

Woodlands Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115840
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312074
Inspection dates	30 April –1 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	73
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Springett
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Eagle Avenue Cowplain Waterlooville PO8 9XP
Telephone number	02392 265042
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Woodlands provides for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Many have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Others are at risk of permanent exclusion and remain on the registers of their mainstream school whilst attending the centre, pending reintegration. Several pupils have not been excluded from schools, but are emotionally vulnerable because of anxiety or traumatic events in their lives. The centre also provides an outreach service for pupils with complex social and emotional needs, which have often resulted from physical or emotional abuse, or mental illness. These pupils receive a few hours of individual tuition each week, either at home or in the form of extra support in their mainstream schools. As at the time of the last inspection, the centre is still using temporary accommodation, but plans for a move to new, purpose built facilities are now well advanced. Almost without exception, pupils are of White British origin and almost three quarters are boys. A few pupils have statements of special educational need because of dyslexia or autism.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Woodlands provides a good, effective education for its pupils. The centre benefits from good leadership, which ensures that staff share a common vision for supporting pupils who have experienced severe difficulties in mainstream schools. Parents and carers clearly appreciate this. One wrote, 'The staff are very helpful and supportive. My daughter had no confidence when she first joined the school but the improvement has been dramatic.' This growth in confidence is a recurring theme in parents' comments. It stems from teachers' very good understanding of pupils' needs and the excellent relationships that they establish with them. They insist on good behaviour but provide ready praise when it is warranted. This forms the basis for good teaching and learning and enables students to enjoy lessons, sometimes for the first time that they can remember.

Pupils all say that they trust staff. Emotionally vulnerable pupils, some of whom have suffered from bullying in their previous schools, feel safe and secure. They say that the centre is much less intimidating than their mainstream schools. Most pupils' behaviour and attendance improve significantly. This enables a good proportion of younger pupils to return to mainstream school. Older pupils in particular benefit from a varied curriculum, which is flexible and well planned to meet their individual needs. Links with local colleges and other training providers offer a good range of vocational courses and help the large majority of pupils to move into further education, training or employment after Year 11. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles while they attend the centre and willingly participate in a good range of outdoor and recreational activities. In food technology lessons, they show a good understanding of what constitutes healthy eating. However, some admit that they find it difficult to give up smoking, despite the counselling support that the centre provides for them to overcome the habit.

The centre's success in enabling students to come to terms with their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties provides a firm basis for their improved academic achievement. Standards remain exceptionally low because pupils have missed so much work in the past. However, good teaching and pupils' improved attitudes enable them to achieve well. Those who continue to attend the centre to the end of Year 11 gain GCSE passes and unit awards in a range of subjects. The centre's strong focus on supporting pupils' personal development is shown by the emphasis that teachers place on targets for improving behaviour and social skills. These are checked in all lessons and are very effective. However, teachers do not always make it clear to pupils exactly what they are expected to learn in lessons. They do not involve pupils enough in assessing how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

The centre's good track record of improvement since the last inspection, its good leadership and teamwork, mean that it has good capacity for further improvement. Procedures for self-evaluation are satisfactory and involve all staff. However, data about pupils' progress is not yet used to evaluate the centre's work as precisely as it could be, or to set precise, measurable targets for further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish greater consistency in the use of assessment to improve pupils' learning.
- Rigorously analyse data to set precise targets for improving and evaluating the centre's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the centre with very low standards because of the difficulties they have previously experienced in mainstream schools. Many have missed a lot of their education through poor attendance or frequent exclusions before coming to the centre. Despite this, they begin to make good progress. The attendance of the majority improves significantly and they begin to build on their learning week by week. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests vary widely, depending on the length of time that pupils have spent in the centre prior to taking the tests. Those who remain in the centre until Year 11 gain GCSE qualifications. In 2007, nearly all Year 11 pupils gained one or more GCSE passes and over half achieved three passes in English, mathematics and science. Current standards are similar, but pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also working towards a wider range of unit awards than last year. Overall, standards remain exceptionally low by comparison with national figures, but they represent good achievement for pupils who appeared to have little prospect of gaining nationally recognised qualifications when they first arrived at the centre. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational need has improved since the last inspection and these pupils also achieve well. Extra support is now available for dyslexic pupils, which enables them to make good progress with reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well personally and socially, especially in view of the severe difficulties that they have experienced previously. They feel very secure in the centre as there is very little bullying and they know that staff will deal with it immediately and effectively. Emotionally vulnerable pupils in particular begin to blossom and become much more confident in this safe environment. For example, some participated in a drama lesson in which they needed to improvise the roles of 1960's 'mods and rockers'. Pupils' more positive attitudes and increasing enjoyment of education are shown by their improving attendance. Some pupils still display challenging behaviour at times, but they begin to control their emotions successfully. They mix well socially during short breaks between lessons. Many pupils contribute to the local community by assisting at events at the local special school and hosting social activities for elderly people. These are all signs of students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage classes very well and establish clear expectations about pupils' behaviour in lessons. Pupils rightly say, 'The small classes give you more chance of learning because you can't get away with anything.' Teachers' own subject knowledge is strong. Through regular assessments, they know pupils' levels of attainment well. This enables them to set work at the right level of challenge, so that pupils learn and achieve well. Teachers often identify precise learning objectives, which they share with pupils. However, several lessons were observed where teachers left insufficient time to review how well these had been achieved. The headteacher has rightly identified this as an area for development, in order to involve pupils more in assessing their own learning. Current practice is in sharp contrast to the review of pupils' progress towards

their behaviour targets, which teachers invariably check at the end of lessons. Teaching assistants work closely and effectively with teachers and make an important contribution to the smooth running of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The centre provides a good range of subjects and activities that meet pupils' needs well. There is a suitable focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, along with Information and Communications Technology (ICT). As a result, pupils make good progress with key skills that enhance their future life chances. Older pupils benefit from a good balance of vocational and academic opportunities, with a good range of accreditation from unit awards to GCSE. Good links with local colleges and training providers significantly extend the range of opportunities that the centre can offer. These are well organised to meet individual pupils' needs. They prepare pupils well for the world of work, extend the number of qualifications they can gain and keep them interested and engaged. The centre provides distance learning materials for some pupils who do not attend full-time. However, teachers find it difficult to enforce the completion of this work by pupils who lack motivation to work independently. Provision for pupils who receive home tuition is satisfactory, but is limited to the minimum five hours to which they are entitled.

The centre has inadequate facilities for physical education until the planned move to new accommodation is completed. However, it compensates for this by providing weekly outdoor and physical activities for pupils. Many pupils say that activities such as kayaking, rock climbing and navigational walks are a highlight of their time in the centre, and help them to develop healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff quickly get to know pupils' specific needs, through initial assessments that involve pupils, parents or carers and outside support agencies. They are clearly dedicated to supporting pupils as well as they can. Through staff meetings at the beginning and end of each day, they evaluate individual pupils' progress or difficulties, so that they can provide additional support where necessary. Pupils have good access to qualified counsellors for guidance with personal problems. Good advice for careers and further education is available. As a result, a large majority of pupils gain places in further education colleges or with other training providers at the end of Year 11. Parents and carers are kept well informed of their children's progress and are often relieved that they are receiving the help that they need. One wrote, 'This is a terrific team - they saved our sanity.'

Staff help pupils to improve their behaviour by agreeing clear targets and awarding points, linked to rewards, at the end of each lesson. Most pupils know these personal development targets well. Academic guidance is satisfactory, although pupils are less certain about their academic targets, which they discuss with form teachers each term.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The centre manager provides strong leadership. She is ably supported by a teaching team leader, who helps to ensure the smooth day-to-day management of the centre. Staff work well together as a dedicated team, despite the postponement of an eagerly awaited move to new accommodation, because of building delays. The limitations of the current, temporary accommodation have been well managed. For example, the impact of inadequate facilities for physical education and social activities has been reduced through the use of an external provider of outdoor education. The move to new accommodation is now imminent and has been carefully planned.

The centre has good capacity for further improvement. Staff have responded well to areas for development that were identified by the previous inspection, notably by improving the curriculum for all pupils, provision for pupils with special educational needs and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation is now satisfactory and involves all staff in the identification of priorities for development. However, the leadership team recognises the need for more rigorous analysis of available data, in order to set precise targets for further improvement. The local authority currently oversees the work of the centre and provides satisfactory support. A new management committee has been formed, in line with recent government regulations, but has not yet held its first meeting.

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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	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands Education Centre, Waterloooville, PO8 9XP

I really enjoyed visiting your centre and would like to thank you for your welcome and for being so friendly and helpful. I agree with you that the centre is a good place to learn. You told me that you get on very well with the teachers and I could see that during lessons and break times. This letter is to let you know what your centre does well and how, with your help, it can be an even better place to learn. My main finding is that the centre provides you with a good quality of education.

The best things about the centre are that:

- those of you who are going through a difficult time in your life begin to overcome your difficulties because of the good support that you get from staff
- many of you improve your attendance and behaviour; you develop well, personally and socially
- good teaching helps you to you make good progress with your work and leave the centre with better qualifications than you expected.

To make the centre even better, I have asked staff to improve two main things:

- to set precise targets for improving the centre's work
- to help you to have a better understanding of what you need to learn in lessons, so that you can see exactly how well you are doing and how to improve.

You can help your teachers to do this by asking them what the lesson objectives are if you aren't sure. Try to work out how well you have done at the end of each lesson.

Thank you again for your help. I hope you continue to work hard, do well and make the most of the good opportunities that the centre provides for you.

Yours sincerely

William Robson

Lead Inspector