

Gorse Hill Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134046
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	301392
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Merrell
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Hunt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cavendish Road Stretford Manchester M32 0PS
Telephone number	0161 866 9650
Fax number	0161 866 9650

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Gorse Hill Centre is a pupil referral unit for girls and boys who have been permanently excluded or who are in danger of exclusion. Most pupils have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and a few have other learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all are White British, and a small minority come from a range of minority ethnic groups. All speak English. Pupils have not done well in mainstream schools and their standards are below average. Most pupils are registered at both the unit and a mainstream school. Attendance is on a full or part-time basis for approximately six weeks.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the unit is satisfactory. It has some good aspects. Achievement is satisfactory. In their brief time at the unit pupils improve their attitudes and begin to make steady progress. They fill in gaps in their learning in English and mathematics. In other subjects, including science, information and communication technology and art, they increase their knowledge and develop their skills. There is some good progress in physical education as pupils broaden their experience of physical activities and gain confidence.

Personal development is good. Pupils begin to improve their behaviour as they respond to the support that the centre provides. They are aware of the benefits of healthy lifestyles and try to apply the lessons they have learned to their own lives. Most enjoy being at the unit. Attendance is very good and most are punctual. They appreciate the personal attention they receive. They are confident that they can talk to their mentors about any problems and that their views and ideas about how the unit might improve will be taken into account. Pupils have no fears about coming to the unit and do not find bullying or racism a problem.

Teaching is good. This is seen in the success experienced by the unit in improving pupils' attitudes to learning. Teachers know their pupils very well. They give them helpful and clear guidance on what they should achieve. Management of behaviour is very effective. The curriculum is satisfactory. It emphasises improving literacy and numeracy and makes good provision for pupils' personal development. Provision for physical activity is good. However, the range of what can be provided is greatly constrained by unsuitable accommodation.

Care, support and guidance are good. Safeguarding procedures are well established. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessments, are good. The unit uses a points system to continually check that pupils are making personal and academic progress. However, while pupils' standards are assessed soon after they arrive, these are not reassessed when they leave. This makes it impossible for the unit to verify how successful it is in boosting pupils' achievement. Good relationships with parents are maintained. This is aided by the work of the mentors who make home visits. Liaison with other agencies is effective and the unit marshals support from these to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families are adequately supported.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the manager is good. His clear understanding of the purpose and role of the unit is shared by the staff. The leadership has successfully improved the unit. Management is good on a day-to-day basis. The budget is managed prudently and resources are used effectively. There is a management committee that oversees the unit and to whom the manager reports. It does not as yet act in other than an advisory capacity, but it will take on the powers of a governing body shortly. The leadership of the unit has dealt with most issues from the last inspection, but those that are the responsibility of the maintaining authority have not been fully addressed. Most significantly, the accommodation is unsuitable and this limits the work the unit can do. Value for money is satisfactory and progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The leadership is well placed to make continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Assess the progress made by pupils while they are at the unit in a way that makes clear the value that has been added during their time there.

- Liaise with the local authority to ensure that accommodation that matches the requirements of the unit is provided as soon as possible.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. In most cases, pupils who join the 'Step Out' programme have underachieved in their mainstream schools and have significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Initial assessment by the unit shows that their starting points are below average. During their time at the unit, pupils begin to make up the ground that they have lost and to establish a firm foundation for further learning, when, after approximately six weeks, they return to their schools. The gains that they make are most evident in English and mathematics. Reading, spelling and writing all improve as does confidence and accuracy in number work and calculation. In the majority of cases, pupils achieve the challenging targets that are set for them in their individual education plans. In other areas of learning, including science, humanities, information and communication technology, physical education and art, pupils broaden their experience and improve their knowledge and skills. Their work is of satisfactory quality and they complete the tasks set for them. Many come to enjoy and benefit from activities from which they have previously been excluded because of their behaviour or which they have avoided. For example, all of them take part in physical activity and extend their physical skills. Some enjoy for the first time participation in team games or in rigorous outdoor pursuits such as mountain biking.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They quickly come to understand that the adults at the unit want them to succeed and will give them all the help they can. They respond well to its ethos. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They realise that they need to change the way in which they act if they are to become good learners and are to be welcomed back by their schools. They show a growing understanding of how to behave in the classroom. Most start to consider the needs and rights of others. They become increasingly confident learners and are willing to participate in question and answer sessions and complete the work that they are given. Their attitudes to learning improve well. Behaviour is mostly good. Pupils are courteous to visitors and respectful to staff. They keep the unit rules and understand why it is necessary to have these. Emotional outbursts that arise from pupils' particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities are brief and do not disrupt the work of others. Pupils respect the facilities provided for them. They fully understand the messages they are given about healthy lifestyles. Most are more physically active than formerly and they take advantage of the sports programme the unit provides. They also revise their eating habits. They like the healthy snacks and nutritious lunches provided by the unit. Many pupils smoke but the unit has worked effectively to significantly reduce this. All pupils understand the dangers of smoking. They are not fearful of bullying or of racist or other oppressive behaviour. They report that they feel safe. They enjoy coming to the unit each day and show this through their very good attendance and by coming to school on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and manage their classes well. They swiftly form good relationships with their pupils. They assess them accurately and match the work they prepare to their capabilities very precisely. Both teachers and mentors are very well informed about pupils' individual characteristics and difficulties. They use this knowledge to develop effective strategies to help them learn and to support them in the classroom. The isolated incidences of unsatisfactory behaviour that occur are managed very effectively. Pupils are given good, clear guidance about their performance and what they need to do to improve it. The targets in individual education plans help pupils to see their way forward. Because teaching is good, pupils, who were poor learners in their mainstream schools, begin to fill in the gaps in their previous learning and make steady progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Good provision is made for the development of literacy and numeracy. Pupils are assessed near to entry so as to ensure that work in these areas is carefully tailored to their individual levels. There is a strong emphasis on their personal development. Mentoring sessions and the regular input provided by professionals from other services support this very well. All pupils are offered a broad and suitable range of learning experiences. In addition to English and mathematics, pupils have lessons in science, information and communication technology, design and technology, art, humanities, physical education and personal, social and health education. However, because of the constraints imposed by the unsuitable accommodation, work in science, design and technology, art and physical education does not mirror that provided by mainstream schools. This issue was raised at the last inspection and remains unresolved. Enrichment of the curriculum is limited. However, a minority of pupils take part in work-related activities or work-based placements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The staff are highly committed to making sure that pupils stay safe and remain healthy. The risks involved in practical lessons and out-of-school activities are assessed well. Procedures to ensure that children are protected are in place and are known to all staff. The learning mentors play a key role in this. They meet with each of their pupils every week. They discuss the progress each pupil has made and any needs or difficulties that have arisen in their lives. It is chiefly through this process that the pupils' views are gathered. Mentors keep in close contact with pupils' families or carers and ensure that they are fully informed about their child's achievements and about problems that might have occurred. The unit works closely with other agencies. There is effective liaison with Connexions to help deliver work-related learning. It also makes sure that those who need it receive help from health and social work professionals. It is very vigilant in looking after the interests of its most vulnerable pupils. The unit has devised an effective means of keeping a check on pupils' personal and academic progress. At the start of each school day, pupils are told what they are doing well and what they should improve. Except for a very small number of pupils who have been permanently excluded, the unit makes sure that contact is maintained

between each learner and the school to which they will return. However, schools' expectations of the precise purpose and duration of the placement are not always clear and could lead to pupils failing once more in their mainstream school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The manager provides good, dynamic, leadership. He has brought about substantial improvement in the unit's provision and effectiveness. He clearly understands that a pupil referral unit is a place of learning. He has the strong support of his deputy manager and all of the staff. The unit is strongly committed to inclusion. Pupils who are admitted for the six week 'Step Out' programme maintain contact with their schools. The leadership has a broadly accurate view of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. Priorities for improvement are sensible. Management is effective and the unit runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Rigorous vetting procedures are in place. Resources are used well. There is a management committee that helps the local authority monitor the work of the unit. It meets every term and receives the report of the unit manager. However, presently it only offers advice and support. It is expected to extend its role and assume governing powers from the start of the new school year. The unit has resolved those issues from the last inspection that the leadership alone was able to deal with. However, the local authority has not yet fully dealt with the issues addressed to it. It has granted the unit more autonomy and management of its own budget. In addition, a start has been made on setting the context in which the unit is to operate. An alternative provision policy has been produced. However, some protocols and policies to safeguard the rights of children in alternative educational provision, particularly the protocols for 'hard to place' pupils, are not yet completed. Most seriously, accommodation is still unsuitable and continues to restrict the work of the unit.

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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?	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	3
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	3
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

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

Inspection of Gorse Hill Centre, Cavendish Road, Stretford, M32 0PS.

Thank you for your helpful assistance when I visited Gorse Hill. It was a pleasure to meet you and to see you at your work. I wish to thank those of you who gave up their break to talk to me and tell me your views. Your courtesy was much appreciated.

You told me that you find Gorse Hill helpful. You would like to go back to school, but you feel that Gorse Hill is giving you a good chance to become more confident and better able to learn. You have understood what you have been taught about eating a healthy diet and cutting-out smoking and some of you really enjoy the chance to play sport, swim or ride mountain bikes. You are not afraid of being bullied or picked on and you feel that there is always someone at the unit to whom you can turn for help.

From talking to Mr Hunt and the staff, seeing your 'start-the-day' session and observing your lessons, this is what I found out about Gorse Hill. It is a satisfactory unit that gives you the education and support that you need. You make progress in your work and learn things that you missed out on at school. Your behaviour, your attitudes to learning and your attitudes towards others all improve well. You are taught well and your teachers set you work that you can do. You are kept safe. All of you are well supported and there are lots of people who are on your side. Mr Hunt is a good leader and with the help of all the staff has improved Gorse Hill. Some things still need to be improved. With even greater effort, you could improve what you achieve., More space with an outdoor area is really needed. It would also help if at the end of your time at the unit your teachers could tell you exactly how much your work has improved.

In order to help the unit become even better I have asked Mr Hunt to work with you and your teachers to help you achieve more in your lessons. I have also asked him to find a way to make clear to you, and to teachers in the school to which you return, how much your work has improved. Finally, I have asked him to speak once again to the local authority and urge them to provide you with a more suitable building.