

Silverbank Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132034
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	315908
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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	86
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Deborah Braithwaite
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Silverbank Churchill Avenue Chatham ME5 0LB
Telephone number	01634 338801
Fax number	01634 338808

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The Silverbank Centre provides education for pupils who, for a variety of reasons, are currently not attending either mainstream or special schools. Most pupils are placed at the centre because they have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. All the pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and over half of them have statements of special educational need. Pupils admitted permanently to the centre are based in the Oaks building. Excluded pupils who are expected to be re-integrated to mainstream schools are based in the Rowans building. Pupils at risk of exclusion from their existing school are placed at the centre for a short period on SMASH programmes (Self Management All Starts Here) and are based in the Elms building. The local authority looks after about a tenth of the pupils. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Silverbank Centre effectively meets the needs of all pupils by providing them with a good quality education. The remit of Silverbank has changed considerably since the last inspection and there has been good improvement in the outcomes for pupils and in the quality and range of the provision. This improvement is a result of the good leadership and management. The senior leadership group has a clear vision of the high quality service they want to provide for these pupils. Leaders have been successful in translating much of this vision into reality.

Systematic evaluation of the data that measures the centre's success is still at its early stages and as a result leaders tend to underestimate the positive impact of their work. Their capacity to improve the centre further is good. School leaders have established excellent links with a variety of partners, reflected, for example, in very successful admission and re-integration procedures. The centre is funded generously and school leaders deploy resources effectively.

Permanently excluded pupils make good progress both in their studies and in their behaviour and attitudes. The centre is successful in nearly all cases in re-integrating these pupils back into mainstream or special schools. Pupils with a statement of special educational need make good progress in relation to their annual targets. The centre has an improving and successful record in moving Year 11 pupils in both groups into further education, training or employment. This is because they leave with personal skills and practical and academic qualifications which employers and colleges value. Pupils on the SMASH programmes make very good progress in improving their behaviour and attitudes and as a result, this year, none has been excluded from his/her own school.

Pupils' personal development is good. Attendance overall is satisfactory, but there are wide variations between the three bases. Attendance for some pupils in the Oaks and Rowans bases is poor. Pupils in the Elms base usually attend regularly and this supports rapid improvement in their abilities to cope in mainstream schools. Pupils often come to the centre with low self-esteem but the staff are successful in raising this through good care and support. Pupils' interest is also engaged by a good and exciting curriculum which is broad and relevant and which is taught well. As a result, pupils acquire new skills and knowledge quickly and demonstrate their successes through an extensive range of accredited courses. Pupils' well-being is improved, for example, through a range of therapies such as art and play therapy and reflexology. This results in pupils feeling safe and generally enjoying their education when at the centre. The centre tracks pupils' progress well, both in their academic and personal development. Targets are set and monitored. Although pupils' progress is good, insufficient time is spent at the end of lessons reflecting how well they have met their weekly targets in that lesson and this reduces the effectiveness of the points award scheme.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate data more systematically so that leaders do not undervalue the centre's successes.
- Raise the attendance rates of pupils in the Oaks and Rowans bases.
- Allow more time in lessons for pupils and staff to reflect on progress towards individual targets and thereby improve the impact of the points award scheme.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Understandably, the academic standards reached by most pupils are well below the national average because their education, for a variety of reasons, has been disrupted. Additionally, over half the pupils have a statement of special educational need. However, whilst at the centre, nearly all pupils regain their enthusiasm for learning because each individual's programme is tailored to meet their specific needs. One pupil said 'it helps you to control your inner self and anger' and 'makes you not be so argumentative'. Because of such improvement, pupils achieve well. Progress is particularly strong in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and in practical and active subjects such as science, design and technology, art and physical education. Progress against individual learning targets is good but could be better as weekly targets do not always link to annual targets and teachers and pupils do not always reflect on them sufficiently in lessons. Progress for some pupils is also affected by their erratic attendance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good moral and social development is demonstrated by the positive way they behave and work together. Attendance varies between the different bases, being highest for pupils on the SMASH programmes. Bullying is rare, partly because the different groups of pupils are taught in their respective bases for much of the time. Pupils say that the centre and particularly some of the therapies available, such as reflexology, have been a big help to them in coming to terms with their difficulties. Pupils' cultural development is good and is enhanced through art, music, drama, and the opportunities to sample the foods of other cultures.

Pupils are well aware of how to keep fit and healthy, many taking good advantage of the range of physical activities the centre offers. They appreciate the healthy food options available to them at breakfast, break and lunchtimes. Through the school council, pupils contribute effectively to the centre's community, reflected, for example, in the establishment of the eco-garden. Pupils contribute to the wider community through fund raising for charities such as 'Jeans for Genes' and 'Wear It Pink Days', but there are few links with the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a productive atmosphere in the different bases and in most lessons. This is helped by the very good ratio of adults to pupils and by the way in which adults provide very good role models for the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team. There is much individual teaching so the staff gain an intimate knowledge of what works best with each pupil and as a result pupils make good progress. Teachers' planning is usually detailed, although sometimes what the teacher will do is more clearly identified than what the pupils will learn during a lesson. Teachers have high expectations and use questioning well to enable pupils to understand what they have achieved in the lesson. Teachers use practical activities well which often result in pupils enjoying the lesson and working independently, albeit under close supervision. Opportunities are sometimes missed at the end of lessons to focus on how well pupils have met their targets. Day sheets, which record pupils' progress towards their targets,

are not always completed with the pupils and this reduces the effectiveness of the points award scheme.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum effectively meets the needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes improve and their confidence and self-esteem grow. They develop the skills necessary for the successful return, either to mainstream schooling or to go on to further education or employment. This process is helped by the centre's extensive links with external providers such as local colleges, therapists and counsellors and visiting performers such as the steel drum band. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive outdoor education programme and through residential visits. There is a good focus on personal, health and social education (PHSE), for example, through the productive use of 'circle time', where topics relevant to the pupils are discussed. The curriculum benefits from the availability of high quality specialist facilities, such as the ICT suites and science, art and technology rooms and good facilities both indoors and outside for physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are rigorous systems in place for safeguarding pupils. The centre has established excellent links with a range of outside agencies, for example the Education Welfare Service to try to encourage pupils' regular attendance. This, together with an extensive range of support services, ensures that barriers to pupils' learning are tackled as quickly as possible. Older pupils receive individual advice from careers specialists to help them plan and feel well prepared for the future. Pupils receive good support from centre staff when they return to mainstream schooling and former pupils can and do make continued use of the therapy and counselling facilities. Parents and carers are pleased with the support their children receive. One parent said 'We feel Silverbank is doing a very difficult job well'.

Academic guidance for the pupils is good. Pupils have overall targets, which are monitored, and pupils make good progress against them. The centre has a points scheme which is linked to weekly targets for the pupils. Teachers do not review these weekly targets consistently at the end of lessons with the pupils and this reduces the effectiveness of the system.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a very good role model for centre leaders. She has established a clear vision for the role of the centre since the last inspection, which is shared by all staff. As a result, staff are focused strongly on developing pupils' personal and academic strengths so that all groups are prepared well for a return to mainstream schooling or to education and work beyond school. The leadership challenges itself well to meet the differing needs of these disaffected youngsters. Leaders work very well in partnership with mainstream schools, parents and specialist support staff. They are successful both in preventing exclusions in the first place and ensuring the good progress of excluded pupils, so that most can return to mainstream education. With these priorities in mind, the centre's improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development, for example ensuring that work is sufficiently challenging to raise pupil

achievement. The centre is well supported by the management committee, which keeps its focus and effectiveness under review. Some leaders have been appointed relatively recently and the full impact of their work can not be determined yet.

The centre is rich in data about the academic and personal progress of the pupils and of the pupils' backgrounds. Evaluation of this data is developing, but currently the centre underestimates its success in meeting both the needs of the pupils and the local authority's commitment to re-integrating pupils into mainstream provision. The percentage of pupils gaining externally accredited awards during their time at the centre has increased year on year. The number of pupils returning to mainstream school is increasing. The number of pupils who do not go on to education, training or employment at the age of 16 is reducing significantly. The centre has been successful this year in supporting a large number of pupils so that they have not been excluded from their mainstream schools. The centre is an expensive resource, but its current successes mean that it provides good value for money.

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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?	1
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	2
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	2
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	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	2
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

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Silverbank Centre, Chatham, ME5 0LB

We were pleased to see you at work and to talk with you about your education and your hopes and plans when we visited Silverbank. We would like to thank all of you who talked with us, showed us your work and shared your views about the centre. I particularly enjoyed hearing about your healthy fruit stall and about all your exciting outdoor education activities.

We think that Silverbank is a good centre and that you make good progress with both your studies and in improving your behaviour and attitudes whilst you are there. We were particularly pleased that nearly all of you take national tests and external examinations at the age you are supposed to. We are pleased that so many of you are able to go back to your old, or sometimes new, school. We were particularly pleased that so many of the older pupils go on to college, training or get jobs. We think that you are taught well and that the school is well led and managed. We think that the care and support you receive is good.

We think that the centre should look more closely at the information it has about you and recognise how well the centre and you do. Some of you, particularly in the Oaks and Rowans bases, could attend more regularly so that you really benefit from what the centre offers. We have suggested that teachers talk with you at the end of the lessons about how well you have met your targets, so that the points system has a better effect.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tim Feast Lead inspector

Annex B

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Lead inspector