

Broom Cottages

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113992
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311441
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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	102
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Summerbell
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2003
School address	Broom Ferryhill County Durham DL17 8AN
Telephone number	01740 656040
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Age group	5-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Broom Cottages serves the county and city of Durham. It is for pupils who are permanently excluded, or who are in danger of being excluded from mainstream schools. A very large majority of pupils come from areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. Some travel a considerable way to attend the unit which has places for 120 pupils. Three quarters of pupils are boys. All are of White British heritage. The proportion entitled to free school meals is high. All pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; a lower than average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The unit has undergone significant changes since it was last inspected as a Key Stage 3 provision for up to 42 pupils. In 2005, 22 places for Key Stages 1 and 2 were added. In 2006, Key Stage 4 provision was added with places for up to 58 permanently excluded pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Your heart warms to know that other people care for someone you love.' The words of one carer typify views of the unit's work. This is a good pupil referral unit, which gives good value for money. It makes a big difference to the life chances of its pupils.

The unit's considerable strengths include the excellent way it helps pupils to build their personal confidence and self-esteem. It has sustained these strengths through a period of significant change because of strong partnership between the unit, the local authority, other professional agencies and training providers. All adults work together to provide good role models for the pupils, who receive consistent messages about what is expected from them and of them. Pervasive team spirit, relentless challenge and a refusal to give up on pupils, are major factors contributing to the success that pupils gain in their personal development and their academic work.

Pupils typically enter the unit as disaffected and disappointed young people, unable to cope in mainstream school for a variety of reasons. On entry, many are angry about previous experiences in school, and they see little that is positive in their futures; standards are below average. This is particularly true in Years 10 and 11 where all pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream school.

Pupils make excellent gains in their personal development and well-being because of the high levels of pastoral care, individual support and the personal guidance they receive. Most attend the unit regularly. They are polite and talk proudly about 'our school'. Transformed behaviour enables them to engage in learning very effectively. Pupils say they enjoy being in the unit because teachers make lessons 'fun for the first time'. This is visible on their smiling faces and their much improved attitudes to learning. It leads directly to improved achievement and good progress for all pupils. Some reach standards which approach those typical for their age by the time they are either reintegrated into school, or complete their statutory education. Parents strongly support the unit; the comment, 'He now wants to go to school every day' is typical of many.

Pupils achieve well academically because teaching and learning are good. They enjoy lessons because of the individual attention they receive. This is the foundation for the strong relationships which abound throughout. Teaching is well planned to meet the learning needs of each pupil, taking advantage of the information on individual progress provided by assessment. However, teachers have insufficient opportunity to share good practice between classes.

The good curriculum ensures that: pupils aged between 6 and 11 follow a programme of learning based closely on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy; pupils aged 11 to 14 have every opportunity to take their Year 9 tests with success; pupils aged 15 and 16 gain academic and vocational qualifications preparing them for the next stage of their lives. Because older pupils have been in the school for less than four terms, the full impact of the unit's work has yet to be shown. A range of other subjects and extra-curricular activities ensure that all pupils have the benefits of a balanced learning experience, although the small and variable size of the unit can restrict the range of these experiences.

Determined leadership by the headteacher and senior staff has ensured that the significant changes of the last two years have been successful. The senior leadership team know the unit's strengths and areas to develop, although are somewhat over-cautious in judging their work.

The development plan does not demonstrate in full the clarity and perception of the thought behind it. The unit has good capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation process is focused clearly on how standards and achievement will be improved.
- Ensure that teachers have more opportunities to share good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Boys and girls make good progress, as the school's reliable assessment system clearly shows. Pupils make good progress in English, science and mathematics. Some reach standards which are typical for their age in these and other subjects. The large number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in a range of courses, including GCSE and in recognised vocational qualifications. Very few do not move on from the unit into further education, training or work. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and use their growing range of skills in their work in other subjects, for instance, to carry out research in geography. Pupils are well motivated by practical activities; for example, art and design are of high quality, use a range of media including film and are displayed proudly throughout the building.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the excellent care, guidance and support given by the unit staff to every pupil. Pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem rise rapidly after induction; behaviour quickly improves, ambition and aspiration are reawakened. Pupils say they enjoy coming to the unit, a view shared and strongly echoed by their parents. Many proudly take part in sporting activities for the first time in their lives. Others purchase, prepare and cook healthy food, which they share with their classmates. They offer suggestions for improvements to the learning environment which help the unit to function increasingly harmoniously day to day. The strong focus in all lessons on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT, underpins the vocational aspects of learning in Years 10 and 11. This gives pupils a very good preparation for the next phase of their lives where previously there was none.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is based firmly on the excellent relationships between adults and pupils found throughout the unit. Teachers and support staff work as seamless teams to provide very good individual support for pupils. Teachers work hard to improve reading and writing. Work is well matched to pupils' particular needs and is based on accurate assessment. Consequently, pupils of all ages quickly become fully involved in lessons and make good progress. For example, a group of Year 11 boys were fully, skilfully and enthusiastically engaged in repairing a damaged car in a commercial garage offsite. Every teacher aims to produce a weekly 'whizz-bang' practical lesson which is lively, fun and enhanced

by the skilful use of high quality resources. As a result, pupils are well motivated and try hard. There are not enough opportunities for staff to share what works well in one key stage with staff in other key stages.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Because pupils often come to the unit with poor literacy skills, there is a common thread in all lessons on improving them. This enables pupils to gain increasing access to other subjects. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' personal, social and health education. This has a significant impact on pupils' self-confidence and maturity, and is shown in their outstanding personal development and well-being. There is a good balance between teaching basic key skills such as numeracy and ICT, work in creative subjects such as art, design and photography, and vocational subjects such as motor vehicle maintenance and bricklaying. The curriculum is enriched by a number of clubs, with sport being very popular. Links with mainstream schools are developing well, enabling a few pupils to benefit from their facilities. Older pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their lives through links with local companies. Extended work placements for some give them a chance to develop good social skills, positive attitudes to work and a range of work related skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils are key strengths. Everything the school undertakes is done with an extremely clear focus on the individual. Staff are fully aware of the circumstances of vulnerable pupils. Health and safety including child protection has a high profile. Teachers and inclusion support staff work closely together and with other professionals such as mental health workers, for pupils' benefit. Daily routines, and a well respected and liked system for rewarding good behaviour, contribute very well to helping pupils come to terms with their difficulties and to develop strategies to cope. The straightforward assessment and tracking system is fully understood by pupils and staff. It helps pupils to set challenging targets for academic improvement and personal behaviour. It helps staff to plan their teaching to best meet the needs of individual learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. Under purposeful and effective leadership, the unit has in a relatively short time successfully established a very positive ethos and learning environment for pupils who have been disengaged and excluded from mainstream education, often for some time. The distinctive way the school is organised, the early successes by pupils in examinations and their good levels of personal achievement are a mark of this leadership. Every member of the school feels valued as part of the team. Consequently, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, demonstrating how well senior managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school so that school performance is improved. However, this knowledge is not well expressed in the school development plan and other documents. These

are not focused sharply enough on the detail of how the school carries out its work on raising standards and improving achievement. All managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and subject leaders are becoming more influential in monitoring their subjects and making a difference to achievement. The management committee supports the unit well. Accommodation and resources are effectively managed and very well looked after, not least by the pupils themselves, and this has a positive impact on their achievements and personal development.

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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	NA
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1

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	1
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

5 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Broom Cottages, Durham, DL17 8AN

Thank you for helping me find out about the unit when I visited recently. It was absolutely clear to me that you like being there, because you feel that it is helping you to gain success. Your parents and carers think the same way too.

I found that the unit gives you a good education, and here are some of the good things I found out.

- The way you have all developed since arriving at the unit is extremely impressive.
- All the adults connected with the unit really do have your best interests at heart. They work outstandingly well to help you develop your independence.
- Relationships in the unit are very positive and strong. You respond in an excellent manner to the help the staff provide. You clearly have respect for each other and the adults, and you realise that the efforts you make now will have positive results for you in the near future.
- The headteacher and all her colleagues give you a good range of experiences which you find interesting.
- The teachers and classroom helpers work very hard to make sure that the work they set for you meets your needs really well.

However, I also found some things that might be done better.

- The unit's leaders do not say what the unit is doing clearly enough in their plans for improvement. The written documents do not give a clear enough picture of all the really good things that go on at Broom Cottages.
- Your teachers, who are all good, don't come out of their year groups often enough. Perhaps you could encourage them to come and work with you in different year groups from time to time.

Please continue to work hard and behave in the very impressive way I saw on my visit. I wish you all the very best of luck for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott

Lead inspector