



Midpoint Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134256
LEA Wolverhampton
Inspection number 282511
Inspection dates 30 January 2006 to 30 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mick Megee AI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	Cromer Gardens
School category	Community		Wolverhampton
Age range of pupils	14 to 16		WV6 0UA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 551695
Number on roll	33	Fax number	01902 556924
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr Christine Mills
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Miss Dee McIlmurray

Age group 14 to 16	Inspection dates 30 January 2006 - 30 January 2006	Inspection number 282511
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Midpoint Centre is a pupil referral unit in Wolverhampton, for young people in Years 10 and 11 who are unable to attend their mainstream school because of permanent exclusion or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These difficulties have slowed down their learning. Pupils attend the centre for four days a week. The centre was formed in September 2003 and has not been inspected before. Two thirds of the pupils have a statement of special educational need. A significant minority of pupils have additional special needs such as learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a quarter are from other backgrounds, mostly Mixed White and Black Caribbean. Over half the pupils are entitled to claim free school meals. The ratio of boys to girls is seven to one.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this centre requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The centre is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to teaching, curriculum, leadership and management and the pupils' achievement.

The centre judges its effectiveness as satisfactory. However, the inspection judges it to be inadequate because, although standards improved in the last year, many pupils still do not do well enough. Nearly all the concerns raised in this report are identified in the centre's most recent development plan, but in many cases action has not yet been taken. The centre currently provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Teaching and learning are inadequate because the tracking of pupils' progress, particularly through individual targets, is ineffective. Teachers do not have good enough information which will help pupils understand how to improve. The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all the pupils, especially the less able. Pupils are supported well by the staff, and behave well while in the centre. However, attendance is too low, and the number of exclusions is too high. Pupils are well cared for, but the centre is not thorough enough in checking whether pupils are making sufficient progress. Parents are mostly positive about the centre, but have concerns about the exclusions and the curriculum.

Leadership and management are inadequate because senior staff do not monitor and evaluate progress sufficiently. Despite staffing difficulties, the headteacher has worked hard with staff and managers to set the centre up from scratch but this process has taken a long time to complete. The improvements already completed and those which are planned justify a judgement that the centre has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with a wider, more challenging curriculum and specific individual targets so that they all achieve as well as possible.
- Develop procedures to check on pupils' progress so that everyone, including the pupils, knows how well they are doing, and what needs doing next.
- Implement effective procedures to raise attendance and reduce exclusions so that pupils can benefit much more from what the centre provides.
- Bring in an effective system which will enable senior managers and subject leaders to monitor and evaluate standards and progress and speed up the improvement in pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

All pupils are performing below the standards expected for their age when they arrive. This is because they have had negative experiences at school and have missed a lot

of education. Once at the centre, the pupils become more ready to learn as a result of the structured support they receive especially for their behaviour. Many pupils develop good social skills and are able to benefit from the teaching offered to them. However, the centre has not yet been able to capitalise on these improvements, because of weaknesses in assessment, the curriculum and individual target-setting, and this leaves too many pupils underachieving.

In 2005 there was a big improvement in examination results over the previous year, because the centre offered a wider, although still too narrow, range of subjects. The pupils themselves say they should be able to take science, geography and a modern foreign language which are not currently available. Only a few pupils are set individual targets which means that staff find it difficult to reinforce specific skills throughout the day. This all means that most pupils make less progress than they should.

There are no discernible differences in the performance of girls and boys, or those from different backgrounds. Those with additional needs do not have as wide a choice of accredited programmes in which to be successful. The very low attendance in Year 11 negatively affects pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The centre enables many pupils to behave well and develop social skills which will help them to become self-reliant and develop into mature young adults, well prepared for the next stage of their life. Parents like the intimacy of the small groups and said that they were pleased with the sometimes dramatic improvements: 'Our daughter's behaviour is 90% better'. Pupils say that what has made the difference is the use of 'support workers' who provide individual encouragement and guidance to each pupil. One said 'My support worker backs you up, and without them I wouldn't be here today'.

Although there is some improvement in attendance after joining the centre, attendance is still very low, particularly in Year 11. The centre has tried hard to bring absence down, but has not had much success. There are too many exclusions, even taking into account the difficulties which pupils bring with them, and pupils and parents complain that there is inconsistency between staff as to whether an exclusion is warranted. When pupils are in the centre, they enjoy their work and feel safe. They report that bullying is dealt with well by adults.

Pupils are respectful to staff, and this helps them develop a moral understanding. This is reflected in the low level of bullying. Pupils learn to appreciate the world around them, particularly other cultures and to reflect on life, particularly through lessons in art and music. Pupils do not yet make a substantial contribution to the local community.

Pupils do not have a formal say in the way the centre is run, although the centre is planning to develop this aspect. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the world of work through careers lessons and work experience. Pupils have some understanding of keeping fit, safe and healthy, and they learn about sensible diets when cooking their own meals. However, the centre is too lax about smoking and allows pupils to smoke

at lunch and break times on the centre site. It has plans to stop this but not until next year, which is unsatisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. Staff are not clearly aware which pupils are underachieving or why, because the centre has not introduced good arrangements for them to check up on pupils' progress. There is some good practice by a few teachers within their own subjects. However, the centre does not yet set and share individual learning targets for most pupils, which means that even in the better lessons, opportunities to reinforce pupils' basic skills are missed and pupils do not know what they need to do next. In most lessons, support workers help pupils effectively and sensitively to manage and improve their behaviour. Relationships between adults and pupils are good, and lessons are calm, good humoured and well managed. Staff are beginning to make good use of interactive whiteboards to add additional interest to the activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. This is because the range of subjects and accredited programmes is not wide enough to meet the needs of all the pupils, especially the less able. The centre has recognised this shortcoming and has plans underway to address this need.

The centre was set up to provide education for five days a week for its pupils, but only offers four. This is because external providers, such as local colleges and schools, have not come forward to take up the extra day. As a consequence, pupils remain at home for one day a week and receive no education. Parents are very concerned about this. One said 'We don't agree with just four days. This is a waste of her time, especially where there is so much catching up to do'.

Pupils are particularly worried about the narrowness of the curriculum. One said 'We haven't got science and we really need it to get anywhere'. Another said he thought that he should be learning a foreign language. The centre provides a good range of lunch time activities, which always includes a sport, such as basketball. However, there are no after school activities or residential visits and this is a weakness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pupils have good relationships with their designated support workers and they are confident that they can turn to these adults if they are worried or upset. Child protection procedures are secure. Staff

are firm and caring of those who have significant behavioural problems, although exclusion may be used too much. All staff have been trained recently in restraint procedures. However, they have only been used four times in the last two years, which reflects how well the pupils are managed and kept calm. Staff ensure that pupils work in a safe environment and that they understand the need to take care of themselves in everyday life.

Pupils do not receive enough academic support and guidance in their work to ensure that they achieve as well as they can. This is because the centre does not routinely set individual targets for each pupil, and assessment practices are inconsistent. Discussions with pupils show that they are not always clear about what they need to do to make better progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. The headteacher, her deputy, staff and management committee, despite some serious staffing difficulties, have worked hard to set up from scratch an environment which is pleasant and spacious, and to introduce systems which bring order, respect and calmness to the lives of the pupils. This is no mean achievement.

The headteacher and managers have correctly identified most of the strengths and weaknesses highlighted in this report, taking into account the views of pupils and parents, and have agreed plans to address them. However, this process has taken too long and needs to be speeded up, so that the pupils presently in the centre are not further disadvantaged through low achievement. The centre now has sound performance management systems which are helping staff to better understand their roles and responsibilities to raise pupils' achievement, including improved support for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. However, there is much more to do to improve pupils' achievement, which is still too low. The headteacher and senior staff have not had a sufficiently firm grip on measuring how well pupils are progressing, or in ensuring that a full range of learning opportunities is in place which meets the needs and the aspirations of the pupils. As a matter of urgency, the senior staff now have to begin formal monitoring and evaluation to analyse achievement in subjects and to identify gaps in pupils' learning and social development.

The management committee operates satisfactorily. Managers understand that there needs to be much higher achievement and are fully supportive of the headteacher in her drive towards improvement. The improvements already made, especially in the support worker system, linked to the key priorities in the improvement plan, and the determination of the headteacher and staff to help pupils achieve as well as they can, indicate that the centre has the capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	No
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to visit your centre this week to see how you are doing. I am writing to you to tell you what I found out about your centre.

These are the most successful things about your centre:

Most of you behave well and get on well with each other and the staff.

Your support workers have gained your trust and do very well in helping you to manage your time at the centre.

Your headteacher and teachers care about you and are trying hard to make your centre as good as it should be.

You work in a very pleasant environment and you look after it well.

However, many of you do not do as well as you could do in your work and so I have asked the centre to improve these things:

Make sure that all of you learn as well as you can in every subject and that every subject is given enough emphasis.

Make sure you each know precisely what is expected of you and what you have to do to make fast progress.

Provide an even wider range of courses to suit everybody's needs.

Help you come more often to the centre.

Perhaps you could help in this by only staying away when you are really unwell. Those of you who smoke should think about stopping or at least cutting down. All the very best in the future.

Yours faithfully

Dr Mick Megee Lead Inspector