

The Young Mums Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105147
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336433
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen HMI

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	13–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Birchby
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
School address	Harvey Early Years Centre Shaw Street Bolton BL3 6HU
Telephone number	01204 334026
Fax number	01204 337391
Email address	jill.ingham@bolton.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited three lessons and held meetings with the chair of the management committee, the head of unit and members of staff, current and former students, and representatives from the local authority. She observed the school's work, looked at work by current and former students, and scrutinised documents, including performance data, personal education plans, assessment records, development plans and monitoring records, and questionnaires returned by two students, seven members of staff and two parents.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of personal education plans in ensuring students achieve their best
- the impact of teaching on the students' understanding of their progress across the curriculum
- the quality of pastoral care and development of parenting skills.

Information about the school

The unit has places for up to 15 girls in Years 10 and 11 who are pregnant or who have recently given birth. Students are dual registered and remain on the roll of their mainstream school. As the unit is a registered examination centre students follow the unit's courses, returning after confinement to complete their Key Stage 4 education. At the time of the inspection, one of the five students on roll was on maternity leave and six students in the early stages of pregnancy had enquired about places. The students come from different parts of Bolton, often from areas of considerable social and economic deprivation. All are White British. None is looked after by the local authority. None has a statement of special educational needs.

The unit is located within the Harvey Children's Centre, close to the centre of Bolton, and there is childcare available for the students' babies in the Young Mums Nursery. The childcare provision was inspected separately but at the same time as this inspection. The childcare report can be accessed from the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding unit and is, as parents and staff in mainstream schools readily acknowledge, 'a very special place'. It meets exceptionally well its aims of ensuring students do well academically and gain parenting skills. It has sustained strengths noted in the previous inspection, most especially in the high level of pastoral care. It has also been successful in raising standards to broadly average and improving attendance – some students manage almost 100% attendance apart from maternity leave. Given that students have often attended irregularly in mainstream schools, this is no mean feat. Students and their families know the unit provides a chance to, 'make a fresh start' and that the staff do all they can to help the students. A former student commented that she had had, 'the best year of my life' and had surprised herself in gaining good examination results. This is not unusual. Students achieve well, often making marked leaps in learning and exceeding the targets set. All leave with at least five qualifications and nearly all take up college or sixth-form places on leaving the unit. The students' positive attitude reflects the warm relationships between students and staff, including medical and care professionals. The students rise to the staff's high expectations and develop a good work ethic. Parents, students and staff from mainstream schools comment on the often remarkable transformation in students' attitude and approach.

The head of unit has developed a very strong team who understand the emotional and educational needs of the students and who share a commitment to providing the best. Staff reach out to the students and families, often going beyond what is reasonably expected, to remove barriers to learning. They recognise and reward small steps in the students' personal and academic progress and are prompt to take action when students are absent without notice or are having personal difficulties. Flexibility of approach as well as innovative solutions, often involving negotiation and liaison with several agencies, are effective in engaging students in learning. A good example is the introduction to the unit for some students by an invitation to 'Bumps and Babies' sessions at the Children's Centre. Excellent partnership with mainstream secondary schools facilitated the decision to register the unit as an examination centre and to run courses that echo mainstream provision and which students find motivating and relevant. The introduction of a course in child development has proved particularly rewarding; students draw on observations of children in the Young Mums Nursery and most achieved a good pass in the GCSE examinations in 2009. In mathematics, students do not fare as well. There are gaps in their mathematical knowledge and students find the subject less enjoyable.

The quality of teaching overall is good. It is not of a consistently high standard to ensure that students' achievement is equally good in all subjects. The staff are skilful in cajoling

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and encouraging students who respond well. In lessons and in the unit, the students behaved maturely; they were polite, respectful and showed interest and concern for others. Overall, their behaviour is exemplary. They feel safe in the unit, appreciate being treated as young adults and learn to accept the responsibility this brings. Although it is a traumatic period in their lives, the students benefit greatly from the security of being with caring staff and others in a similar situation. While staff keep a close eye on the students, there is little to chart the students' personal progress and some targets are too general to boost improvement in the short term.

The unit is very well led and managed. All the staff feel valued and have a clear understanding of what the unit is trying to achieve and their role in it. As a result there is a ready willingness to reflect on what the unit does, to acknowledge where things are not as successful and to discuss how best to move on. The recommendations from this inspection echo aspects already in the development plan. Recent training for members of the management committee has clarified their roles including the need to probe more critically into what the unit does and what it achieves. All in all, the unit is very well placed to sustain its strengths and improve even further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by sharing effective practice in teaching and learning and tailoring support to fill gaps in students' knowledge.
- Refine measures to track and assess students' personal and academic progress so that individual targets for improvement are sharper.
- Strengthen the contribution of the management committee in checking on the work of the unit and challenging its impact.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Over their time in the unit students make significant strides personally and academically. From often a low base, students gain good passes at GCSE and exceed their predicted grades. In 2009, all passed in science, English literature, English language, mathematics and child development, and most gained at least grade C. All passed Level 2 in preparation for working life and also in numeracy. These results were an improvement on those of 2008 and 2007 and reflect students' marked progress as well as the gains made in workplace skills and their attitude to study.

Students new to the unit have settled in quickly and have risen to the staff's high expectations of them regarding behaviour, work and attitude. In lessons, students move on well in their learning and gain personal confidence. They listen, respond to questions and participate in tasks. They come alive in practical sessions: students enjoyed looking for the rhymes in song lyrics and unpicking the meaning, and there was considerable fun when comparing their own physical features. They complete their tasks, sometimes asking for explanations or checking spellings. They take care with their work: word processed stories made good use of descriptive language to set a beach scene, and completed child studies included well captioned photographs.

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Students show an increasing sense of personal responsibility. They are conscious of changes during their pregnancy and of the need to make healthy lifestyle choices.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The excellent, tailored curriculum, along with the high level of care, guidance and support, are major factors in the unit's success in raising standards and sustaining a high level of provision that meets each student's needs.

The staff select courses and work experience placements best fitted to the students. The introduction of courses in functional skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology has provided a valuable avenue for students to gain national qualifications in a relatively short time span. Staff also work successfully with mainstream schools and draw on personal expertise and specialist knowledge to support students who are already some way into their options. Similarly, individual support is provided to help students catch up, such as in learning multiplication tables. A key strength of the excellent curriculum is the time given to developing personal awareness. The whole team, including the midwife, health visitor, learning mentor, nursery nurses

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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and re-integration teacher ensure that the students gain a good understanding of how to care for themselves and their babies, how to stay safe and how to manage on a budget. In addition there are activities, including horse riding and cookery, to promote physical and creative skills.

Each student is treated as an individual in lessons and the life of the unit. Scores and information from tests on entry to the unit provide the basis for setting academic targets and tracking students' progress in meeting them. The staff seek the students' views of how well they are doing and are prompt in finding ways to resolve issues. Although the unit is primarily put forward as a workplace, the staff show keen interest in the students' health and their babies' progress. This warm, caring but no nonsense approach is at the core of the provision.

Teachers plan thoroughly, have good subject knowledge and interact well with the students: cueing answers, praising good responses and building up students' self esteem. The staff make the students well aware of what they need to know to give a good answer in an examination. Occasionally the staff are too quick to give information rather than help the students to make the links themselves, but frequent reviews and repetition of content ensure students move on well in their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership of the head of unit is valued by all as being central to the unit's recent successes. She has enabled all staff to come to a common understanding about the unit's purpose and the way forward. Changes in organisation, use of resources and curriculum content have proved highly beneficial in meeting students' needs and given good value for money. The development plan is founded on an accurate overview of the unit's performance. The management committee is supportive and oversees effectively the operation of the unit. It is well poised to put into action agreed changes that should enable members to question more critically how well the unit is doing and lift the overall quality of governance.

Safeguarding is given high priority. The unit works closely with the Children's Centre and local authority to ensure requirements are met and to provide regular training to update staff's knowledge. The good relationship with students' families enables the staff in the unit to deal with issues as they arise, greatly assisted by the strong partnerships with other local agencies. As a result, situations regarding students' personal safety and

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well-being are accorded high precedence. The unit is highly effective in bridging the gap between students and encouraging them to understand and help each other. Staff are aware that there is still headroom for improvement in how individual students' needs are met, especially in mathematics. It is this that keeps the promotion of equal opportunity good rather than outstanding.

Given the fact that students come from all parts of Bolton and join at differing times, the unit makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion and is looking at ways to develop it further. Effective work is done to ensure students gain an understanding of the local context and how it affects them as young parents and citizens. Promising links have been set up with a local primary school and university where students took part in an anti-bullying project.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires returned were very positive. Where comments were attached they matched the strengths identified by the inspector and echoed comments in cards from the families of students who left in July. In particular, mention was made of the helpfulness and approachability of staff and the exceptional one-to-one support for students. No concern was raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Young Mums Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received two completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection.

In total, there are five pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Thank you for your help and comments when I visited the unit. Like you, I enjoyed finding out about song lyrics and who could tongue roll! It was good to hear that you have settled well into the unit and feel you are, 'learning lots'.

I agree that Young Mums is, 'a very special place'. I judge it to be outstanding. All the staff have your interests at heart and expect you to do well. I saw that you are doing your bit in meeting your targets by coming to the unit, presenting your work neatly, joining in and offering ideas in lessons, being well mannered and polite (avoiding saying a swear word when reciting a song lyric!) and making sure that you keep Christine and her staff aware of any concerns or problems you might be having. You are lucky in having the Young Mums Nursery so close. Your work in child development, and the work submitted by students in July, shows that you gain a lot from observing the babies in the nursery and from talking with and working alongside the nursery nurses.

Part of the success of Young Mums is that Christine is keen to help you achieve the very best you can. With this in mind, I have asked the management committee to deal with a few little things. Firstly, to help you do as well in mathematics as you do in other subjects. Perhaps in Friday review time you can discuss how you learn best in mathematics? I have also asked the committee and staff to refine the ways they keep track of your progress, not just in subjects but also how you feel about things. That should help you and them to set some very clear targets to move things on even further in the relatively short time you have at the unit. Lastly, I feel committee members need to ask more challenging questions about how well the unit is doing. I am sure you will think of ways that you could pass on information about what you do.

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