

Guildford Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124923
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340685
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Judith Lindfield
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. He visited seven lessons and observed six teachers. The inspector also held discussions with a member of the management committee, staff and outside agencies, and talked with pupils. The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, development planning, management committee minutes and pupils' work. The inspector also scrutinised questionnaires from staff and a sample of pupils, and four questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers.

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

- the extent to which the flexible curriculum and the personalised learning programmes are raising levels of achievement and getting pupils more involved in their learning
- how restructuring is having an impact on leadership and management and the school's effectiveness
- the influence of the management committee on the school's direction and capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Guildford Centre is also known as a short stay school. It provides alternative full-time education for 23 pupils in Years 7 to 11, who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school or who attend on individualised learning programmes. The majority of pupils are in Years 7 to 9. In addition to serving the large geographical area of south west Surrey, the school gives on-site support to pupils who are at risk of exclusion whilst attending their secondary schools.

The school serves the needs of pupils where the length of time they stay varies from three to 18 months. The composition of the cohort changes weekly and from term to term. All pupils have behavioural, emotional or social needs, and almost all are from families of White British heritage. Currently, 39% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, or are undergoing statutory assessment, and the majority of these are waiting to be transferred to a special school.

Among its awards, the school has National Healthy School status, Artsmark gold and Investors in Careers status.

As a result of changes to the local authority's structure for alternative education, the school is going through a transitional stage.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Guildford Centre provides a good education for pupils. It achieves its success through the hard work of all staff under the strong leadership of the headteacher who is passionate about developing the best provision and gaining the highest quality outcomes for all pupils and their families. Pupils are provided with good quality education and exceptionally good care, guidance and support. As a result, pupils make good progress not only in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, but also in developing their confidence and self-esteem. By the time they leave, pupils reach attainment levels that are similar to those found nationally for their age. This represents good progress because in a relatively short period the school successfully transforms pupils' attitudes and makes up for substantial deficits in their education. However, whilst in the short term the school successfully meets the educational needs of pupils waiting to be placed in a special school, it does not have the specialist staff nor facilities to cater for their behavioural and emotional needs for an extended period.

Behaviour and attendance improve significantly when pupils enter the school. As a result of clear expectations and strong relationships developed with staff, the large majority of pupils learn to manage their behaviour and attitudes are much improved. It is an indicator of the school's success that the very large majority of pupils attend regularly and arrive on time, with some having undergone long journeys on public transport. Such significant improvements lay down firm foundations for the pupils' reintegration to mainstream education, enrolment at college or successful employment.

The school's push for consistently good teaching is evident in the continual review of classroom practice. Teaching is good because staff know each student, including their needs and backgrounds, extremely well and use detailed information to help with planning. Individual targets are used well by staff and pupils to accelerate personal and academic progress. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in a supportive environment and the trust developed between pupils and staff is the foundation of this success. Parents and carers are also pleased with the school and indicate that they welcome the impact it is having on their child's academic progress.

The flexible curriculum is extremely well suited to the needs of pupils. The careful balance between core skills and the development of pupils' creative skills makes it relevant and meaningful. Underpinned by a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, pupils benefit from a very well constructed personalised learning programme. However, the school knows it must do more to help pupils develop a better understanding of people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of Britain and globally.

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The school has rigorous systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff have an accurate understanding of where the school is now and of the improvements needed. Knowledgeable committee members ensure that policies are systematically reviewed. The school is well placed to move forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that senior leaders and the management committee enable those pupils designated for special schools to be transferred as soon as possible.
- Extend the school's strategy for community cohesion by creating more opportunities for pupils to appreciate and value people from a wide variety of backgrounds and communities nationally and globally.

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

There are distinct signs that the school's determination and well-informed support are making a substantial difference, resulting in pupils' good gains in both academic work and personal development. Pupils' willingness to participate in learning, as seen in mathematics and practical activities, reflect good learning. Pupils also show great satisfaction in getting the tasks right and explaining the reasons behind their answers, in science for example.

Pupils have a disrupted educational background and poor attendance in mainstream schools. Consequently, pupils enter the school with large gaps in their skills and knowledge, and often with a negative view towards education. The amount of time pupils spend at the school varies, but the rate of progress is such that attainment levels reached in the wide range of subjects are similar to those expected nationally for pupils of similar age. Progress is good because the majority of pupils are successful in making up for some of the lost time and overcoming a number of the significant barriers they faced when they started at the school. For example, pupils showed interest and became fully involved in a science lesson where they developed a good awareness of the impact of volcanoes on people's lives. In a lesson which focused on practical skills, pupils gained confidence by using a range of hand and electrical tools to cut out wooden puzzles. As result of this good progress, younger pupils leave ready to reintegrate with mainstream education. In 2009 the proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11, who gained five GCSE passes, or equivalent, including English and mathematics, was similar to the national average for mainstream schools. In addition, all pupils gained other accreditation in English and mathematics and a number of vocational courses. Current progress data show that pupils are on track to make similar gains this year.

Pupils respond positively to the sensitive and individualised support provided by staff. For all pupils, this response is a substantial change when set against the personal challenges they have faced in the past and with which they continue to struggle. Although the length of time pupils stay at the school may be short, they say they feel safe and gain confidence in an environment that has firm boundaries and clear

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expectations that are consistently applied. Pupils are largely friendly and polite and usually talk with staff and visitors in a mature and respectful manner. The large majority show an understanding of what is right and wrong. Behaviour is good and, although the number of fixed-term exclusions rose last year, they have now dropped substantially. Pupils particularly like the respect they are shown by staff and that their views are valued. Pupils' positive attitudes towards activities, including cooking and pottery, have led to them taking a greater pride in their work and adopting healthier lifestyles. Pupils' substantially improved attendance reflects their positive attitudes and enjoyment of the activities. For most, it is the first time they have attended school on anything like a regular basis. As a result of the school's determination to encourage enterprise, work experience and courses related to life skills, pupils are appropriately prepared for life beyond the school.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The strengths of teaching lie in detailed planning based upon a thorough knowledge of each pupil and the collaborative approach taken by teachers and their assistants, who

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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work effectively within teams and provide individualised support. Questioning is used well to probe pupils' understanding and help adjust the pace of learning. The teachers' supportive and sensitive approach helps to raise expectations, manage behaviour and coax pupils into doing their best. Lesson objectives are made clear to pupils to ensure, for example, that they understand what skills they will develop during the lesson. Where teaching was less successful, expectations varied and ground rules with regard to classroom management were not fully established. Assessment and marking are closely linked to individual targets.

Personal, social and health education underpins the curriculum and forms a significant part of each pupil's personalised learning programme. The broad range of attractive and informative displays gives an insight into the range of pupils' learning experiences. The curriculum provides a carefully considered balance between basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the development of creative skills in subjects such as art, including pottery and ceramics. A particular strength lies in its flexibility and the ability to offer pupils individualised support and learning experiences that reflect their interests. The breadth of the curriculum is made possible by the different range of activities offered at colleges and by local businesses. There is a balanced and realistic approach towards pupils following courses leading to GCSEs and opportunities for them to achieve external accreditation in, for example, skills related to the building industry, horticulture and car mechanics.

The outstanding support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents and carers. Pupils have a good understanding of their targets for personal development and appreciate how the consistent and sensitive support helps them improve their behaviour and social skills. Pupils are extremely well known by staff who leave no stone unturned to ensure that they are exceptionally well cared for and supported. Staff are very alert to the fact that no two days are alike and pupils can arrive on any day with varying levels of interest and willingness to engage. Attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected, not just in opportunities for physical activity, but also in the provision of healthy food and health-related courses. Progress, both academic and personal, is closely tracked and monitored.

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?

Strong leadership at the very top has established a provision that has made significant

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improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher, with close support from staff, demonstrates a commitment to developing each pupil's self-esteem, lifting levels of achievement and raising standards. The school promotes equality and tackles any form of discrimination exceptionally well. Team work is a real strength and enables effective communication with outside agencies, which hold the school in high regard.

The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This picture is accurately reflected in documentation, which is sharply focused on improving the outcomes of pupils' educational and personal development. Systems are well embedded and, as result, pupils make good progress and standards are set on a path to sustained improvement. The school's challenging but realistic expectations of where they want their pupils to be, despite wide variation in their length of stay, demonstrate good capacity for moving on.

The management committee is supportive and members give well-considered guidance and advice. Knowledgeable committee members ensure that policies are systematically reviewed. Their monitoring role is currently less effective, but is being strengthened to ensure that all members challenge the effectiveness of the school's development. Attention to pupils' safety is integral to the school's work and safeguarding procedures are systematic, continually reviewed and firmly established. Local services and agencies are used exceptionally well to enhance the well-being of pupils.

The local authority's restructuring of alternative education has led to unexpected changes to both staffing and to the responsibilities held by staff. The headteacher has managed change well during this transitional stage by ensuring that staff are well supported and that pupils continue to benefit from a consistent approach and clear parameters. The local authority has placed a significant number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs at the school, pending placement at a special school. While the school meets the needs of these pupils well in the short term, it does not have the specialist staff or facilities to cater for them for an extended period.

Community cohesion is promoted well within the school and in the local area. Links and partnerships with outside agencies and local businesses are very well established. The school also supports the work of national charities. However, it knows it must do more to help pupils gain a better understanding of people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of Britain and globally. Parents and carers are given exceptionally good opportunities to give views on the provision and they benefit from regular contact.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Four parents returned questionnaires for this inspection. However, a greater number completed a survey, sent out by the school earlier in the year, which included similar questions. The responses to all these questions were positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Guildford Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the provision. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the provision. The inspection team received four completed questionnaire by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 23 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	50	2	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)	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	75	1	25	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



17 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Guildford Centre, Guildford GU1 3SQ

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited Guildford Centre. I enjoyed talking to you, sitting in your lessons and listening to your interesting views. You told me that the school makes a significant difference to your behaviour and attitudes to learning. It is clear that you value the life-changing opportunities that the school offers you.

This letter is to tell you about some of the things I found while I was with you. The Guildford Centre a good school where you feel safe and secure, and enjoy taking part in the wide range of interesting and meaningful activities. Staff have clear expectations of you and provide clear guidelines for you to follow.

Here are some important things about your school.

- The school is well led and managed.
- Effective teaching helps you to make good progress.
- You achieve well when account is taken of your starting points when you join the school.
- The very large majority of you reach standards in the external examinations and assessments that are similar to those found in mainstream schools.
- All staff take extremely good care of you, and make sure you have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and a healthy diet.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better.

- Ensure that those of you who are waiting to go to another school, more suited to your needs, do so as quickly as possible.
- Help you to understand more about people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of Britain and beyond.

I wish each one of you every success in your future and hope that you continue to help yourselves to make things better.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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