

# Learning Support Service

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113657
<b>Local Authority</b>	Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	331179
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Charles Hackett

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	47
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Perry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	c/o Broadstone Youth Centre Moor Road Poole BH18 8AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 698606
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 261949

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

### Description of the school

- Poole Learning Support Service caters for pupils who for a variety of reasons are unable to access mainstream education. The service supports:
  - permanently excluded students
  - pupils with medical needs
  - school-age mothers
  - vulnerable, anxious non-attenders
  - pupils in Poole hospital
  - pupils at the adolescent mental health unit
  - pupils awaiting a place on a school roll.

Permanently excluded students are taught at two bases: one for Years 7 to 10 (the Gaff) and another for Year 11 pupils (Broadstone Youth Centre). Other pupils are taught either in a schoolroom at the hospital, the unit for pupils with mental health issues (Pine Cottage) or a temporary base located in a converted bungalow in the grounds of a school (Phoenix). A few are taught individually in local libraries until they are able to make use of the Phoenix Centre. The Phoenix is a new facility being developed this term to replace the need to teach pupils in Poole library. When Poole Learning Support Service was inspected in October 2007, it was judged to require special measures.

A new permanent headteacher took up her post in September 2008 and a temporary assistant manager started in January 2009.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (14) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Poole Learning Support Service is now providing a satisfactory level of provision for the wide range of vulnerable young people it supports. The best practice is found within the hospital base where teaching and learning and the curriculum are good, enabling these pupils to make good progress.

The service has made significant improvements since its previous full inspection because of good leadership and management. A promising start had been made prior to this academic year but, since the appointment of a permanent headteacher, progress has accelerated considerably. In the relatively short time she has been in post, she has shown exceptional commitment and determination to bring about significant improvements. Given excellent backing by the chair of the management committee, the headteacher has successfully tackled many of the weaknesses that previously existed, especially those related to the provision for permanently excluded pupils at the Gaff and Broadstone. An excellent improvement plan provides a good framework for improvement. Additionally, funds have been acquired and draft plans drawn up for new purpose built accommodation for the education of the permanently excluded pupil group. Overall leadership and management are good and, given the impressive gains made already, the service's capacity to improve is good. The key weaknesses identified at the time of the inspection in October 2007 have been tackled successfully.

Pupil standards are average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Year 11 pupils now have access to a good range of GCSEs and the number of passes being gained is increasing. The results of mock examinations and the number of pupils taking science modular tests confirm that standards are improving. For example, during the inspection all permanently excluded Year 11 pupils came into school and completed a science modular paper. This represents a marked improvement on the experiences of previous years. Individual pupils' academic progress is recorded, but at Broadstone and the Gaff the data systems for tracking performance are not fully developed. The service acknowledges it needs an improved system to be in a position to be fully aware of pupils' academic and personal development.

Pupils' personal development is good and this leads to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory overall. It is good for those pupils attending because of medical reasons, but at the Gaff and Broadstone the attendance of a few pupils is unsatisfactory. Pupils enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities being introduced. For many, these are very effective at re-engaging pupils in education. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. The total ban on smoking at the Year 11 centre is helping with this, as are the increased opportunities for these pupils to take part in sporting activities.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and in some areas, notably at the hospital, teaching is good. Over the last year, much has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all bases, although long term staff absences have slowed down progress at Broadstone and the Gaff. While teachers' expectations are higher than before, work at these two sites is not always closely matched to the different needs and abilities of individual pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory with some strong features. These include the good links with outside providers and other agencies, such as the youth service. Good opportunities to improve basic skills are supplemented with programmes to develop citizenship, personal, social and health education

and work related learning, including work experiences. The curriculum is designed to enable students to be well prepared for a return to mainstream education and for their future beyond school.

Good care, support and guidance play an important part in assisting pupils to deal with the many challenging aspects of their lives. Safeguarding arrangements are all in place and these contribute well to pupils feeling safe in all of the bases used. A revised marking system means that pupils are given good guidance on what they need to do to improve, as well as very positive encouragement to try as hard as they can with their work.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement plans for the relocation of the bases for educating permanently excluded pupils to new purpose built accommodation.
- At Broadstone and the Gaff, improve the systems to track pupils' progress.
- At Broadstone and the Gaff, ensure that work set is geared to the differing needs and abilities of individual pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Almost all permanently excluded pupils are now making satisfactory progress in most areas of the curriculum. Higher expectations of what pupils might achieve have been key in driving up levels of performance. Over the last term, the best progress has been in English and mathematics and in a new work related course. In the hospital base, pupils make good progress in their learning, the youngest pupils often making outstanding progress in reading. One parent confirmed this by saying that she was 'thrilled' by her son's improvement in reading over his three week stay in the hospital. At the Phoenix centre progress is currently more limited because resources and equipment are still in the process of being developed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are able to make positive contributions to the communities at each of the teaching bases. For example, members of the Years 7 to 10 unit have voted to keep the name of the Gaff when they moved to new premises. Those at Broadstone have shown that through improved behaviour they can access more of the youth service facilities, including their leisure equipment at lunch breaks. Behaviour at both these centres is improving, although there are still a few pupils at the Gaff whose poor behaviour is limiting the progress they can make. Improved achievements in English and mathematics and the good work-related curriculum, including work experience, is preparing pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Pupils enjoy learning and feel safe at the hospital base. They are eager to visit the school room because they say it is a happy place where they enjoy and have fun in their learning. In all the bases, pupils increase their self-esteem and confidence and are well prepared for challenges they will face in the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

At Broadstone and the Gaff there has been considerable recent support to develop the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example, there has been a strong focus on improving the quality of lesson planning. This has led to lesson plans showing clearly what pupils are expected to learn. More is needed to ensure work is always planned well to match the differing needs and abilities of pupils.

Throughout the service, teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, excellent relationships with pupils, and good use of behaviour management strategies to keep pupils on task. In the hospital, teaching and learning benefit from good communication with the pupils' mainstream school. This means pupils learn what they would be learning in their regular classes, as well as receiving good one to one support to improve their basic skills. Teaching at Pine Cottage is adapted well to pupils' emotional and medical needs. The expert knowledge that the teacher has of pupils' illness is used very effectively to provide learning opportunities that best match with the pupils' current needs. Because of this, the progress pupils are capable of making is maximised, despite their illnesses. Teaching and learning at the Phoenix are made difficult because of the lack of sufficient resources such as computers.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Much has been done recently to improve the quality of the curriculum at the Gaff and Broadstone. Whilst staff absences have reduced the impact of this, pupils are now experiencing a wider range of learning opportunities and activities. Plans show how this will be developed further.

The curriculum for pupils at the hospital base is flexibly designed to be as relevant as possible to individual pupils. Every effort is made to ensure pupils are able to return to mainstream having not missed out the work their peers have been undertaking. Primary pupils have many opportunities to improve their literacy and number skills. Older pupils are given good support to continue with the examination courses they are following.

At Pine Cottage the curriculum is carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual interests, their prior learning, and their medical condition. Whenever possible, pupils are prepared for GCSEs and in the past some have achieved outstandingly good grades. The curriculum for these pupils is reduced because the teacher responsible for this group is only employed on a part-time basis.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Throughout the service, pupils receive very high quality pastoral support that is most effective in engaging them in learning and helping them to address the challenging issues they face. The warm, caring environments at each base encourage pupils to talk easily with staff about their difficulties. This helps staff guide them well in their learning and in their personal development as they prepare for the next stage of their education. For those who have experienced difficulties out of school, very good links with other agencies such as the youth offending team and Connexions are used well to provide additional support. At all of the centres

for pupils with medical needs, the work of the education staff complements the work of the medical staff very well, supporting pupils' recovery and especially in preparing them to be as self-sufficient as possible on leaving. The introduction of learning mentors at Broadstone and the Gaff is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and their behaviour. As a result of this good guidance more pupils are making better rates of progress. Not all staff though are effective at managing the behaviour of some of these pupils.

Good attention to detail ensures that at all the bases pupils are safe. Thorough risk assessments are backed up by staff receiving up to date training in key aspects such as child protection and positive handling. Individual pupils' progress is monitored, but at Broadstone and the Gaff performance data is not used consistently enough to track overall performance.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Effective self-evaluation has enabled the service to have an accurate picture of its effectiveness and to identify weaker aspects. Many of these weaknesses are related to the provision for permanently excluded pupils. Through good leadership and management, considerable progress has been made addressing these issues and this has already led to pupils making better progress and increasing their enjoyment of education. Monitoring systems are very rigorous and are having a positive impact on provision. For example, there have now been three audits of teachers' planning and a scrutiny of these shows real progress in the quality of plans. Similarly, information gained from lesson observations confirms improved practice. Staff absences through long term sickness have slowed progress in some areas. The good progress over the last two terms shows clearly that there is a good capacity to improve even further.

The management committee is very effective, especially its excellent chair. The committee has held the service to account and has given invaluable support, helping its work to be seen in a much more positive light than previously and promoting the service as a strong member of the community. Individually, each centre is developing good links with outside agencies and pupils are making greater use of community facilities. Pupils' work in humanities and work related learning is also enhancing their knowledge of the wider community.

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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?	3
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?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

7 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Poole Learning Support Service, Poole BH18 8AZ

Thank you for being so helpful when my colleague and I visited the service recently. We both very much enjoying meeting you all and seeing how much you appreciated the support the service is now providing.

Our report judges the service to be satisfactory with some good features. A key strength is the work of the new headteacher who has ensured that leadership and management are good. This has led to recent improvements and plans for even more developments, including for some of you to move to new premises. We think that your achievements are satisfactory and for many of you with medical needs they are good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving, as is the curriculum.

We consider that you make good improvements with your personal development because of the good care, support and guidance that you receive. Good links with other agencies and schools are used well to ensure you can keep up with pupils in mainstream schools.

To develop the service even further we have recommended these priorities.

- Implement plans for the relocation of Broadstone and the Gaff to new purpose built accommodation.
- At Broadstone and the Gaff improve the systems for tracking the progress you are making.
- At Broadstone and the Gaff make sure work set is geared to your differing needs and abilities. We are confident that you will continue to enjoy being with the service and that you will be successful in the examinations many of you are due to take.

Yours faithfully

Charles Hackett Lead inspector