

# Learning Support Service

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113657
<b>Local Authority</b>	Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	311326
<b>Inspection date</b>	31 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Kell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Trish Copelin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Dolphin Centre Poole BH15 1SA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 262266
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 261949

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Learning Support Service (referred to as the service) provides education and support to pupils who are out of school and who have a very wide range of social, emotional, medical and academic difficulties. It is a Pupil Referral Unit. The majority of the pupils have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. This majority is taught in one of two centres according to their age; the Gaff is for pupils in Years 9 and 10, and pupils in Year 11 are taught at the Broadstone Youth Centre. There are twice as many boys as girls in the centres. Service staff also work at other bases with pupils who are out of school for other reasons. There is, for example, hospital provision for sick pupils and provision for young people with mental health problems. Such pupils are often with the service for very short periods and so numbers fluctuate greatly.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The service is ineffective in meeting the needs of its pupils. It has not made enough progress since the last inspection. A lack of strong leadership in setting a clear direction and purpose for the service, and the absence of routine, robust management systems have meant that many features of the service's work have deteriorated. Midway through the last school year, the local authority (LA) realised that it had to intervene to improve the situation and it implemented a number of changes. These included a much-strengthened role for the strategy manager (pupil and parent support) and a newly-constituted management committee. The strategy manager has recently carried out an accurate and detailed audit of the service, and the management committee is becoming increasingly involved in carrying out its responsibilities. Although some of the personnel with key roles in bringing about the required changes are in place, there has not been time for their input to have an impact. There are pockets of effective and improving practice, such as the hospital provision, but overall, the service is inadequate.

The pupils do not make the progress that they should and their achievements do not reflect what they are capable of doing. This is because of inadequate teaching and an unsatisfactory curriculum. Teaching lacks pace and challenge. There are no systems in place for setting challenging targets and then monitoring and tracking the pupils' achievements and progress. The inadequate accommodation severely restricts the range of learning activities that can be provided. Precious taught time is lost as unplanned timetable changes occur and many pupils move between sites at lunchtime. Staff have low expectations of pupils' personal development, and this is inadequate. There is no sense of urgency or the development of a culture that indicates to the pupils that they should attend well, are at school to work and to prepare themselves for moving into continuing education or employment. As a result, attendance is very poor and pupils show a lack of interest in lessons. Their lack of enjoyment further reflects the absence of stimulating, and challenging activities. The pupils receive an inadequate level of care, guidance and support. There are no formal procedures for assessing pupils' work and using this information to show them how to improve the standard of their work. It is intended that pastoral care and guidance take place through a keyworker system but this does not work in practice. Safeguarding procedures do not meet current requirements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- 
- ensure that safeguarding procedures comply with current requirements
- raise expectations of pupils' academic achievements and personal development, for example by setting and tracking challenging individual targets
- develop a strategic direction and improvement plan based on the outcomes of rigorous self-evaluation
- implement management systems and procedures that enable senior leaders to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the service's work, especially the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low compared with national expectations because they have experienced disrupted education through exclusion and poor attendance. The rate at which the pupils learn and make progress is inadequate. They do not achieve as well as they could. The service does not do enough to assess pupils' prior achievements when they enter the two centres. This makes it very difficult to set challenging targets. Once at the centre, their achievements are not assessed or recorded routinely or consistently. The absence of rigorous systems for monitoring and tracking their progress means that staff are not in a position to provide their pupils with activities that meet their individual learning needs. This reduces significantly their progress in lessons. Pupils' achievement is also reduced by other factors. A number of pupils have been on part-time timetables. Unplanned timetable changes frequently occur. As a result, teachers have ended up teaching mixed age groups of pupils, or subjects with which they are not familiar. In addition, staff expectations are not high enough and pupils' frequent absences disrupt their progress. Consequently, although pupils achieve passes in accredited examinations, their grades are not as high as they should be.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils are not given sufficiently intensive personal support, and this means that their life chances are not improved as quickly as they should be. The pupils in the centres are not prepared sufficiently well for leaving school. Their examination successes do not reflect their true potential and the centres' ethos is much too relaxed in terms of staff's expectations of how the pupils should act. Insufficient attention is paid to expecting pupils to attend regularly, to be punctual and to show positive attitudes to their learning, such as removing coats, scarves and caps when they enter a classroom. As the pupils are not expected to follow such basic classroom routines, situations in which teachers' authority might be challenged do not arise and so the pupils' classroom behaviour is generally satisfactory. They develop a satisfactory understanding of a safe and healthy lifestyle. For instance, pupils in the centres know the importance of a healthy diet and about the dangers of smoking and alcohol, even though some choose to ignore this in practice. Pupils with specific health and medical problems in the hospital provision do well in coming to terms with them and in understanding how to manage their conditions. Pupils' involvement in the local community and in the work of the centres through taking responsibility is generally limited to a few individuals. For instance, a pupil at Broadstone recently redecorated a room so that it could be used for pupil interviews and a few pupils from both centres will soon begin work with the Dorset Wildlife Trust on a community project, but this is a new initiative. The narrow curriculum is inadequate in providing opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The quality of teaching and learning overall is inadequate because the pace of learning is much too pedestrian. This is because lessons are not planned well enough to meet individual pupils' needs. Teachers do not use what the pupils already know as a starting point in providing

activities that challenge and stretch them to an appropriate degree. When activities are too challenging, or too easy, the pupils become bored and uninterested, and learning stops. Some teaching is effective, such as in the hospital provision, where staff are skilled at working around their pupils' conditions and making the most of learning opportunities. Staff have good relationships with their pupils and confrontation is rare. This is primarily because the staff avoid situations in which they have to assert their expectations or raise the level of challenge rather than because of their skill in defusing potential conflict. This strategy has an adverse effect on pupils' learning and personal development.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum does not meet the needs and interests of pupils. This has contributed to their poor attendance and inadequate achievements. The centres offer a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education, but schemes of work are at varying stages of development. The enrichment curriculum is less well advanced. This is because, although the LA has plans to relocate the two main centres in 2009, the unsatisfactory accommodation identified in the last inspection report remains inadequate. This limits the breadth of the curriculum that can be offered. For instance, there are no specialist teaching areas and many pupils still have to move from site to site at lunchtime to follow enrichment curriculum options. Planning for work-related learning has not been pursued with sufficient vigour. Year 11 pupils are offered a narrow range of part-time vocational courses at local colleges and with alternative education providers, but the take-up of these places is low.

Insofar as it is able, the hospital provision attempts to give pupils a curriculum that is broadly parallel to that which they would be following at school. However, the nature of the accommodation and the shortage of space restrict its ability to do this fully.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils in the centres do not receive adequate levels of planned and consistent pastoral or academic guidance and support. Pastoral support is supposed to take place through the keyworker system but the programme has been poorly planned until recently. In some cases, keyworkers and pupils have been on different sites. Even though that has now changed, keyworkers still do not find the time to carry out individual tutorials with their allocated pupils, even though the timetable allows this. Recently there has been a high level of staff absence. On a day-to-day basis, the pupils are cared for satisfactorily, for instance through breakfast clubs and the availability of staff to talk through problems, but the service's safeguarding procedures do not comply with current regulations. Staff from other agencies, such as the school nurse, social workers and Connexions, work well with the centres. Hospital provision-based staff provide a high level of personal care and support. Staff at the two main centres are not in a position to provide any degree of effective academic support and guidance to their pupils because they have very limited information about what their pupils are achieving or how well they are progressing. Pupils have not been set challenging targets, assessment procedures lack rigour and marking is not informative in showing pupils how they can improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

For some time now, service leaders have not had a secure grasp of how well the service was doing because management procedures have been ineffective. Self-evaluation is not a planned and thorough exercise. There are few systems for assessing, monitoring and tracking the pupils' achievements and progress, and the findings from lesson observations are not analysed or used to disseminate best practice. Consequently, leaders have not been able to produce and implement an improvement plan that is sharply focused on improving the academic and personal outcomes for pupils. As a result, standards are declining as the service lacks direction. Until now, the management committee has not been sufficiently active in finding out for itself what is going on. The LA has failed to put right some of the deficiencies, such as the accommodation, and by the time it began to redress the shortcomings in leadership and management, the situation had worsened significantly. There is now a recognition at all levels that the situation has to be turned around urgently. The LA is committed to improving the quality of provision and relocating the service; the management committee is keen to become increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating what the service is doing, and the strategy manager has a very perceptive understanding of what needs to be done. Despite this, the impact of their actions in bringing about clear and sustained improvements, especially to the pupils' academic and personal development, is not apparent at this stage. The lack of firm evidence of recent improvement means that the service is not satisfactorily demonstrating that it has sufficient capacity to improve in the future.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. There are many different parts to your school and not all of them are doing as well as they could. Therefore, the school needs 'special measures' to help it make the improvements that are needed. This means that inspectors will visit your school regularly to check how well things are going.

You do not make enough progress in your work. One reason is that too many of you stay away from school too often, and when you are there, a lot of time is wasted by stretching breaks and arriving late in lessons. Another cause for you not doing as well as you might is because the teachers do not expect enough of you in lessons. The Broadstone and Gaff buildings are not good enough for a better range of subjects to be taught and time is lost when you move from one site to another.

You do not make as much progress as you should in your personal development either. You know about a safe and healthy lifestyle, such as the dangers of smoking and alcohol and the importance of a healthy diet, although some of you choose to ignore this. Your behaviour is satisfactory and there are reasonable opportunities for some of you contribute to the work of the centres and to the local community. The centres do not do enough to prepare you for leaving school, although you do not always help yourselves by taking up the college courses that are on offer. The staff look after your day-to-day personal needs but the school does not have in place all of the paperwork that is required to make sure that you are safe. There are people around that you can talk to if you have a problem, but this needs to be planned better. The people who run the school have not done all the things that they could have done to make sure that the school gets better. We have given them some ideas:

- make sure that all the necessary paperwork is up to date to keep you safe
- have higher expectations of your work and personal development
- implement a plan that shows how improvements will be brought about
- develop better ways of finding out how well the school is doing all of the time.

We wish each of you the best of luck in the future.



1 November 2007

Dear Students

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Mike Kell  
Lead Inspector