

The Young Mums Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105147
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	301387
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Noreen Buckingham

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	13–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jayne Littler
Headteacher	Mrs Lorna MacIvor
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2003
School address	Harvey Early Years Centre Pilkington Street Bolton Lancashire BL3 6HP
Telephone number	01204 334026
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Age group	13–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The unit provides education for girls in Years 10 and 11 who are pregnant or who have recently given birth. It serves the whole of the Bolton area and is situated within the Harvey Early Years Centre. The girls are brought to school by minibus and all are dual registered. Many have had difficulty in attending mainstream school before becoming pregnant so their attainment on entry is below average. All girls receive free school meals and all but two are from White British backgrounds. While the girls are in lessons their babies are looked after in the crŠche.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Young Mums Unit gives the girls an outstanding education in an environment where they flourish both as individuals and as parents. This is due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the team of professionals who work with her to ensure that these young mums and their children have the best possible education and start to family life.

The staff have succeeded in creating an extremely caring and supportive environment in which the girls and their babies feel secure. Staff and girls respect each other resulting in a very positive ethos. Achievement is outstanding due to a number of factors. These include excellent teaching and exemplary care and support, which in turn, impact very positively on the girls' personal development, giving them the motivation and determination to succeed. All the girls leave school with a range of qualifications including GCSEs in English Language and Literature, mathematics and science - with grades ranging from B to G - and other recognised examinations, such as CLAIT and vocational subjects. The unit employs a number of regular temporary teachers with particular subject expertise to maintain this wide range of subject choice.

An outstanding feature of the teaching is the way all staff develop very positive relationships with the girls. They encourage and support the girls to maximise every learning opportunity. Whilst many of the girls have been reluctant to attend school previously, records show how this improves while they attend the unit and they demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. It is very noticeable how much they want to do well: they want to be able to work to look after their babies. All staff work very well as a team, always with the best interests of the girls and their babies at heart.

The curriculum is outstanding and is very relevant to the needs of the girls. High priority is given to basic skills and child development. Personal, social and health education is taught formally but also informally at appropriate times, for example during lunchtimes when the girls look after their babies. The outstanding care, support and guidance are at the heart of everything the unit does and underpin the girls' outstanding personal development. They feel secure and very well supported in the knowledge that someone is always there to help. They grow in confidence and maturity and will say how glad they are to be in the unit. The additional support they have on hand from other professionals adds significantly to the all-round education package available. They are all very protective towards their babies and it is clearly evident that the unit is giving them very good advice about parenting. Parents are very supportive of the education and care and have very positive views about the unit as a whole.

The experienced and very committed headteacher manages the unit with warmth and a determination which considers everything the girls need to be successful, both academically and as young mums. All staff share this very caring attitude, and the headteacher's values, and the girls appreciate this. The management committee is very supportive of what the unit does but they are not directly involved in monitoring its work. Issues identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed and improvement since then has been good. Whilst the accommodation is ideally situated, there is little room to manoeuvre when all the girls are in and space is limited for the different activities. However, the unit makes the most of the available space and provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Routinely involve the management committee in monitoring the work of the unit.

- Discuss with the local authority ways of increasing the size of the accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Girls' achievement and progress are outstanding considering the low base from which many start on entry. Many have had a poor attendance record but with the very high level of support from the unit staff, and encouragement, girls' attendance improves, as well as their confidence and self-esteem. They show a strong determination to achieve, coming each day ready to work. All girls are entered for external examinations in English Language and Literature, mathematics, science and child development. They also gain success in CLAIT, numerous AQA units, in subjects such as French, German and Spanish and other subjects which they may have started prior to admission to the unit. Last year most girls left with at least four GCSEs and a number of other qualifications before moving on to college. Achievement is supported further by enabling girls to return to their mainstream school to complete modules of work or sit examinations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The girls' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. This is due in no small part to the outstanding care and support they have from both the unit staff and the extensive range of other agency staff; this impacts very positively on the girls' self-esteem and confidence. It develops their determination to turn their lives around and achieve as well as they can. They are happy and enjoy coming to the unit. This results in improved attendance. The many letters of appreciation show just what a difference the unit has made to their lives. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle, especially the importance of a balanced diet, and want to make sure that they do all the right things for their babies and themselves. They involve themselves in fundraising for charities and have high ambitions for their futures. The extremely strong and supportive relationships between all adults and the girls significantly contribute to the warm and positive ethos that pervades the whole of the unit. They know they can get on with their work while their babies are well looked after in the crèche.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. Relationships are very positive and the encouragement the girls receive helps them to make the most of the learning opportunities available. The girls are keen to learn and this is fostered by the willingness of staff to adapt work to meet their individual needs. Good use of questions makes the girls think and persist when faced with a problem. Although most staff are employed on a temporary basis, they have a strong commitment to the unit and bring specialist knowledge so that examination modules are very well taught. Although only one lesson was observed during the inspection, the quality and quantity of work in folders is of a good standard, confirming the excellent progress the girls make in their learning.

Information from schools about girls' previous achievements can be patchy and the unit is working on refining its current system to give a more accurate picture of girls' attainment on entry to the unit. Working through examination modules gives the girls an idea of what they

are learning, although they are not always sufficiently involved in planning their own work in detail.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of the girls very well. Strong emphasis on basic skills and child development gives the girls a very good basis for the next stage of their lives whatever path they choose to take. The unit has very strong partnerships with mainstream schools, not just because the girls are dual registered, but because of the support and advice given to pregnant girls who choose to stay in their local school. Significant emphasis is placed on personal, health and social education (PHSE) which not only covers all aspects of health, but also includes financial and citizenship advice. This helps prepare pupils very well for when they leave. The unit tries very hard to give the girls opportunities for physical activities relevant to their particular needs, such as aerobics and use of a jacuzzi. Links with Bolton College gives the girls opportunities for taster courses in health and beauty and nail art. Work experience placements are available for those who ask.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and this impacts very positively on the girls' personal development and their ability to succeed. All safeguarding arrangements are secure with risk assessments for every activity. Within the building there is an extensive range of support for the girls and their babies; for example, midwives, health visitors, a school nurse and physiotherapy. In addition, Connexions advisers are in regular communication with them. During the inspection two girls were very reluctant to have a routine injection but when the school nurse discussed their responsibilities to their babies, explaining the impact of infections, they agreed. Staff are supportive at lunchtimes in helping the girls look after their babies which boosts their confidence. The girls also support each other, creating a common bond between them. Staff ensure that there are good links with the girls' local health professionals so they are familiar with maternity facilities and the choices they have about the birth. This outstanding level of personal support, coupled with the unit's high expectations, significantly contributes to their outstanding academic achievement and personal development. Links with mainstream schools concerning work modules and examinations ensure that both the staff and the girls know what they have to do to achieve success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The very experienced and committed headteacher has continually strived to give the best possible education to these girls during a difficult and stressful time in their young lives. Over the years she has successfully developed the unit, ensuring girls have the support from every possible agency so that they can develop into responsible parents. A new headteacher, who knows the unit well, takes over in September and she has ideas to move the unit forward, building on the exemplary practice already in place. Self-evaluation is too modest, but the unit does know precisely its strengths and areas for development. The school has maintained its excellent features noted at the last inspection and the impact of the current provision is outstanding. The school demonstrates an outstanding

capacity to continue to improve. Although most of the staff are engaged on a temporary basis, they too are committed to the unit and attend training courses and meetings to ensure they are part of what is going on. This commitment is typical of all staff, at whatever level, who are involved in the unit. The management committee is very supportive of what the unit does but does not have an active role in monitoring the work of the unit. While the accommodation is fit for purpose, space is at a premium when all the girls are in and different activities are planned.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of The Young Mums Unit, Bolton, BL3 6HU

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your unit for the inspection. I did enjoy talking with you and seeing how well you were managing your beautiful babies. You must be very proud, and rightly so, because you are doing an excellent job. It is not easy managing a baby with school work but you are all doing it very well.

You are provided with an outstanding education at the unit and all staff, including health personnel, want you to have the very best they can give. The care and support you are given is exceptional, and you and your babies are given a very good start. Teaching is excellent and, coupled with your determination to do well and the support you are given, your achievements are outstanding. The very positive relationships within the unit between you and the staff make it a warm and welcoming place.

There are a couple of things I think would improve your unit further. I have asked that the management committee become more actively involved in checking the effectiveness of the unit. In particular, I have asked that staff discuss with the local authority about possibilities of providing additional space within the unit because it must be quite crowded when you are all in together.

I hope you all continue to do well and wish you and your babies the very best for the future.