

# South Somerset Link Education Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134697
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	341503
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Emerson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Catton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Buckland House 8 Buckland Road Yeovil BA21 5EA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01935 382028
<b>Fax number</b>	01935 382029
<b>Email address</b>	PJCatton@somerset.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited both bases where the provision is sited in order to obtain a full overview of the centre's work. She observed five lessons, of which one was delivered at the hospital base. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed teachers and support staff leading other learning activities such as circle time and independent study. As a consequence, the inspector observed all the teachers and support staff working with the pupils and five teachers leading lessons. She spent the majority of available inspection time in direct observation of learning. The inspector had discussions with teachers, the School Improvement Partner and the chair of the management committee. She spoke to pupils and to a parent. The inspector examined the files of three pupils in detail, as well as the centre's tracking file, to see how well the centre meets pupils' individual needs and checks their progress. A wide range of documentation was also examined, including the centre's development plan and policy documents for safeguarding and other statutory requirements. In addition, the inspector looked at the 12 parental questionnaires that were returned.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the leadership team monitors the provision in the two bases and that delivered through outreach
- the effectiveness of the centre's strategies to improve pupils' attendance
- the amount and quality of provision for pupils who attend the main base at Buckland House.

## Information about the school

South Somerset Link Education Centre is one of four pupil referral units in Somerset that support pupils who are temporarily unable to attend school on a full-time basis because of medical reasons. Last year, 63 pupils accessed the provision. The main base at Buckland House caters for pupils in Years 7 to 11 with a wide range of medical and emotional needs, including pupils with mental health problems and pregnant schoolgirls. At the time of the inspection, all pupils at the base were in Years 10 and 11. The satellite base at Yeovil District Hospital provides education for pupils who are admitted to the hospital and also for day patients. Younger pupils, and those who are not well enough to attend Buckland House, are educated in their own homes. Almost all pupils are on the roll of a mainstream school. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. All the pupils currently on roll are of White British heritage. The centre holds the Healthy Schools award.

**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

The South Somerset Link Education Centre continues to provide the outstanding quality of education which was identified at the previous inspection. Teachers and support staff are highly sensitive to the particular needs of individual pupils and expert at planning interesting work at just the right level. As a consequence, pupils re-engage extremely well with learning and make excellent progress in lessons. Pupils are rightly proud of the success they experience at the centre and this results in enormous gains in confidence and self-esteem. For example, one pupil told the inspector that 'I was predicted to get a D for maths, but since coming here I'm now in line to get a B.' There are wide variations in pupils' attainment, with a small number of high-attaining pupils. However, overall attainment is low because of the pupils' exceptional circumstances. Many pupils have missed a great deal of education prior to admission to the centre because of complex medical or emotional difficulties. As a result of outstanding care and support, pupils' attendance improves markedly in spite of their health problems. With better attendance and excellent teaching, pupils therefore achieve well. This is very clearly demonstrated by the centre's detailed and accurate assessment records. The emphasis on supporting pupils' personal development and emotional well-being permeates all aspects of the centre's work. The exemplary pastoral system, which includes very carefully planned individual tutorials, is highly effective. As a consequence, pupils make outstanding progress in developing social skills and adopting a safe and healthy lifestyle. It is testimony to the expertise of staff that pupils at Buckland House, many of whom have previously been unwilling to engage in any sport, demonstrate obvious enjoyment as they participate willingly in the interesting range of sporting activities which the centre offers.

An extremely strong sense of purpose is evident throughout the centre. All staff are highly committed and morale is exceptionally high. Very careful monitoring ensures consistently high quality across all aspects of the provision. The centre has not been complacent. Since the previous inspection it has continued to build extremely effectively on its outstanding performance. For example, leaders have very determinedly addressed the issues in relation to the poor accommodation and lack of sufficient teaching time. As a result, accommodation is now much better and teaching time for pupils at the base has increased significantly. However, the centre rightly recognises in its development planning that these aspects of provision remain areas of focus. Through its current performance and improvement since the previous inspection, the centre has demonstrated that it has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

**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

- Improve pupils' access to the curriculum and raise their achievement by:
  - improving the accommodation to provide more separate teaching areas and specialist facilities
  - increasing the amount of teaching time for pupils who are well enough to attend the main base.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Bearing in mind pupils' medical and/or emotional difficulties, they achieve well. This is because they follow excellent individualised programmes which are delivered very flexibly to take account of their particular needs. An example of this was in an outstanding lesson in the hospital base. The teacher demonstrated expert skills in working with a pupil whose complex difficulties prevented active participation in learning. The teacher used a variety of strategies which made the lesson great fun and maintained the pupil's interest. As a result, the pupil made very rapid progress in developing early numeracy skills. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They try extremely hard in lessons and are very polite and considerate to each other and to adults. The focus on developing key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and good opportunities to engage in enterprise schemes, prepare pupils well for adult life. Pupils have organised organic vegetable boxes and held a virtual Christmas fete. Money raised through these schemes and the many other fund-raising events is donated to local and international charities and used to sponsor a child in Vietnam. As a result, the pupils make an outstanding contribution to both the local and global community. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Through participation in stimulating activities, such as 'Black History Month', pupils are prepared extremely well to live in a culturally diverse society. Outcomes for pupils are excellent and last year all Year 11 leavers moved on to further education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>

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

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

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Pupils are given exemplary support and guidance. This results in outstanding learning and personal development both in lessons and in other activities such as circle time. This was evident, for example, in an outstanding ICT lesson at Buckland House. The pupils received excellent individual support throughout the lesson and were guided extremely sensitively to review their own and each other's work. As a result, they made outstanding progress in understanding the key elements of an effective PowerPoint presentation and in developing their social skills. Pupils educated in the home receive the same excellent quality of teaching as is available in the two bases. In addition to direct teaching, they are able to use the internet to access the 'virtual classroom'. This is a highly effective method which enables the pupils to interact with, and learn alongside, other pupils. The curriculum has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. Pupils have access to a very good variety of stimulating activities and can follow a good range of accredited courses. Strong links with mainstream schools ensure that those pupils who are returning to school keep up with their coursework. The lack of space and specialist facilities limits the delivery of some subjects.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Senior leaders are extremely effective. They have inspired all staff to share their ambition and determination to improve. This strong sense of purpose has resulted in a powerful drive for improvement. Excellent links between the area access manager and the headteacher ensure that strategic planning is of a very high quality. This is

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underpinned well by an effective management committee who are proactive in supporting and challenging the centre to improve provision further. Monitoring of the work of the centre, including the monitoring of teaching, is very thorough. Since the previous inspection, leaders have made excellent progress in developing partnerships, particularly with mainstream schools. Parents value the excellent support they are given. For example, a parent notes that 'the school always support my child and me, with all her problems'. The excellent individualised planning ensures that equality of opportunity is promoted extremely well. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and rigorous, with very careful monitoring to ensure staff training is kept up to date; they are in line with government requirements. Community cohesion is promoted well through the curriculum, and despite their differences pupils get on very well together. The centre makes good use of its resources and provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

**Views of parents and carers**

Forty-three per cent of parents and carers returned the parental questionnaires. Almost all parents are extremely positive about the provision their children receive at the bases and in the home. A large majority of parents have made positive comments on the questionnaires. For example, one parent has written, 'I am amazed how well they know our child and how they are working to meet her individual needs. They are to be highly commended.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Somerset Link Education Centre 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 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 28 pupils registered at the centre.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	75	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	75	2	17	1	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	58	3	25	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)	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	42	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	50	5	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	67	4	33	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



8 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Somerset Link Centre, Yeovil, BA21 5EA

Thank you for welcoming me to the centre. I enjoyed talking to you and reading your pupil questionnaires. It was very useful to know what you think about the centre. I am really glad that you feel very safe at the centre, and you told me that staff are extremely supportive and help you to become confident and successful learners. I judged that the centre continues to give you the outstanding education that was identified at the previous inspection.

There are many outstanding areas. These are some of the strengths of the centre:

- Excellent planning, which ensures that you all follow individual programmes that are at exactly the right level for you.
- Outstanding care and support, which helps you to feel safe and become much more confident.
- The outstanding progress you make in learning how to stay safe and healthy.
- Excellent teaching, which enables you to really enjoy lessons and learn very well.
- Extremely good leadership by the headteacher and the area access manager. They monitor the work of the centre very well and are highly effective at improving it further.

I have asked the leadership team to improve two things to make the centre even better:

- to improve the accommodation so that there is more space and specialist teaching facilities
- to increase the amount of time for those of you who are well enough to attend the base.

Yours sincerely

Christine Emerson

Lead inspector

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