



# Wakefield District Community School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131526  
**Local Authority** Wakefield  
**Inspection number** 295457  
**Inspection dates** 12–13 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Kath Halifax

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	High Well Hill Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community special		South Hiendley, Barnsley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		South Yorkshire S72 9DF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01226 718613
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	124	<b>Fax number</b>	01226 714183
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jc Harris
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol McDermott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	12–13 September 2006	295457

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school serves the whole of the Wakefield Authority and is for pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs and those who have been excluded, or who are in danger of being excluded, from mainstream secondary schools. Of the 124 on roll, only 18 are girls. Almost all are of White British heritage. All pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with 47 having a statement of special educational need for emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Five pupils are looked after by the local authority. Almost 60% are classed as young offenders. The school opened in September 2005 and is on three main sites with 10 satellite units. A residential unit can cater for up to 20 pupils; 10 were resident at the time of the inspection.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is improving at a rapid rate. Under the passionate leadership of the principal, significant strides have been made with staff committed to, and excited by, the challenges the new school presents.

The focus on improving teaching, behaviour and the curriculum is paying dividends in improved achievement. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, individual teachers' performance is still too variable, as reflected in pupils' learning. Pupils appreciate the work that has gone into improving the curriculum. They particularly enjoy the enrichment activities such as designing the school garden and their work in the community, for instance, Riding for the Disabled. Pupils are offered the opportunity to study for a wide range of accreditation, enabling many to leave with nationally recognised awards, including GCSE, Adult Literacy and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). However, the range on offer, and take up, varies between sites; this adversely affects future employability. This is why the curriculum is satisfactory and not good.

The school is very effective in providing for pupils who need a few weeks out of mainstream education to modify their behaviour. In the year the school has been open, a high percentage of pupils have made a successful return to their home school. The provision for pupils who board is equally strong. The decision by managers to use staff from the residences during the school day provides continuity between education and care. The opening up of evening activities to non-resident pupils and extending the activities into the school holidays is contributing to pupils' well-being, confidence and skills.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The majority make good improvements in their attitude and attendance, but the attendance of a significant number is unsatisfactory and adversely affects their achievement. The provision for pupils' social and moral development is good and is evident in pupils' consideration of the consequences of their actions and planning for life beyond school. The focus on spiritual and cultural development is not as strong, and some pupils are not sufficiently prepared for living in an ethnically diverse society.

Care, support and guidance are good. Staff work closely and effectively with a wide range of other professionals to support vulnerable pupils such as those with mental health issues. The family support officer, inclusion team, learning mentors and learning support assistants make equally valuable contributions. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure pupils are healthy. Some pupils are aware of how they can improve and are set targets to improve but this is not happening on all of the school sites.

While leadership and management are satisfactory overall, that of the senior leadership team is good. Much has been accomplished in the first year, but many systems are in their infancy and not yet bearing fruit. Equally, there are inconsistencies in some aspects of the school's work. Nevertheless, difficult staffing issues have been dealt with effectively, some good appointments have been made and the expertise of teachers is beginning to be shared between sites.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The latest report by the Commission for Social Care Inspections in January 2006 shows satisfactory improvement from the previous visit. It recognises that almost all of the National Minimum Standards are met. Since the report, managers have responded well to the areas identified, especially linking with a similar school to improve the quality of placement plans. The report can be found at [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk).

The provision is well managed and staff from the residence provide very effective support during the school day to manage difficult behaviour in lessons. Pupils are well cared for. Relationships are very good and pupils feel that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. The number of staff employed provides well for individual safety and needs. Pupils enjoy staying at the residence and look forward to the variety of activities and visits which are scheduled in the evenings. They feel that they have a voice in what happens through participating in the residents' committee. Meals are healthy, with a plentiful range of high quality food. Accommodation is pleasant and pupils take pride in their rooms, which they keep tidy and personalised with their artwork and certificates. Parents are very positive about the provision. They state that they are always consulted and their children receive excellent care.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and the range of nationally recognised awards so all pupils have equal opportunities to achieve.
- Work with families and pupils to improve attendance in order to raise achievement.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to appreciate cultural diversity.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement and standards are improving. On arrival, pupils have a history of long periods out of school, in some cases up to three years, and most have a very negative attitude. Where achievement is good, pupils have progressed from well below average attainment on entry to the school to gaining GCSE passes in between one and four subjects. Awards such as Adult Numeracy, Adult Literacy and ASDAN equip pupils well for life after school; awards in courses such as childcare and motor vehicle maintenance are equally valuable. Cross-site teaching by the specialist teacher has enabled pupils to reach a good standard in art. Some pupils leave the school with no nationally recognised award and too few pupils go on to further education or employment. Until the current academic year, pupils receiving individual tuition have underachieved because of the short amount of time devoted to their education.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Despite the good provision for care, guidance and support, and the improving behaviour and attitudes of pupils, personal development is only satisfactory. Whilst most pupils make significant improvement in their attitude, behaviour and attendance, the very poor attendance of a considerable number of pupils affects their achievement and future employability. Pupils' respond well to the good provision for their social and moral development, being particularly proud of the letters they have written to the Prime Minister about nuclear energy and court sentences commenting, 'and he wrote back to us'. However, many pupils are not sufficiently aware of the traditions and beliefs of different cultures. Most pupils are adopting a healthy, safe lifestyle and make a useful contribution to the community as in the making of planters and seats for a refurbished 19th century schoolroom.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Although there is some outstanding teaching, inadequate teaching still remains and so overall teaching is satisfactory. Where teaching and learning are most effective teaching by subject specialists is contributing considerably to good achievement. Well qualified, confident teachers plan interesting work that captures pupils' imagination, as one Year 7 pupil exclaimed, 'This is cool!' Teachers and non-teaching staff work well together as a team, helping to make seamless provision between education and boarding. Overall, behaviour is managed effectively although on occasions, this is not as successful with pupils with severely challenging behaviour. Other weaknesses exist in a small number of lessons where work does not always match pupils' interest and capability and information collected about how well pupils are doing is used too variably.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Good efforts have been made to make the curriculum relevant to individual needs. The extensive building refurbishment has made pupils and staff feel valued. Effective emphasis on the key subjects of English and mathematics is raising standards and improving achievement. Work-related learning contributes significantly to pupils' skills, personal development and future plans, for example, environmental work at a fish farm which is not only of vocational value but enriches the curriculum and provides enjoyment. A good deal of time is devoted to sport through outdoor education, and is effective in keeping pupils healthy and in team building. Despite these strengths, provision is not strong enough in the range of nationally recognised awards because they are not available to all pupils. Despite substantial investment in information and communication technology, inadequate equipment is currently affecting achievement.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Staff know their pupils well and help them come to terms with their problems. Procedures for child protection and health and safety routines are in place and understood by staff. Care, guidance and support is most effective in the very good links with numerous professionals such as the child and adolescent mental health teams and the youth offending team who make an appreciable contribution to pupils' well-being. Staff are sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils such as young offenders and those in public care. Good support enables smooth transfer for pupils returning to mainstream education.

However, good practice in pupils setting targets to improve their achievement and evaluating the progress they make, is not consistent on all sites

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In a short time managers have moved from a starting point where the provision was isolated, scattered and ad hoc, to what is becoming a cohesive school. The principal's experience and drive have been the major factor in improvement together with the shared vision, determination and skill of the senior leadership team. These characteristics are key to the school's good capacity to improve. Improved management of behaviour has substantially reduced the number of exclusions. Governors use their expertise, for instance in health and social services, for the benefit of pupils. Managers know what the school does well and are clear about what needs to be improved. For example, because of the many changes and the spread of the school, some staff feel 'out on a limb' and report communication could be better. Also, whilst weaker teachers have been given support they have not had the chance to observe and learn first-hand from more successful teachers.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you are aware, two colleagues and I recently spent two days inspecting your school. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us and helping us with our work. We were pleased with what we saw.

Under the leadership of Mrs McDermott, your teachers and you have achieved a tremendous amount in the year the school has been open. We know that for many of you school has been difficult in the past, but once in this school most of you try hard with your work and with your behaviour and attendance, so by Year 11 some of you are achieving some impressive results. We enjoyed our short time with you and wish you well for the future.

In Years 10 and 11, some of you have access to a number of different courses and exams. We have asked your teachers to make sure this range is available to all pupils. We encourage you to take up what is on offer. It will help when looking for work.

Most of you have improved your attendance, but too many of you stay away for no good reason. You are missing important work and this will affect your chances when you leave. It is important you attend every day.

Living in Wakefield, you do not get many opportunities to meet with pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. We think it is important you learn more about the beliefs and cultures of people from different nations - though you probably know quite a bit about different music and food already!