

Rochdale Pupil Referral Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133409
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	316116
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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	122
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Connolly
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Darnhill Study Centre Sutherland Road Darnhill Heywood Lancashire OL10 3PY
Telephone number	01706 626700
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The service provides for pupils from the whole of Rochdale and the surrounding area who are not attending school for a variety of reasons. It operates at two main centres and also provides tuition in pupils' homes and a number of community settings. The Saxon Hall Centre is for pupils aged 14 to 16 who have been permanently excluded from school and have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Permanently excluded pupils from Year 1 onwards who are aged 5 to 14, and vulnerable pupils, such as young parents and pupils with mental health problems up to age 16, attend The Darnhill Centre. A number of pupils at Darnhill, such as those who are on fixed term exclusions are dual-registered with mainstream schools. The accommodation at Darnhill is arranged so that vulnerable pupils are taught in a separate area from those on permanent or fixed term exclusions. Thirty-eight pupils are currently taught off site. Girls make up only 20% of pupils. Seventeen pupils have statements of special educational need, primarily for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; 10% of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The service has a high turnover of pupils; in the last year, 396 pupils accessed the service. The local authority is in the process of amalgamating the pupil referral service with a school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to form a federation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective service, which is successful in re-engaging pupils who are disaffected with education. The service has a good track record of returning younger pupils successfully to mainstream schools. Because of the outstanding transition programme and emphasis on support to 'aim high', pupils make very good progress in acquiring workplace skills, which equip them to succeed when they leave school. As a result, the majority of pupils in Year 11 move on to college or training. Parents and carers say that their children enjoy school and are encouraged to work to their full potential. Most pupils have had a disrupted education prior to admission to the service because of behavioural difficulties or health and/or mental health needs. Consequently, attainment on entry is often low. Although standards of work are mainly below average, good teaching ensures pupils achieve well. They make good progress in achieving the targets set in their individual education plans. Bearing in mind their behavioural difficulties and/or health needs, pupils in Year 11 achieve a good variety of accredited results and GCSE results are improving. Pupils generally respond well to teachers. They have very good relationships with the staff who give them skilled and sensitive individual support. Any incidents of challenging behaviour are managed confidently so that lessons are not disrupted. However, teachers do not always adapt work so that it is at just the right level for individual pupils. This means that on occasions, some pupils struggle to complete their work while higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough.

The curriculum is good with excellent enrichment activities, which include residential opportunities and field trips. There is a good focus on promoting pupils' personal and social skills as well as developing the key skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils are assessed thoroughly on entry to the provision and teachers keep detailed records to show how well they are doing. Pupils are involved well in setting and reviewing their targets for behaviour and learning. However, learning targets are not always precise enough to help pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work further. There are effective and consistent reward systems and high expectations regarding appropriate behaviour and dress. An emphasis on developing personal and social skills permeates all activities and lessons. Consequently, pupils make good progress in improving their attitudes and behaviour and in distinguishing right from wrong. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils learn to behave safely and only a minority report that they have experienced bullying. The service holds the Healthy School award and pupils make good progress in understanding the importance of healthy lifestyles even though they do not always make healthy choices. Pupils make a good contribution to the community; for example, they raise money for charity through selling goods they have made in enterprise schemes.

Care, guidance and support are good. Excellent links with a wide variety of outside agencies and with local schools support the pupils' personal development very well. For example, even though the attendance of a minority of pupils remains too low, intensive work with the education welfare service has improved attendance overall.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the service and sets a very clear direction. The management committee are effective. Good procedures are in place to evaluate the work of the service and the leadership team has an accurate view of how well the service is doing. There has been good improvement since the

previous inspection and the service has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work is consistently matched to individual pupils' needs and learning levels.
- Ensure that all pupils have clear and achievable learning targets that they understand.
- Work with families and pupils to improve attendance where it is too low.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils have low attainment on entry. In many cases this is because pupils have had a fragmented education and developed poor independent learning skills. However, pupils respond well to the service's high expectations of behaviour and strategies to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, although overall standards are below average, pupils make good progress and achieve well against the targets in their individual education plans. The number of targets partially or fully achieved each year is rising. The service enters pupils in Years 10 and 11 for a good variety of accreditation, which are well matched to their individual needs. This means that most pupils who attend the centres for long enough to complete accredited courses leave with qualifications. In 2007, around a third of Year 11 pupils attained at least one GCSE at grades A* to C and a third attained passes at Entry Level. A number of pupils also attained a variety of vocational awards and certificates for literacy and numeracy. Some pupils in the provision for vulnerable pupils at Darnhill are working at an average or above average level. For example, a few pupils are on track to obtain A and B grades in GCSE examinations this year. Different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the focus on developing their confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy attending the centres and begin to realise that they can make a success of their lives. For example, a number of Year 11 pupils plan to train for a trade after school and are confident that they can achieve this. Pupils' social and moral development is promoted very well through activities such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Parents feel that the service sets high expectations for behaviour. Although the number of exclusions rose last year, this was because the service admitted a number of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. Although the attendance of some pupils is still too low, attendance is carefully monitored and is improving. A number of pupils and parents say that the length of the journey to the centres, which may include taking up to three buses, impacts adversely on attendance. Pupils make good progress in learning how to stay safe and healthy. A strong programme of work-related learning and an excellent transition programme led by a transition mentor ensure that the majority of pupils move on successfully to further education or the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and know them well. They are skilled at keeping pupils motivated and managing challenging behaviour. Consequently, lessons are calm and purposeful and pupils learn well. Teachers and support staff in the classes for vulnerable pupils are very sensitive to the pupils' health and other needs. This means that all pupils participate in activities as much as they are able. Teachers keep good records to demonstrate the progress that the pupils make in achieving their targets. However, this information is not always used effectively to adapt work so that it is at exactly the right level for individual pupils. Consequently, lower attainers sometimes find work set too difficult whilst higher attainers do not always have sufficient challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with a very good emphasis on promoting the pupils' personal and social development. Limited specialist accommodation impacts on the ability of the service to offer some subjects such as physical education on site. However, effective use of community facilities and local schools enables pupils to access specialist resources and also promotes their social skills well. As the new federation develops, the service is increasingly accessing facilities at its partner school. An aspirational variety of enrichment activities such as the sailing trip to Devon and visits to London and Amsterdam are effective in developing pupils' confidence and broadening their horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety, including child protection procedures and the safe recruitment of staff, are well established. Excellent links with a variety of agencies ensure that particularly vulnerable pupils, such as young parents and pupils who are looked after by the local authority, are supported very well. Behavioural programmes and individual reward systems are effective in improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils are involved well in setting and evaluating their own targets. However, although they know exactly what their behaviour targets are, academic targets are sometimes too broad and pupils are, therefore, not sufficiently clear about what they have to do to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the school and provides very good support and guidance for staff. The new leadership team and middle managers are settling well into their roles and contributing effectively to monitoring and evaluating how well the service is doing. Consequently, the service has an accurate view of its strengths and knows where it needs to develop further. The management committee

bring a good range of relevant expertise to the service. They support the service well and challenge the leadership team where necessary.

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	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?	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

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

Inspection of the Rochdale Pupil Referral Service, Rochdale, OL16 2XW

Thank you for welcoming us to the study centres. We enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about the centres. We judged that the centres provide you with a good education.

There are some things that are really good about the centres. These are:

- the way in which you learn to feel good about yourselves and 'aim high'
- the very good individual support you are given in lessons that enable you to make good progress with your work
- the very good planning and links with the community that enable you to make a successful transfer back to school or into college or training
- the good systems, which help you to improve your attitudes to school and your behaviour in lessons.

I have asked your teachers to improve a few things to make the centres even better. These are:

- to make sure that all the work you are given is at just the right level for each of you
 - to make sure that you all have clear learning targets so you know exactly what you need to do to make your work better
 - to help those of you who take more time off than you should to improve your attendance.
- It is important that you attend every day to improve your chances when you leave the centres.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help the staff all you can.