

School Returners/Young Mums Provision

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135642
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	341682
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Farrow

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	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Ferrie
Headteacher	Mr R Bain
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grindon Lane Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR3 4EN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed eight lessons involving six teachers on two sites. The inspector also held meetings with the Chair of the Management Committee, the headteacher, managers, members of teaching and support staff, the school attendance officer, specialist health visitor, local authority officers including the manager of their safeguarding monitoring team, and groups of students on each site. The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation including the individual pupil records, development plans and monitoring reports, curriculum and teaching plans, health and safety and safeguarding documents, attendance records and incident and racist incident logs. The inspector spoke to one parent and received eight parental questionnaires as well as 12 staff and 19 student questionnaires.

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

- how well students were being enabled to overcome obstacles to their learning and achievement
- how well attendance improves following students' admission to the units
- how well lessons were matched to students' ability and interests
- the extent to which the leadership and management of the school had the capacity to drive forward improvements in two separate and discrete settings.

Information about the school

The School Returners and Young Mums short stay school opened in September 2009 after an extensive reorganisation of alternative provision in the city. This new school operates across two discrete units, providing individualised programmes and support to small numbers of young people who have a range of vulnerabilities. Many of these anxious students have an associated history of persistent absence or non attendance. There are a few pupils on roll with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students on both sites are dual-registered, as they remain on the roll of their mainstream school. The school aims to support their return and reintegration to these schools wherever possible.

The School Returners unit for anxious non-attenders is based in Sandhill View Secondary School. An admissions panel, working to clear admission criteria, strictly control admissions. The headteacher of Sandhill View School undertakes operational management of this unit under the guidance of the local authority.

The Young Mums unit is housed in Hendon Health Centre, where extensive refurbishment has been undertaken recently to upgrade the facilities. Many of the pregnant schoolgirls and young mums were persistent absentees before becoming pregnant and have a history of disrupted education. The unit manager works closely with their 'home school' and the local authority to arrange their admission to the unit and facilitate their return to full-time education during and after their pregnancy. This location facilitates delivery of multi-agency support to the girls, and their babies, with babies being able to attend childcare provision housed in the same building. This

childcare provision is not run by the management committee and is subject to a separate inspection. The most recent childcare inspection report can be accessed on 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The School Returners and Young Mums units both provide a satisfactory education for their students. Anxious young people who have found it difficult to attend mainstream schools regularly and pregnant schoolgirls or young mums are provided with a safe and supportive learning environment. They receive good quality care, guidance and support when following educational programmes that are increasingly well matched to their individual needs, abilities and interests. This enables both groups of students to enjoy school, behave well and improve their attendance and successfully re-engage with learning. Since the reorganisation, school leaders and the management committee have worked effectively to establish a strong sense of shared purpose and raised expectations amongst staff and students. As a result of good self-evaluation procedures, leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are demonstrating good capacity to sustain further improvement by tackling the remaining weaknesses and building on existing areas of strength. For example, they have already eliminated most weaknesses identified in teaching, and as a result, teaching is now at least satisfactory and improving. The school's leaders know that further improvements in the quality of teaching are required and are continuing to implement rigorous monitoring and support programmes designed to further increase the proportion of good teaching experienced by students.

Some of the partnerships established with other providers are also successfully enhancing the learning and well-being of the students. For example, close partnership with Sandhill View School is providing many of the school returners with opportunities to successfully integrate into a wider range of accredited courses alongside mainstream peers. Similarly, the Young Mums unit enjoys access to good quality partnership activities with the 'Bump to Baby' project located in the same building; these make a strong contribution to the achievement and the well-being of both the girls and their babies. Although much has been achieved in a relatively short time, it is too early for the improvements being secured in teaching and the curriculum to be fully reflected in examination grades predicted for the older students at the end of their statutory education. However, students' learning and progress in lessons and evidence from their course work indicates they are making at least satisfactory progress and are beginning to make up some of the lost ground. Older students and their parents recognise that recent improvements are already leading to better outcomes. As one boy put it, 'I would not be leaving with these qualifications if I was still at the old place.' In a telephone conversation with the inspector, one mother said, 'The new unit was the first school to be able to meet my daughter's needs, and at last, she is beginning to get back on track.' Most students quickly settle and say they enjoy school, almost all invariably showing

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marked improvement in their previous patterns of attendance. However, despite the school's strenuous efforts, overall attendance remains too low and the persistent absence of a small but stubborn minority of students on the roll of both units remains a cause for concern.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the level of persistent absenteeism amongst the small minority of students reluctant to engage with either unit by working with these students, their families and relevant support agencies, to overcome the remaining barriers to their successful return to full-time education
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching experienced by students at both settings by sharing the good practice established in Sandhill View School and the further extension of the good practice now emerging in the units themselves.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, respond well in lessons and are keen to take full advantage of the opportunities provided to get their education back on track. Students pay close attention in their lessons, working diligently and at a good pace. When teaching is engaging or inspiring (as seen for example in a personal, social and health education lesson on revision techniques) they become lively and animated, take part with enthusiasm in group discussions, make good progress and even have fun! Most say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They recognise that they are being effectively supported to confront their anxieties and face their futures with better qualifications and greater confidence. A few of the older or more anxious students from the School Returners unit expressed some remaining unease about the prospects of further integration into a large and vibrant mainstream school, but they acknowledge the changes they have experienced have also led to a rapid improvement in the quality of their education and the range of external accreditation they are now able to secure.

Students usually enter the units as a consequence of a substantial period of anxious non-attendance, or pregnancy, or both. Often these extended absences have led to significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding or contributed to their feelings of lowered self-esteem. On entry, students demonstrate a wide range of prior attainment, mostly below age-related expectations. However, when they begin to attend regularly, most quickly regain their confidence as learners and begin to close these gaps. While standards likely to be attained by older students at the end of Year 11 in 2010 are still predicted to be below average, students' consistently good behaviour and conscientious attitudes to learning make a very significant contribution to their satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Nevertheless the persistent absence of a small minority of

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students places their future at a significant disadvantage.

Students have a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and a significant minority of them are trying to translate this knowledge into positive actions. For example, most of them make good use of the health promotion strategies offered by the school nurse and some have signed up to smoking cessation classes or are actively striving to follow a healthier diet as part of a health improvement programme. School returners and young mums also make a satisfactory contribution to their units' efforts to reach out to their neighbours and sections of their local community, for example when hosting a Christmas lunch for elderly local residents at Sandhill View School.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

An emerging strength in the quality of teaching is the consistent approach now being taken by staff in both units to carefully plan lessons that are effectively matched to the ability and interests of their students. Teachers monitor students' progress methodically. They then use this accurate assessment information effectively to help keep their students well informed about their individual progress and what they need to do next to

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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improve further. In a typical satisfactory English lesson, designed to develop students' skills in writing well-constructed and persuasive arguments, the teacher provided a clear sequence of relevant development activities based around clear learning outcomes. This enabled students to persevere well with their work and make progress broadly in line with their predicted targets, ability and starting points. Opportunities to routinely involve students in more active reflection or focused discussion, designed to gradually reduce their over-dependence on teacher support, are more limited. Consequently, the pace of learning often slows to satisfactory when students have the potential to achieve more. In the better lessons seen, where these features are more clearly established, students are beginning to assume greater responsibility for their own progress, for example when discussing what they need to do next to cross a grade boundary. The curriculum in both settings is adequately matched to students' needs, interests and aspirations and opportunities to provide a broader range of accreditation pathways are continuing to expand through relevant partnership activities at both sites (such as those involving Sandhill View School or 'Bumps to Babies' project). These external links are enhancing students' growing self-esteem well and preparing them satisfactorily for the next stage of their lives. They are a key factor contributing to the very high proportion of students from both settings known to remain in education, training or employment after leaving the units.

Arrangements to support the entry of new students are highly individualised, effective and sensitive and are an established strength in both units. This helps most new starters to settle quickly and experience a tangible sense of belonging that subsequently underpins improvements in both their attendance and achievement. If and when students experience further difficulties, possibly those associated with bouts of anxiety or the competing demands of new or sick babies, students know that help is always at hand, from partner organisations as well as unit staff. Students say this helps them feel more confident to make better informed choices about their own, and in the case of the young mums their babies' futures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior and middle leaders share a strong commitment to securing improvement on both sites and this is having a positive and tangible impact on the quality of education provided and students' achievement. Working together, with a shared determination,

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the leadership team has quickly established and implemented the strategies needed to secure the necessary improvements in the quality of education provided. The quality of teaching is monitored conscientiously with outcomes used to inform and direct any necessary interventions still needed to secure consistently higher quality teaching. The management committee has also demonstrated the necessary determination and capacity to support, challenge and direct the continued development of this relatively new short stay school. They work well in a flexible and productive partnership with the school's leaders, other relevant partners in the local authority and the wider community. The school has a positive relationship with most parents and seeks to actively involve them; for example, in the development of each student's individual learning plan. Nearly all parents who responded to the questionnaire, and the parent who spoke to the inspector by phone, agreed they were kept well informed about their children's progress. Some partnership activities such as those with Sandhill View School or 'Bumps to Babies' are making an increasingly significant contribution to students' satisfactory and improving achievement and well-being. Others are still developing, especially in those areas where the school's staff lack the expertise to provide highly specialised therapeutic interventions. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students' safety and welfare fully comply with statutory regulations. Strong links with the local authority safeguarding team helps ensure the school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work. Both units are cohesive communities and the school takes satisfactory steps to promote community cohesion as a discrete element within the school's personal, social and health education programme and through specialist off timetable days. These are designed to promote a better understanding of the similarities between outwardly different socio-economic, ethnic and religious groups. However, evaluation of the impact of this work and its impact beyond the school's local community is patchy. The school secures satisfactory outcomes for students with a range of complex needs and is therefore providing satisfactory value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A small proportion of parents returned questionnaires. Those who did were mainly positive about the quality of education and care provided. Most valued the quality of the school's relationship with them and their children, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management. A small number of responses expressed an opposed view, but the inspector judged the relationships with parents were mainly constructive and endorsed the mainly positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at School Returners/Young Mums Provision 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 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 29 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	13	5	63	1	13	1	13
The school keeps my child safe	5	63	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	50	3	38	1	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	38	3	38	1	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	50	3	38	1	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	25	4	50	2	25	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	38	3	38	1	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	38	4	50	1	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	38	4	50	0	0	1	13
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	38	3	38	2	25	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	50	3	38	1	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	38	4	50	1	13	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



7 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of School Returners/Young Mums Provision, Sunderland,
SR3 4EN

Thank you for the warm and thoughtful welcome you gave me when I came to inspect your school. I would particularly like to thank those of you who spent time talking to me during the inspection, and congratulate you on the mature and open manner in which you answered my questions. I judge that the School Returners and Young Mums units provide you with a satisfactory and improving education and good care, guidance and support. I was particularly impressed with your good behaviour and the concentration and effort you show in your lessons. This and the satisfactory teaching you receive is one of the key reasons you are able to make satisfactory and increasingly good progress; this is helping prepare you suitably for the next stage of your education, training or employment.

I know that many of you arrived at your particular unit with a history of poor attendance from your previous school. Your attendance improves very quickly once you settle in. However, a few of you are still absent far too often and this is seriously limiting what you can achieve at school. Therefore I'm asking the school's headteacher, unit managers and the management committee to continue to work with you, your families, the school attendance officer and others to improve the attendance of those of you who are absent too often. I am also asking the school to continue to improve the quality of teaching so that you are encouraged to take even greater responsibility for each step of the learning you undertake. This will help you to develop greater confidence and to achieve even better results in the future.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Farrow

Lead inspector

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