

The Latimer Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100476
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	307399
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Kennedy HMI

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	59
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Marion Michaud
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	194 Freston Road Latimer Road Station London W10 6TT
Telephone number	020 7938 8120
Fax number	020 7938 8113

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Latimer Education Centre is the sole pupil referral unit for the local authority and provides full or part-time education for a range of pupils including those excluded from school, some who are at risk of exclusion or awaiting placement. The Centre also provides for some who have medical or other factors preventing them attending mainstream schooling. There are generally twice as many boys than girls attending the Centre. Many have complex needs and eight pupils are currently looked after by a local authority. Most pupils come from areas of significant economic deprivation. The ethnic background of pupils is varied with the highest proportion from White British and Black British or Caribbean heritages. There are currently no primary aged pupils on roll.

The Centre's purpose is to be an interim placement, particularly for younger pupils and those in a receipt of a statement of special educational needs. However, in practice pupils remain there for very long periods. This is especially the case for the 30 per cent who are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs, and have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The Centre at Latimer Road is the main site with a number of other satellite sites to cater for the particular needs of pupils. The Centre has recently achieved the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Latimer Education Centre takes good care of its pupils and provides them with a satisfactory education. Pupils, because of the excellent pastoral care they receive, make good strides in their personal development. The touchstone of the Centre's strength is how good it is at bringing pupils back on track against all the odds. The staff work hard to include and support pupils from the time of their arrival. This boosts their confidence, personal development and life chances. Although standards are low, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Overall, teaching successfully helps most pupils to make steady progress from very low starting points. Pupils learn fastest in those lessons where teachers set challenging work that is closely matched to their individual targets. However, these features are not yet consistent in all classes. Those pupils who attend regularly often make good progress as they benefit from their positive relationships with adults and teachers' skilful support and good subject knowledge. However, a significant minority of pupils are held back by poor attendance and punctuality.

A particular strength is the flexible curriculum the Centre offers which is effectively personalised to meet the needs of pupils. Its focus on the development of basic skills and provision which is as close as possible to what is on offer in schools is a helpful springboard for pupils. It prepares them well for any move to another education, training or employment setting. However, despite this good preparation and the best efforts of the Centre, opportunities for reintegration continue to be very limited; a concern raised by the last inspection. Good care, guidance and support can be seen in its impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy being at the Centre and their satisfactory behaviour represents a significant improvement for many. The new-found motivation can be seen, for example, in an extract from one of their poems: 'I have ambition, BIG ambitions I have expectations, GREAT expectations I wanna get somewhere in life'.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is passionate about ensuring that pupils are given the best of chances to have a good education and achieve well. She is well supported in this by the leadership team and staff. However, the management committee is less effective because it does not always provide sufficient support to the leadership team or hold it fully to account. It is now taking steps to improve its composition and working practices. Because of the strengths in the leadership team and the Centre's secure knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more effective systems of recording attendance to enable more pupils to have more precise targets for improvement.
- Use information from assessment and tracking to increase the proportion of good teaching and ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the management committee.

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

A high proportion of pupils start with standards of attainment well below average. This is because many have complex needs, challenging behaviour, negative attitudes to education or a history of poor attendance. However, the staff are particularly good at identifying individual needs and adapt the curriculum to meet these. Pupils develop better basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and this helps boost their fragile confidence. Pupils who attend regularly make at least satisfactory progress in their learning in lessons and, where the teaching is good they get back on track and catch up for lost time. However, many do not make good progress because of their continued poor attendance and punctuality.

At the end of Year 9, few achieve the levels expected for their age but most make satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment on entry. Many pupils who stay on until the end of Year 11 and who attend regularly make good progress in relation to their previous learning. They gain accreditation because of the excellent pastoral care, individual attention and nurture they receive from staff. Over the past two years, almost all those entered for examinations have gained GCSE grades, with many gaining a good grade in English, mathematics or science and in another subject such as art or a modern foreign language. The majority of pupils also achieve accreditation in a range of other courses such as history and 'preparation for working life'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Because of the Centre's strong pastoral care and effective support, pupils make good strides in the personal development and this is reflected in the improved behaviour and social skills of many. Behaviour is only satisfactory because some pupils still have a long way to go in learning how to manage their feelings and emotions better. The pupils say they enjoy coming to the Centre and particularly welcome the individual care and support they receive. The curriculum is effective in enabling them to develop good cultural, social and spiritual awareness. Their well-developed sense of reflection can be seen in some of the poetry they wrote which is on display in the school and the local community. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is developing and evidenced in their participation in sport. They say that they feel safe and secure at the Centre and this is a direct result of the good care and supervision there. For some pupils, their engrained habits of unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality continue to be barriers to their learning. The Centre rigorously follows up absence, and while the attendance of many shows improvement, overall it remains stubbornly low. Information about attendance is not used well to enable the staff to set realistic targets with pupils for improvement. Pupils contribute well to the Centre through their council. There are also good examples of how they contribute to the community. They produced a powerful DVD on the impact of drugs as part of a cannabis media challenge project. Improved basic skills prepare them well for their future lives but in Year 10, there are limited opportunities for work placements. Many pupils spoke of being keen to return to mainstream school. Despite the good personal development and the effective work the Centre does in enabling some to reintegrate, limited places and an unwillingness of some schools to accept them has a negative impact on their motivation.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the Centre's evaluation of teaching and learning that half is satisfactory and half is good. The leadership team places a high priority on improving the quality of teaching and it recognises the need to raise the proportion of teaching which is engaging and motivating. The most notable strength of teaching is the excellent relationships adults have with pupils. They are skilled in gaining the trust of vulnerable pupils and often succeed in getting even the most reluctant learners to work hard. Pupils spoke positively about the interest teachers take in them and the better chances they now have to work in small groups. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan work well and use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think for themselves. In an English lesson, this was particularly effective in improving pupils' essay writing skills as part of their coursework in modern drama. Teachers' marking and verbal comments help pupils to see what they need to do to improve. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning is not as brisk as it should be and there is less challenge for pupils because teachers tend to dominate too much. Planning is generally good but teachers are often not precise enough in using information from assessment and monitoring to set clear expectations for each pupil. While general learning outcomes are clear, pupils are not always aware of what small steps they need to take to make progress, and they are insufficiently involved in assessing their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The Centre offers a good and flexible curriculum which is adapted well to meet individual learner's needs. The pastoral support team offer a wide range of enrichment opportunities including, for example, gardening, sports and rock climbing. Provision for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is good. The curriculum is modelled closely to the national curriculum and there are very good opportunities for pupils to gain a wide range accreditation. Art is a strong feature of the curriculum and its impact can be seen in the impressive displays on the walls and the Centre's website. Well-organised personal, social education and careers programmes reinforce pupils' learning about personal awareness, healthy lifestyles, life skills and relationships. These prepare pupils well for their future lives. The Centre offers a full timetable to pupils at interview unless, for example, risk assessment indicates that this would not temporarily be appropriate. However, pupils do not always maximise the benefit of this because they are unwilling, for example, to travel to parts of the borough to attend provision. The Centre is able to offer a good curriculum for each pupil with a statement of special educational needs but with its limited resources it recognises that what it offers for some is not broad enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good care and guidance along with strong pastoral support provide the foundations for the pupils' achievement and good personal development. Pupils respond well to the 'second chance' that the Centre provides and excellent pastoral care boosts their self-esteem as it helps them gain confidence in their learning. Arrangements for safeguarding and managing pupils' behaviour are rigorous and well managed. Risk assessments are thorough and the Centre has effective

procedures for dealing with racism and bullying incidents. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and well supported. Relationships with parents and carers are very strong with parental responses indicating a high level of satisfaction with how well the Centre takes account of their views. Effective partnerships exist with a range of agencies providing well, for example, for young people with mental health needs. The Centre often receives very limited information about pupils on their arrival but does its best to assess and meet individual needs. All the pupils have individual education plans which are regularly reviewed. However, some of the targets set are too imprecise, difficult for the pupils to measure and lacking in challenge. As a result, some of the pupils make only satisfactory progress in their attendance, punctuality and learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

One of her colleagues said that the Centre would not be what it is without the headteacher. Her inspirational leadership and good management, with strong support from other leaders and staff at the Centre evidence this. Staff respond well to the good support they receive for their professional development. However, leadership and management at all levels are only satisfactory. The management committee has not always provided sufficient support, strategic direction or challenge in holding the leadership to account. Changes are being planned to its operation and current members, some of whom are relatively new, recognise the need to improve its effectiveness. A number of vacancies, particularly at senior level, place additional responsibilities on the leadership team and restrict its capacity. In spite of these challenges, leaders have a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and appropriate strategies are now in place to improve the quality of education. The Centre makes good use of the limited resources available to it and it provides good value for money because of the impact it has on the personal development and well-being of its pupils and on the progress that many make despite their very difficult circumstances.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Latimer Education Centre, London, W10 6TT

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we recently visited your Centre. I was impressed with the hard work that the staff put into giving you a second chance. I know from speaking with you that you enjoy coming to the Centre or its other units and value the support you get. The staff push you hard because they believe in you and want the best for you.

You will be pleased to know that I agree that you are being given a satisfactory quality of education. I think your teachers do a good job, and plan their lessons well. Sometimes lessons are not as good because you are not as involved as you could be. Some of you come in late and disturb the learning of others or you do not attend and miss out on what happened in the previous lesson.

The Centre puts on a good range of courses for you and it was great to see the many other opportunities you have to take part in sport and other activities. You have produced some great work and I was particularly impressed with your artwork and the poetry which I read when I visited the Centre.

Your headteacher and all the staff are doing a good job but they need more help from the management committee. We know that many of you want to get back to school again and this is also what the staff want for you. We have asked the management committee to help with this. We have also made some other suggestions to help your Centre be even better:

- make sure even more of your lessons are good
- help you know your targets better so that you know exactly how to improve your work and attendance.

If you are one of the pupils whose attendance or punctuality could be better, you would be helping your future chances by improving it.

Thank you again for talking to us. I wish you the very best for your futures.

John Kennedy

Her Majesty's Inspector