

Learning Support Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135558
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	331630
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	12
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr George Collins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Burnside Avenue Chingford London E4 8YJ
Telephone number	020 8496 1964
Fax number	020 8709 3001

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Learning Support Centre provides for pupils with complex behavioural, emotional and social needs. All have experienced a disrupted education or are at risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream school. The centre is the place where children who have been permanently excluded are sent. Some pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There is a high turnover of pupils, which means the unit has to adapt on a regular basis to their challenging individual needs. Most pupils are boys. Many are entitled to free school meals and the unit educates pupils from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Learning Support Centre offers a good standard of education. It meets its objectives of ensuring that all pupils make progress and have the best set of skills possible to enable them to access future education and life opportunities. The unit is most effective in improving pupils' enthusiasm for learning and reintegrating them into mainstream or special schools. It has notable strengths, particularly in the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils. The unit is highly effective in supporting each pupil in specific ways that meet their personal and learning needs. This enables the pupils to make good progress despite their difficulties. The service works especially well with other schools and specialist agencies to provide for pupils, and has good partnerships with others to foster their well-being. The unit's work with parents is most effective. Parents and carers appreciate the support that they receive and the difference it makes to their children. One of the large majority who returned the parental questionnaire commented, 'I am very impressed with the school's support, communication and teamwork. Staff recognise and meet my child's needs, and it has been a pleasure working with the school at all times.' All other respondents who made written comments expressed similar sentiments.

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards on entry are well below average, with especially weak literacy and numeracy levels. Because of the unit's focus on improving behaviour and interest in learning, most make significant improvements by the time they leave, even though some only stay for a short time. The unit is very good at raising attainment in literacy and numeracy and in giving pupils greater confidence in these skills. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, are good. Some interesting artwork encouraged the pupils to look at other cultures, and they were studying some aspects of Africa as part of their charitable efforts. Such activities encourage the pupils to think about communities other than their own; there is a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, with pupils especially being encouraged to make a contribution to their own community as well as supporting charitable efforts to help children in Africa. Attendance rates are above average, and frequently far better than those recorded before the pupils joined the service. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding; they respect their learning environment and show pride in their work.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers, along with all the support staff, know their pupils very well. They work together in lessons very effectively to ensure that pupils make progress towards the challenging targets set in their individual education plans. On the very rare occasions that inappropriate behaviour occurs, it is dealt with in a calm and safe manner. The lessons observed during the visit were interesting and well planned, but senior staff rightly acknowledge that lesson monitoring is not sufficiently robust to ensure that staff adopt a consistent approach to planning what pupils will learn in lessons, and then checking that the desired learning has taken place. The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of pupils, reflecting well the curriculum that they would be following in mainstream schools. This supports pupils' academic progress and personal development well. A particular strength is the broad range of enrichment activities, especially the opportunities for physical recreation. The on-site play area has been well designed and offers a safe environment for the pupils to let off steam and enjoy themselves. The picnic area will no doubt be popular once the weather improves. The good progress made by pupils is fostered through an outstanding programme for care, guidance and support. Multi-agency work provides very well for the pupils' varying needs, and target-setting, monitoring and mentoring procedures are detailed and thorough, with the pupils all set challenging academic and social targets. The improvements made are acknowledged at the

'achievement' assemblies held each Friday. For many, their negative attitudes diminish as their confidence and self-esteem improve.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his deputy provide a very clear direction for the school, and focus on improving the quality of education it offers. Consequently, there is a very strong sense of teamwork, which has promoted improvements in behaviour, learning and achievement. Governance is satisfactory, but is improving; the governors have purpose and direction. The unit's good record of reintegrating pupils into mainstream or special schools; its clear focus on improving pupils' behaviour, learning and attendance; and the clear direction set for further developments show there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Regularly monitor teaching and learning to ensure that teachers make the purpose of the lesson clear to the pupils, and carefully check at the end of the lesson what learning has taken place.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Levels of attainment are well below average. This reflects the extent of the pupils' special needs and, for some, their negative experience of mainstream education. The progress they make, however, is good. In relation to their low starting points, many are achieving well and are at least meeting their challenging targets, with some reaching levels comparable to those expected for their age. There are no significant differences in the levels of attainment made by different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils eat healthily throughout the day and, apart from formal physical education lessons, benefit from daily exercise at break times and in the afternoon activity sessions. Healthy living is encouraged in other ways, and appropriate emphasis is placed on the dangers of substance abuse, for example. The pupils form good relationships with each other and with their staff, and this is reflected in the excellent behaviour observed in lessons and around the unit. The working environment is a settled and peaceful one, where the pupils enjoy their education. One boy said he liked everything about the school and another said, 'welcome to our classroom' when I visited his lesson. The pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility, and they contribute to the school community by making their views and ideas known. The pupils are also encouraged to raise funds for charities. Pupils are adequately prepared for their future education. They are improving their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills but, because their standards are frequently low, their future economic well-being is developing satisfactorily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. All the lessons observed during this visit were at least satisfactory, and most were good. The pupils regularly make good progress in their learning because their teachers take care and time to explain ideas, and work with the

pupils individually to help them achieve. Progress is further helped by the good support offered by the well-briefed teaching assistants. Staff have high expectations, and the pupils respond well and show interest. The classrooms are peaceful, and the pupils behave extremely well. Some lessons make good use of ICT, such as the interactive whiteboards, to stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers' planning is good; it identifies what pupils should learn and provides activities to help them make progress based on their particular needs; however, teachers do not always make the purpose of the lesson clear to the pupils, nor do they always carefully check at the end of the lesson what learning has taken place.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The thoughtfully planned curriculum ensures that all pupils are well prepared for part-time and full-time reintegration into mainstream schools. There is also a good focus on provision for improving literacy and numeracy skills, though the staff acknowledge that more work is needed here to ensure greater consistency. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. The unit regards the whole school day as time for learning, which ensures constant supervision and involvement of pupils. The curriculum is enlivened through extra-curricular activities. These are often sports-based, but include other interesting activities such as a computing club and Dhol drumming, which is very popular. The learning environment is enhanced greatly by various displays, including those that support the pupils' achievements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent quality of the support and guidance offered supports the pupils' well-being extremely effectively. This results in pupils improving their personal skills and academic achievement. The service has been particularly successful in ensuring improvements in attendance. Arrangements to support pupils' reintegration into mainstream schools are most effective, and are highly praised by local primary school headteachers. The unit robustly tracks pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, as well as their individual performance in relation to National Curriculum levels and individual education plan targets. Through this system, the unit has been able to set individualised programmes to meet each pupil's precise needs. An excellent system of rewards and sanctions underpins the entire support programme.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Though the leadership team is reasonably new, it has successfully secured a number of improvements. They have established a service that is popular with parents and liked by pupils. Though some of the monitoring arrangements in relation to teaching and learning need improving - pupils are not always told what they will learn, and the learning that has taken place is not always properly checked at the end of lessons - many good systems, designed to ensure that the pupils enjoy their education and make at least good progress, have been established. Some of the systems are new; others are developments of what existed before the new team was established. The service has a clear purpose, and all staff are committed to improving the educational experience of the pupils. The new management committee, formed to meet statutory regulations that have been recently introduced for pupil referral units, is

developing its effectiveness as a critical and supportive friend, though the chairwoman acknowledges that her team are in their infancy and that more work needs to be done.

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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	NA
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	1
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	3

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	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	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	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**

24 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Learning Support Centre, London, E4 8YJ

I recently spent a day with you, seeing you in lessons and joining you in other activities. Thank you for making me so welcome. I also chatted to some of you, who told me what you were doing in lessons, how your behaviour was improving, and what you thought about the unit. I was impressed with your friendliness and openness, and it was good to see so many happy children.

You receive a good education. This is because:

- your staff have your best interests at heart, and make every effort to make sure that you will do well
- your staff work hard to ensure that you are safe and well cared for, and use lots of other people to help you
- your staff work closely with your parents and carers to improve your education
- your progress is good, and you are well prepared for integration to mainstream schools
- you are involved in the life of the school
- teachers make your lessons interesting and varied
- the curriculum is interesting, and includes some very good extra activities for you to take part in and enjoy
- your staff have plans to make things even better for you.

To make things even better for you I have suggested that:

- your staff improve your lessons even further, by monitoring what happens and making it clearer what they want you to learn.

Thank you for making me so welcome, and good luck for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Bill Stoneham

Lead Inspector