

Springwell Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134055
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	328812
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Noreen Buckingham

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	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	127
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Mr Mike Evans board
Headteacher	Ms J Thirkell
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2006
School address	St Helens Boulevard Carlton Lane Barnsley South Yorkshire S71 2AY
Telephone number	01226 283068
Fax number	01226 779244

Age group	8–16
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Inspection number	328812

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Springwell Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) which admits pupils from the whole of the Barnsley area. Pupils who attend the PRU are at risk of exclusion from mainstream school and have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre also offers short-term intervention programmes for both primary and secondary-aged pupils who are dual-registered with their mainstream school. Some pupils are young offenders, others are young mothers and a few have mental health issues. The centre for Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils is situated within Springwell Community Special School. In addition, the PRU offers a dispersed provision across 13 sites, including many training providers supporting Key Stage 4 pupils. An executive headteacher has overall strategic leadership and management of the centre and the school, and also a wide range of local authority services, such as Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and the Behaviour Support Services. Currently, there are 127 pupils on roll of which only 33 are girls. All but a very small minority are White British, with very few in the care of the local authority. The centre works very closely with a wide range of professional agencies in a multi-agency partnership which is at the hub of the provision. The management committee of the PRU is a sub-committee of the school's governing body with some joint membership. The PRU was opened in its current form in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Springwell Centre is an effective pupil referral unit. It successfully re-engages pupils with education and as a result, they can move forward with their lives. The committed leadership is central to the good progress pupils make across all aspects of their learning. Senior leaders are very well supported by an equally committed staff team that share their high aspirations for the pupils' futures. The PRU has quickly established and continues to develop a good range of provision for pupils. There are strengths in its leadership at all levels and it achieves good outcomes. These factors give it outstanding capacity to improve further.

Attainment on entry is much lower than would usually be expected. This is due to pupils' previously poor attendance and to periods of disaffection in their previous schools. However, all groups of pupils generally become engaged in learning and, as a result, achievement and progress are good. Pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 work hard and are offered a curriculum which prepares them for a return to mainstream school. Short-term intervention programmes give pupils the opportunity to settle into a routine and consider their future options with good support from the PRU staff. The majority work hard and return to school successfully. Older pupils in Key Stage 4, in all units, have opportunities to gain a variety of externally accredited awards which helps give them a good base from which to move on when they leave the PRU. The range of accreditation from GCSE to Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) units, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and Awards Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, is increasing this academic year to meet the ever increasing range of interests and abilities within the PRU. The good teaching provided is crucial in enabling pupils to learn and achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants have relevant subject knowledge and use strategies which engage the pupils. They know the pupils well and use this knowledge to support pupils' learning. A good pace is a feature of most lessons. The recently introduced assessment and tracking systems are beginning to show how well pupils are doing and where the weaknesses are but these systems have not yet become fully established across all aspects of learning. In addition, staff have not yet had sufficient opportunities to get together to check and moderate the accuracies of their assessments to further develop teaching and learning programmes.

The outstanding levels of care, guidance and support benefit pupils' overall development, not only while they are at the PRU, but also in other areas of their lives. Safeguarding arrangements are in place and pupils comment on how safe and free from harassment of any kind they feel. Many pupils and their parents commented on the ways the staff of the PRU and other agencies have supported them. There is no doubt that this support also helps to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem, giving them a positive start to their life after the PRU. Alongside this is a good curriculum, especially the personal, social and health element which is fundamental to pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to live their lives healthily and successfully. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. While attendance is satisfactory overall, the individual attendance of many pupils has improved considerably since joining the PRU. Behaviour is good and exclusions are now rare. The emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the individualised programme of work related learning means that they are extremely well prepared for leaving and taking their place in society. Relationships across the PRU are positive and staff are good role models. Pupils know they have someone to talk to and someone who will listen to them.

The leadership and management of the PRU are good overall. The executive headteacher provides strong and effective leadership and is now very ably supported by an executive deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the inclusion manager. They share the clear vision for the future development of the PRU which includes exciting developments, such as a new inclusive building and further developments within the primary sector. The management committee is very supportive of what the PRU provides but does not yet have the breadth of community representation that would enable it to take a more independent view. In addition, it recognises that its limited role in monitoring the provision does not enable it to have such a fully informed view of the PRU's work as it could have.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the recently introduced assessment and tracking systems are fully established across all aspects of pupils' learning.
- Improve moderation opportunities for staff so that assessment is more consistent and more accurate.
- Widen the membership of the management committee and encourage members to be more actively involved in monitoring the overall work of the PRU.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils achieve well. They start from a low baseline, usually because of disruptions to their previous education and due to the nature of their learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Once they have settled their behaviour and attendance improve, they work hard and make good progress. Many have large gaps in their learning, particularly in their basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 make good progress because good teaching, high levels of support and the good curriculum all support their achievements. Pupils on short-term intervention programmes achieve well and the majority return to school successfully. Although there are only a few girls attending the PRU, they have the same opportunities as boys to access relevant courses and achieve equally as well. Older pupils, at all units, can gain a wide variety of externally accredited awards such as GCSE, ASDAN, Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALAN), Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and AQA units in a range of subjects. Already the PRU has extended the current range to include, for example, more GCSEs, the Junior Football Organisers Award, NVQ Hair and Beauty Level 1, Horse care Level 1 and BTEC Performing Arts. Standards vary widely on leaving the PRU but overall they are just below average. Pupils' successes are not only as a result of their own hard work but also of the support and encouragement from the PRU. The number of pupils who do not access either employment or training when they leave is reducing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

At the heart of pupils' good development is the warmth and individual support given to pupils within the centre. Pupils respond accordingly, saying, for example, 'I was always in trouble before I came here, but now I see a future for myself'. As a result, their attendance improves, frequently dramatically and especially so for the youngest pupils or those who have had long periods of time not engaging with education at all. Overall, attendance is satisfactory, but this disguises the good attendance of many and reflects the persistence and determination of staff to get pupils back into school. Many pupils join the centre at times of major upset in their lives.

However, staff successfully help them to manage their anger, contain their language and refine their approach to personal relationships. Behaviour is therefore good. Exclusion is the very last resort now to be considered, and instances have dropped to virtually zero. Because of this, pupils feel safe in school and bullying incidents are rare and racist comments not evident at all. Pupils are friendly and keen to succeed. 'I was rubbish at maths before,' said one, 'but now the teachers have got me right good because I enjoy being here so much'. They have a good understanding of needing to live a healthy lifestyle and of the importance of not smoking or engaging in substance abuse. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They work together and support each other well, celebrating successes in a wide number of settings such as actually catching a fish, digging a pond out, making a palm tree in a craft activity or successfully completing a mathematics question. Because of the enthusiasm of the staff working with them, pupils regain an interest in learning and in discovering interests, especially vocational skills which will contribute to the enrichment of their lives. As a result, they are in an excellent position to make the move to the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. All staff know pupils well and have a good understanding of the difficulties many face in their lives on a day-to-day basis. The sensitive way teachers react with pupils, influences their attitudes to work and their willingness to work hard. Staff generally have secure subject knowledge and use age-appropriate resources to gain pupils' interest. Most lessons move along at a good pace. Occasionally, teachers' insecure subject knowledge results in a lack of appropriate challenge and the pace slows. Good teamwork is a strong feature in all lessons, as are the positive relationships between staff and pupils. Small classes and individual support help break down the barriers which have hindered pupils' achievement in the past. Appropriate use of praise and encouragement also adds to pupils' motivation to work hard. Improved attendance and more positive attitudes mean that pupils and staff work harmoniously together in lessons. 'I like a challenge. If you can do the easy work the school gives you harder work and loads you up all the time', and, 'The teachers make it fun and want you to do well'. These comments from pupils capture the success of staff in motivating them to learn. The PRU has recently introduced a new system to track both academic and behavioural progress. This is enabling staff to monitor progress more effectively. This, in turn, supports the target-setting process. However, staff do not yet have sufficient opportunities to get together to moderate their assessments and, hence, identify the information that will help them pinpoint even more accurately the next step in learning for individual pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and pupils' social and emotional education meet the expectations for a pupil referral unit. In addition, the customised programme of activities devised for individual pupils, takes advantage of a wide range of venues for learning in the community. It also prioritises the subjects crucial to a quick return to mainstream school or the next stage in education. As pupils said, 'You get an equal opportunity to succeed.' There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation and to attend work related learning, reflecting the school's good promotion of equality. For young mums and pupils who are anxious about re-engaging with learning, there are the opportunities

to break the cycle of isolation and to strike up new relationships. As a parent typically commented, 'they can look to a successful future'. However, the lack of specialist facilities restricts the opportunities to develop some subjects, such as science, art, and design and technology. The PRU is constantly developing its effective partnerships with mainstream schools and some pupils successfully return to mainstream schooling, particularly those on the short-term intervention programme. However, about a fifth of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 move on to the Key Stage 4 PRU. A good outdoor education programme enables pupils to achieve well in physical education. Although the centre enriches the curriculum well during the school day, pupils have access to activities beyond it. A new focus on the international primary curriculum strengthens opportunities for pupils to extend their awareness of global and cultural diversity and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Focused work on topics such as 'Africa' week offers pupils an opportunity to access other cultures, although these opportunities remain limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The PRU offers very compassionate provision which gives outstanding care, guidance and support to pupils. 'They have changed my child's outlook on life – she is happy, and so I am happy and proud', is a typical comment from parents. The PRU meets all current government requirements to safeguard pupils. Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of staff's drive to enable pupils to make the most of the opportunities they are given to turn their lives around. Strategies and systems for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance and behaviour are constantly scrutinised and developed to accelerate their personal development and promote their inclusion in learning. To this end, the PRU has created a strong partnership with parents, who support the work of the centre. Effective induction procedures, which include visits to pupils in their previous provision, help pupils to move on quickly. Pupils feel valued and respected, many commenting on the absence of the negative judgements they had experienced previously. Adults are very good role models. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their lives, to identify priorities for their next step in education and to take back a belief in their own abilities. Pupils say they are confident to talk to any member of staff if they have a personal problem. The PRU works very effectively with Connexions and a wide range of other professional agencies. Many of these are based within the provision to provide both good academic and personal guidance and to give consistent advice to pupils. Pupils have specific academic and social and emotional targets. The recently introduced 'provision mapping' tracks pupils' access to the comprehensive range of available services and enables staff to monitor the impact of these more effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the PRU overall is good. The executive headteacher is very experienced and has a very clear strategic vision for the future. She provides the drive and determination to move the PRU forward. Since September two senior staff appointments have been made which have further strengthened the leadership and management. Staff and resources are deployed extremely productively and the whole-staff team is totally committed to giving pupils the best education possible. They are prepared to go that extra mile to ensure that pupils are secure and happy and enjoy their time in school. Staff have opportunities to work across both the PRU and the wider school which enhances subject expertise and benefits the pupils.

Self-evaluation is accurate and the identified areas for development are included in the development plan. Performance management systems are well established and support other monitoring arrangements. The management committee was formed almost a year ago and is developing its monitoring role but recognises that this is an area for further development. Some members have joint membership of the governing body with Springwell Community Special School. However, the management committee does not yet have the wider community membership to give it a more independent perspective for judging the overall effectiveness of the PRU. Plans for an exciting new building to further cement the strong working link with Springwell Community Special School demonstrates the innovative thinking that is at the heart of the PRU's drive to improve opportunities for pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	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	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	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?	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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?	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	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**

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspection team when we inspected your centre. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you and travelling around the area to see all the different activities you can take part in and the different places that you learn in.

Springwell Centre provides you with a good education. You are taught well and helped to adopt a healthy and safe lifestyle. You showed us that you are putting behind you many of your previous negative attitudes to learning, taking responsibility to control your own outbursts of anger and showing a responsible and caring attitude towards each other. We were especially impressed with the real effort all of you are making to get back into education, as we realise how difficult this can be for some of you. To talk with you and hear how much you are enjoying what you are learning is a very positive sign of the turnaround you are all making in your lives. Your behaviour is good and most of you achieve well and make good progress in reading, writing and development of mathematical skills. You make good gains in confidence and self-esteem while in the centre because of the outstanding levels of care and support you receive. Because of this it is good to know that some of you are almost ready to return to mainstream schools full time and that you are determined to succeed in those schools.

We have asked the staff to make sure that they continue to look closely at how you learn and the progress you make and have suggested that staff get together and exchange their views about this. This will help you to make even better progress. We have also asked suggested that members of the management committee come in more frequently and see how you are doing for themselves.

Thank you so much for sharing with us your view as to what an 'amazing place' your centre is. We were delighted to hear that many of you think, 'it's the best school in the whole wide world', and while we cannot judge the centre on a global basis, we can certainly agree with you that your head of centre and all the rest of the staff, lead and manage your education well!