

Will Adams Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133767
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	328757
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	38
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Jane Patterson
Date of previous school inspection	7 August 2006
School address	Woodlands Road Gillingham ME7 2BX
Telephone number	01634 337111
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Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Will Adams Centre is a pupil referral unit providing education for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, most of whom have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Most of the students on roll are boys but there are a small number of girls. Just over half the students attend on a part-time basis. About a fifth of the students have been provided with statements 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: 2

The Will Adams Centre is a good and improving pupil referral unit, which is effective in meeting the needs of its students. Students make good progress with both their academic and personal development and as a result an increasing proportion of the students go on to further education, training or employment when they leave the centre.

Students' academic achievement is good and all of the students now leave with at least one externally accredited qualification. They make good progress with their functional skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and through a wide range of vocational courses develop the skills that will serve them well in the world of work. Students are taught well. Teachers bring a range of appropriate skills to their teaching which enables them to plan effectively to meet the particular needs of the varying groups and to pitch work at the right levels. The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection, particularly in expanding the range of vocational courses off site. This provision helps to overcome the physical limitations of the centre's building. One of the results of the centre's limitations is its reduced capacity to offer students full-time timetables.

The good academic progress that students make helps to raise the self-esteem of many of them. Their behaviour and attitudes improve, partly as a result of the good quality relationships they build with the centre staff. The centre has been increasingly successful in ensuring that the attendance of many of the students improves, although some remain poor attenders. There is a good focus on physical activity and many of the students, particularly the boys, respond well to these opportunities. Students are made well aware of the need to behave safely and work hard to respond to the guidance that is given. The centre's safeguarding procedures and risk assessments meet requirements. The pastoral support and guidance given to students is good. However, students do not always have a sufficiently clear understanding of their academic targets and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management are good and as a result the centre has made significant improvements since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for the centre and good planning to take it forward. However, the management committee does not always make full use of the available accurate data on students' academic and personal development to regularly check performance against challenging targets. The centre takes its role in promoting community cohesion very seriously, especially in relation to tackling aspects of the local gang culture. However, it acknowledges that there are not enough opportunities for students to learn about other faiths in Britain and the wider world. The capacity of the centre's leaders to bring about further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is more regular scrutiny of performance against challenging targets by the centre's management committee.
- Provide more opportunities for students to learn about the different faiths in Britain and the wider world.
- Improve the consistency of students knowing their targets and what they need to do to achieve them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average. Students are admitted to the centre usually after a period of exclusion from mainstream school. As a result their attainment on entry is usually well below average. Achievement is good. The proportion of students gaining GCSE pass grades has risen consistently since the last inspection. The number of students achieving vocational qualifications has risen considerably since the last inspection. In addition, in 2008 all students achieved their awards scheme development and accreditation network (ASDAN) bronze award and some achieved their Duke of Edinburgh award. Most students achieve a first-aid qualification.

Most students make good progress whilst they are at the centre. Their current progress in mathematics is better than in English and this reflects some staffing difficulties last year. They make good progress with their information and communications technology (ICT) skills and in vocational courses such as the national vocational qualification (NVQ) Level 1 diplomas in motor studies and land-based operations. Boys and girls make similar progress whilst at the centre. Of the very small number of looked-after children, some make faster progress than others due to personal circumstances. Although part-time students may not have access to the full range of options, their progress in the subjects they do take is in line with that of full-time students. Students with statements of special education needs make good progress in relation to the targets identified in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

With the exception of some poor attenders most students enjoy coming to the centre and respond well to its positive ethos. They respond well, for example, to the challenge of getting in to the centre at a time of inclement weather. The attendance of many improves and their attitudes improve, as seen in their positive contributions to discussions in lessons. They form good relationships with each other and with staff, and they work well alongside each other. Students are aware of healthy lifestyles and act on aspects of it, for example the student council requesting fruit juice as a drinking option. They participate enthusiastically in the centre's physical activities. Some find difficulty in giving up smoking although they acknowledge the risks. The council enables students to contribute to the community positively, for example, in supporting the setting up of an after-school club. The centre's partnerships with local organisations, such as the Kent Wildlife Trust, enable students to make a wider contribution to the local community. Students gain an understanding of other areas of the country through residential visits to places like Derbyshire. The impact of residential visits and camping expeditions enhances students' personal development, giving them, for example, good opportunities to enhance their social skills and a wider awareness of some cultural differences. However, their understanding of the different faith groups in Britain and the wider world is limited. The centre's focus on key functional skills, vocational courses and work-related learning prepares students well for their next stage of education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students' learning at the centre and off site is good, as a result of the good teaching they receive. Staff build good relationships with the students and this helps them to manage students' behaviour effectively. Teachers have high expectations, particularly in relation to student behaviour in workshops, and students respond well to these expectations. Teachers plan well and make good use of the accurate assessment information available. They know that many of the students need a wide range of practical activities to engage them. Lessons typically contain such activities and are strong motivators. Students show good concentration and interest, for example, when arranging a sequence of photographs to gain an insight into civil unrest in Northern Ireland and in testing the effectiveness of a car's cooling system with specialist trade equipment. Lessons contain fewer opportunities for students to show initiative and work independently. Teachers make clear to the students what is needed from them to complete the requirements of the courses they are taking and this helps most students to gain the appropriate accreditation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The centre was asked to provide more award bearing courses in the last Ofsted report. This it has done well. The extension of vocational opportunities through places like Hadlow College and the Catch 22 Motor Project has helped to overcome some of the limitations imposed on site. There is an extensive range of outdoor education activities including residential trips to Broadstone Warren and camping expeditions to Meopham and Sittingbourne. The curriculum meets particular interests well, for example the Open College Network (OCN) Course in Music Studies, which involves developing disc jockey expertise and sound audio production. All students now leave with at least one appropriate qualification. Students work with a range of organisations on community projects, for example, the Fort Amhurst Trust. There are appropriate opportunities within the curriculum for students to gain an insight into aspects of the wider world, especially through history, music and art. However, the curriculum provides too few opportunities to raise students' awareness and understanding of different faiths.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students are cared for well, for example, in the provision of a breakfast club in the morning. Staff know students well and students believe there is someone they can talk with if they have problems. Risk assessments are comprehensive in relation to activities on and off the site including work-related learning. Good guidance is provided for students by centre staff and Connexions in respect of their next steps after leaving the centre. As a result the proportion of students finding college places, training programmes or employment has risen considerably since the last inspection. The centre makes good use of outside agencies to support individual students. It has been increasingly successful in strategies used to improve attendance. The centre tracks students' progress thoroughly and sets students targets in relation to their courses. Not all students have a sound knowledge of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Students in Year 11 have a better knowledge and understanding of their targets than those in Year 10.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is evidence of the positive impact of the centre's leadership in the improvement since the last inspection, especially in developing a curriculum that now meets a wider range of students' needs. There is a clear focus on improving students' academic achievement and personal development and the centre now has accurate data to demonstrate the quality of its provision in these areas. The centre identifies priorities for development and plans well to tackle them. There is a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses, based on accurate self-evaluation. The management committee gives satisfactory support to the centre. It does not always make enough use of the available data to fully scrutinise the centre's performance against challenging targets. The centre's leaders thoroughly monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and this has brought about a greater emphasis on using assessment for learning. This in turn has resulted in the quality of teaching improving. The centre has been particularly successful in reducing the barriers to students engaging with education, even for those students who are only capable of operating a part-time timetable. There is a very good focus on valuing all the students equally and working to meet their needs in exciting ways. The centre is well resourced within the limitations of the site and the leaders have used the funding well, particularly in expanding the range of curriculum activities that engage and motivate the students. The centre promotes community cohesion appropriately. It serves a large number of communities, distributed widely on a geographical basis. It knows its communities well and the needs of students well. However, it acknowledges that it needs to provide more opportunities for students to learn about other faiths. The centre works well with an extensive range of partners to enhance its students' education.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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	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	2

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?	2

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Dear Students

Inspection of Will Adams Centre, Gillingham, ME7 2BX

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me when I visited your centre, despite the poor weather at the time. Please thank those parents who completed the questionnaires for me. I enjoyed talking with you and watching you working hard in your lessons and out on the various sites.

The effectiveness of the centre is good. It helps you well with your behaviour and attendance and with your learning in the different subjects. The good support you are given helps you to get ready to move on to college, training or employment. In all of these areas you are making good progress. This is because the teaching is good and the centre provides you with a wide range of interesting and useful activities that you enjoy doing. You make good progress with all the support you get and leave the centre with useful qualifications.

There are some areas that I have asked the centre to do better.

I have asked the centre's management committee to look more carefully at how well the centre is doing. I have asked staff to make sure that you are clearer as to what your targets are and what you need to do to achieve them and also to provide you with more opportunities to learn about other faiths. You can help by always doing your best.

It was a pleasure to meet you all.

Yours faithfully

Tim Feast Lead inspector