

The Bridge Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115838
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312073
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	William Geoffrey Robson

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	54
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Sue Wright
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	The Bridge Education Centre Cherbourg Road Eastleigh SO50 5EL
Telephone number	02380 629306
Fax number	02380 629340

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The centre provides for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Many have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Others are medically unwell or emotionally vulnerable. The centre operates from three sites. The Eastleigh site provides mainly for pupils in Years 7 to 9. In addition, a few from Years 2 to 6 have recently begun to attend on this site, until they can be admitted to special or mainstream schools next year. It is currently housed in temporary buildings, pending a long-awaited move to purpose-built accommodation. The Woodside site is for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The third site provides for pupils aged 11 to 16 who are in-patients at Leigh House adolescent psychiatric hospital in Winchester. The centre also supports pupils who are too unwell to attend school, through individual home tuition. All pupils are of White British background. Significantly, more boys than girls attend the centre.

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, HMCI 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.

Recently, the centre's work has been hampered by the sudden death of the previous centre manager. The local authority has also been slow in responding to some of the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection. For example, agreements with headteachers of mainstream schools are still not clear enough about how and when excluded pupils should return to mainstream education. Too many excluded pupils therefore remain in the centre for too long. There has been inadequate progress towards providing full-time education for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The large majority attend part-time because links with local colleges and training providers are not strong enough to provide a suitable range of work related learning opportunities.

In the short time since her appointment, the new centre manager has quickly established a clear vision for the future of the centre. She has correctly identified the key priorities for development. However, self-evaluation is weak because staff do not collect sufficient data to analyse the impact of their work on pupils' progress or personal development. Despite this, some pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and in Leigh House Hospital it is good. It is also good for emotionally vulnerable pupils on the Eastleigh site. Parents are rightly pleased that these teachers keep close contact with pupils' mainstream schools, ensuring continuity and as little disruption to their children's education as possible.

However, those pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools as a result of their behaviour and social difficulties do not do as well as they should. Although their attendance improves considerably by comparison with their time in mainstream schools, unacceptable behaviour remains a significant barrier to their learning.

On the Eastleigh site (Years 7 to 9) there are too many instances of verbal abuse and refusal to follow instructions. This disrupts the learning of others, some pupils do not feel safe and staff do not implement consistent strategies to manage and improve behaviour. Pupils do not have clear enough targets, either for personal development or improving their work, and staff rarely refer to them. Because of this disparity in the progress of different groups of pupils, overall achievement is inadequate. Standards remain very low by comparison with those expected nationally.

There is a clear discrepancy between different groups of students as regards the extent to which they adopt safe practices. Emotionally vulnerable pupils, who are taught in a separate group on the Eastleigh site, and hospital in-patients quickly trust staff, grow in confidence and feel safe. Most pupils adopt healthy lifestyles while in the centre. They follow the no smoking policy and thoroughly enjoy an extensive range of outdoor education opportunities. Some pupils participate in projects at a local community centre.

On the Eastleigh and Woodside sites, there are no formal ways in which pupils can take part in making decisions, for example through a student council.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set, and consistently review, challenging targets for pupils' academic achievement, behaviour and personal development.
- Implement strategies for managing and improving pupils' behaviour that are consistently used by all staff.
- Ensure that all pupils receive full-time education, especially by broadening the range of opportunities for work related learning.
- Improve arrangements for excluded pupils to return successfully to mainstream education.
- Establish clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the centre.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Many pupils enter the centre with exceptionally low standards, because of previous disruption to their education. There is a significant difference between the progress made by different groups of pupils during their time in the centre, which means that overall achievement is inadequate.

Emotionally vulnerable pupils and those who attend the hospital school achieve well. Teachers keep in close contact with their mainstream school. This good liaison ensures that they keep up to date with work, while benefiting from sensitive support from knowledgeable teachers, who understand their needs well. Despite their reduced timetables, most pupils continue to work successfully towards levels and grades that their schools have predicted.

By comparison, excluded pupils with behavioural and social difficulties do not achieve as well as they should. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE passes has increased in recent years. Last year, all gained at least two passes in English, mathematics or science at grades D to G. Current pupils are on track to gain similar results, along with qualifications in design and technology, and information and communication technology (ICT). However, teachers do not set challenging targets for pupils to achieve, based on their attainment on entry to the centre. Pupils' ongoing behaviour difficulties, especially in Years 7 to 9, and lack of full-time education in Years 10 and 11 also hold them back.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

There is a significant difference in the personal development and well-being of different groups of pupils. Emotionally vulnerable pupils and those who are taught in the hospital school clearly develop in confidence during their time in the centre. They enjoy their education. For many in the hospital, school work is a welcome relief and distraction from their medical and psychiatric problems. Emotionally vulnerable pupils appreciate working in a quiet, calm atmosphere. They begin to overcome their difficulties well, as shown by the good rates of reintegration to their mainstream schools.

Most students improve their attendance significantly when they attend the centre and this is a sign that they enjoy their education more. However, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the centre overall is unsatisfactory. This is because too many permanently excluded pupils do not improve their behaviour and social skills enough. Even when they do, few are able to return successfully to mainstream education. Many older pupils still find it difficult to persevere and succeed in college or extended work placements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning as seen in lessons is satisfactory overall, but inconsistent. It is good in the hospital school. Here, teachers are very aware of their pupils' needs and standards reached, because of very good links with pupils' mainstream schools. As teachers also have good subject knowledge, this enables them to plan motivating activities and to challenge pupils to do as well as they can.

There are also examples of good planning on the other sites. Two Year 11 pupils agreed, 'If you can't do the work, the teachers find a way to make it easy and fun.' In particular, ICT lessons enthuse and interest pupils. For example, Year 10 pupils learned how to design a web-site quiz for a younger audience. The teacher shared clear objectives with them and helped them to evaluate their progress at the end of the lesson. Teachers do not generally encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned at the end of lessons, or to work out how they can improve. Pupils do not have targets for improving their work. The management of challenging behaviour is also inconsistent.

At times, teachers skilfully avoid confrontation with pupils and defuse potentially challenging situations. However, they do not remind pupils enough about their individual behaviour targets, nor make reference to basic classroom rules for acceptable behaviour. As a result, pupils make slow progress in improving their behaviour and controlling their emotions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum in the hospital school, and on the Eastleigh site for emotionally vulnerable pupils, focuses sensibly on the work that pupils would be doing in their mainstream schools. This eases their return to school when they are ready. Individual programmes are carefully planned and meet pupils' needs very well. During the past year the centre has doubled the number of emotionally vulnerable pupils for whom it provides. For excluded pupils, there is an appropriate focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection, so that pupils now make satisfactory progress in this subject. On all sites, pupils enjoy and take full advantage of good opportunities for outdoor activities through the 'Youth Options' scheme.

As at the time of the last inspection, the Woodside site does not provide the full-time education to which pupils are entitled. The centre has been unable to organise sufficient opportunities for work related learning through other colleges, training providers or through extended work experience. As a result, if a pupil's initial placement is unsuccessful, there is no alternative to make up for this. Very few pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a full timetable as a result and make slow progress with workplace skills. The centre does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to gain different types of accreditation for the courses they follow. Apart from ICT, all centre-based courses lead to GCSE qualifications, and students cannot gain credit for smaller units of work in which they are successful, such as their outdoor activities or work experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

There are several strengths in this area of the centre's work. Teachers in the hospital school work very closely with medical staff to minimise disruption to pupils' education. Effective links with several outside agencies provide good support for some aspects of pupils' personal development. Good careers advice and support help most pupils move into further education or training after they leave the centre. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) work closely with many pupils with more severe difficulties. The education welfare service has helped the centre to improve pupils' attendance.

Teachers do not track the progress of pupils, especially those who have been excluded from schools, closely enough. Assessments of their behaviour and learning are imprecise and do not lead to the setting of challenging targets. Both staff and pupils are uncertain what they should achieve because no academic targets are agreed in pupils' individual learning plans. Behaviour targets such as, 'I will attempt tasks set in lessons,' lack the necessary precision to encourage progress and are not systematically discussed or reviewed with pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Since her recent appointment, the centre manager has identified key areas in which the centre needs to improve. She has begun to implement realistic plans for improvement but it is too early for these to have an impact. Most importantly, there is a recognition that procedures for evaluating the centre's work are weak. This means that the centre has inadequate capacity to improve. Data is not collated centrally to evaluate pupils' achievement or personal development, with the result that challenging targets are not set. Teaching and learning are not monitored closely enough. Staff roles are not clear enough in job descriptions. As a result, middle managers are not sufficiently accountable for their areas of responsibility. Since the last inspection there have been further difficulties with accommodation, including a move to new temporary buildings in Eastleigh. This has caused significant disruption to the centre's work. The distance between the Eastleigh and Woodside sites continues to hamper the most efficient deployment of staff.

The local authority is not providing enough support or challenge for the work of the centre. There has been no management committee this year and it is not expected that one will be in place until next September. This hampers the centre's attempts to improve links with mainstream schools, especially as regards procedures for reintegrating excluded pupils. Although these are improving, there is still a long way to go. It also limits opportunities to forge better links with local colleges and businesses, in order to improve the availability of college and work placements for older 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?	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?	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ 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	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	4
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

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?	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?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Bridge Education Centre, Eastleigh, SO50 5EL

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your centre recently. I enjoyed speaking to you and seeing the work that you are doing. You may have heard that as a result of my visit, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has decided that your centre requires special measures. This means that although your centre does some things well, in some important areas there are weaknesses which it needs help to sort out.

The main strengths of your centre are that:

- Teachers work hard to care for you and support you as well as they can. They help many of you to get through a difficult time in your life.
- Some of you, especially in hospital, do very well and keep up with the work that you would be doing in your mainstream school.

To improve your centre I have asked staff to concentrate on several things:

- Set clearer targets for you so that you know exactly how to improve your work and your behaviour.
- Make sure that all staff use similar ways of helping you to behave better.
- Make sure that all of you can have full-time education.
- Improve the arrangements between the centre and other schools to help you return successfully to mainstream education.
- Work out exactly how well the centre is doing and how it can improve.

You will not be surprised that the centre has been asked to improve these things as quickly as possible. You and your teachers will get plenty of help to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress that you are making.

You can also help your teachers a lot. For example, when your teachers begin to set targets, you can make sure that you know and understand how to improve your work. Those of you who know that you do not behave well can try even harder to improve.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

William Robson

Lead Inspector