

Clifton Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135504
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	331626
Inspection date	1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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)	37
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Harper
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	117 Silverdale Clifton Swinton Manchester Manchester M27 8GW
Telephone number	0161 778 0970
Fax number	0161 793 5282

Age group	14–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The Clifton Centre is a pupil referral unit for pupils from across Salford. It came into being in September 2008 following the merger of two former units. It provides mainly for girls and boys who have been permanently excluded from mainstream education. Boys outnumber girls by approximately three to one. Pupils are predominantly White British. They are mainly from areas of significant economic disadvantage. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. Many pupils have previous histories of non-attendance or poor attendance. A few pupils with known learning disabilities and/or difficulties have 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: 3

The centre is satisfactory and it has made a sound start. Aspects of its work are good including the curriculum and the measures it takes to promote pupils' safety and welfare. Parents who made their views known are pleased with the centre and with the positive effect it has had on the outlook of their children. In their view, the centre promotes tolerance and respect and encourages pupils to improve as much as they can.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' starting points are below those expected for their age and their attainments are low. A majority make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 11 pupils reach standards that are below average but not exceptionally low. They follow GCSE courses at Foundation Level and gain a large number of Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) Unit Awards in vocational courses. A minority make slower progress chiefly because they do not attend as regularly as they should. Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils have good knowledge of how to stay healthy and keep fit. They consider the needs of others and are open minded in their appreciation of cultures other than their own. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and a minority of lessons are good. Pupils' behaviour is always managed well and learning is not disrupted. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, teachers spend more time talking than they should and do not make full use of resources such as electronic whiteboards. In the best lessons planning is thorough and what is to be achieved is made clear. The pace of these lessons is brisk and the interest of the pupils is quickly captured. Tasks are sufficiently challenging and teachers ensure that all pupils get the help that they need.

The curriculum is good. It prepares pupils well for return to mainstream school or for training or employment. The centre has put in place a well balanced programme of vocational courses to complement the basic skills programmes and academic options it offers. The curriculum is well focused on personal development and enhanced by a range of exciting activities. Care, support and guidance are good. The centre provides good care and is vigilant in ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. Good liaison with other agencies promotes pupils' well-being and helps to keep them informed about their future options.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The centre manager gives clear direction and staff share with her a common purpose to improve standards. The leadership recognises the significance of the centre's unsatisfactory attendance. Both conventional and imaginative means to improve it have been put in place. However, these have had little success. There is a supportive management committee that meets regularly and to which the centre manager reports. However, the local authority retains responsibility for setting the budget and overseeing expenditure. Leaders set out spending priorities and use materials and resources satisfactorily. They are not responsible for the premises in which the centre is located. These are in very poor condition and have a demoralising effect on both pupils and staff. The centre has occasionally been required by the local authority to provide for temporarily excluded pupils. However, it has no separate facilities in which to do this. These pupils have been included in lessons with those on the roll of the centre. This practice is unsatisfactory. There has been satisfactory progress on most fronts since the centre opened. The present leadership are capable of sustaining this, giving the centre sound potential to improve. The centre offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and personal development by taking all necessary steps to ensure that they attend school.
- Work closely with the local authority to provide accommodation for the centre that is fit for purpose.
- Provide separate accommodation and suitable programmes of work for local pupils referred to the centre on the sixth day of temporary exclusion.
- Improve teaching by making sure that the best use is made of time and full use is made of all resources including electronic whiteboards.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When they arrive at the centre pupils' standards are below those expected for their age. Those who attend regularly soon begin to make up lost ground. Their progress is mostly satisfactory and occasionally good. The centre's records show that by the end of Year 11 these pupils attain just below average standards. They complete GCSE courses in English and mathematics. Results of this year's GCSE examinations are not yet known, however, the pupils entered appear to be on course to achieve grades in the range C to G. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 enter for the adult literacy and numeracy tests. Two thirds of those entered in 2009 gained a pass at Level 1 or Level 2. Pupils' work in art and design is often of good quality; however, pupils too frequently lack sufficient concentration and determination to complete their course-work in order to gain examination success. Pupils do well in a broad range of vocational courses. They gain AQA Unit Awards for specific learning in information and communication technology, building and construction, personal fitness, hair and beauty, catering and vehicle maintenance. Many pupils are strongly motivated by the practical nature of vocational learning. There is no evidence of differences in achievement between girls and boys. The very small number of pupils who are looked after, who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others. The major factor affecting achievement is attendance. It is very clear from the centre's records that pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory make too little progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils respond to the respect and encouragement they are given at the centre. They soon come to understand that staff members are on their side. They improve their behaviour and their attitudes to learning. They trust their teachers and those who help and support them. They are confident and not afraid of being bullied. They act safely when using potentially harmful materials in the classroom. Only very rarely is learning temporarily disrupted by the thoughtless actions of individuals. Such situations are swiftly resolved. Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Many who formerly had a limited and potentially unhealthy diet now enjoy the balanced school meals prepared at the centre. They are keen on physical exercise. They take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. During the inspection, most readily took part in rigorous skipping for a health and fitness challenge. They make their views known to their

teachers during tutor time but as there is no pupil council they are not fully involved in promoting change and improvement. Attendance is inadequate. This suggests that there are pupils who do not enjoy their education. However, those who attend regularly clearly do enjoy it and benefit from the good preparation it gives them for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is frequently good. Teachers, teaching assistants and vocational course instructors know their pupils well. They make their expectations and instructions clear but avoid unnecessary confrontation. As a result there is a relaxed atmosphere in classrooms. Relationships are positive and learning benefits. Teachers assess their pupils regularly and tell them what they must do to improve. Under recently introduced revisions to the 'learning ladder', the centre's assessment and recording system, pupils are increasingly involved in self-assessment. In some areas of the curriculum, notably in art and design and vocational courses, teachers' subject knowledge is good. However, it is has not been possible to ensure that all English and mathematics lessons are taught by specialists. The centre has not been able to replace the qualified teacher of science who recently left. Occasionally the pace of lessons is slowed by teachers talking for too long or having to re-explain instructions. Opportunities to encourage pupils to be more active learners by fully using the interactive capacity of the electronic whiteboards are not always taken.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The centre has responded imaginatively to the challenge of designing a curriculum that meets the learning needs of pupils and acknowledges their aspirations. For those who will best benefit from an academic approach, especially pupils for whom return to mainstream school is a realistic possibility, the centre can offer GCSE courses in up to five subjects including English, mathematics, science and art and design. For most pupils, however, a curriculum based on the development of important key skills together with strong elements of vocational and practical learning has been found to be more motivating. The centre has taken effective steps to introduce and develop such learning opportunities. It offers its pupils the choice of five vocational options in which work is externally accredited. Planning to enhance the level of these qualifications is at an advanced stage. There is good provision for pupils' physical well-being through physical education, personal fitness programmes and opportunities to play football and take part in other outdoor pursuits. Personal development is promoted through personal, social and health education and specific courses such as that provided by Fire Team 6, a group of local firefighters who actively engage with school children. This adventurous course is aimed at encouraging young people to work effectively with others. These developments make the curriculum good. However, there has not yet been time for it to have full impact upon achievement and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Those who work at the centre place the strongest priority on keeping pupils healthy and safe. Procedures for safeguarding meet current government requirements. A policy for child-protection

has been put in place and all members of staff have been trained in how to respond to matters concerning the welfare of pupils. Sufficient attention is paid to risk assessment. Parents freely praise the work of the staff and feel that they are considered partners in their children's education. Teachers meet with their pupils to discuss their progress each term. Increasingly pupils evaluate their own progress. The centre has good links with schools and the local college. It is effectively supported by agencies including Connexions and by the police service. The community police officer is a familiar and supportive presence at the centre. The centre takes a lead in organising support from relevant professionals for pupils experiencing difficulties that affect their welfare and well-being. The centre works hard and imaginatively to get pupils to come to school. It has arranged for its buses to call at their homes and it provides each pupil who attends with breakfast. It gives prizes for improved attendance and is now negotiating with Manchester Challenge to make these more meaningful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The centre manager understands what must be done to help pupils succeed and keeps a close eye on pupils' performance. The centre is broadly accurate in its self-evaluation. The leadership is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. This is well illustrated by its successful work to match the curriculum to pupils' needs and interests. In its first year, the leadership has been faced with significant challenges. The centre manager was unable to take up her post until April. The centre's premises are very dilapidated and specialist teachers have left and have proved impossible to replace. In addition, the centre has been required to make short term provision, for which it is not resourced, for some temporarily excluded pupils. However, a sound start has been made in providing suitable education for permanently excluded pupils and aspects of the centre's work are good. Promoting community cohesion is in its initial stages. Satisfactory steps have been taken to help pupils develop a sense of their rights and responsibilities in the centre and to develop trust in local institutions. Partnerships between the centre and local sports clubs are in place. Work to extend pupils' knowledge of the broader United Kingdom and global communities is planned. The leadership has taken measures to improve attendance. However, these steps have not worked and poor attendance that badly affects achievement remains the centre's biggest problem. The leadership plans to seek help from Greater Manchester Challenge to set new priorities for action on this. The centre is well resourced but the building is in an extremely poor state. Parents and some pupils are put off by it. There is no definite timetable for the local authority's plans to re-house the centre.

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
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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?	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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 being so polite when I inspected your centre. It is not always easy to get on with your work when someone you do not know is watching but you did this very well. I thought that you behaved properly in lessons and made sensible points when you answered questions. I also thought you were very enthusiastic when you took part in the skipping challenge. You kept going well on a very hot day.

I found that your centre is satisfactory and that some things about it are good. Teaching is satisfactory and those of you who attend regularly make progress and achieve what might be expected. You are well cared for and given good guidance and advice. Some of you have learned a lot about keeping healthy and safe. You have developed your understanding of others by, for example, coming to appreciate the art and the beliefs of people from backgrounds that are different to yours. However, some of you do not attend as well as you should and you lose a good chance to learn and to become more sociable. The centre gives you interesting and frequently exciting things to do. It is satisfactorily led and managed and the staff have worked hard to make the best of the building which is in a poor state. I also noted that there are at present no separate facilities for pupils who are sometimes sent to the centre temporarily.

To improve the centre I have asked the manager and staff to:

- help you achieve more and improve your personal development by finding ways to improve attendance – you can really help with this!
- work with the local authority to improve accommodation
- make separate provision for pupils who attend the centre because they are temporarily excluded
- make teaching even better by making lessons brisker and using all the resources such as the electronic whiteboards more frequently.

Thank you once more for your help and good luck in the future.