

The Coningsby Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101706
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	319387
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	75
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Teacher in charge	Mrs B Gonella
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
School address	45 Coombe Road Croydon CR0 1BQ
Telephone number	020 8680 0949
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Coningsby pupil referral unit (PRU) provides a full-time education for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schooling and for those who require a considerable amount of time away from their secondary school because of their behaviour. Most pupils come from the south of Croydon but a few others come from further afield. Most pupils are White British but about a third are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The centre also manages two others services. 'Get Connected' provides education for a small group of students who are in local authority care and who receive their education at a separate unit about five miles away. These students have an individual programme and attend for a morning or afternoon session. The PRU also provides specialist home tuition for a number of students who have particular medical needs, learning difficulties or disabilities, or who are awaiting a placement elsewhere. At the last inspection, the school was given a notice to improve because significant improvement was required in respect to the students' standards and achievement in their work, the quality of teaching and the support and challenge provided by the management committee.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Coningsby Centre is providing a satisfactory level of education. The centre is improving rapidly and can boast some good features including some good teaching, and good arrangements for monitoring the quality of work and setting the students challenging targets. In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the Coningsby Centre no longer requires significant improvement.

Students entering the Coningsby Centre have usually had a disrupted education and their standards of work are at least below, and frequently well below average. Examination results in 2007 were well below average but most students left with at least some examination passes, though these tended to be at low grades. Since the last inspection, the staff have significantly improved academic monitoring procedures and target setting is now more rigorous. The centre confidently forecast that this year's examination results will show a clear improvement. The progress the students make overall is satisfactory, and for some it is better than this. Those who attend regularly tend to achieve well and make good progress. It is also noteworthy that all current Year 11 students are expected to progress to college courses for the next academic year.

Much of this success stems from the good and improving care, guidance and support offered. A particularly impressive aspect is that each student's work and conduct is monitored and recorded in every lesson. Such monitoring enables staff to intervene quickly if things are not going well. Equally, the information is used to offer praise and encouragement. There is a very good reward system in place. Supporting this good programme is a plethora of other measures to track progress and offer support and encouragement. Good work is done in association with the careers provider, to help the students to progress to the next stage of their education, or to enter the world of work, and centre staff offer good support and guidance on career choices. The levels of monitoring are detailed and thorough and directly contribute to the improvement in standards that can now be identified.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Though it is satisfactory overall, in many lessons the students are taught well. The improvement in teaching and learning is because there is now a more stable staff and issues identified in the previous inspection, relating to provision in mathematics and science, have largely been resolved. The acting headteacher has introduced a programme of lesson monitoring and this, too, has led to higher standards, although further improvement is needed, as standards remain lower than they should be. Staff still lack a consistent approach to developing the students' literacy skills. Key words are displayed for at least part of some lessons, but are referred to rarely. On other occasions they are either simply listed, or even ignored completely. Another weakness is that in lessons staff do not consistently make it clear what the students are expected to learn. Learning objectives are usually listed at the start of lessons, but then tend to be ignored. Staff are not consistent enough in using and referring to learning outcomes to help students make more progress.

A satisfactory curriculum is offered. Students are able to study a reasonable range of GCSEs and suitable provision is made for the teaching of citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The centre has improved its provision for both mathematics and science and there are good plans to improve further the provision for vocational education. The curriculum

meets the needs of the students and enables progress to further education or the world of work.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The centre is continually seeking ways of encouraging the students to become more involved and to take responsibility for their own actions and their immediate environment. Since the last inspection, some thoughtful improvements have been made to the centre and the improvement in the outdoor facilities, including the provision of a small garden, has helped social cohesion. The students like the centre. Most enjoy attending and the improvements have helped to create a calmer, more peaceful environment. Satisfactory provision is made for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good moral and social development is reflected in the good behaviour seen during the visit and in the good relationships existing between staff and students. Improvements in personal development are reflected in the rising attendance rates and improved punctuality of the students. Though attendance overall is below average, this outcome is severely distorted by the very poor attendance records of just a few. Many students have better attendance records than when they were at school and something like three-quarters of those attending the Coningsby Centre have attendance records that exceed the national average rate. Staff work tirelessly encouraging all students to attend regularly and promptly.

Most students said they like attending the centre and that they find the staff friendly and helpful. Many appreciate the individual attention they receive. Only one parent completed the inspection questionnaire. This response was favourable. Other evidence provided by the centre indicated high levels of parental satisfaction.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and are improving rapidly. The centre is well led by the acting headteacher and she is ably supported by her deputy and by the whole staff. The role of the management committee has been transformed. Members' participation was criticised by the last inspection team. A new chairperson has been appointed and there have been other changes in personnel. The management committee is now a significant and effective force for change and improvement. The committee benefits from excellent and incisive leadership. There is a good and clear vision and a steely determination to ensure that change and improvement occur. Target setting has improved significantly and is now being used well to promote higher standards. Other recent improvements have been made, including the writing of a good improvement plan. This document covers most relevant aspects well. However, strategies for raising academic standards and achievement are not explicit enough and the success criteria listed in the plan are not adequately quantified. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The service provides satisfactory, but improving, value for money. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The improvements in teaching and learning and in the tracking of students' work, which have already led to rising levels of achievement, allied to the significant changes to the strength of the management committee, indicate that there is now a good capacity for further improvement. All staff at the Coningsby Centre are working hard to change the lives of vulnerable youngsters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by ensuring that there is a far more consistent approach in lessons to developing the students' literacy skills including the use made of learning objectives.
- Modify the centre's development plan to ensure that measures to improve standards and achievement further are clearly stated and that all outcomes in the plan can be quantified.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most students have experienced considerable disruption to their education prior to entering The Coningsby Centre. Significant work is undertaken to encourage the students to adopt good study practices. The students receive considerable encouragement and they are offered appropriate opportunities to study GCSE and other qualifications. Some students are able to gain some C grades, or better, in their examinations and the range of courses available offers the students appropriate opportunities to progress to the world of work, or to further education. Overall standards are below average but are now improving. The progress made overall is satisfactory, but some students, especially those with very good attendance records, are making good progress in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of the students are satisfactory. Most students engage in a friendly manner with each other, with staff and with visitors. Whilst many enjoy the security offered by the centre and feel safe, attendance is unsatisfactory overall, although the level of attendance is improving at a good rate. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. This provision has improved recently and the 'Spare a Thought' programme, whereby the students are encouraged to reflect on topical issues, has helped to improve the quality of provision. This initiative complements the centre's work on citizenship education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The students are positive about PSHE provision and the good personal guidance they receive. Participation in physical activities is satisfactory and students understand its importance in keeping healthy. The students know about balanced diets even if they do not always put this knowledge into practice. They similarly understand the ill-effects of smoking and drug and alcohol abuse. The students are confident that their views matter and consider they have good opportunities to talk to adults when necessary. Through charity fund raising, they make valuable contributions to the wider community. Staff work very hard to prepare the students for their future in the work place, in education and in training through effective work-related learning and well managed work experience opportunities. Overall, however, provision for the students' future economic well-being is no better than satisfactory because of the problems the students continue to encounter in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Behaviour around the site and in lessons is good. On the rare occasions when a student might behave erratically, staff are quick to intervene and to tackle the issue. Good behaviour is encouraged and rewarded and the students generally respond positively to the examples set.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The consistency of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This is because staffing is

now more stable and because monitoring arrangements are now more robust. All the lessons observed during this visit were at least satisfactory and some were good. The students made at least satisfactory progress in the lessons seen because their teachers took care and time to explain ideas and worked with the students individually to help them achieve. Staff have high expectations and the students generally respond well and show interest. The classrooms are peaceful. The students behave well and show respect to each other and their teachers. Some lessons make good use of technology, such as the interactive whiteboards, to stimulate students' interest. Teachers' planning has improved because of improvements in academic monitoring. Teachers are now able to identify what students should learn and provide activities to help them make progress based on their particular needs. However, the lesson objectives are not always sufficiently used to reinforce learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is reasonably broad. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are mostly taught in the morning sessions and physical and creative activities in the afternoon. The curriculum is enhanced by subjects such as art and geography and all students follow courses in PSHE and citizenship. The curriculum is appropriately enriched with activities like music at a local recording studio. Years 10 and 11 are provided with a good range of activities on a Friday afternoon, which include football, aerobics, dance, art cookery and film editing. A breakfast club is provided each day and staff are on hand at break and lunchtime, often providing impromptu counselling to students. The curriculum is further enhanced by opportunities in work related activities such motor vehicle engineering and staff are keen to extend the provision for vocational education for the next academic year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff work very hard to provide high quality personal guidance for vulnerable students and their families. Extensive links with other agencies are very well organised to deal with the students' social and emotional circumstances. The 'Get Connected' unit offers very good support for students in local authority care, enabling some to gain essential academic qualifications to underpin future economic well-being. Good careers advice and guidance helps students back into mainstream school, or into the best options available in education, work or training. Staff act swiftly to address any anti-social behaviour such as bullying. The re-integration of students into mainstream education is very well managed, with individual follow up of students for several weeks or longer, if necessary. Similarly, students are followed up after enrolling on college courses and the good guidance that they receive enables a significant proportion of students to take up college courses or training routes. Termly reports and reviews record each student's personal and academic progress, including attendance and recently, politeness. Students have personal targets and most know by when they should be achieved. A major improvement since the last inspection has been in the quality of academic tracking. Students' work is now far more closely monitored than was previously the case. Target setting has improved and staff are now able to see how well each student is performing in relation to the targets set. This scheme has already seen marked improvements in the quality of the students' work.

Provision for ensuring health and safety is good. All current Government guidelines on child protection are fully met. Staff work hard to improve both attendance and punctuality, but the

poor attitudes of a minority adversely distorts the overall attendance figure. The centre's multi-agency approach and use of outside professional agencies successfully enhances the quality of support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality of provision is improving rapidly, but many of these improvements are recent and not yet fully embedded. The running of the centre has also been made more difficult because of the unforeseen, long-term absence of the headteacher. Day-to-day management of the centre is good. Since the previous inspection, more attention is being given to lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and teachers' planning. The leadership and management by staff with key responsibilities such as English, PSHE and citizenship, art, the work-related curriculum, reintegration to mainstream and the 'Get Connected' centre are good. Another significant change is the involvement of the management committee. The management committee now provide valuable support. They are prepared to challenge and they are keen to ensure that improvements continue.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

16 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Coningsby Centre, Croydon, CR0 1BQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave me on my recent visit. I enjoyed learning about the work you are doing. Overall, I have concluded that you are offered a satisfactory standard of education, but one that is improving rapidly. The centre is well led by the acting headteacher and her good staff. They are all working hard to help you. Your standards of work are below average compared with national standards. However, you are making satisfactory progress in your studies. Some of you, especially if you attend regularly, are making good progress. You are offered a satisfactory curriculum and the support and encouragement offered to you is good. You benefit from satisfactory, but improving, teaching and the centre provides you with a safe and caring environment in which to work. Though some of you need to improve your records of attendance, I was pleased to see how punctual many of you are and how well you behave. It was also pleasing to see you enjoying your work and I like your outdoor area. The site manager has worked hard to improve this area for you and the staff to enjoy. I have suggested some areas for improvement. These are:

- your staff should do more work with you to improve your literacy skills
- in lessons your teachers need to make it clearer precisely what they expect you to learn and reinforce and evaluate this with you towards the end of the lesson
- the centre's senior staff need to make some changes to how they plan to measure the centre's improvement.

Thank you for your contribution to this inspection. I really enjoyed meeting you all and I would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham

Lead Inspector