

# Denewood Learning Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122401
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Nottingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	327718
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Watts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Wendy Vincent
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	DeneWood Crescent Bilborough Nottingham NG8 3DH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01159 153128
<b>Fax number</b>	01159 153126

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Denewood Learning Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit in a residential suburb within the City of Nottingham. It is located in a large former mainstream school alongside other local authority services. Pupils are from Key Stages 2 and 3. Girls are admitted as well as boys, but the great majority are boys. All have been permanently excluded from other schools mainly because of severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many have not attended school regularly prior to admission. Pupils' social skills and their educational attainment on entry are often well below those expected for their age. The school aims to provide an environment that is settled and caring, but challenging, in which pupils can re-engage with education and with their peers. The longer-term intention is to re-integrate pupils into mainstream education wherever feasible.

The local authority, which is the appropriate authority for the Centre, is currently reviewing its provision for the early intervention services it makes available to mainstream schools. Currently at Denewood a number of staff are in post on a supply, temporary or acting basis, including the headteacher being in an acting capacity for two years. There was also an acting headteacher at the time of the previous inspection. Other staff posts are vacant, including those of deputy headteacher and coordinator of special educational needs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Denewood Learning Centre provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Parents are mainly supportive, 'An amazing school with brilliant staff,' wrote one. Several are more negative in their views, mainly about behaviour.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher is very capable and has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for continuing development. Staff are very supportive of the acting headteacher and are committed to the on-going improvements. Support from the management committee and the appropriate authority is satisfactory. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory. This is partly because some staffing posts have not been filled, and others are filled by staff on temporary contracts. This creates uncertainty among staff and makes planning for the future difficult. Initially pupils are offered short term, part-time placements in the induction group to enable staff to assess the full extent of their needs. The number of pupils on roll tends to fluctuate over the year. This is because the school has to respond to the changing numbers of pupils who are excluded from the mainstream schools it supports. The school makes sound efforts to promote community cohesion through close contacts with outside agencies, educational facilities, schools, pupils' families and people living nearby. Although without a deputy headteacher and other senior managers, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection: there are now many fewer part-time pupils, and they are mostly in the six-week induction period; the acting headteacher continues to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and is addressing some inconsistencies in lessons; and teachers now gather good information about pupils' progress, and mostly use it well in planning future lessons.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Often, they arrive with severe behavioural problems but during the induction period their behaviour begins to improve greatly and exclusions are far less common than in their previous settings. Pupils mostly enjoy their education and many are keen to get back into a mainstream school. They have a good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle, and many help each other, are involved in a school council, and raise money for charities. Their preparation for their future lives is satisfactory. This is helped by their willingness to cooperate with others, arrive on time, and look after their personal appearance and hygiene. Although good progress is often made by those who attend regularly, particularly in their willingness to learn, the progress in basic literacy, numeracy and computing skills is satisfactory overall.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. A few lessons lack pace and challenge but many good lessons are taught, leading to pupils' vastly improved levels of attention and willingness. Although pupils' academic standards are well below those generally expected of pupils their age, they make satisfactory progress in their academic learning over time. Pupils of all abilities make equally satisfactory progress and achieve soundly. The school has a high success rate in getting pupils back into mainstream education within the target time of six months. Even though they have not caught up academically with their mainstream peers, their positive attitude and enthusiasm for learning helps them considerably with their re-integration efforts. The curriculum is satisfactory, with a broad range of enrichment activities to complement the main subject areas, along with individualised therapy sessions.

Pastoral systems are strong and do much to turn pupils round. Staff are dedicated and support pupils well at all stages of their stay at Denewood. They make good efforts to provide clear

guidance in lessons, especially in helping pupils with individually tailored teaching and assistance based on clear assessments of how well they are progressing. They do all they possibly can to encourage pupils to attend the centre, from in-school rewards and displays to phone calls, letters and home visits, occasionally supported by legal action by the appropriate body. However, backgrounds of high social and economic disadvantage of many pupils, multiple bus journeys between home and school and other factors beyond the control of the school make this difficult, and too many pupils do not attend regularly enough. The school has good and positive working relationships with many outside agencies, such as the schools that pupils come from and those that they return to.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Strengthen links with outside agencies and complete the review of the curriculum in order to improve attendance, particularly of pupils in Key Stage 3.
- Strengthen the staffing structure, particularly the number, position and role of senior staff, to be more appropriate to the school's needs.

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**

Assessments of pupils during the six-week induction period indicate a turn-round in their attitude that is reflected in increased cooperation, attention, and progress in learning. Individual targets for further learning are set and pupils are often inspired to make good progress towards them. Their success varies between the different subjects: mathematics shows better progress than English, for example. Pupils tend to make better progress overall in Key Stage 2 than they do in Key Stage 3. Progress made by pupils with irregular attendance is reduced. Assessments indicate improvements by some pupils in the core subjects that are around the same pace as is expected in mainstream classes. This is good but other pupils need a longer time to settle and begin to learn again. Pupils' presentation of their work becomes relatively neat and accurate; they gain confidence in speaking in class and in writing lengthy passages. Confidence in written and mental mathematics soars. The school aims to develop pupils' attitudes and skills to a level that would enable them to succeed in returning to mainstream education. In this it is especially successful in Key Stage 2, where three-quarters of pupils return to mainstream education after about six months. Almost half of Key Stage 3 pupils manage this.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' behaviour improves considerably as they settle into the school, with increasingly rare instances of poor behaviour, and many fewer exclusions. Pupils pay attention, follow instructions, and build up good relationships with teachers and with each other. Friendly banter replaces previous extremes of behaviour, and pupils are eager and willing in many lessons, especially in Key Stage 2. Many pupils are keen to get back to mainstream education and enjoy their lessons very much. 'I really like my teachers and all the activities we do,' said one. Others occasionally fear re-integration because they worry they might not cope. A significant minority of poor attenders has not been sufficiently persuaded of the benefits of education, whether here or elsewhere. Pupils are polite in the main and act sensibly. They have a clear understanding of

the dangers that they might encounter. They say that there is no bullying but would be happy to approach their teachers if they had any problems. Pupils' understanding of health matters is good: they asked for more salad meals at midday, and regularly take part in a range of physical and sporting activities. Many willingly help each other, especially newcomers, and they raise funds for outside charities. Their future outlook is well supported by their developing skills in relationships and cooperation, and, for the good attenders, by their progress in basic subjects such as English and mathematics. They develop well in social, moral and cultural awareness; their sense of awe at the wonders of life and the world around them is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The better teaching is characterised by bright, well-paced and interesting lessons, such as several mathematics sessions in both key stages, with pupils who are eager to offer answers and willing to write their answers neatly. Some lessons are slower in pace, however, and the level of challenge is insufficient to generate enthusiasm, even when the topic is a practical investigation or involves information and communication technology (ICT), for instance. For the most part, teachers have good relationships with their pupils and they manage behaviour well. Occasionally, some low-level disruption is not managed well. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching and of the individual needs of their pupils. They assess how well their pupils are making progress and base future lessons on the information they gain. Classroom assistants effectively support their pupils with prompts, encouragement and humour.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory in its breadth and its relevance to learners. English and mathematics, along with personal, social and health education (PSHE), form the core of the curriculum. The PSHE programme is based on a scheme of social and emotional aspects of learning which the school implements very effectively. Science and ICT are taught by a subject specialist and other subjects are mainly taught through periodic topics. Lessons often include good opportunities to develop skills in literacy and numeracy, and all lessons have strong PSHE elements. Particularly in the afternoons, pupils take part in a range of activities such as climbing, horse riding and dancing at various local facilities and schools. They also participate in activities such as 'Run Riot' and 'Wild Things' in which they learn basic forest craft skills. Therapy is also available for pupils, should they need it, including art imaging, play therapy and cognitive learning therapy. Pupils in both key stages can gain nationally recognised certificates in many subjects through the Assessment and Qualifications Authority and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. These include food technology, ICT and aspects of literacy and sports. The school is improving some aspects of both the basic curriculum and the range of enrichment activities as part of its effort to encourage better attendance by some pupils.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Procedures to safeguard pupils' health, welfare and safety are strong. All of the current regulations are met and staff are thoroughly checked for their suitability to work at Denewood. Staff are good at assessing how well pupils are making progress in their personal and social skills, and they develop their teaching and support approach with this in mind. Good systems to encourage good behaviour are well developed and consistently applied. Since the last inspection, staff have successfully assessed pupils' academic progress, particularly in the core subjects and they base pupils' individual targets and the plans for their lesson activities on the information they gather. Increasingly, staff have begun to develop ways of analysing assessment information to study the progress of pupils of different abilities, ages or ethnicity, despite the relatively short period that pupils are admitted for. Pupils are well supported in lessons by teachers' careful planning, and by the one-to-one help from teachers and support staff. A dedicated team of staff manage the whole re-integration process efficiently and effectively, from pre-admission contact with schools to a month's continuing support when pupils return to mainstream education. The very low number of pupils who return to Denewood is testament to the effectiveness of the programme. The school is very proactive and persistent in trying to encourage good attendance and tries hard to enlist the support of outside agencies.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory value for money. Planning for improvement is soundly based on good evaluation and understanding of the present quality of provision. Developments in teaching and the curriculum are progressing soundly, rooted in challenging targets for all staff and for the school as a whole. Matters are greatly helped by the acting headteacher's determination and skill, and the strong commitment of other staff in their supporting roles. Developments have been hindered by the lack of a deputy headteacher and senior leaders such as a coordinator for special educational needs, and the temporary nature of the employment of so many members of staff. As the appropriate body, the local authority has satisfactorily fulfilled its obligations to the school in its provision of guidance and support. However, a restricted budget has meant that the school is operating beyond its capacity. Thus, there are more pupils than there are places for, and new pupils have to be admitted for the induction period on a part-time basis. The management committee is newly refreshed in its ability and willingness to be more closely involved under the guidance and vigour of a new chairperson appointed in September 2008. It is currently providing a satisfactory and improving level of support and challenge. Relationships with other agencies, such as social services and the Youth Offending Team, contribute well to pupils' welfare. The school contributes satisfactorily to the local, and wider, community. This is particularly the case through its relations with many other schools that provide help and support when their excluded pupils are admitted to Denewood, or those that welcome Denewood pupils for re-integration. Invitations to attend a variety of workshops and awareness-raising events are extended to pupils, their families and local people.

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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	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Denewood Learning Centre, Nottingham, NG8 3DH

I hope you remember when an inspector visited recently. Thank you for helping me and telling me your views about the school.

I found that you go to a school that provides you with a sound education and encourages you to continue your learning in a variety of subjects. Many of you realise how important it is to improve your learning and you are keen to do well in lessons so you can get back into mainstream schools.

Teachers work hard in planning lessons, teaching you, and checking how well you are progressing. Other staff are also good at encouraging and helping you. Your lessons are mainly interesting and give you plenty of challenge. Sometimes the teaching is rather slow and the work does not make you try hard enough. Most of you are interested and are keen to join in with all the activities. You said you feel safe in school and would be happy to speak to staff if you did have problems with anything.

There are two things that I suggest need to be improved. First, some of you do not attend as regularly as you should. Mrs Vincent and her staff are looking to see if there are different activities or ways of teaching that could encourage you to attend, as well as asking other people outside the school to help more. However, it is also up to you to go to school regularly and make the most of what happens there. Second, some teachers do not have a permanent contract to do their present jobs. This can make them worry and affects their planning for the future of the school. I am asking the local authority to sort this situation out as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector