

Newstead Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104418
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	301393
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Atkinson

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Norman Keats
Headteacher	Ms Lena Wheatley
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Bracknell Avenue Southdene Kirkby Merseyside L32 9PW
Telephone number	0151 4778382
Fax number	0151 4778383

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Inspection number	301393

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Newstead Centre caters for up to 95 pupils. A small number of pupils are in Years 7 to 9 and the vast majority are in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and many have statements of special educational needs because of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre provides education on site and, in partnership with Knowsley 14 to 19 collegiate, a wide range of off-site vocational experiences. A small number of pupils on roll are educated at home or receive support through contact with a number of other agencies. The pupils are predominantly White British and none speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils are in public care. Attainment on entry is below average because many pupils have missed a considerable amount of schooling through poor attendance and/or exclusion from mainstream schools. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Newstead is a good, effective centre with some outstanding features. It is a very good example of how different agencies work collaboratively with a shared commitment to helping pupils overcome their difficulties. Pupils' enjoyment of and participation in the wide range of available opportunities contrasts sharply with their previous negative experiences and responses. Parents and carers acknowledge the impact of the centre in improving their children's behaviour, attitude and achievements. As one parent commented, 'Teachers at Newstead are worth their weight in gold.'

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is key to maintaining a hugely positive ethos in which pupils and staff feel individually valued and respected. The passionate commitment to providing the very best for emotionally vulnerable young people with additional behavioural and social difficulties is very evident in all aspects of the centre's work. The outcome is that pupils make significant and rapid personal and academic improvement and begin to realise their potential.

Teaching is consistently good and, as a result, pupils enjoy their learning and work hard. Though standards are well below average because of learning and behavioural difficulties, achievement is good. Most attain passes in a number of subjects at GCSE or the Entry Level certificate as well as an accredited course in information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, pupils achieve particularly well in a range of vocationally based qualifications and develop good personal skills that prepare them well for their futures. Teachers and support staff work very successfully as teams, have high expectations and target pupils to do their very best in examinations.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the excellent provision for their care, guidance and support. Links with other agencies are outstanding and staff work collaboratively and imaginatively to provide solutions for individuals' complex needs and circumstances. Pupils have positive attitudes, display considerable improvements in their behaviour and show massive respect for the centre's staff. The high quality relationships between pupils and adults sustain a very positive ethos where pupils feel safe, secure and at ease in sharing their anxieties and problems. The centre provides an excellent diet for pupils and complements this through its teaching of food technology, so that pupils make more informed choices about healthy lifestyles. Attendance is satisfactory for the majority of pupils, which compares favourably with their poor attendance in their previous schools.

The curriculum is outstanding. It broadens pupils' horizons by widening their access to additional opportunities and makes a significant contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their skills for work and, as a result, grow in independence and self-confidence. The work-related and vocational curriculum is key in motivating pupils and prepares them well for the available options when they leave school. Teachers assess pupils regularly and have a very good knowledge of how well they are doing. They are able to guide pupils well because of their awareness of pupils' personal and academic targets. As one pupil commented, 'I get really good levels of support and now I'll get my GCSEs.' However, pupils are insufficiently involved in assessing their own work and this is a missed opportunity to raise standards further. Care is very strong because rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place and there are outstanding links with external agencies.

Senior staff are given excellent support in developing their leadership skills and undertake their responsibilities very effectively. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning effectively. However, senior and middle managers are insufficiently involved in this process and this limits the sharing of best practice. The school's self-evaluation shows that senior staff understand what it does well and what could be improved, although its judgement of outstanding for its overall effectiveness is generous.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that senior and middle managers play their part in the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Involve pupils in the assessment of their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Boys and girls make good progress and, taking account of prior attainment, achieve well. Pupils join the centre with low levels of literacy and numeracy and negative attitudes towards learning. They make good and rapid progress in English and mathematics in Years 7, 8 and 9 and improve all aspects of their communication skills. They make good progress in ICT lessons and use their skills well in other subjects such as science, art and business studies.

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in GCSEs and the Entry Level certificate and in 2006 there was a 100% pass rate for those who were entered for external assessment in English. Pupils' artwork is high in quality and the standards achieved at GCSE exceed previous expectations of what the pupils could do by a long way. Pupils achieve particularly well in vocational courses and in their work-related learning. The evaluations on pupils' achievements by external providers who run the vocational and work-based programmes consistently show the enormous progress that pupils make in learning new skills and acquiring the attributes to succeed in the work place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Overall pupils' personal development is outstanding and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils really enjoy what the centre offers and they make the very best of the available opportunities. The staff's consistent implementation of routines and setting of very clear boundaries bring about huge improvements in pupils' attitudes and understanding of the consequences of their behaviour, which overall is very good. The centre has very effective procedures for improving attendance resulting in the vastly improved attendance rates for most pupils. A minority of pupils remain poor attenders and good links with external agencies ensure these individuals are supported. Pupils feel very safe at school and are confident that they can share any worries or anxieties with staff. Pupils eat very healthily at school and regularly take part in physical exercise. The personal, health and social education programme actively develops pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and pupils can access a wide range of relaxation therapies. The outcome is that pupils are very well informed about the choices they can make for themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and use a wide variety of approaches to engage and motivate them. As a result pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve their individual targets. Lessons are very well planned and structured with high expectations of behaviour and standards of work. Teachers and support staff work very effectively as a team to ensure that pupils receive sufficient support to achieve their personal targets. Every classroom is well organised and resourced and this creates a positive ethos which contributes to pupils' enthusiastic approach to learning. Praise and rewards are used appropriately to recognise effort, progress and achievements. A significant strength is teachers' questioning skills, which actively involve pupils, improve their speaking and listening skills and develop their social skills. The pace in lessons is brisk and tasks are well matched to pupils' activities resulting in pupils growing in confidence of their ability to succeed. There is a group of challenging younger and immature pupils who require firmer handling in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and its enrichment are outstanding. There is a wide range of courses provided at both Key Stage 3 and 4 with a wealth of opportunities for pupils to participate in. The accreditation of all courses in Key Stage 4 gives pupils the opportunities to achieve qualifications that many had come to think they would never reach. They are enormously influential in motivating pupils and widening their horizons with the effect that pupils develop a renewed enjoyment of learning and a belief in their ability to succeed. The excellent vocational and work-related courses give pupils a real sense of purpose and enable them to recognise how they can maximise their opportunities for further training, education and employment. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of visits and visitors: for example, the Duke of Edinburgh award, coaching football in primary schools and the Knowsley enterprise week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a very safe and caring centre where pupils feel valued and respected. Parents feel their children are achieving much better than in their previous schools and are pleased with their progress academically and personally. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are very thorough and this means that the most vulnerable or at risk pupils are quickly identified and supported. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. The guidance that pupils receive is extensive and pupils are made very aware of what their targets are and how they can achieve them. Pupils are insufficiently involved in the assessment of their own work and this means that there are missed opportunities to raise standards further. Pupils feel that, through the advice and support they receive, 'they have turned the corner' and do well in their different courses and subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school with drive, energy and enthusiasm. The clear vision is fully shared by staff and pupils. As a result there is a very positive ethos where pupils feel they are back on track and can see a brighter future for themselves. The headteacher, an outstanding leader, has recently put together a new leadership team that has quickly gelled and is effectively addressing the school's priorities. This has resulted in a stronger focus on monitoring pupils' personal development and working very closely with outside agencies to improve further the opportunities and outcomes for all pupils. However, senior and middle leaders have limited experience of monitoring teaching and miss out on the opportunities to observe best practice. The management committee is involved well in the strategic direction of the centre and carefully monitors the finances and the curriculum, and ensures that the premises are of a very high standard. The morale of the staff is very high and professional development opportunities are excellent, resulting in the centre's very good capacity to improve. The centre gives very good value for money.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	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?	2
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	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Newstead Centre, Bracknell Avenue, Kirkby, L32 9PW

I really enjoyed the two days that I spent in the centre last week and want to thank you for making me welcome, sharing your opinions about how the centre has helped you and showing me your work. I was very impressed by how you behaved and how you try to resolve problems in a calm way. The way in which you show respect for each other, staff and the school environment is a credit to you. I entirely agree with your views that the centre has helped you to get back on track and achieve success in exams. You have really good opportunities to gain experience of work and many of those adults who were training you spoke highly of your commitment and good manners. The centre has many strengths.

- Staff help you to make good progress in learning and improve your attendance and behaviour.
- Staff and pupils always cooperate well and have great respect for each other.
- Staff have high expectations of you and you respond enthusiastically.
- The headteacher is totally committed to getting the very best for you.

I think that you can help yourselves and the centre by continuing with your very positive attitudes and hard work. It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities the centre provides for you because then you can achieve well in your exams and go on to do well in the future. I have asked the staff to improve the centre by:

- involving you more in assessing your progress
- involving more people in checking lessons to see how they could be even better.

I hope you carry on working hard all year and continue to be as helpful to each other as I saw when I was in the centre.