

Midpoint Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134256
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	300803
Inspection date	16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	57
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Dee McIlmurray
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006
School address	Valley Park Campus Cromer Gardens Wolverhampton WV6 0UA
Telephone number	01902 551695
Fax number	01902 556924

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Midpoint Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils have been permanently excluded or are at risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Over two thirds of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A minority of pupils have additional learning difficulties. Most pupils are White British, although a small number are from other backgrounds, mainly mixed White and Black Caribbean. The ratio of boys to girls is seven to one. During the previous inspection, in January 2006, the unit was judged to require significant improvement and was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Midpoint Centre provides a satisfactory level of education. There has been substantial progress since the previous inspection just over one year ago, with improvements in achievement, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, leadership and management, and in aspects of pupils' personal development. In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards reached by pupils are below average but the great majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. The pupils appreciate the support given to them by centre staff. As one pupil commented, 'We've (now) got a brighter future.' Parents are happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe, that they enjoy their lessons, and that the pupils make good progress in aspects of their personal development. The pupils value the centre. This is evident from the good relationships they have with staff and the improvement in their attendance, although this remains well below average. The majority of pupils respond well to the reward system and behaviour is generally satisfactory, although there are still too many pupils excluded temporarily from school. Personal development overall is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is also satisfactory and strengthened by the good relationships between staff and pupils. There has been overall improvement in the monitoring and tracking of pupils' achievement, particularly in English and mathematics. This is now satisfactory, although some inconsistencies remain in assessment and record keeping and in its use to inform planning to meet pupils' needs. The curriculum is much more varied than at the previous inspection. There are a wider range of opportunities for the pupils in work related learning and in the range of accredited courses. As a result, the curriculum is now good and well adapted to the needs of the pupils. It is enriched by the substantial provision of sporting and work experience activities which support the pupils' personal development.

The pupils are well supported through a range of agencies and the standards of care are good. Pupils who are underachieving through personal difficulties are quickly identified and supported. The centre is increasingly effective in enabling pupils to reflect on issues relating to their behaviour. The pupils are well informed about their achievements and are well aware, and proud, of the progress they have made. Pupils do not, however, have a clear understanding of their future learning targets. This is because there is lack of consistency in the way targets are identified, due to the inconsistencies in assessment and record keeping, and in the way they are discussed with the pupils. Similarly, pupils are not always sure of the reasons why they have been excluded. Consequently, care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. The headteacher, with support from a strong management committee and the local authority, has led improvement in several key areas over the last year. The centre monitors and evaluates its progress with increasing confidence and accuracy. It seeks out and acts on the views of all concerned with the school, not least the pupils themselves. There are still inconsistencies in the standards of provision, but the centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the consistency of assessment and record keeping and its use to inform planning.
- Ensure there is consistency in identifying learning targets for pupils and that pupils have a clear understanding of how their learning targets will enable them to achieve more highly.

- Further improve attendance and establish clear criteria and procedures for the temporary exclusion of pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Although many pupils come into the centre with low levels of attainment their progress is satisfactory and they achieve success in a range of subjects. Over the previous year, a much wider range of courses has been introduced which has led to increased entries for nationally accredited examinations particularly in vocationally oriented areas of study. The pupils now have a greater chance of reaching their potential through the range of academic and vocational options offered. The pupils' achievements in English and mathematics have improved, mainly because progress is now effectively monitored and tracked. Progress in other subjects is less secure because there are inconsistencies in the assessment of pupils' work, its use to inform planning, and in the identification of challenging learning targets. The progress of pupils with additional learning needs is satisfactory and has improved in recent months through the provision of a more systematic support programme. Although girls are heavily outnumbered, they enjoy school and also achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The satisfactory progress that pupils make in personal development reflects the good relationships between staff and pupils and the growing effectiveness of the centre's system of 'restorative practice' which encourages pupils to reflect on, and to make amends for, their behaviour. This practice also has a positive effect on the pupils' moral and social development. A minority of pupils, however, do not always behave well and the level of temporary exclusions remains high. One of the contributing factors to this situation is that the criteria for exclusions are not clearly explained to the pupils and they do not always understand the seriousness of their misconduct.

The centre is calm because pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected of them. The pupils feel that any instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Most pupils respond very well to the reward system. They enjoy their education. The pupils develop a good understanding of issues concerning sex and relationships and the dangers of drugs. They participate well in the many opportunities provided to take part in challenging physical activities and team building activities. Pupils support each other and develop socially through the many communal activities. They make good progress in developing work related skills. The level of attendance remains well below average, although this is largely due to the poor attendance of a small minority. However, there has been an improvement over the last year especially amongst Year 11 pupils. This is a result of the centre's effective monitoring of absence and an improved curriculum which pupils increasingly see as more relevant and interesting.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well. Lessons are interesting and well paced and pupils enjoy them. They concentrate for long periods and the lessons are orderly and well managed. In some subjects, lessons are planned well, with assessment used well to inform planning, and with activities well matched to pupils' needs. Elsewhere, the quality of assessment is too variable and activities are not consistently well matched to needs. Those pupils who were spoken to were enthusiastic about the chance to achieve success in external examinations. The pupils with additional learning needs are supported effectively and receive a high level of individual tuition. Teaching assistants, however, are not involved sufficiently in recording the pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The range of learning activities available to pupils has been widened considerably since the previous inspection and the curriculum is now good. Programmes have been well adapted to the needs of learners and there is a good range of accredited subjects that provide good opportunities for each pupil to reach his or her potential. However, provision for science, including the range of resources available, is limited. The provision for work related learning is a strength. Facilities both on site and provided by other community based training providers are good. Pupils have many opportunities to learn new work related skills and to gain vocational qualifications in well equipped workshops and other premises. As a result, their achievement in this area is good. The experience of working with a range of adults and other pupils has a significant impact on the pupils' achievement in personal skills, their understanding of healthy lifestyles, and the importance of keeping safe. Pupils are regularly taken out of the classroom, teaching them to behave appropriately and that new things can be learned in all sorts of situations, such as in team building activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The centre provides a good standard of care and support for pupils. Child protection procedures are effective. There are good procedures for health and safety, and risk assessment. The necessary checks on staff are in place. Pupils are well supported through a variety of agencies, including the school nurse and the drugs, and relationships advisory team. Pupils with additional learning needs are identified quickly and they receive a subsequent high level of support. There are clear strategies to monitor and improve pupils' attendance. The centre's procedures for 'restorative practice' are popular with pupils but have not yet had a significant impact on the rate of exclusion. This is because the management of the exclusion process is inconsistent. Pupils are sometimes unsure why they have been excluded. The pupils are involved in discussion about their work and those spoken to were confident that they had made progress. There are, however, inconsistencies in the setting of pupils' targets. The impact of this is that pupils in many cases are unclear on how to further improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Satisfactory leadership and management by the headteacher have led to improvement in most areas since the previous report. Communication within the centre is good. The staff are fully consulted and feel involved and valued. There is a good level of professional development. Teachers are well qualified and this has a beneficial impact on pupils' achievements. Relationships with parents are good because communication between home and the centre is well organised. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved with their child's education and behaviour.

The centre's staff are closely following an action plan for improvement drawn up by the local authority. The progress made by the centre is effectively monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and centre staff and subsequently by the management committee. This committee is very supportive of the centre and is driving progress through the high level of challenge members bring to the work of the senior team. Their impact, in particular, is making the process of monitoring and evaluation increasingly more effective and more accurate. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching, and leadership and management, with good progress made in developing the curriculum and aspects of the pupils' personal development. Although assessment and target setting are still somewhat inconsistent, the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	2
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

17 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Midpoint Centre, Cromer Gardens, Wolverhampton WV6 0UA

Not long ago my colleague and I spent a day in your centre looking at how well you are doing. Thank you for being helpful to us in our work. I am able to tell you that the Midpoint Centre provides a satisfactory standard of education. Your achievement and the way you develop as young people are satisfactory. So is the teaching and care you receive and the way your centre is run. We think that there is a good range of activities for you, in and out of lessons. We could see that you enjoy coming to the centre and that you look after it well. There were some things that we were particularly pleased with.

- Your behaviour has significantly improved since you came to the centre. You are more able to understand how you can improve it further.
- You usually work hard and you are making better progress.
- Your attitudes to learning have improved since you went to the centre.
- The teachers work very hard for you and really want you to do well.
- You make good progress in work related learning.

There were, however, some things which we thought should be improved.

- The teachers should tell you more clearly how well you are doing and give you clearer targets to help you improve your work.
- Your teachers should agree on the best way to assess and write down how well you are doing in your work and make better use of this information in planning your lessons.
- There should be clearer procedures for exclusions so that you all understand why this sanction has been used and even more efforts made to encourage those of you with attendance problems to come to the centre regularly.

Thank you again for making us welcome. Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband Lead Inspector