

West Kent Health Needs Education Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132186
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	315956
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	109
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Graham Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The School House Cerne Road Gravesend DA12 4BN
Telephone number	01474 365467
Fax number	01474 358145

Age group	3-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is the first time that the West Kent Health Needs Education Service (WKHNES) service has been inspected in its current form. It was previously a hospital service for pupils aged 5 to 16. It was designated a pupil referral unit (PRU) in September 2006, when it extended its provision and increased the age range of its pupils. At the same time, the teacher in charge of the main site was given responsibility for managing the whole service. He became acting headteacher in January 2007 and the post was made permanent just a few weeks ago. WKHNES provides education for pupils who are not in school because of their physical or mental health and a number have phobias and anxieties in addition to their primary health needs. Pupils learn in a range of settings depending on the extent of these needs, and may move from one to another as their health improves. These include hospital, home, on the main Gravesend base, or in one of three distant bases; Tonbridge has been running for five years; Tunbridge Wells opened in 2006; Seal opened very recently. Approximately half of the pupils spend all or part of their time in one of the four bases.

The number and nature of the pupil roll fluctuates greatly. At the time of the inspection, virtually all pupils had a White British background and there were no pre-school children or students over the age of 16.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Kent Health Needs Education Service does a good job in enabling vulnerable young people to return to education and improve their life chances. An excellent level of care, guidance and support transforms pupils' ability to manage their health needs and contributes greatly to their outstanding personal development. Pupils become more confident as their self esteem rises and their social skills develop. Their improved communication skills enable them to interact more easily with others and so they become more self assured in new situations. Consequently, their attendance improves, their enjoyment of school returns, and their learning flourishes. Parents describe the service's influence in terms such as 'the staff seem to understand his health needs and have made a huge and positive impact on him and his life as a whole', whereas a pupil simply said, 'It's made a difference to my life.'

Pupils receive a good quality of education and a high level of one to one support and challenging work ensures that learning proceeds at a cracking pace. A particularly well planned curriculum meets individual pupils' needs well, despite the fact that shortcomings in the accommodation restrict the range of activities offered. Older pupils follow a good work related learning programme and they are successful in a very good range of accredited examination courses. Although standards are below average, learners make good progress and achieve well against challenging examination and National Curriculum goals. However, the termly learning targets that are set as a means of accelerating the rate of progress towards these goals are not always precise enough to fully inform planning and guide progress.

The headteacher has provided good leadership through the recent turbulence. He has maintained the quality of provision at the main site and has forged excellent additional links with the service's partners. Many pupils reintegrate successfully into mainstream schools. However, although new bases have opened in response to local needs, they have done so at a quicker rate than the pace at which the management systems required to oversee a growing service have evolved. In particular, the size of the management team has not kept pace with this growth. Following the opening of one new additional base very recently, it is now becoming increasingly difficult to monitor fully the expanding provision and to identify priorities for future development. This, together with the shortcomings in the accommodation, limits the unit's capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 0

At the time of the inspection, no children were taught as part of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to establish a management team that can fully support the work of the headteacher.
- Work with the local authority to ensure that there is accommodation on all sites that better meets the needs of all learners.
- Ensure that all individual learning targets are worded precisely.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below those expected of children of similar age because the pupils' health needs have frequently resulted in long periods out of school. However, pupils' hunger to learn returns and pupils make good progress. Although the large majority of pupils are on the service's roll for only one year or less, during this short time they achieve well. The great improvements in their personal development and the extent of their good academic achievement give them the confidence and skills that enable a smooth transfer to a mainstream school or entry into college.

In the bases, pupils acquire literacy and numeracy skills at a good rate and they use information and communication technology competently to support their learning. As a result, they achieve well in end of key stage tests. Pupils' achievements in examinations at the end of Year 11 are equally good. This includes some examples each year of outstanding achievement. Approximately half of pupils take up to six GCSE examinations and a small minority get grades A to C in some subjects. Time restricts the headteacher's ability to monitor extensively the progress made by pupils who receive home tuition, although evidence, including the rate of their successful reintegration into mainstream schools, indicates that they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding progress in their personal development is evident in the way that pupils mature as young people, including both those attending the bases and those receiving home tuition. They have an excellent attitude to learning and behave impeccably. Pupils are polite, courteous and articulate in the way that they express their views. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and are very willing to support each other and to celebrate each other's successes. Learners develop an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy and safe lifestyle. They learn how to manage their own specific health needs, as well as appreciating the importance of exercise and diet and the dangers associated with smoking and alcohol. Pupils feel very safe in the bases as there is no intimidation of any sort. Minor problems are sorted out quickly as pupils know that they can talk to any staff because they describe all of them as being 'very approachable'. Pupils are very well prepared to leave school. They make informed choices about further education based on their work experience and their knowledge of colleges and courses, and they are equipped with the qualifications and personal skills to succeed. Pupils make a good contribution to the work of the bases, although there are fewer opportunities for them to give time to the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have detailed knowledge of their pupils' needs and so they are particularly skilled at responding to their health status. They know when it is appropriate to maintain a high level of expectation and when it might be necessary to slacken off for a short while. Relationships are outstanding. Teachers' very good specialist knowledge of the subjects that they teach and the extent of one to one teaching allow them to focus very carefully on the needs of each pupil. These needs are typically well met, although the lack of precision in some individual learning targets sometimes limits the effectiveness of planning to fully meet individual needs. Teachers

use questions and ongoing checking of pupils' work very well to assess the extent and rate of learning and as a trigger for when deciding to intervene to provide additional support. As a result, pupils work at a good pace consistently and make good gains in their learning. Evidence of pupils' successful reintegration, as well as their academic achievement, confirms that the good teaching and learning found in the bases is also typical of the home tuition service.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has many striking positive features, but the quality of the accommodation reduces its overall effectiveness. Within the limitations of their resources, the bases are highly effective in balancing the obligation to provide a core curriculum for all pupils with the aim of meeting the curriculum needs of individuals. This might mean enabling them to continue with a GCSE course that they began in their mainstream school, or it could be a response to a pupil's interest within the base, such as offering a new subject or course. This flexibility contributes greatly to pupils' achievements. Despite offering a curriculum that is much wider than that normally found in a PRU, none of the premises has specialist areas for practical subjects. This stops some pupils from pursuing particular interests and prevents pupils practising self help skills, such as cooking at the bases. Links with other organisations enhance the quality of the curriculum considerably and help to compensate for these limitations in the accommodation. Dartford Sports Partnership funds many additional physical education activities and Thamesview Vocational Centre provides older pupils with a good variety of vocational options.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' care and welfare are at the forefront of the service's work. All child protection and safeguarding arrangements are in place and the bases provide a safe and supportive environment that enables pupils to flourish. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health needs, such as when to take their medication, but staff are always on hand to guide and support. Staff are equally assertive in the way that they encourage pupils to reduce anxiety levels by managing relationships and dealing with new situations. They balance challenge and support carefully, but encourage independence at all times. One pupil described this as 'staff help you to find solutions to problems and how to move on'. Very effective links with other agencies support the service's work in the way that staff guide pupils and support their families. This is particularly evident at times of transition, such as in the procedures for integration when pupils return to mainstream schools and the way in which pupils are helped to prepare for further education. Pupils are supported well in their studies. Staff set challenging National Curriculum level or examination goals, although they have taken the decision, rightly, not to share these routinely with pupils for fear of raising anxiety levels if they then consider themselves to be 'failing'. Termly learning targets are shared with pupils, but some are too loosely worded to fully guide individual progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how he sees the service developing. This has been underpinned by good self-evaluation up to the present time that has effectively identified appropriate priorities. Data has been used very effectively to identify trends, such as the nature

of pupils' primary health needs and where pupils live, and the unit's effectiveness in helping pupils to move on. There has been an effective focus by all staff, including those with management responsibilities, on meeting individual needs. This has resulted in pupils making good academic progress and outstanding progress in their personal development. Initiatives taken have contributed well towards ensuring consistency of quality for all pupils, irrespective of where they learn or the nature of their needs. A significant development has been the way that part-time staff, especially home tutors, are now more involved in the service. For instance, these staff are included in training days and attend local team meetings at the bases. However, despite the good impact of leadership and management to date, its numerical strength has not kept pace with the expanded provision and this limits the service's capacity to secure further improvement. The newly formed management committee provides satisfactory support but it is not yet in a position to be wholly effective.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	IE ²
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	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?	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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. It was a real pleasure to see so many of you returning to health. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing you working so hard and talking with you. You told me that you liked the unit and that you appreciated all the help that the staff gave to you. You thought that the unit was good, and I agree with you.

Here are some of the things I found.

?The staff take a great deal of care of you and support you a lot. ?Lessons are good. You learn a lot because teachers give you interesting activities. ?You make good progress with your work and do well in examinations. ?You mature really well as young people. ?Your behaviour and attitudes are excellent and most of you go to school as often as you can. ?You know a great deal about staying fit and healthy. ?The staff make sure that you are well prepared for leaving school. ?Those responsible for running the service do a good job.

I have given those in charge of the service some ideas about what it should do now.

?Make sure that the headteacher has more help to do all the things that need doing. ?Improve the buildings on all the different sites. ?Write better learning targets for all of you to help you do even better.

You can help too by continuing to behave so very well and by carrying on attending school as often as you can. I hope that you stay healthy in the future and I wish each of you the very best of luck, especially those taking examinations next year.



13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of West Kent Health Needs Education Service, Gravesend
DA12 4BN**

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Yours sincerely

Mike Kell
Lead inspector