

Greys Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134032
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	328806
Inspection date	1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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 (total)	310
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Sue Raffé
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
School address	Manor Drive Kempston Bedford Bedfordshire MK42 7AB
Telephone number	01234 408477
Fax number	01234 408478

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspection of the centre evaluated its overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of action to prevent exclusion of pupils from mainstream schools; and where this does happen, the effectiveness of actions to reintegrate pupils
- the impact assessment, tracking and target setting has on improving achievement and ensuring all pupils are sufficiently challenged by their work
- the effectiveness of the management committee in supporting the centre and holding it to account.

Inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, assessment data, a scrutiny of pupils' work, a series of interviews with pupils and staff, and examination of a range of documents, including parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the centre's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the centre's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This pupil referral centre was established in 2003 by the merger of four previous units and two local authority support services. The centre is currently undergoing reorganisation and has become a shared service between Bedford Borough and Central Bedford Councils. The current headteacher is retiring and will be replaced by an acting headteacher in September 2009. Greys is a large and complex organisation spread across five centres. It has three sites in Bedford, a site in Houghton Regis and at a local hospital. Outreach services provide support to pupils of all ages who are at risk of being excluded from school or after a period of attendance at the centre are reintegrating into mainstream school. The functions are managed by heads of unit or service.

Pupils face a wide variety of barriers to learning, including those who have been permanently excluded; those returning from youth custody; pupils who have medical or mental health needs; looked after children in need of support; pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers. They come from all four key stages. Although able to take pupils from the age of five years, the service does not admit children who are eligible for Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The ethnic and gender mix of pupils varies during the year as does the number of pupils in public care. Some pupils are dual registered and educated part-time at the centre and for the remainder of their time on programmes organised by their mainstream school. As a result of their past experiences, and often disrupted patterns of education, pupils' attainment on entry is often very low and their personal skills are poor. Some pupils have a statement of special educational needs, often acquired while attending the centre. The centre has gained the Cabinet award for mentoring, the Healthy Schools award and the 21st Century Learning Alliance award.

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 a good centre. It has some outstanding features. It has an extremely significant impact on changing pupils' lives for the better. Many pupils enter the centre with a sense of failure or have given up on education. They make good academic progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Their behaviour and attendance improves dramatically during their time at the centre. This is because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the support she receives from her very strong leadership team. The staff are dedicated to the care and support of students and have a strong belief that it is not too late for them to reach their potential. There are high expectations of pupils, even though many have previous histories which include, low achievement, poor behaviour and unhealthy lifestyles.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and well-being as a result of the excellent support and guidance they receive. For example, pupils develop an excellent awareness of how to keep healthy and stay safe. The centre's systems to safeguard students meet government requirements. Pupils told inspectors they enjoy coming to school and praise the way they are supported by staff. Relationships are based upon a culture of mutual respect. The small number of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the way the centre supported their children. Parental feedback collected by the centre is equally positive.

Excellent partnerships with schools, colleges and other services ensure a wide and balanced curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities they have for physical education. Overall, reintegration rates back into mainstream schools are very good, with 100% of pupils from Key Stage 1 and 2 moving back into the mainstream or onto appropriate special education facilities. In Key Stage 3, around 85% of pupils are reintegrated within two terms of their arrival. In Key Stage 4, a large proportion are well prepared for the transition to further education employment or training. Very few pupils who return to the mainstream are permanently excluded again.

Pupils' make good academic progress because they are well taught in very small groups. However, due to the history of underachievement of many, overall standards are below average. In the primary provision, progress is particularly good in mathematics and English, although the centre recognises that more needs to be done to improve progress in science. In the secondary provision, pupils often re-engage with learning after very long gaps in their education. Although the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE is low, overall progress is good. Increasingly, due to the development of the curriculum for pupils in the secondary provision, pupils succeed in a range of vocational qualifications.

Initial assessment has improved since the last inspection and is generally more precise. However, it is not used consistently enough in lessons to match the work pupils are set in relation to their needs and abilities or to ensure they are consistently challenged by tasks. The system for gathering and using information about pupils' behaviour and personal development is far more robust and used well in lessons to ensure pupils receive outstanding support. Constant reinforcement and praise for relatively small steps in progress help pupils build confidence and self esteem. Challenging personal developmental targets are set and reviewed frequently.

Information and communication technology is used innovatively to make learning fun and enable students who have severe attendance problems make good progress. However, it is not seen as the panacea for all problems and the centre recognises it has to be carefully blended with pupils return to school.

Attendance varies widely but is satisfactory overall with the vast majority of students significantly increasing their attendance, in some cases from complete non-attendance to 100%. Given the context that many pupils have long histories of severe disruption in lessons, behaviour is outstanding. Rules are clearly set out and all staff apply them consistently. Almost all pupils feel safe and secure within the boundaries that have been set out. This contributes to the harmonious community atmosphere. Outreach work makes an outstanding contribution to local community cohesion by re-engaging disaffected pupils back into learning. Since the last inspection there have been no permanent exclusions. This symbolises the centre's determination that they will never give up on children. Fixed-term exclusions do happen but always after careful consideration and planning for a return.

The headteacher and senior staff have an excellent understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Information is used very well to set challenging targets and an appropriate annual development plan is in place. However, due to the restructure taking place within the local authority, the long term vision for the future of the centre has become clouded. This doubt has had a detrimental impact on the ability to plan effectively in the medium and long term. Despite this, the centre has a good capacity to improve. There has been some good action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, lessons are more effectively monitored and middle managers have a clear understanding of their roles. However, some areas for action remain stubbornly difficult to shift.

There have been significant changes to the management committee since the last inspection; for example, the headteacher is no longer the chairperson. They meet their statutory obligations. However, some meetings remain poorly attended and the committee is insufficiently involved in self- evaluation and planning. The headteacher provides them with accurate information about the service's work and its achievements, but they are still not in a position to hold the service fully to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the effectiveness of the management committee in holding the school to account and supporting long term-planning.
- Improve the use of academic assessment information by teachers to ensure pupils are consistently challenged by their work.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

2 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Greys Education Centre, Kempston, MK42 7AB

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us during the inspection and letting us see your work. We were impressed with the calm atmosphere and how hard you were working.

We think Greys is a good Pupil Referral Unit that has some outstanding features. The care, guidance and support you get from staff are excellent and this means that you make great progress in your personal development. You told us about the really enjoyable activities available, including the physical activities that many of you like so much. The headteacher and the senior staff have high expectations of you and this pays off. They clearly set out the 'ground rules' so you know what you should do and how to behave. It was good to see how much your attendance has also improved. Most of you quickly move on from the centre to thrive in other schools or colleges. Well done!

Although only a few parents completed the inspection questionnaire, the vast majority were very happy with the centre's work. The school also showed us lots of evidence that proved their work was much appreciated and of high quality.

We have asked the centre to improve by asking them to:

- use the assessment information they have about your previous learning to make sure that your work is always as challenging as it should be
- develop the role of the management committee so that it can play a greater role in measuring the quality of the centre and planning for the future.

You can do your bit by continuing to attend as often as you can, behaving well and caring for each other and the staff.

With best wishes for the future

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector