

Colwood Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131189
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293720
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Megee

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	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	11
6th form	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Price
Headteacher	Graeme Cornell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hurstwood Lane Haywoods Heath RH17 7SH
Telephone number	01444456427
Fax number	01444412327

Age group	5–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Colwood Education Centre provides for pupils who have emotional and mental health difficulties and who have been admitted, either as in-patients or day attenders, to the Sussex Centre for Children and Young People, a health service facility on the adjacent site. The pupils come from West Sussex, East Sussex, Brighton and Hove, and a few are admitted from Kent and Surrey. A small number of pupils have additional difficulties such as autism (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). About one fifth of the pupils have a statement of special educational need. Currently there are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who attend the centre. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 live at home and attend the centre for two days a week, and spend the rest of the week in their own local mainstream or special school with specialist support from the centre. This arrangement usually lasts for a fixed period of ten weeks. Some pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as those at post-16, live in the adjoining hospital and attend the centre full time. Others attend daily, or part-time, from home. This arrangement may last for up to a few months, although the average stay is only about 25 days. At the time of the inspection, only pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16 were attending the centre. The centre also provides outreach support to pupils in their own schools, where they may be at risk of exclusion. Thirty-five pupils were in receipt of such support at the time of the inspection. The centre opened in January 2003 and has not been inspected before. The centre is part of the local authority's out of school provision and is led and managed by an area head of service based in Worthing in collaboration with a head of centre who is based at Colwood.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Colwood Education Centre is an effective provider of good education and timely support for its pupils, including those at post-16, during their often brief stay. As a consequence, the pupils gain in confidence, make good progress in their studies and are well equipped to resume their educational careers in their local schools. The pupils' increasing optimism and growing self-belief are exemplified by the words of a song they were composing during the inspection: 'No, it will never rain The sun is shining bright The future's come already I know we'll make it, we're ready.'

When pupils arrive at the centre their standards are below average. Their emotional and mental health difficulties have led many of them to miss out on schooling. Once at the centre, pupils are provided with individually tailored programmes within a good and relevant curriculum which concentrates on the essential basic subjects that they will need when they return to their local schools. The curriculum for students at post-16 is not quite as strong as for younger pupils, and the centre has already identified this as an area for further development. The low numbers and good staffing ratio mean that students are taught in small groups. This is of particular benefit as staff can quickly establish a good rapport with the pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are skilful and effective, and in the congenial environment pupils flourish and achieve well in both their academic and personal development.

Pupils like coming into the centre a lot, behave well and their attendance is exemplary. The atmosphere in lessons is calm, and pupils' relationships with staff are kind and mutually respectful. The centre staff ensure that pupils receive good care, guidance and support. Much of this work relies on the warm, relaxed and often informal interactions between staff and pupils, which lead to the development of trust and confidence. However, the staff sometimes rely too much on informal methods for setting individual learning targets and for tracking pupils' academic progress, which means that opportunities are missed to promote even more rapid achievement.

Leadership and management are good, and have led to the centre developing well since it opened. Essential links with the centre's partners including parents, nursing staff, the learners' schools, and the mental health professionals and agencies who admit and refer the pupils, are well established. The area head, the head of centre and the management committee are committed to doing their best for pupils. There is good capacity for the centre to become even more effective.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

There were four students at post-16 attending the centre at the time of the inspection. It is evident from the centre's records and from discussions with staff that the post-16 provision is effective overall. Post-16 students make good personal and academic progress because of their individually tailored programmes and the good care, guidance and support they receive. The range of accredited programmes is not yet as wide as it could be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers set academic targets alongside the pupils which are formally and regularly reviewed, and promoted in every lesson.

- Ensure that there is a more formal system for tracking pupils' academic achievement, particularly their progress, against their individual learning targets.
- Ensure that students at post-16 have a wider range of opportunities to gain accreditation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' standards are broadly average. Their achievement is good in the appropriately limited range of subjects the centre provides. There is no discernible underachievement by any group within the centre, for example by those with autism. Girls and boys, and pupils of different ages, achieve equally well. The small numbers mean that pupils are given good individual support and attention, and the approach is relaxed and informal. This approach is mostly justified by the need for many of the pupils to feel at home and comfortable so that they regain their self-confidence. However, opportunities are missed to promote further progress because the system for setting targets for learning and for tracking academic progress is not as tight and well structured as that for social targets and teachers do not always ensure that pupils' individual academic targets are promoted within lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the centre ensures that individual targets for social development are set and promoted at every opportunity. Pupils do particularly well in developing moral and social awareness, as shown in their good behaviour and positive relationships. All pupils enjoy the centre a lot and so it is no wonder that the attendance rate is exemplary. A typical comment from a parent is, 'School has always been a big issue for my daughter and I am so impressed that she is now in full attendance.'

Pupils' good and mature behaviour contributes to the centre being a safe place. Bullying is virtually unheard of. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe outside the centre. Whilst pupils know the importance of having a healthy lifestyle, this is not always apparent in practice because they do not always have enough opportunities for making healthy choices about what to eat. There are occasional opportunities for pupils to prepare a healthy lunch but most days they have a restricted choice of food, provided by the health authority. Staffing problems sometimes prevent pupils from attending off-site physical education lessons. Pupils contribute positively to the community, such as through raising funds for charities. Such actions demonstrate their potential to do more than current opportunities offer. The regular community meetings are intended to give pupils a voice, but they tend to concentrate too exclusively on staff concerns about pupils' individual therapeutic progress. The pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education back in their local schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils do well because of the well focused encouragement they receive. This enables them to recover their self-confidence and ability to learn independently. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together with the very small groups, and this enables every pupil to learn well. Pupils enjoy the relative informality of the teaching, and become increasingly comfortable when taking on challenging tasks. The good relationships, combined with a sensitive and consistent approach to the pupils' evident difficulties, result in the calm and productive atmosphere in lessons. Pupils say, 'Teachers are very helpful and very supportive. They teach at your own pace, and don't pressurise you. They understand you when you're low.'

Planning of learning is based on good knowledge of each pupil, but is not always sufficiently focused. Planning does not have a sufficiently high level of formality to ensure that every opportunity is seized for promoting pupils' individual academic targets and for developing basic skills in all subjects.

Staff work hard to overcome the deficiencies in the quality of the accommodation, and classrooms are stimulating places in which displays promote learning and show pupils' good achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The centre teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum with the exception of history, geography and a modern foreign language. The curriculum places a particular emphasis on building up and maintaining basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This slimmed down curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs given the nature of their difficulties and the need to spend extra time on preparing them for a successful return full time to their local schools. Nevertheless, there is also a strong element of creative and practical work, as exemplified by the vibrant artwork in the corridors, display cabinets of beautifully crafted sculptures and models and, during afternoon options, the sound of young people composing and performing their own music. Parents typically comment, 'My daughter's creative work within art, sculpture and pottery especially has been outstanding. She is obviously getting a lot of encouragement and support from staff.'

There is an extensive range of activities which supplement and enhance the curriculum such as the summer holiday activities. The curriculum provided for students at post-16 is satisfactory but the range of accredited programmes is not as wide as it could be.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The centre is scrupulous in ensuring pupils have a safe environment in which to work. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils are robust. All pupils are valued

equally. Pupils with additional difficulties such as autism are fully involved in all aspects of centre life. The centre works closely with health authority specialist staff to meet the therapeutic needs of all the pupils.

Staff seek and listen to individual pupils' views. For example, in design and technology teachers ask pupils whether they have any preferred strategies for tackling an activity. The centre also provides a formal forum, the community meeting, for discussions between staff and pupils. However the meetings are not as effective as they could be in involving pupils in the life of the centre as they tend to focus on individual health matters, rather than on allowing the pupils to raise topics themselves as a group.

Personal guidance is good, with pupils fully involved in evaluating their development. Pupils say, 'The staff take care of you, give you time out if you need it, and sit with you and support you.' Academic guidance is not quite so systematic and well structured. Although pupils are given informal feedback about what they need to do to improve their performance, the absence of a formalised system of setting individual targets limits the quality of guidance pupils receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The area head and the head of centre work effectively as a team to provide a clear educational direction for the centre. The head of centre provides a good example for other staff in her commitment to pupils' personal and academic development. As a result, there is good teamwork and a shared commitment to improvement. Teachers with responsibilities, for example, for co-ordinating subjects, are involved well in checking and improving the quality of provision. The management committee has only just been formed and is already working satisfactorily in its monitoring role. Self-evaluation is accurate and effective. The centre has worked well with its key partners and successfully developed provision that enables pupils to achieve well academically and personally. In order to identify priorities for improvement even more sharply, the centre recognises the need to track and evaluate pupils' progress even more thoroughly.

The centre makes good use of the cramped and shabby premises in which the centre is currently located. There are water stains on the ceilings of the rooms and corridors where the flat roof leaks. It is to the credit of the staff that they have worked hard to make sure that the environment does not have a major negative impact upon the achievement of pupils. There are plans to move from the present site to new premises in August 2008. The leadership has ensured that there are good resources for most subjects, although much of the computer equipment is outdated.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
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	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	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	3
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

22 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colwood Education Centre, Hurstwood Lane, Haywards Heath RH17 7SH

As you know we visited your centre recently. We enjoyed watching your lessons, looking at your work and talking with some of you. We are pleased to say that we found out that Colwood Education Centre does a good job. You make good progress with your studies because the teaching is good, and the curriculum suits you well. Those of you who need extra help get good support. Your personal development is good, and the centre successfully helps you to overcome your difficulties. You enjoy the centre a lot, and you all attend extremely well. You get on well together and with the adults who work there. The staff look after you well and do their best to make sure that you regain your confidence quickly so that you can go back to your local schools and be successful. They also give you good informal advice about how to improve your work. The centre is well led with all the teaching and hospital staff working together to help you do well. The staff work really well with your parents and many of your parents told us how important this is to them. We have asked the centre to do some things that should make it even better for you. We have asked them to make sure you and the staff agree individual learning targets that are written down, and that teachers make sure you achieve your targets even more quickly. We have said that the staff need to keep track of your progress more systematically. Finally we have said that the centre needs to make sure that it has a really good curriculum in place for students who are over 16, just in case they need to attend the centre. Please keep doing your best. We wish you every success in the future. Mick Megee Lead Inspector