

South Cumbria Network

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112098
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310782
Inspection date	11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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	7-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Holmes
Headteacher	Mrs Elise Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Newbridge House Ewan Close Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA13 9HU
Telephone number	01229 894461
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Age group	7-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The 61 pupils on roll spend varying amounts of time at the centre adding up to the equivalence of 34 full-time placements. The pupils have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their previous schools. The majority of the pupils are in Years 9 to 11. Currently eight of the pupils are girls. A high percentage of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and five are in public care. Nine pupils have a statement of special educational need because they are identified as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many of the pupils live a considerable distance from the centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good centre that provides good value for money. The very committed senior leaders are central to the good progress made since the last inspection. They are very well supported by an enthusiastic team that share their high aspirations for the pupils' future. The inclusive ethos of the centre is a particularly striking feature and it is impressive that no pupils have been excluded in the past few years. The management committee provide good support and challenge to senior leaders and help to foster the good capacity for further improvement. Self-review in the centre is open, honest and accurate, but senior managers and the management committee are, on occasions, over-ambitious and try to tackle too many priorities at once.

Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress at Key Stage 2 where high expectations prepare pupils well for their return to a mainstream school. These pupils enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are well focused on good opportunities to gain qualifications in academic and vocational qualifications and achieve well. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Their progress is limited by the organisation of the teaching groups and the negative impact this has on their learning. Across the school, pupils make good progress in their reading and speaking and listening, but they are reluctant to extend their writing and make satisfactory progress in this aspect of their learning. Pupils make particularly good progress in practical subjects such as art and design, and food technology.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and enjoy being at the centre. Relationships are very strong and pupils respond well to the consistent management of their behaviour. Attendance is good overall, but the Year 11 pupils would have a better chance of gaining higher standards if their attendance was good rather than satisfactory. The pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. They are fully involved in a good range of physical activities and accept guidance of healthy eating. However, despite the staff's best efforts, some of the older pupils continue to smoke off-site during the lunch break.

Teaching and learning are good. Typically teaching is brisk, confident and has high expectations for pupils' learning and personal development. Teaching assistants provide a good balance of support and challenge, helping to meet the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils' individual targets are challenging and they share in the staff's ambition for their success. There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work which contributes to some satisfactory rather than good progress. The curriculum is good. Since the last inspection, it has been enhanced by improvements to the accommodation which is now good. Pupils enjoy their activities, listen to advice and learn from their mistakes. At Key Stage 2, the curriculum prepares pupils effectively for their return to mainstream, whilst at Key Stage 4, personalised curriculum packages provide good opportunities for pupils to gain the essential qualifications to prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. However, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 has limitations and this contributes to pupils' satisfactory achievement. Enrichment of the curriculum is good, but the extra-curricular provision is only satisfactory. Pupils are provided with good care, guidance and support that take into account the pupils' wide range of learning needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the range of opportunities provided for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills.

- Ensure that the organisation of the classes and curriculum for the pupils at Key Stage 3 is well managed to help improve their achievement.
- Ensure the marking of pupils' work is consistent so that pupils know how to improve their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Due to their disrupted educational history, the majority of pupils join the centre with standards of attainment below those typical for their age. Despite making good progress towards their challenging targets, the gap is too wide for most pupils to make up and they are unable to meet the national expectations for pupils in mainstream schools. Groups of pupils, such as those in public care and girls achieve as well as their peers in the centre. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve well. Pupils at Key Stage 2 respond effectively to clear expectations and make good progress. They develop a positive approach to their work which prepares them well for their return to mainstream schools. Year 9 pupils are not in a separate teaching group which limits the opportunities for staff to prepare them well enough for their tests at the end of the year. This contributes to pupils' satisfactory achievement at Key Stage 3. The range and challenge of external accreditation at Key Stage 4 has been extended and the achievement of these pupils is now good. They take pride in their work. For example, their folders for the moderation of their ASDAN work are impressive. Pupils make good progress in their reading, speaking and listening. However, staff do not fully overcome pupils' reluctance to extend their writing and they make satisfactory progress in this aspect of their learning. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy art, design and food technology and make particularly good progress in these subjects. Pupils are making good progress in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a wide range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The majority of pupils enjoy their time at the centre and attendance is now good; although the attendance of the Year 11 pupils is still only satisfactory. Pupils display high levels of respect for adults and each other, and behave well. Good behaviour is celebrated and pupils are aware of the consequences of negative behaviour. It is particularly good that the school has not excluded any pupils during recent years. Relationships are excellent and pupils are able to express any concerns they have to members of staff. Pupils enjoy a good range of physical exercise and many make healthy choices for their lunch. However, despite consistent staff advice and guidance, some of the pupils continue to smoke off-site during the lunch break and this limits their adoption of healthy lifestyles to satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to the centre community. The school council is well established and members have the confidence to express their points of view and know that staff will listen. Year 10 pupils are keen to join the older pupils off-site during the lunch break, but the staff are wisely resisting this request. Pupils are well prepared for moving on to the next phase of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Typically, teaching is calm and purposeful. The staff team is enthusiastic and effectively tailor pupils' activities to meet their individual learning needs. Teamwork is a strength and helps to promote the consistent management of pupils' behaviour. Staff use a good range of strategies, including praise and humour, to effectively engage pupils in their learning. At times there is insufficient focus on marking pupils' work which slows progress as they are not always made aware of how to improve their learning. Also, pupils take less pride in their work and fail to complete their tasks when too little attention is given to moderating the work in their books. Staff have particularly high expectations at Key Stage 2 and consequently the classroom is a busy hive of activity. Staff are developing their skills in the use of interactive whiteboards and the use of this resource is really helping to motivate pupils. At Key Stage 4, the consistent reference to the value of external accreditation prepares pupils effectively for the next stage of their education, employment or training, and encourages them to work hard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and provides pupils with an enjoyable education. There has been a marked improvement in the accommodation since the previous inspection providing more attractive and suitable facilities. This is particularly the case in ICT and art and design where improvements have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. There is a good focus on practical activities with, for example, extensive use of the local facilities for the teaching of physical education. However, in science, pupils at Key Stage 3 have not yet developed the skills to manage their practical work and this limits their progress. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is a strength of the centre and this helped them to achieve the Healthy Schools Award. It is particularly good that the Key Stage 2 curriculum matches the learning in mainstream schools and this contributes to the centre's success in re-integrating these pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, but there is too little focus on preparing pupils for the national tests at the end of Year 9. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is good with a fine balance of academic and vocational courses. Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities including college courses and work placements. However, there are too few enterprise activities to develop, for example, pupils' decision making and financial management skills. The curriculum enrichment is good; for example, it is boosted by the contributions of visiting musicians and a Peri Chef. However, the provision of extra-curricular activities remains satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The staff team work very hard to promote a stimulating and safe learning environment and they are very good role models for pupils. This judgement is supported by comments from parents who acknowledge and appreciate the staff's total commitment. The staff's enthusiasm is infectious and this helps to boost pupils' enjoyment of their learning. Pupils are made welcome at the start of the day and typical comments from pupils make it clear that they enjoy the staff's company. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are in place and a high priority is placed on keeping pupils safe. However, advice and

guidance to stop smoking has little effect on some of the older pupils. It is good that the younger pupils have their own play area to enjoy activities that are appropriate to their level of maturity. Older pupils and staff enjoy, for example, playing football during the breaks with a good combination of skills and fair play. Working relationships with parents and other agencies are positive and this helps to promote pupils' attendance, achievement and positive attitudes. Behaviour management is particularly effective and ensures pupils take increasing responsibility for their own actions. Pupils returning to mainstream schools are provided with skilled support from the centre's staff and this helps to ensure a smooth transition.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The enthusiastic and very committed headteacher is provided with very good support from the deputy headteacher and rest of the staff. This is a team effort, with a shared sense of purpose that is well led and challenges pupils to achieve well. The professional development of all staff is a particular strength and ensures that the full range of pupils' learning needs is met. This is a very inclusive school where staff agree that pupil exclusions are not the answer to challenging behaviour. There has been good progress since the last inspection but staff are under no illusions that there is more to be done. Self-review is open and honest, and fully involves the staff and other stakeholders. This process provides an accurate view of the centre's strengths and areas for development. The management committee contributes effectively to the centre's good capacity to improve. However, they are sometimes over-ambitious by trying to tackle too many priorities at once. For example, there has not been the necessary sharp focus on improving the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Centre staff provide valuable support to their colleagues in mainstream schools to help develop their behaviour management skills. Parents are supportive of the centre, demonstrated by comments such as 'my son has come on in leaps and bounds since starting at the centre'.

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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?	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	2
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?	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	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	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

12 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Cumbria Network, Cumbria, LA13 9HU

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your centre. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and taking the time to tell me about your centre. In particular, thanks to the members of the school council who expressed clear views on what is good and what needs to improve in the centre. Also, I noticed during your break that you can play football well and it is good that you let the staff have the ball for some of the time.

South Cumbria Network is a good centre. You make good progress in your learning because of the good teaching and good curriculum that the centre provides. It was good to see just how busy the all of you are in the Key Stage 2 class and the appropriate opportunities you get to return to a mainstream school. Also, those of you at Key Stage 4 must keep working hard to make the best of your good opportunities. The senior staff and management committee run the centre well to make sure that you are happy, safe and busy. You make good progress in developing more positive attitudes and improved behaviour. Your attendance has improved during the past twelve months and is now good, although some of the Year 11 pupils should attend the centre more often.

Even a good centre can improve and I have three suggestions to make. You do not have enough chances to improve your writing and the staff will give you more help with this in the future. I have asked staff to make sure that all of your work is always marked to ensure that you know how to improve your learning. Finally, those of you in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory rather than good progress and the staff will introduce changes to improve your achievement. All of you can help by making sure that you attend, behave well and continue to work hard.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

Lead inspector