

The Behaviour Support Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103146
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308231
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Burdis 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	Community
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	204
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Fiona Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	The Link Centre Jenkins Street Small Heath Birmingham B10 0QH
Telephone number	01213 030272
Fax number	01213 030270

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Birmingham's Behaviour Support Service is a complex organisation. It has a dual function – first as a pupil referral unit (PRU) covering the full statutory age range based in nine centres (three primary and six secondary) and, second, as the local authority's school Behaviour Support Service. It is currently undergoing organisational change, in line with mainstream schools' move to network working in geographical locations. This has resulted in a revised management structure, increased focus on early intervention and prevention and partnership working with mainstream schools. Historically, the secondary centres provided for either pupils in Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4. Centres have been re-aligned with mainstream networks and now offer primary or secondary provision. There is an acting head of service. A substantive appointment to the head of service is to be made when Birmingham's Children's Trust management structures are agreed.

Most pupils attending the PRU are assessed at school action plus on the special educational needs code of practice and have had disrupted education, having been subject to exclusion or experienced significant difficulties at school. A high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few are looked after by the council. There is a very high turnover of young people in any one academic year with re-integration a priority aim. Whether supported in mainstream schools or placed at one of the centres, attainment on entry is usually below average, as spasmodic school attendance and significant social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties have affected performance.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'I cannot praise these establishments enough as anyone with children with behaviour problems will be only too glad to tell you.' (A parent's response to the inspection questionnaire).

The senior leadership team has been very effective in developing partnerships with schools and other agencies to the benefit of pupils with the most challenging behaviour. The acting head of service and leadership team have managed changes to the structure of the organisation very well and all staff acknowledge the success and appropriateness of new ways of working. The partnership is increasingly successful in the range of options available to promote improved behaviour and personal development in mainstream settings. The trend in permanent exclusion from secondary schools is reducing, with the Behaviour Support Service contributing well through shared placements, alternative curriculum provision and facilitating multi-agency panels working to keep pupils in mainstream schools. Whilst management structures are new, effective monitoring and evaluation of provision ensures the focus of activity is on the right issues for further development. The service's self-evaluation provides an accurate reflection of its work.

The consistently good quality of educational provision across the nine centres is a major achievement. Senior staff monitor the provision effectively and use data well to identify where there are gaps or weaknesses and take appropriate action. Increasingly robust performance data illustrate the impact the service is having on pupils' improved attendance, behaviour and achievement. The centres are very effective in their core work of supporting emotional and behavioural development, and this is achieved through providing high quality educational opportunities and consistent implementation of behaviour management strategies. As a result, personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good. All staff contribute to this success – teachers plan interesting and engaging activities, and retain an upbeat and positive attitude. Teaching assistants and learning mentors have specific roles in supporting individuals and their families and ensure success in offsite curriculum activities.

A well-planned and broad curriculum provides interesting and engaging activities. Although the curriculum is taught well, not all teachers in the secondary phase mark work well enough. Enrichment activities are excellent, making a very positive contribution to pupils' achievements and self-esteem. The wide range of activities and a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme have a positive impact on pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and safe practices, including the dangers of drugs and gun crime. A few young people miss some aspects of sex and relationship education owing to a clash of timetables when they are involved in offsite activities. Pupils' enjoyment in learning is seen in much improved attendance and their active involvement in lessons and social activities. There are good opportunities for pupils to contribute to their community through the school council and 'put it right' sheets, and for helping others through fundraising events. In Year 11, pupils access alternative, offsite vocational provision. This provides well for their future economic well-being as they learn workplace skills.

A new management committee has been selected but, having just had its first meeting, does not yet fulfil its management role. With the consistently good quality of provision at the PRU and the positive working relationships with partners, the Behaviour Support Service has good capacity to improve further. Its success in re-engaging pupils with learning, improving attendance and re-integrating pupils into mainstream schools demonstrates its good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a marking policy in the secondary phase.
- Establish the advisory and support role of the new management committee.
- Ensure access to sex and relationship education for all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils enter, standards are very varied but generally below national averages with some pupils well below average. In particular, some have limited basic literacy and numeracy skills and have not established good study skills. Pupils of all ages attending any of the nine centres usually make good progress against prior achievement. As pupils' confidence and basic literacy and numeracy skills increase, they make good progress in subject areas. The improvement to pupils' self-esteem helps to raise confidence, re-focus on learning and improve levels of attainment. Pupils make good progress towards achieving their individual targets. Appropriate targets for performance are set and monitored, demonstrating the good academic progress most pupils make even when attending the PRU for a relatively short time.

Pupils are entered for appropriate accreditation, including national tests in Years 6 and 9. Standards are below average but outcomes reflect good progress for most against their prior attainments. In 2007, the large majority of older pupils gained success in some form of accredited courses, including GCSE and AQA unit awards. A number also gained success in work-related activities that help them to prepare for their future. Most significantly, pupils are encouraged to aspire to return to mainstream schools and there is a good rate of successful re-integration at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Almost all Year 11 pupils are reintegrated to education via supported alternative provision

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In line with the service's own evaluation, the inspection identified many outstanding features in the provision for pupils' personal development, however, the impact is reduced in those centres where there are high rates of unauthorised absence. Many pupils learn to modify their behaviour, regain their self-esteem and successfully re-integrate into mainstream schools. Behaviour is usually good in lessons and in social settings. Pupils talk positively of the help they have received to improve their behaviour and the trust they have in the adults working with them and say this has helped them to improve their behaviour. Attendance figures are low but in almost all centres attendance improves quickly as pupils become re-engaged with learning. In the primary phase, a high proportion achieved over 90% attendance in 2006/07.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils learn to reflect on the reasons for and effect of their behaviour, demonstrate empathy and take responsibility. They embrace opportunities for music and art and know about their own and different cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of the choices required to live healthy and safe lives and participate fully in exciting physical activities. Pupils show their increasing enthusiasm for school by improving attendance, sometimes dramatically, and engaging very positively in a wide range of activities including raising money for charities. They make a positive contribution to their centre's development by making decisions such as playground design and classroom colour schemes. They are actively involved in the resolution of disagreements through school council.

With the good progress pupils make in developing basic skills and improving their behaviour, and access to meaningful vocational courses they are well prepared for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very good relationships and the consistent implementation of behaviour management strategies ensure that classrooms are about learning and success. Teaching and non-teaching staff contribute to the effective learning environments provided across all centres. Staff establish excellent relationships with pupils and these are used successfully to develop pupils' self-esteem. Pupils respond positively to the interesting and creative activities teachers plan and respond well to their high expectations of them. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are responsive and usually skilful in pitching the level of challenge accurately for individuals. Pupils forget to be angry as they become involved in engaging and interesting learning opportunities. Their irritation often turns to interest as teachers introduce new resources or present irresistible challenges. Occasionally, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) or visual resources to capitalise on opportunities for independent research. Not all secondary phase teachers use marking well enough to guide pupils on the next steps in their learning. Teaching assistants and learning mentors make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, both in the centres and in supporting re-integration into mainstream.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A broad and flexible curriculum matches the diverse needs and ages of individual pupils well. The curriculum strikes a good balance between developing pupils' essential skills and ensuring that they experience stimulating and meaningful learning opportunities at each key stage. The impact of improved personal development and the broad curriculum increases pupils' chances of timely and successful re-integration into mainstream schools. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education and the development of life skills.

Drugs awareness and sex and relationship issues are addressed well, but in some centres not all pupils have access to discussions because of a clash of activities with their timetable taking them off site. The curriculum is under continual review and currently being planned through a more thematic approach, linking subjects together to make learning relevant and interesting. Enrichment activities are excellent. Especially good use is made of outside specialists and local facilities in order to extend the curriculum. The involvement of many services, including the police, youth offending team and especially challenging work with the fire service, helps pupils reflect on risky practices and encourages safe behaviour. Visitors, such as artists in residence, also increase challenge and enrich the curriculum. The curriculum prepares pupils very well for life after school, especially at Key Stage 4 through work experience placement and wide ranging alternative curriculum provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are known and valued by a dedicated team of staff who have the well-being of young people as their priority and, as a result, care, guidance and support are outstanding. The staff are especially good at employing approaches to improve emotional awareness and helping

pupils to understand and manage their emotions. All staff consistently apply agreed behavioural policies. Pupils are taught to express very strong emotions safely. As one young person proudly reported, 'One thing I've learnt – I can be good.'

Induction into one of the centres and transition back to school usually succeed because of the very careful thought given to these stressful times of change. High quality support is available for the pupil and the family. Arrangements for promoting health and safety and child protection are good. All parents responding to the inspection questionnaire felt that their child was safe and well cared for and their views were sought. Excellent links with a wide range of external services help meet the complex needs of some pupils. Good baseline assessment, record keeping and data analysis demonstrate the good progress and improved attitude to school made by pupils. Target setting for both behaviour and academic achievement is good. Pupils discuss and agree their targets, and success in meeting them is regularly referred to in lessons and social settings. When individuals are having difficulty behaving, the situation is managed well to minimise the disruption to learning of others.

Very good risk assessments covering the wide range of activities enable rather than limit opportunities, especially offsite. Good support by Connexions careers staff and learning mentors at each secondary centre helps prepare for successful transition to life after school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting head of service and senior leadership team provide outstanding leadership and effective strategic management of a complex organisation. Major organisational change, required to respond to increased network working, is being managed very effectively.

All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and there is a pride in the contribution each can make to the diverse and developing provision offered by the service. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Good use of performance data informs targets for each centre and the impact of work with mainstream schools. Good subject leadership in the centres provides meaningful and challenging learning opportunities, re-engaging pupils with learning and success. Thoughtful consideration is given to ensuring equality of opportunity, especially for the few girls attending and the assessed learning difficulties of individuals. The impact of effective monitoring and evaluation of the services' work is reflected in the consistently good provision in all nine centres and the positive partnership with mainstream schools and other providers. The wider senior management team is making an effective contribution to developing citywide provision in line with the national and local agenda for reducing exclusions and promoting inclusion.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

The Behaviour Support Service, Small Heath, Birmingham, B10 0QH

You will be aware that we recently came to the Behaviour Support Service and visited all the centres as part of an inspection. I am writing to let you know our findings, but may I first thank you for helping the inspection team look carefully at your centre and the work you are doing there. We were all very impressed by your positive attitudes, how helpful you can be to each other and how you usually behave well.

We think that your headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make sure you achieve well by helping you to understand how you can improve your behaviour and planning some very interesting things for you to do. We thought your teachers planned good lessons and you were usually very involved with your work. We think you make better progress and attend school more regularly at the centre than you did in your previous school. The activities you do out of school looked very interesting and the older pupils have some good experiences in preparing for the world of work.

There were three things that we felt could be better. First, teachers should make it clearer when they mark your work what they think you should do to improve it. Next, everyone in the secondary centres should be involved in education about sex and relationships. Finally, we know that the management committee is new. We want it to quickly develop its involvement with the work of the service.

You can help with these things by discussing with your teachers how you think your work could improve and trying your best in future lessons. Perhaps you could invite members of the new management committee to see you at work – they would very quickly understand what good things are going on if you told them.

Thank you again for talking to us and making us feel very welcome.

We would like to wish you every success for your future activities.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Burdis Her Majesty's Inspector