

Thompson House Tuition Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133744
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	328747
Inspection date	24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	36
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Steff Gleeson
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
School address	Sandy Lane Newport PO30 3NA
Telephone number	01983 533523
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Age group	6–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Thompson House Tuition Centre offers education to students aged from 6 to 16. It provides for the whole of the Isle of Wight. Students aged 6 to 11 are referred to the centre because their behaviour puts them at risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream schooling, or because they have already been excluded. Students aged 11 to 16 are referred because of illness, phobias, anxiety disorders or mental health issues. This group tend to be long-term placements. Many of the students have educational difficulties and/or disabilities. These include Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Tourette's Syndrome, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and generalised social anxiety. The Centre's remit also includes hospital and home tuition for students who are not well enough to attend the Tuition Centre. It also monitors those being taught at home by their parents. The centre administers these services. Many of the students involved are dual registered with mainstream schools. These parts of the service did not form part of this inspection because the mainstream providers, or the parents or carers providing the education, have direct responsibility for the students' academic work and progress.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thompson House Tuition Centre provides a good level of education. There are some outstanding features of this provision, including care, guidance and support, partnership working and behaviour.

Students entering the Centre have usually had a disrupted education and their standards of work are frequently below, and often well below, average. By the time they leave, their attainment levels have risen but are below average; this represents good progress. Most Year 11 students gain some qualifications and there has been a steady improvement in the Centre's GCSE grades. Some students, who were predicted to gain no qualification in their mainstream school because of their attitudes and poor attendance, leave the centre with qualifications that equip them to progress successfully to the next stage in their lives.

Much of this success stems from the outstanding care, guidance and support offered. All staff are supportive of the students, especially in terms of helping them to adjust to their situations and encouraging them to develop friendships. There is a very good reward system and students are encouraged to take responsibility, especially for their own actions. Partnership work with a variety of agencies is outstanding. For example, excellent work is done in association with the provider for careers advice. This helps students to progress to the next stage of their education, or to enter the world of work. Levels of academic monitoring have improved and are now at least good. Staff identified this as an area for improvement, and target setting and the monitoring of progress against such targets has improved.

The good progress made by students is also because of good teaching and a good, relevant and improving curriculum. In lessons, the set tasks challenge and extend the students' knowledge and understanding. Progress is further fostered by staff setting students their own individual and challenging learning targets in lessons. This successfully enables students to work at their own pace and levels. Occasionally, some staff have a tendency to tell the students the answers too quickly. As a result learning opportunities to develop the students' literacy skills are missed. For example, staff do not consistently seize opportunities for students to read aloud and key words are not routinely displayed or referred to. In some of the lessons observed, staff were using words such as rhyme, rhythm and percussion, but they were not displayed and the attention of the students was not drawn to the correct spelling of these words. A more consistent approach to developing literacy skills is required. The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection. The provision for physical activity has been significantly extended and more vocational options are now available for older students. These developments further reflect the outstanding quality of the Centre's partnership work. Though the Centre's accommodation is cramped, some thoughtful use has been made of the site and the students enjoy their extra-curricular work associated with gardening, for example. The curriculum successfully offers a good balance between academic study, vocational work and extra-curricular activity, such as sport.

Personal development and well-being are good. Good provision is made for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students' moral and social development is reflected in their excellent behaviour and in the very good relationships that exist between students and between staff and students. Some good spiritual and cultural development was evident in displays about religious festivals. Personal development and responsibility are also promoted well through the emphasis placed on caring for wildlife. The various feeding stations

around the site enable students to appreciate the local bird life at close quarters. Staff and students alike relish the experience of being able to hand-feed a pair of visiting mallard ducks and some inquisitive pheasants. Improvements in personal development are further reflected in the rising attendance rates.

Another good aspect of the Centre's work is the way responsibility is developed and the contribution made to community cohesion. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own immediate environment. For example, the compact buildings hosting the Centre are clean, tidy and well cared for, with smart displays and an absence of graffiti. Community cohesion is promoted thoughtfully in other ways. Each year the students are encouraged to support both a national and an international charity and the work of the chosen charities is incorporated into the taught curriculum.

Leadership and management are good. The Centre is led by a determined headteacher who is well supported by a dedicated, committed and hard-working staff. Their work is appropriately supported by the Centre's good management committee. Senior staff have produced a good improvement plan and there is a good commitment to raise academic standards and achievement. At present, self-evaluation is satisfactory, but senior staff and the management committee know where improvements are needed and how these can be enacted. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection and the Centre provides good value for money. There is a good capacity for further improvement.

Thompson House Tuition Centre is successfully working to change the lives of vulnerable youngsters. Very few parents replied to the inspection questionnaire, but those who did were supportive and appreciative. The students are similarly appreciative. As one youngster commented, 'It is friendly here. The staff know and support you. They help you improve'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put into practice effective and consistent systems and procedures across the Centre to raise standards of literacy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the Centre with attainment levels that are usually and often well below average. On arrival, every student is given much encouragement to adopt good study practices. The students receive good support and they are offered appropriate opportunities to study GCSE and other qualifications. In relation to their starting points, the progress students make is good. All Year 11 leavers gain some GCSE qualifications. The standards students reach while in the Centre do improve and levels of achievement are good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The site used by the Centre is cramped and compact but it offers a calm and welcoming working environment. The students engage in a friendly manner with each other, with staff and with visitors. Students say they enjoy attending, they feel safe and valued and they are appreciative of the encouragement offered. Attendance is improving but, overall, is marginally below the national average. Many students have greatly boosted their attendance since joining the Centre; many now have attendance records that exceed the national average. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This aspect of personal development is promoted well

through the emphasis placed on developing cultural awareness. Students are constantly encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. The strong emphasis placed on personal development and responsibility is seen in the students' excellent behaviour.

Despite the limitations of the outdoor facilities, participation in physical activities is good and has improved appreciably since the last inspection. Students understand the importance of physical education in keeping healthy. They know about balanced diets and they have a good understanding of the ill effects of smoking and of drug and alcohol abuse. The students are encouraged to be responsible and they are confident that their views matter. Much good work is done to prepare the youngsters for reintegration into mainstream education or for life beyond the age of 16, but preparation for their future economic well-being is no better than satisfactory because of the difficulties that many continue to encounter in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students achieve well because of consistently good teaching. Staff expectations are high. Suitably challenging work is set, lesson planning is good, and the students are keen and eager to participate. All lessons observed featured good learning and, in some cases, learning was outstanding. Staff take care to develop a strong rapport with the students; this too helps learning. Teaching was thorough and the lessons enjoyable, but staff need to be far more consistent in ensuring key words and vocabulary are displayed and referred to during the lesson. This would help to boost students' literacy skills still further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Despite the limitations imposed by the accommodation, the Centre offers students, in all years, a good and balanced curriculum. By working with many partners, the Centre has managed to improve provision markedly. As a result of these exceptional efforts, the curriculum meets the varying and complex needs of the students and helps them reintegrate into mainstream education, or to progress to employment or further education. The National Curriculum is followed, with the students able to study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A suitable range of other subjects is available, including various vocational options. Excellent partnership work has resulted in considerable improvements in the provision for physical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The quality of pastoral care is excellent. Highly successful and extensive partnerships with a range of agencies are very well organised to deal with the students' complex social and emotional circumstances. The centre's multi-agency approach and use of outside professional providers successfully enhances the quality of support. High-quality and effective personal and careers advice and guidance helps students back into mainstream school, or into the best options available in education, work or training at the end of Year 11. Staff act swiftly to address any antisocial behaviour such as bullying, though such incidents are most rare. The reintegration of students into mainstream education is managed

very well and is lavishly praised by local schools. Academic support has improved appreciably and target setting procedures have developed well, as have the arrangements for monitoring progress against such targets. Effective systems for tracking all aspects of students' work, attendance and behaviour are in place. These make a considerable contribution to the progress made by students in their learning and the improvements they record in attendance and behaviour. The sensitivity and effectiveness of the care, guidance and support available cannot be faulted.

All current government guidelines on child protection are met, and the provisions for ensuring health and safety are very good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership offered by the headteacher is good and she is well supported by her staff. Together they form an effective and dedicated team who are fully committed to improving the lives of groups of students, many of whom are vulnerable and have had troubled histories in dealing with daily life. The Centre has improved well since its previous inspection. The Centre's management committee are supportive. They know where the strengths are and they realise that some recent developments need time to bed down. They fulfil their role as critical friends well.

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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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

07 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Thompson House Tuition Centre, Newport, PO30 3NA

Thank you for the welcome you gave me on my recent visit. I enjoyed learning about your work. I have concluded that you are offered a good standard of education and that there are some outstanding features. The Centre is well led by the headteacher and her good staff are all working hard to help you. Overall, your standards of work are below average, but you are making good progress in your studies. You are provided outstanding care, guidance and support and this helps you when you return to your main school, or when you leave to go to college or employment. You are taught well and the Centre provides a good and improving curriculum and a safe and caring environment. You also benefit from some excellent partnerships that have been established. Most of you have at least satisfactory attendance records and I was hugely impressed by your excellent behaviour. It was pleasing to see you enjoying your work and mixing in well together. I hope that the Year 11 students continued to enjoy their music project. I have suggested one main area for improvement. Your teachers need to adopt a more consistent approach, especially in lessons, to developing and improve your skills in reading, writing and spelling.

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 faithfully

Bill Stoneham

Lead Inspector