

Midpoint Centre (Key Stage 4 PRU)

Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton, WV3 7BJ

Inspection dates 13–14 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in English and mathematics because these subjects are taught well.
- Students' artwork is inspirational reflecting the creativity in the teaching of this subject.
- Almost all Year 11 students gain a place at college or on an apprenticeship scheme when they leave the centre.
- Behaviour is good. Students' understanding of how to keep safe is outstanding.
- Those students who get into trouble outside of the centre are well supported by the Youth Offending Team and most are kept engaged with education.
- An innovative range of vocational subjects equips students with excellent work-related skills.
- All leaders, including members of the management board, are meticulous in checking the quality of teaching and provide extensive training of teachers. Consequently, teachers improve their practice and so raise students' achievement.
- Students are listened to sensitively by all leaders. What they say is used to effect change, which makes a valuable contribution to improving the work of this centre.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons teachers take too long explaining to students what they need to do. This slows their learning.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of what pupils already know and can do to plan new work for them.
- In some subjects (outside of English lessons) teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to exactly what students need to do to improve their writing when they set them writing tasks.
- Some students do not come to school as often as they should. This slows their progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by eight different teachers. Five of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. The inspector heard students read and looked at their written work when observing lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, students, the vice-chair of the management board, representatives from the local authority and a manager from the local Youth Offending Team.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, improvement planning, pupil premium funding, a sample of statements of special educational needs, behavioural plans, assessment and attendance information, monitoring information, the appraisal policy, all safeguarding documents and minutes of the management board meetings. The inspector examined 13 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. However, the inspector spoke with a few parents who came into the centre purposely to meet with him and examined the most recent parental survey conducted by the centre.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This pupil referral unit (known locally as a centre) is going through a period of transition.
- Up until September 2011 it admitted students from a local Key Stage 3 special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (at the end of Year 9). It was a continuation of provision for students with statements for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties into Key Stage 4; all bar name it was a special school for such students. Hence, the proportion of students in Year 11 (the last cohort to come through from the Key Stage 3 special school) with statements of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (some also have additional learning difficulties) is far above what is typical for a pupil referral unit.
- From September 2011 it became a more typical pupil referral unit providing for Key Stage 4 students at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools.
- It is housed in a temporary building.
- It is planned that this centre will be co-located with a Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit and a pupil referral unit for students who are fragile because of complex medical conditions in a new purpose-built building on one site from September 2013.
- It is part of a hard federation (that means that there is one executive headteacher for all three separate pupil referral units and one common management board). She has overseen the developments of this centre for three years.
- The centre has a head of centre in addition to an executive headteacher. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre.
- Although the proportion of students with special educational needs is very significantly less in Year 10 (a new profile of students) than in Year 11, overall the proportion of students with a disability and/or special educational needs, including statements, is above what is typical for a pupil referral unit.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly above average, but the proportion of these from families where English is spoken as an additional language is below average.
- An above-average proportion of students are supported through the pupil premium (extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals). This is because the number of children in local authority care is a little higher than what is typical for such a centre. There is a teacher employed part-time to support these students in their care homes.
- The centre does not make use of alternative provision. All work-related courses are taught at the centre.
- The number of subjects available at GCSE has been increased this year so as to better provide for a different profile of students (those at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make effective use of what pupils already know and can do to plan work at the correct level of challenge to move them on more rapidly with new learning
 - teachers pay careful attention to the specific points students need to work on to improve their writing when setting them writing tasks
 - teachers do not take too long to explain to pupils what they are expected to do in lessons and

so sustain a good pace of learning at all times.

- Improve the attendance of those students who are absent from the centre far too often by 12% within a year so as to raise their achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry is different for each student. Typically, it is below average in English and mathematics because of the gaps students have in their learning due to poor attendance patterns in their previous schools.
- Almost all students make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Some measured from their low starting points on entry make more than the expected rate of progress while at the centre (this means from the time they enter the centre until the time they leave their rate of progress is faster than what is typical for students nationally over such periods of time). However, because the catch up needed in such a short space of time is so great attainment by Year 11 still remains below average for most students.
- Nonetheless, almost all Year 11 students make good progress towards a wide range of qualifications including a Level 2 GCSE equivalent in English; a good foundation GCSE pass in mathematics; and BTEC Level 1 accreditation in a range of vocational subjects. In art, students make outstanding progress and achieve GCSE passes above the national average.
- Most Year 11 students have secured a guaranteed college place or entry onto an apprenticeship scheme for when they leave the centre.
- In Year 10 students make good progress in a range of GCSE subjects including English, science and information and communication technology (the range of GCSE subjects is much wider in Year 10 than in Year 11 because of changes made to better provide for these students).
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including the few who speak English as an additional language, receive high quality support and make the same good progress as their peers. There is no discernible difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls. The few students with additional special needs (learning difficulties over and above their behavioural, emotional and social needs) receive quality one-to-one support with reading and spelling. Consequently, they make good progress.
- Some students do not come to the centre as often as they should (this includes a few children looked after by the local authority). This slows their progress and they do not do as well as those who attend regularly.
- Pupil-premium funding is targeted appropriately. Students known to be eligible for free school meals are supported in a number of innovative ways. This funding enabled them to see 'Blood Brothers' at the theatre which made a valuable contribution to their good progress in English. It pays for a teacher (part-time) to work with children looked after by the local authority in their care homes, but it is too early to evaluate the full impact of this initiative on narrowing their achievement gap.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is at least good. There are pockets of outstanding teaching, particularly in art and some of the work-related subjects. Teaching of English and mathematics is consistently good.
- In the best lessons students have the confidence to ask questions of their teachers because

relationships are exceptionally positive. In these lessons teachers use their expert subject knowledge to answer students' questions and so successfully deepen their knowledge and understanding. In such lessons students, supported by highly effective teaching assistants, take safe risks and their learning accelerates rapidly as a result.

- In most lessons teachers use their knowledge of what students can do to plan work at the correct level of challenge to move them on quickly with new learning. Teachers think on their feet and re-align activities on the spot once students grasp a concept to take them on into new learning rapidly. For example, as soon as students in a Year 10 mathematics lesson grasped Pythagoras' theorem they were set a challenging geometry problem to solve.
- Similarly, in an English lesson as soon as students completed a persuasive piece of formal writing aimed at impressing Lord Sugar (in an imaginary setting), they were moved on to an even more challenging piece of writing. High expectations typify most lessons.
- In an outstanding motor mechanics lesson students applied the theory they learnt about how a clutch works to solve a practical problem. They engaged in collaborative critical thinking and gained excellent work-related skills. All of this happened under the careful supervision of a teacher and teaching assistant who used questions very effectively to move the students forwards step by step in the activity without 'spoon feeding' them.
- In a few lessons teachers talk for too long, especially when giving explanations of what they expect the students to learn. On such occasions the pace of students' learning is slowed. Also occasionally, teachers of subjects other than English do not make sufficient use of the specific areas students need to work on to improve their writing when they set them writing tasks.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of students' prior attainment to challenge them to progress quickly enough in lessons. Instead they hold all students on the same task when some are already secure in their knowledge and understanding of the concept being taught and are ready to be 'notched up a gear' in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students arrive at the centre having experienced difficulties in managing their behaviour at their previous schools. They have often not engaged with learning as they ought to have done. Some on entry are 'switched off' from education.
- Most students successfully re-engage with learning because staff are skilful in helping them overcome their negative feelings about schooling. Students engage positively with the relevant and challenging tasks they are set. When a few slip back into trouble outside of the centre, the Youth Offending Team is usually successful in keeping them engaged with learning.
- Behaviour is good. Classrooms are calm and orderly. Students respect the site and value the displays of their high quality work. They are polite and welcoming of visitors and most demonstrate a maturity and a keenness to make a success of their lives.
- There are no recorded instances of bullying or racism. Fights in the centre are exceptionally rare and usually reflect something that happened outside of the centre carrying over into the centre. Such instances are tackled swiftly and positive outcomes result. Students feel safe at the centre. They can talk about anything that worries them with a trusted adult.

- Students have an outstanding understanding of cyber bullying and all forms of prejudice-based bullying. They understand how to keep themselves safe. Before working on a car engine they, without being prompted, put on their steel capped boots and gloves to protect themselves from injury or infection. They know the risks of getting involved in a gang (postcode gang rivalry is a reality for them in their community). Their understanding of the risks associated with getting involved with fanatical religious or political groups is exceptional.
- They have an in-depth knowledge of the harmful effects associated with the misuse of drugs and the emotional and health risks associated with unsafe sex.
- The majority of students improve their attendance from the time they enter the centre; a few very significantly so because of the high quality support they receive. But a few persist in failing to attend and this has a negative impact on their education.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team, driven by the executive headteacher, has been relentless and effective in its drive to improve the quality of teaching. Under her leadership inadequate teaching has been totally eradicated and the amount of good and outstanding teaching has improved significantly.
- Focused and tailored training is provided to develop teachers. They respond well and so improve their practice. This in turn raises students' achievement. There has been a recent focus on improving lesson planning. It is now consistent and because the planning is implemented rigorously in almost all lessons it results in students making at least good progress.
- Through the detailed analysis of its work, the centre has an accurate picture of what it does well and where it needs to improve further. It uses this analysis to improve. For example, it recognised that teaching assistants, a year ago, were spending too much time addressing behavioural issues in lessons rather than contributing directly to students' learning. A decision was made to appoint behaviour mentors to work with students so as to free up teaching assistants to support students' learning. Now lessons are mostly calm, behaviour has improved, and teaching assistants contribute significantly to students' good progress in lessons.
- The leadership of subjects is good. The range of options and accreditation opportunities has been managed very effectively to better meet the changing profile of students (more students from mainstream schools with a higher prior attainment than has been typical in previous years). Other middle leaders drive improvement, for example in improving students attendance and removing emotional obstacles they have to learning (through for example programmes such as anger management).
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They reflect upon the hardships and suffering in their lives and most resolve to live positively. A recent visit to a simulation of a prison cell in the town caused students to think deeply. Celebration of Black history month and Chinese New Year contributes to students' awareness of cultural diversity.
- Leaders do all that they can to ensure that all students receive equal chances to succeed and rigorously tackle any discrimination. High risk students (with very challenging behaviours) are supported through examinations. But, some students' chance of being on an equal footing with their peers is 'scuppered' by their poor attendance.

- Partnership with parents and external agencies (such as health professionals and the Youth Offending Team) support students well. The few parents who came into the centre during the inspection said, 'Our kids simply would not have made it if it were not for this centre'.
- There is a positive relationship with the local authority: it provides good support and advice on assessment, examination options and provides good quality training for the management board so that it can meet its statutory responsibilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management board provides effective support and challenge to the executive headteacher. It is well informed about students' progress and it was instrumental in using premium funding to fund a part-time teacher to work with children looked after by the local authority in their care homes with the aim of narrowing their achievement gap. Members do not shy away from asking the executive headteacher and the head of centre 'tough' questions about the centre's performance. They are involved in the centre's planning and monitor its plans effectively. The board is also rigorous in managing concerns with the local authority: they have shaped the new direction for the centre (as a provision for Key Stage 4 students at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools). Although highly skilled members keep abreast of training as provided by the local authority. The board ensures that a robust policy links teachers' performance to pay, based on how well they promote students' learning. They know about any teaching concerns and take decisive action, in partnership with the executive headteacher, to address them. The executive headteacher's performance is reviewed in accordance with regulations. All safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134256
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	400151

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Tim Gallagher
Headteacher	Jo Wood
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2011
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