

Notton House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109394
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309967
Inspection date	27 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Leighton-Fry
Headteacher	Gerry Gamble
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	28 Notton Lacock Chippenham SN15 2NF
Telephone number	01249 730407
Fax number	01249 730007

Age group	9-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: personal development and well-being; academic care, guidance and support; and the achievement and standards of pupils. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; examination of a wide range of documentary evidence provided by the school; parents' and carers' replies to the inspection questionnaire; observation of the school at work; and interviews with staff, pupils and a governor. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report

Description of the school

The school provides for boys aged 9 to 16 who have experienced considerable disruption and fragmentation to their formal education. They enter at various ages and at any time throughout the school year. Pupils are mainly from deprived backgrounds in the urban areas of Bristol, Swindon and Wiltshire, with small numbers of pupils from more rural areas in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset. The great majority are of White British heritage. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. All have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties: many have medical conditions associated with behavioural difficulties. The proportion of children who are in the care of a local authority is high. A distinctive feature of the school is the flexible boarding arrangements it has developed. Initially all pupils board on a weekly basis. The school is open every other weekend for 18 weekends per year. The school gained the Healthy School Award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Notton House School provides a good standard of education. Most pupils start at the school with standards that are well below average and many have significant gaps in their skills and knowledge. This is often as a result of previous difficulties, including poor attendance and/or exclusion from other mainstream schools. The school's first priority is to help pupils get into a position where they can begin to learn and enjoy school. This it does well, with the consequence that achievement is good. Standards are generally well below those seen nationally but represent good progress from where the pupils started. Most pupils who attend school regularly gain GCSE grades in a variety of subjects and have aspirations for further education and employment. Along with the new college-based and externally accredited courses, these leavers are enabled to be either gainfully employed in further education or training. Levels of attendance have improved over the last year, with the vast majority of pupils attending at around the national average rate. For these pupils this is a significant improvement on how frequently they attended in their previous school. A small number of pupils attend very little or not at all, and some only manage a first visit. This is for a variety of reasons. The school has done much over the last year to encourage these pupils to attend and has now managed to sustain attendance levels in Years 10 and 11. It has done this, for example, through an increased use of flexible packages of college placements and work experience supported by a dedicated inclusion worker. However, the length of time that non-attending pupils have remained on the school roll whilst not engaging in education has been far too long. The school is working with the local authority in order to ensure that this does not happen in the future. Teaching and learning are good because teachers and assistants know their pupils well. They understand the pupils' often complex backgrounds and individual learning needs. Pupils say that they find the small classes very helpful in reducing their levels of anxiety and this helps them to do better than in other schools they have attended. Teaching assistants are a significant and vital resource that the school deploys very well to help pupils learn. Equally, they are well managed and supported in their work, with many of them continuing their own education and professional development. Those pupils with the lowest standards of literacy have extra specialist one-to-one support. The school is in the process of completing an analysis of the full impact of this provision. The good care, guidance and support for pupils are appreciated by them. Several boys return after leaving school so that they can help to make a difference to the lives of other boys who have had similar problems to them. However, there is an inconsistent approach to the way that staff share information with parents/carers and pupils on how well pupils are doing academically in relation to their age and ability. Consequently, it is hard for parents/carers to know if their son is doing as well as he should or could be doing. This is in contrast with the clear behaviour targets that are shared well throughout the community. Personal development and well-being are good because pupils learn to be responsible citizens. While at school, pupils learn how to manage their behaviour and are polite and welcoming to visitors. When they have lapses in maintaining their behaviour, pupils say they appreciate the way that staff help them to regain control of themselves. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, although they sometimes forget. In spite of occasional outbursts, most learners generally get on well with each other and with the adults with whom they work. They know why they should stay safe and healthy, but do not always do so. Pupils find the role of 'key workers' a significant pastoral support that they say makes them feel safe and secure. Pupils respond well to the points system of reward but they are unhappy in the way that their points are recorded. They feel particularly frustrated when points had been removed without them being told directly by the member of

staff concerned. The school is aware of their concerns and is looking at ways to improve the recording system. There is a school council with mainly elected members. However, the current council is very new and pupils do not have enough other opportunities to share information and be involved in managing school issues that are important to them. The construction of a new education block complete with sports hall and science laboratory, the improvements to the curriculum and highly effective use of learning support assistants demonstrate that the school has responded well to most of the key issues for improvement raised in the last inspection report. However, the role of subject leaders is still not sufficiently developed. The school is aware of this. Since the end of last term it has been developing new monitoring and recording procedures to ensure that middle managers have greater accountability for their work. The systems and procedures are sensible and are a good improvement on those used previously. If the records are sustained on a reasonably frequent basis, they have the capacity to be very informative for all levels of leadership and management as well as strengthening the subject leaders' role. In spite of this developing area, the school does currently have an accurate knowledge of what it is doing well and the areas that it needs to improve. The school improvement plan is clear and focuses well on the most significant points for improvement. The improvements that have already been made from this plan demonstrate that capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The last Commission for Social Care inspection, published in January 2007, substantiates the school's self-evaluation that boarding provision is good. The school has addressed the key issues for improvement that were raised in that report. Pupils opt into weekend boarding, with younger pupils being encouraged to take up this opportunity. Some pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, go home on one or two evenings per week. This additional home and community contact is an important part of the preparation for their future beyond school. Often this is linked with accessing opportunities within their local communities such as army cadets, martial arts, photography and local Bristol colleges. These older boys greatly appreciate this. Younger pupils said that they would like this opportunity too and have raised the issue at their last school council meeting. The school also prepares pupils to live independently through its 'learning for living' programme. Since the end of September, to the great disappointment of the pupils concerned, this programme has been suspended owing to staff illness. The school recognises the importance of this programme and intends to reinstate it at the earliest opportunity. Some older pupils stay in the school at weekends, often on a respite basis for them, their families, or both. Parents and pupils said that they value this facility. The need for residential support for most pupils does decline over time. The school has recognised this and has adjusted its support accordingly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils who are on the school roll receive a full-time education.
- Improve the consistency in recording and reporting standards in learning and academic achievements to parents/carers and pupils.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	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?	2
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

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

- 28 November 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Notton House School, Lacock, Wiltshire SN15 2NF Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when I came to inspect your school. I came to see how well you are learning. I enjoyed my day with you and in particular talking with some of you over lunch and meeting with your school council. Thank you for talking to me about your work and what it is like being a pupil at your school. This letter is to tell you what I found out.
- Notton House is a good school.
- Those of you who attend regularly are taught well and you make good progress in your learning. This means that when you leave school you can follow your dreams of getting a job or joining a college or sixth form.
- All the staff really work well together as a team. As a result, they know you very well and the best ways to help you. As you told me, this has also helped make sure that you feel safe and secure. Staff at your school are keen to make things even better and they talked to me about how they might do so. I have asked them to focus on improving the following things:
 - to help the pupils who do not come to school often enough to get a full-time education, so that they have better opportunities when they leave school
 - to make sure that you and your parents/carers know how well you are doing in relation to your age and your ability. Can you think of ways to help the school do these things? Thank you for being so polite and helpful during the visit. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. Please thank your parents and carers for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires. With my very best wishes for your future Steffi Penny Her Majesty's Inspector



28 November 2007

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Can you think of ways to help the school do these things?

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With my very best wishes for your future

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector