

Old Warren House

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124526
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	314949
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Naylor

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	21
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs E M Rodgers
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Warren Road Lowestoft Suffolk NR32 4QD
Telephone number	01502 511794
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Old Warren House is a Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit (PRU) for 24 students. The majority of students are school refusers or were at high risk of exclusion from their previous school. The school's primary aim is to re-engage disaffected students into full-time education and to prepare them for further education, training or employment. Students have emotional and learning difficulties and their attainment on entry is lower than national expectations. A third of students have statements of special education needs. A small number of pupils attend on a part-time session basis because they have dual registration. Students join the school at various stages through the year. Some live outside the PRU's local area. A variety of off-site curriculum provision is used to give students work-related learning opportunities. The school has been awarded National Healthy Schools status, The Basic Skills Mark and Careers Education Information and Guidance Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Old Warren House provides an outstanding standard of education. Parents are delighted with the progress that their child makes. One parent said, 'This is an excellent school; since joining the school my son has been a different boy and now enjoys school'. Students thrive as a result of the outstanding leadership and management of the school. This has led to a high quality curriculum, excellent pastoral welfare and excellent teaching. Students' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school and their self-esteem grows in proportion to their successes in their social and academic endeavours. Students' behaviour is excellent and their good attitudes to work are reflected in their much improved attendance. Students themselves think that the school is 'brilliant' and gives them the opportunities they have never had before.

Students' achievements are good and occasionally excellent. Standards are satisfactory, however, students make rapid and outstanding progress on many fronts, especially in their English, mathematics, science and in their social skills. They gain success in a host of nationally accredited examinations, as well as in making excellent progress in work experience and college placements. This is because of the consistently outstanding teaching by staff at the school and those at off-site placements. Teachers establish exceptional relationships with students and build their trust. They manage behaviour extremely well. Excellent staff team work ensures that students receive outstanding individual support. Staff take note of what students' perceptions are about lessons and about their learning. This enables them to give reassurance and to ensure that each student knows what their next steps in learning should be. This exceptional teaching significantly raises students' achievements and they make outstanding progress from the level recorded when they first joined the school.

The leadership of the school has sustained its very high quality of direction and support to staff and students. School self-evaluation is used precisely and effectively to guide school development planning so that the best possible learning opportunities are made available to students. Students, parents or carers find staff cooperative, helpful and supportive. Staff create a very positive atmosphere in the school that helps to make students feel safe, secure and willing to learn. Crucially, care, guidance and support are of the highest quality. Pastoral welfare of students is excellent. Academic guidance is very effective because staff have an in-depth knowledge of students' social and learning needs.

The curriculum is well planned to provide activities that prepare students for their future beyond school. Lessons in personal, social, and health education (PSHE) provide a strong platform upon which students' basic life skills are promoted, and through which they become aware of the need for keeping themselves safe, taking exercise and eating a healthy diet. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. A wide range of accreditation opportunities are offered to students. The school plans to further extend access for students to full GCSE courses and is considering introducing the new Diplomas. Careers advice is first class.

Students are given a very personalised timetable which is based on a wide range of curriculum activities designed to promote their basic literacy and numeracy, vocational learning, awareness of college courses and to increase their prospects for employment.

Teachers are currently exploring plans to extend student self-evaluation to include peer mentoring with sixth formers from a local high school. This is correctly seen as a way of raising their standards further.

The leadership team has addressed extremely well all the issues from the previous inspection. It has developed excellent systems for school self-analysis and evaluation and for monitoring all areas of the school's standards. Consequently, its capacity for further improvement is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete plans to extend provision for full GCSE courses and to introduce the new Diplomas.
- Carry forward plans for extended student self-evaluation opportunities through peer mentoring.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students make exceptional progress on joining the school compared with their previous performance, which is frequently very poor. This includes rapid improvements in literacy and numeracy. Through PSHE lessons they make excellent progress in basic life skills. The progress made by students results in satisfactory standards. Students gain creditable awards in a wide range of accreditation including GCSE Entry Level, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance certificates and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards. They gain other certification in a host of school and college assessed work-related skills and courses. There is also very good achievement by students on further education college 'taster' and 'twilight' courses. Work experience employers report good or excellent progress on placements. Excellent achievement is evident in art, for example as seen by a recent photographic exhibition produced by students. A significant proportion of students sustain further education placements on leaving school. This shows their renewed commitment to learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students make huge gains in self-esteem and confidence. A huge improvement in attendance so that it is good for the great majority of students is a key to their overall success. Students' behaviour and attitudes are excellent because they enjoy learning greatly, and this supports their learning very well. They show enthusiasm and are well motivated to succeed. Students make great strides in their spiritual, moral, social and culture development so that it is outstanding. Students have very positive relationships with staff and are helped by them to build similar relationships with each other. They show great interest in the wider variety of activities presented. They work hard to improve and to meet their targets in the subjects and for their behaviour. Students take part in the physical education (PE) opportunities provided. They have a very good awareness of how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and diet and are prepared to change their ways to improve these. They are equally aware of keeping themselves safe as demonstrated whilst in workshop situations or when taking part in motorcycle pre-test instruction. There is a good sense of community spirit. For example, students help with local community events for older residents and they help to clean up the local war memorial. Students participate in various activities to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills, also their financial awareness and enterprise skills. They enjoy participating in and have tremendous success in the many social activities and work-related learning that help prepare them for further education and the adult world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent. Teachers and teaching assistants work in a very collaborative way to support and establish an excellent rapport and relationships with students. Their behaviour management strategies are very effective. Staff have a very in-depth understanding of students' needs and abilities. They utilise their expertise and talents well to promote learning.

Consequently, highly relevant and interesting activities are provided to stimulate imagination and to motivate learning. For example, students are inspired by excellent teaching when they work with visiting media experts in the making of a film, or when they hold a public exhibition of their photographic art. Teachers engage and challenge students to learn through their often highly imaginative approach to lessons. Staff use the results of student self-evaluation and other assessments to help plan lessons. Much of the teaching is highly successful in using a one-to-one tutorial basis, giving students the very best possible support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent and well-resourced on-site learning opportunities for the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Art, humanities, PSHE and cookery lessons support students' personal development exceptionally well. Each student has an individual timetable that reflects a curriculum that is effectively matched to students' individual learning needs. Work experience placements in the local community, work related learning courses, 'taster' and 'twilight' sessions at the local further education college are successfully organised to extend learning opportunities for students. The school places students with commercial and charitable organisations at off-site venues where they successfully undertake activities such as carpentry, motor vehicle maintenance, cookery, or learning how to travel independently. The views of students indicate that they rate these activities as highly successful and enjoyable. Staff give excellent careers advice to students. This has been recognised and the PRU is the first in the county to receive a special Careers Education Information and Guidance Standards Award from the local authority. Students take part in PE activities and opportunities at a local leisure centre. The staff organise a wide-ranging programme of enrichment activities such as trips to West End shows, historical and cultural sites, outdoor adventurous activities, as well as other local and international trips. Local musicians and media specialists give students experiences of, for instance, drumming and video filming. Such opportunities add extra dimensions to students' learning and enable them to discover their talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff provide excellent pastoral welfare. They liaise very effectively with many external agencies and other professionals to ensure that students' needs are met. The school meets all safeguarding procedures and requirements. Staff make health and safety the highest priority both on-site and at off-site venues and risk assessments are in place. Clear strategies are in place to promote students' health, safety and well-being. Staff keep parents and carers well informed about their child's progress. Parents report that they always get the help they need and find the staff approachable and supportive. The school transition coordinator ensures the

smooth induction of students to further education, training, or open employment. Staff record and monitor student attendance very diligently, at the school and at off-site placements. They work productively with students and their families to encourage students to attend regularly. Detailed and thorough assessments are made of students' academic progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has sustained the very high quality of leadership noted at the previous inspection. She has established a highly effective consultative partnership with the staff team, and with other professionals and agencies. This provides a forward thinking, very well organised and coordinated approach to the curriculum, teaching and learning and to pastoral welfare. The leadership sets challenging and realistic targets for all aspects of student performance and welfare, the majority of which it meets or exceeds. Very good opportunities are provided for staff induction, training and professional development. Senior staff collaborate with and monitor off-site providers closely to ensure continuity of excellent teaching so that this promotes exceptional learning by students. The management committee and the local authority officers provide good continuing support to the work of the PRU. The school development plan is rigorous and identifies appropriate priorities for further improvement across all areas.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

28 February 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Old Warren House, Lowestoft, NR32 4QD

Thank you for letting me join your lessons and see your work when I visited your school this week. I send particular thanks to the student who very kindly showed me around the workshops at off-site placements.

I was very impressed by all the hard work that you do. You make exceptional progress in your learning during your lessons and work placements as is shown by the many awards and certificates that you receive. Most of you seem to enjoy your learning.

Your behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent. Most of you attend school regularly and this helps your work to improve even more.

Your headteacher is an excellent leader who is well supported by a dedicated team of teachers and assistants. Teaching is excellent. You get excellent help with your work and activities are interesting and enjoyable. You get many opportunities to develop the skills you need when you leave school. Staff help you to achieve success in whatever way they can.

When you are at off-site placements, staff there work hard to help you. There are two things that I think the school could try to include in their future plans:

- Offer you more opportunities to take GCSE Exams, and, or Diplomas.
- Give you more opportunities to assess your own and each other's work.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Naylor

Inspector