

# Stevenage Area Pupil Referral Unit co Camps Hill Jnr Mixed and Infant School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 130359          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | HERTFORDSHIRE   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 293637          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 20–21 June 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Steven Parker   |

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

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Pupil referral unit                                 |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–16   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 9   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The local authority                                 |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr Philip Elcock                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 16 September 2002                                   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Chells Way<br>Stevenage<br>Hertfordshire<br>SG2 0LT |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01438 369119  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01438 369355  |

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

The Education Support Centre (known familiarly as the ESC) was established in 1996 to make provision for pupils who have been excluded or are in danger of being excluded from Stevenage secondary schools. The aim of the centre is to re-integrate pupils back into appropriate mainstream or specialist settings after a stay averaging one term. Pupils typically exhibit patterns of challenging behaviour with associated specific learning, social and emotional difficulties and poor attainment. In the current year, 30 pupils have attended the centre. The majority were from White British, disadvantaged backgrounds and over four-fifths were boys. Comprehensive advice and support is also provided to all Stevenage primary and secondary mainstream schools through an outreach service, which aims to reduce the risk of exclusion. Up to 200 pupils benefit from this advice and support in a typical year.

The centre's role is to change in September 2007 to provide support for pupils aged 11 to 14 across the whole North Hertfordshire area. Its outreach service will continue in its current form.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Stevenage ESC provides a good service. It is successful in returning pupils to mainstream schools and makes an important contribution to preventing exclusions across the town through its well regarded outreach provision.

In the centre, pupils make good progress and achieve well in their learning and personal development as a result of good quality, well planned teaching and a relevant curriculum. They are, consequently, well equipped to return successfully to mainstream schools or to transfer to more appropriate training or other educational settings. This is because they are helped to develop their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and learn to control their own behaviour. The centre is particularly effective at improving pupils' ability to read through its paired reading scheme. Those older pupils who stay for sufficient time achieve creditable passes in GCSE and other qualifications by the time they leave. However, whilst pupils' attendance often improves dramatically from previous levels, as a result of the centre's rigorous follow up and encouragement, it remains unsatisfactory, and certainly limits the potential attainment of some older pupils. Pupils' personal development is good. All pupils become much more self-confident and capable because they have benefited from very effective personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), and good care, guidance and support. Where necessary they also receive sensitive, well focused counselling. This means that they develop better self esteem, a more accepting approach to learning and often start to enjoy school for the first time. Many achieve well beyond what they would have expected prior to coming to the centre. Parents, carers and other professionals agree that the service improves these young people's life chances, and there is good evidence that previously disengaged pupils go on to study successfully.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works very effectively in a collaborative partnership with his capable senior managers to develop and maintain this comprehensive provision. The service runs efficiently day to day and resources are well deployed. Many of the teachers work in both the centre and across the outreach service. This enables them to provide valuable insight into the needs of individual pupils in relation to the challenges inherent in the mainstream setting together with good subject expertise for their centre teaching. The service has a realistic view of what it does well and what it needs to do to improve further. Its self-evaluation is satisfactory, but is not fully informed by rigorous monitoring. This is because staff do not yet have a clear idea of how best to measure some of the outcomes of the work of the ESC. This is particularly so for pupils' progress. The ESC does not use the wealth of information it already collects to best effect to inform its development planning and so demonstrate its effectiveness. The management committee are, therefore, constrained in their ability to challenge, although they do provide good support and encouragement.

Good improvements have been effected since the last inspection. The service has good capacity to manage the impending change in its role and continue improving. It provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Work to ensure that pupils attend more regularly.
- Develop a more rigorous and structured approach to gathering, analysing and presenting information about all aspects of the service's work, in order to:
- -inform development planning

- - demonstrate pupils' progress
- - enable the management committee to fulfil its role.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the centre with a low level of attainment, because of their challenging behaviour, poor attendance and fractured education in previous schools. They quickly develop effective strategies to control their own behaviour and consequently make good progress in their learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This enables more than a third to return successfully to a mainstream school and all others to move on to a more appropriate setting to complete their education. Whilst their standards of attainment remain low, they all 'stay the course'. This is because they have learned the important key skills that enable them to access the whole curriculum and achieve good results by the end of their full time schooling. The small number of pupils who attend the centre on a dual placement with the Youth Programmes Unit (YPU) for Year 11 leave with a range of unit awards and GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design. These results could, however, be even better if these pupils had better attendance records. When combined with the valuable lessons learned from work experience placements provided by the YPU, this achievement helps many to go on to employment or further training.

Pupils who are supported in their mainstream schools by the outreach staff are helped very effectively to improve their challenging behaviour so that they can participate more productively in their lessons and make better progress. This helps them to stay in school and achieve good results.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. They appreciate the productive relationships that they have with staff and the sensitive support they receive that contributes significantly to their emotional well being and sense of security. This in turn helps them to develop a more positive attitude to education, so that they come to enjoy lessons. They develop a sound understanding of the importance of living healthy lives, particularly by taking regular exercise, eating the right foods and not misusing alcohol and other drugs. Pupils' behaviour is good because of the effectiveness of the centre's positive, structured approach to providing an environment that encourages and celebrates appropriate behaviour. The centre's star rewards system provides strong motivation to behave well, work hard on meeting individual targets and attend more regularly. Despite the centre's best efforts, attendance remains a difficult problem and is unsatisfactory overall.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. They learn how to reflect on their actions and, often for the first time, come to realise their impact on others. They are encouraged to think deeply about important issues and develop a clear sense of right and wrong. They are keen to take responsibility and are enthusiastic about raising charitable funds. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well being by developing their basic skills, learning how to work collaboratively with others and how to take and follow instructions. Consequently, they are coming to realise that they have a worthwhile, positive future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. The high staff ratio of teachers and teaching assistants, working in effective partnership, helps pupils to learn successfully in small groups, no matter what their difficulties are. Consequently, lessons are less formal than in mainstream settings and pupils thrive on the well focused support and encouragement they receive. This helps them to become increasingly confident learners and prepares them well for a return back to other settings. Highly structured transition arrangements ensure that these returns are consistently successful. Planning of learning is detailed and relevant. It is increasingly being well informed by thorough assessment information and ensures that pupils work on appropriately challenging targets.

Members of the outreach team are highly effective in promoting pupils' successful learning in mainstream schools. They work very well with other teachers and support staff on a one-to-one basis and with groups, as well as providing well received training and individual guidance for their mainstream colleagues.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good because it is relevant to pupils' particular needs. Time is used well and flexibly, so that pupils experience a variety of engaging activities that keep them interested and concentrating on what they are doing. The centre rightly focuses on developing pupils' basic skills. It is particularly successful at improving pupils' reading ability through a paired reading scheme that has been developed since the last inspection and makes good use of the strong, supportive relationships between pupils and the teaching assistants. Pupils are very aware and proud of the often impressive progress they make as a result of this input. Good quality art teaching in the centre and regular physical education activity in other settings, together with lessons in science, ICT and the humanities provide breadth of study. Those who stay for sufficient time have the opportunity to have their learning accredited through a range of courses. The well planned PSHCE programme plays an important part in helping pupils to understand their own difficulties and feelings, handle their frustrations and keep safe. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of additional activities both within the centre and out in the community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength of the centre. Staff know individual pupils and their particular needs very well. This enables them to set challenging but achievable targets and provide effective support to meet them. Pupils and their parents and carers are appropriately involved in negotiating and evaluating progress against these targets at regular half-termly reviews. Partnership with parents and carers is thus well nurtured and they are appreciative of the support provided for both the pupil and the whole family. A strength of the centre's work lies in the very effective way it prepares pupils for return to other settings. In particular, communication between staff and the different schools and units is very good and explains why the move is usually accomplished so smoothly. The same principles apply to the much valued work of the outreach service. Provision for pupils with mental health needs

is very good and organised well to provide high quality support and guidance to meet their complex needs. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and all staff have pupils' welfare very much at the forefront of their minds. The service's successful partnerships with a wide range of agencies and professionals do much to enhance the quality of provision. Pupils' progress is not effectively tracked and so the service's effectiveness is not measured well.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his senior leadership colleagues lead by example and have created a strong team spirit and good collaboration across the service. As a result, there has been impressive stability of staffing over a long period. Thorough performance management procedures and well planned continuing professional development and training opportunities have ensured that staff are appropriately skilled to meet the full range of pupils' learning and other needs. Good improvements have been made to many aspects of the service, including pupils' achievements, the curriculum and assessment arrangements. The management committee represents a wide range of interests and provides well focused support for the service's work. The members are, however, not fully able to meet their brief because they lack this necessary information to inform their work and assist in development planning. The service and its budget are managed efficiently and effectively.





## Annex A

### Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

#### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 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  | 3   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

#### Achievement and standards

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

#### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 4 |
| 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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stevenage Education Support Centre (SEC), Stevenage, SG2 0LT

I enjoyed my time with you when I visited your centre. Thank you for making me feel welcome, talking so honestly about your experiences and showing me your work. I heard about some of the difficulties you have had in your previous schools and how the centre is helping you to feel more positive about what you might achieve in the future. This letter is to let you know what I thought about the ESC.

I agree with you that you gain great benefit from being involved with the centre. I also think that other pupils are lucky to be supported by the outreach service in their own schools.

What I liked about the service:

- You make good progress in your learning, behave well and become more responsible, because you are well taught and always try hard.
- You are all helped to return successfully to a mainstream school or to move on to a more appropriate placement.
- You appreciate the good relationships between staff and yourselves that contribute much to your emotional well being and more positive attitudes to school.
- Staff make sure that you study relevant courses and take part in interesting activities so that you can go on to gain sound results in exams either in the centre or back at school.
- Very good support is offered to teachers in other schools to help many pupils to stay and work well in these schools.
- The headteacher does a good job and helps all the staff to do their best for you.

These are the things I have asked the headteacher and the management committee to do to make the service even better.

- Do all they can to improve your attendance.
- Find better ways to collect and use information about your achievements and the way the ESC does its work to plan any necessary improvements.

I wish you all the best in your studies and hope that you achieve your ambitions. Do try to keep attending regularly; it can make such a difference to how successful you are in your future achievements.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead Inspector