel valued and respected. This is an important ingredient, which encourages pupils to succeed and start to enjoy learning again. Shy and withdrawn pupils gain self-esteem, for example by starting to speak confidently in front of others, and many start to blossom. A strength of teaching is the good range of subject expertise. This is particularly evident for the Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils in the Adolescent unit. The strong emphasis on academic achievement stands pupils in good stead for the future. Lesson planning is extremely thorough, ensuring that individual needs are fully met. Teachers often use the three-part lesson structure, so lessons move along with good pace, and effective use is made of plenary sessions, which are used to reinforce the main learning objectives. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning. Baseline assessments are carried out for all pupils and this information is used well to inform future teaching. Baseline assessment for literacy is good, but it is satisfactory for numeracy as it is less well developed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good curriculum is an important factor in the success pupils achieve and their improved motivation, and it encourages them to re-engage in learning. It meets the

diverse range of needs of pupils very effectively. Post-16 pupils are offered a good range of subjects to study at A level. The curriculum is individually tailored for pupils and this aspect is excellent. For example, teenage mothers undertake a child development course and are taught the importance of good pre- and post-natal care, so that healthy lifestyles both for themselves and their babies are encouraged. The curriculum is enriched effectively through good use of the local facilities and speakers. A good range of accredited courses is offered, ranging from alternative accreditation to nationally recognised qualifications. There is a satisfactory emphasis on work-related learning and some pupils have gained full-time employment through this. The Stratton site accommodation limits the delivery of practical science and physical education. It also imposes restrictions on offering the recommended 25 hours of education to some Key Stage 3 permanently excluded pupils, currently they receive 23 hours per week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support provided to pupils are good overall. However, the support and guidance given to all pupils is outstanding. Excellent links with a wide range of external agencies enable barriers to pupils' learning to be resolved quickly. The impact of this is seen in the good progress pupils make and the positive attitudes to learning they develop. This lowering of barriers often results in a remarkable transformation of pupils' lives. One parent noted the change of her son from 'a nervous wreck' to 'a confident happy young man'. Pupils are given good levels of academic guidance and support, through the regular reviews, to ensure individual pupils' progress is as good as it should be. Pupils are set clear learning targets and where appropriate, behaviour targets. Care is satisfactory for all pupils. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by all adults. Although risk assessments, related to the accommodation, are carried out regularly, the most recent health and safety audit has identified a few issues to be addressed. All pupils interviewed reported they felt safe and well looked after. Links with colleges for a small minority of pupils are not as good as they could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Clear direction for the PRU is communicated through the school development plan. Each centre has its own development targets and this has ensured consistently high quality provision across the different sites. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. Nearly all permanently excluded children now receive 25 hours of education.

There have been improvements in accommodation in some of the units, and this has reduced the number of pupils on home tuition and created more opportunities for

social interaction. The management committee is now much more effective and provides satisfactory support, direction and monitoring of the unit.

The lack of clear information on the progress of all types of pupils makes it difficult for the committee and the headteacher to gain an overall view of strengths and weaknesses of the standards pupils attain. It also limits any analysis of how well specific groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties, may perform. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for improvement, but without the detailed statistical analysis, the plans for improving progress are less easy to refine. It has made good use of consulting parents in evaluating its provision. Results from a recent survey of parents were analysed and led to improvements being made.

Parents felt that younger pupils needed more information on sexual health and drugs, and this led to a review and improvement of the delivery of the personal, social and health education programme. Performance management is well established and this has led to a strong focus on improving teachers' subject knowledge and has improved teaching and learning. This has had a positive impact in the teaching of mathematics for example.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	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	2	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	3	
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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

We enjoyed our visit to your Centre and would like to thank all those pupils who we held discussions with and those who provided us with our delicious lunchtime meal.

We think your Centre is good at meeting your needs, especially as there is such a wide mix of pupils. We think that you settle in quickly and any problems you experience are dealt with speedily. This means that you can focus on learning and you make good progress in your studies. Many of you are much more positive about your future and feel better equipped to face the next stage of your life. You take a pride in what you achieve and feel that the Centre enables you to find your feet again. The people who run your Centre, including those in charge of each separate unit, do a good job. They ensure that you are taught well and what you are taught is suitable for your particular circumstances. We think the Centre gives you very good support and guidance.

To make your Centre even better we have made three suggestions:

- The Centre should make better use of information on how well everybody does to help plan for improvement.
- The accommodation needs to be improved so that science and PE can be taught at Stratton, and that every pupil who has been permanently excluded from school can receive 25 hours of education per week.
- More opportunities should be provided for you to learn about other cultures and beliefs.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and do your best for all the staff at school.