

Forward Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134291
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	328881
Inspection date	29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Gregory
Headteacher	Mrs Yvette Wright
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
School address	Chorley Road Westhoughton Bolton BL5 3NA
Telephone number	01942 840569
Fax number	01942 840851

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Forward Centre serves the whole of the Bolton metropolitan district. It caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded or who are in danger of being permanently excluded from mainstream primary schools, and for pupils who have longer term needs as a result significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils enter and leave the centre at different times in the school year. The majority of pupils have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A number of pupils have additional difficulties such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection there were only boys on roll. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Two pupils are looked after by the local authority. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The centre holds the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Forward Centre is a good and improving pupil referral unit with outstanding features. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support which is provided by the centre is central to its success in helping pupils to improve their behaviour and re-engage with learning. As a result of the very good programme of personal and social education, and attractive reward schemes, pupils make very good progress in learning to tell right from wrong and in developing social skills. Relationships throughout the centre are very good and every pupil is valued and nurtured. As a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to the centre. The family support worker works effectively with parents and carers to support the pupils and ensure that they attend on a regular basis. Parents report that they value this close contact, and attendance rates are good. Standards on entry are below average owing to pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their previously disrupted education. However, because teaching is good, pupils achieve well. A growing number of pupils are entered for the national tests in Year 6 with a few pupils now achieving average results. Very good individual support and lively lessons ensure that pupils are motivated to learn and make good progress. They become confident to share their ideas with others and achieve well in speaking and listening. Systems to assess pupils' learning have improved since the previous inspection and teachers are using the information they collect more effectively to plan lessons. However, on a minority of occasions, written tasks are not sufficiently adapted to the levels of individual learners. As a consequence, some pupils make better progress in mathematics than in English and science.

The centre has been refurbished to provide very pleasant teaching areas and an updated, well designed outside play area. The curriculum is outstanding. It is enriched very well by activities, such as cookery, wrestling and drumming, which the pupils enjoy very much. There is a very good emphasis on promoting personal development through lessons in 'emotional literacy'. A strong programme is in place to develop the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils are prepared well to succeed in the community. Excellent links with outside agencies, such as the police and the drugs team, ensure that pupils make good progress in learning how to stay safe and healthy. Very strong links with mainstream schools and a good transition programme enable some pupils to make a successful return to mainstream education. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the centre through the active centre council and through working collaboratively together on the gardening project. Initiatives, such as visits by the pupils to a residential home for the elderly, build relationships with the local community and promote community cohesion well.

Pupils are involved well in setting and reviewing their targets for learning and behaviour. They understand very well the carefully planned systems to improve behaviour, such as the 'Gem Award', and know what they have to do to make their behaviour better and earn rewards. Detailed records demonstrate clearly the progress which individual pupils make in academic achievements and behaviour. However, although the centre is beginning to collate and analyse this information to identify any under-achievement, tracking the progress that groups of pupils make in different subjects is not yet sufficiently rigorous.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The head of centre provides an excellent role model for other staff in how to work effectively with pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. She has very high aspirations for the centre and is very effective in promoting a culture of continuous improvement. The management committee is active and effective and provides good support. The head of centre and the management committee

understand the centre well. Their evaluation of how well they are doing is largely accurate. The centre provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work set, particularly in writing, is always matched precisely to the learning levels of individual pupils.
- Make better use of information gained from assessment to check that all pupils are achieving equally well in the different subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of pupils on entry to the centre is generally below average with some pupils having very weak attainment. However, pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual behaviour and education plans with a few pupils now making outstanding progress. This is because the centre is very successful in helping the pupils to improve their behaviour and develop more positive attitude to learning. Although overall standards in the centre remain below average they are improving. Pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because their needs are met well. In 2008, 50% more Year 6 pupils were entered for the national tests than in the previous year. Inspection evidence reveals that attainment was best in mathematics, where three pupils reached the expected Level 4. The majority of pupils entered for English and science achieved Level 3. Pupils make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. This is because teachers are very effective in building pupils' confidence to express themselves. However, although achievement in writing is generally good, on a small number of occasions written work set is not matched precisely enough to learners' individual levels. When this happens it slows the progress which the pupils make.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

When they are admitted to the centre, most pupils have poor attitudes to learning and display challenging behaviour. However, they respond well to the variety of well planned reward systems and make good progress in improving their behaviour. Personal development is good. Pupils learn important social skills. They have good opportunities to reflect and, with sensitive support, begin to understand the consequences of their actions. The centre prepares the pupils effectively for contributing to the diverse society in which they live. The family support worker maintains close links with parents and carers. This helps to improve pupils' attendance. As a result, attendance is good overall. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly this year and is now low for a pupil referral unit.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the pupils and know them very well. As a result they are skilled at defusing potential behaviour problems and maintaining ordered lessons. When challenging behaviour does occur, staff are confident in dealing with it. They follow the centre's procedures very consistently, such as taking pupils to the 'quiet

room' for five minutes. The procedures are therefore effective and pupils learn well. Staff are particularly skilled at developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. As a result, pupils are willing to 'have a go' even when they find tasks difficult. Although pupils are now assessed thoroughly, on a small number of occasions teachers do not use information gained from the assessments to match work precisely enough to pupils' individual learning levels, especially in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has improved well since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. The rich variety of high quality activities offered to the pupils is highly motivating. For example, pupils are extremely enthusiastic about their wrestling classes, which promote their physical development well, whilst the opportunities to take part in wrestling competitions boost their self-esteem. Pupils enjoy the after-school club and practical subjects such as the gardening project and cookery lessons. Activities such as these contribute well to pupils developing a range of functional skills which place them in good stead for adult life. Pupils benefit from a very broad curriculum which includes the majority of subjects offered by mainstream primary schools. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. A clear focus on developing pupils' personal and social skills permeates all lessons and activities and is clearly specified in curriculum planning. All these strategies raise pupils' achievement and help pupils who are reintegrating to make a successful transition back into mainstream schools. The centre is very well resourced with interactive whiteboards in every classroom. There is a good range of specialist accommodation which includes a pleasant room for parents and carers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support for the pupils. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that even the most vulnerable pupils, such as those who are looked after by the local authority, feel secure, confident and settled. Pupils told the inspector that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety, including child protection procedures and the safe recruitment of staff, are securely in place. Although staff are trained in safe restraint procedures, these are rarely used because staff are skilled at helping pupils to manage their own behaviour. Pupils have very comprehensive individual plans to improve their learning and behaviour and are very well involved in setting and reviewing their targets. During the inspection, pupils were proud to show the inspector their personal files and explain their targets to her. Parents value the caring nature of the centre and praise the 'warm environment' which it provides for their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The head of the centre has been instrumental in creating a very child centred and nurturing environment where pupils with challenging behaviour can make real gains in improving their behaviour and achievement. She has ensured that the centre has adapted well so that it effectively meets the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. The monitoring of teaching and

learning has improved since the previous inspection. However, the current lack of a management structure occasionally restricts the time available for monitoring. This is because the head of centre is responsible for all aspects of day to day management and until recently had to cover for teachers who were absent. As a consequence, although assessment is much improved, the collation and analysis of the information arising from assessment is still under developed. Although the unit is only beginning to check systematically that its policies are effective, equality of opportunity is promoted well, for example through the curriculum. The management committee includes a good range of expertise. Members of the committee know the centre well. The committee fulfils its role well and provides good support and challenge.

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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?	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	2
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?	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	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	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**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited the centre. I enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you at the assembly. It was very useful to know what you think about the centre. I thought your drumming was really good!

I judged that the Forward Centre provides you with a good education.

There are some things that are particularly good about the Centre. These are:

- the outstanding care, guidance and support which you are given by the teachers and support staff
- the excellent curriculum – you have really good opportunities to take part in interesting activities like wrestling as well as plenty of time to work on the key skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT
- the good improvements which you make to your attitudes and behaviour so that you achieve well
- the outstanding links with outside agencies, schools and your parents and carers which support your learning and personal development very well
- the determined way in which the head of the centre is continuously striving to make the centre even better.

I have asked your teachers to improve two things. These are:

- to make sure that all work set, particularly in writing, is at just the right level for each of you
- to make better use of information gained from assessment to check that you are all achieving equally well in the different subjects of the curriculum.