

Christchurch Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134374
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	381680
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
Lead inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The managing committee
Headteacher	Phil Gavin
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Seven lessons were observed, featuring seven different teachers. Discussions were held with members of the management committee, students, various stakeholders, the headteacher and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line (Parent View) survey in planning the inspection, observed the centre's work and looked at students' work. In addition, questionnaire responses from four parents and carers, fourteen staff and ten students were analysed and their views taken into account.

Information about the school

The centre provides support for students who have been excluded, or who are at risk of exclusion, from mainstream school. It also provides for a small number of medical needs students who are home tutored. The centre assists students, their schools and families, with the intention of reintegrating them into college, training, mainstream schools or alternative placements. Although children from the age of five can be admitted, at the time of the inspection only students aged eleven to sixteen were in attendance, and most of these were in Key Stage 4. Most students have special educational needs associated with behaviour, social and emotional difficulties, with five having a statement of special educational needs. There are a few looked after children. Almost all students are White British and all speak English as their first language. A very small minority are in the care of the local authority. Boys significantly outnumber girls and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Christchurch Learning Centre provides all students with a good education. The headteacher gives clear and strong leadership and has successfully led the centre through a period of transition since the previous inspection. Overall effectiveness is good rather than outstanding because the promotion of literacy is not yet consistently consolidated to result in all students making outstanding progress.
- Students achieve well. Their good achievements are helped by an effective curriculum. The emphasis on developing skills in literacy, numeracy and technology and the good range of GCSE options in Key Stage 4 have helped to boost achievement.
- Most teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Consistently good teaching is boosting attainment. In some lessons, students are not consistently enabled to develop their literacy skills, especially their reading, writing and presentational skills.
- Behaviour and safety are good. The centre is a happy, safe and harmonious place for the students to work and socialise. Students' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to learning. Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is promoted well, especially through art and physical education. Responsibility and working safely in groups are fostered well through food technology, for example. Students have further opportunities to exercise responsibility through their school council.
- The headteacher provides clear and calm leadership and is well supported by his staff. The morale of the staff is high and all are keen to improve the life chances of the students. The management committee offers good support. Self-evaluation is accurate; strengths identified at the previous inspection have been built upon and the centre has improved well. The emphasis placed on the leadership of teaching, target setting and the monitoring of all aspects of every student's work and conduct has improved considerably.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is outstanding in even more lessons by staff taking every opportunity to:
 - encourage the students to read for themselves, including reading aloud, and to practise their writing skills
 - encourage students to develop and extend their vocabulary by checking their understanding of different words and encouraging the accurate use of such words in their oral and written work
 - provide regular opportunities for students to talk about their work and give short oral presentations to their peers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students often have low levels of prior attainment reflecting the difficulties that most have suffered in their former education. Most make good progress in relation to their starting points. Some boys in Key Stage 4 make outstanding progress in mathematics, including their skills in mental arithmetic such as converting fractions into percentages. Students heard reading aloud tended to do so reasonably well, but many are not confident or natural readers. Staff sometimes do not encourage students to read aloud or frequently enough.

For most students, when they leave the centre, standards remain below average, but higher than forecast when they started. Most make good gains in their skills in literacy and numeracy. GCSE results show a steady trend of improvement over the last three years. Target setting and the monitoring of progress against such targets are good and have improved well since the previous inspection. Staff can confidently assess just how far each student has progressed. Data also show that many students make improvements, sometimes significantly so, in other aspects of their development such as behaviour and attendance. These, too, contribute well to their achievements. The sensitively planned, personalised curriculum, especially in Key Stage 4, promotes well the progress being made by many. Such provision ensures that students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are able to follow courses that meet their needs and improve their chances of returning to school, or progressing to college, employment or training.

Students usually behave well in lessons and have strongly positive relationships with their teachers. Consequently, they enjoy their work and regularly make at least good progress.

Although only a small minority of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire, all believe that their children make good progress and their needs are catered for well. All groups of students, including disabled students, those with a statement of special educational needs and looked after children, make at least good

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progress.

Quality of teaching

Teachers and learning assistants work well in unison to manage behaviour effectively and engage the students. Some lessons are taught very well and on these occasions learning is outstanding. Scrutiny of students' past work indicated that most teaching is at least good and lesson observations confirmed that this standard is reached across all subjects of the curriculum.

Teachers have good relations with students, who are appropriately informed about what they might achieve. The use of assessment data to set students individual targets has improved well. The better lessons are delivered at an appropriate pace, and teachers and other adults in the classroom use questioning well to help all students improve their thinking skills and test what they have understood. In a highly effective Year 10 mathematics lesson the students' knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages was suitably challenged and their understanding extended. There was a very strong overlap between numeracy and literacy with the students being required to highlight the correct mathematical terms, such as 'numerator' and 'denominator', and then use these accurately and in context in their oral and written work. As the lesson progressed, one student identified a line of symmetry with accuracy and without any prompting. As in this example, teachers place much emphasis on developing students' literacy skills. However, there are some inconsistencies of approach. For example, there are variations in how often students read for themselves and they do not always have enough opportunities to extend their vocabulary or develop their oral presentation skills during lessons to explain and discuss their learning. Where teaching is of the highest quality, students are challenged. All students, including those who are disabled and those with a statement of special educational needs are taught at least well. Common features of most lessons are that students settle to work well, showing enjoyment and a willingness to work independently with little prompting.

An appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching students the difference between right and wrong. In all key stages, good arrangements are made to promote the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, work associated with the Olympic Games is raising students' awareness of issues associated with culture, morality, perseverance, setting personal goals and social unity.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Many students have previously found it extremely challenging to behave well, which has created problems with their education in mainstream schools. Behaviour in lessons and around the centre is invariably good and discussions indicate this is typical. On the rare occasions where standards of behaviour slip, staff deal with the situation calmly and effectively. Students say that they feel safe and are confident that there are adults they can turn to if they have a problem. Attendance is improving and staff work hard to encourage many reluctant students to attend more

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regularly and to be more punctual. The vast majority of students now have far better attendance records than when they were in mainstream schools.

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed the view that their children are looked after well and feel safe in school. While the large majority of parents and carers felt pupils behave well, a small minority felt that lessons were sometimes disrupted by inappropriate behaviour; a view shared by students. However, students say that when disruption occurs teachers deal with it effectively and that challenging behaviour is properly managed. During the inspection, virtually all lessons seen proceeded in an orderly manner and little time was lost due to poor behaviour. This was because staff applied the centre's policy for managing behaviour effectively, resulting in students making better progress than they might otherwise have done. Students have an awareness of right and wrong and know that bullying, for example through the internet or based on prejudice, is unacceptable. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students demonstrate an appropriate understanding of how to avoid the risks that they might face. For example, in a food technology lesson students were seen to apply hygiene rules well and showed considerable common sense when using knives to chop and dice vegetables.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has skilfully led the centre through a period of change since the previous inspection. He is supported well by a good staff team and an effective management committee. Every respondent to the staff inspection questionnaire said they were proud to work at the centre.

The centre monitors its own performance well. It is aware of its strengths and areas for development, and self-evaluation informs planning and identifies suitable priorities for development. Appropriate emphasis is placed on staff professional development and their performance management, leading to improvements in the use of assessment data, for example. Improvements in teaching, attendance, the curriculum and a clearer management structure have ensured that the good standards identified at the previous inspection have been at least maintained. The quality of partnership work is outstanding. The establishment of strong partnerships with so many agencies ensures high quality care and guidance for students in terms of their education, health and general welfare. The management committee is supportive and challenging and committed to seeing further improvements. The support offered by the local authority has been good and parents and carers are very happy. As one commented, 'I cannot thank the headteacher and his staff enough. They have turned my son into a fantastic student!' All these factors indicate a strong capacity for further improvement.

The arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning, including home-educated students, are good and have helped to secure improvements in the progress made over time by all groups of students. The curriculum has developed well, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4. For example, there were some concerns about the involvement

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of girls in physical education, but developments in activities such as horse riding and surfing have stimulated their interest and uptake. The curriculum effectively promotes the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some artwork does this particularly well and the school fosters cultural and ethical awareness further through subjects such as food technology. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously and discrimination is not tolerated. Since the last inspection, the performance of different groups has been monitored even more closely. This ensures that any gaps in performance are identified and closed. Provision for all students is good. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress of different groups; all are achieving well, with some making outstanding progress. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The site is safe and there is appropriate provision, including detailed risk assessments, for off-site education.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Christchurch Learning Centre, Christchurch BH23 1PJ

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent visit to meet you. I enjoyed talking to you and learning about your views. You told me that the centre is good and that you are happy with the education you receive. The inspection confirms that you are receiving a good education. I liked many things. You are taught well and benefit from an effective curriculum. Your teachers and all other staff are keen for you to succeed. In most lessons, the work set is challenging and engages you. You are also given many good opportunities to develop your skills in literacy, numeracy and technology. However, occasionally in some lessons, staff do not consistently help you to boost your literacy skills. I have asked your headteacher to:

- encourage you to read for yourselves, including reading aloud, and to practise your writing skills
- encourage you to develop and extend your vocabulary by checking your understanding of different words and encouraging you to use such words accurately in your oral and written work
- providing regular opportunities for you to talk about your work and give short oral presentations to your classmates.

There were many other positive things I noted. These included your keenness in lessons, your improving attendance and your good behaviour. By maintaining and building on these strengths, you can help your staff secure the improvements requested.

I enjoyed visiting your lessons. I was especially impressed by your cooking skills. I am disappointed that I was not able to sample your Mediterranean cod dish. It smelt delicious.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Additional inspector

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