

Christchurch Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134374
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	328900
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascal

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 on roll	
School (total)	42
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Philip Gavin
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
School address	29 Stour Road Christchurch BH23 1PJ
Telephone number	01202 471410
Fax number	01202 471410

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the centre and investigated the following issues:

- The effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all pupils and preparing them for life when they leave school.
- The use of assessment data by teachers to ensure work is matched to pupils' needs and the quality of guidance to pupils to support their learning.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders in assessing the strengths and areas for development of the centre and setting challenging targets that will help the centre improve.
- The quality of provision for primary-aged pupils.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and management committee, centre documentation and assessment information. Other aspects of the centre's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found that the centre's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were in many respects justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Christchurch is a medium-sized pupil referral unit (PRU) which educates pupils who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from their mainstream schools. Many of the pupils have spent long periods out of school prior to joining the centre. At present there are two pupils attending the PRU who have statements of special educational needs. As a result of gaps in pupils' education, standards on entry are well below average.

The acting headteacher took over the role in September 2008.

The centre has recently started to provide for a very small number of pupils of primary school age. It does not cater for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good centre that enables pupils to achieve well. It does this through good teaching and a very committed staff team who work very well together. There is a strong focus on ensuring that the care and welfare of pupils are a very high priority. The centre is successful in ensuring pupils are safe and well looked after. Effective pastoral care systems are in place that support pupils well and, as a result, they make good progress in their personal development. Pupils value the centre, and their parents and carers are very positive about the help they receive from the dedicated staff team.

Achievement is good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make particularly good progress in their learning so that they acquire a good range of relevant skills for future education and work. By the time they leave the centre, most pupils attain average standards. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and, through their very good subject knowledge, ensure that pupils achieve the grades in their GCSEs that they were predicted in their mainstream schools. A number of pupils exceed their predicted grades. The curriculum for this age range is good and supports learning well, enabling pupils to take a wide range of academic qualifications, including entry level qualifications and accreditation in adult literacy and numeracy. The centre recognises that it could further enhance the breadth of the curriculum and is looking to extend the range of vocational qualifications provided. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are generally very sensible and are keen to gain qualifications before they leave.

Pupils also make good progress in Years 7 to 9, although not as rapid as in Years 10 and 11. Recent staff illness has affected the previously consistent teaching and management of behaviour of this age group and the attitudes of a small minority are not always positive. The centre has acted quickly to support these pupils and whilst their behaviour is still a concern, the majority of pupils behave well. Many make good improvements in their learning and in their personal development, enabling them to successfully return to mainstream schooling. Staff analysis of pupils' achievements last year resulted in a review of the curriculum for this age group. This in turn has led to improvements in provision for English. As yet, however, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes. Pupils of all ages benefit from a good choice of activities. These ensure their personal development is well promoted and their social skills generally develop well.

The centre has recently started supporting primary-aged pupils who are at risk of being or have been excluded from their mainstream schools. The local authority is in the process of developing its provision for this age group and is looking for a permanent base for these pupils. At present, through well-focused teaching, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Their progress is satisfactory rather than good because they do not receive sufficient taught time. Staff, however, ensure that in the time available, pupils have a satisfactory range of experiences that improve their basic skills and personal development. As a result, last year, all pupils in this age group were returned to a mainstream or special school setting in a very short space of time. The very good links with a range of multi-agency professionals have enabled staff to ensure that all pupils and their families have a high level of support. Activities such as play therapy have enhanced the range of activities for pupils and supported their skills well.

The attendance of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. The great majority attend well although not all take up all the opportunities offered by the centre. There are a very small number of pupils whose attendance is poor and they receive support from a number of agencies. Pupils

are generally well prepared for life when they leave school. They feel they would not have gained any qualifications without the help of staff and the majority of pupils last year went on to college or gained employment.

Staff across the centre work very well with pupils in supporting their behaviour and social skills and provide good role models. Humour is often used effectively to bring pupils back on track in lessons and pupils are encouraged to think about how they react to people and situations. In a good CoPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) lesson, staff used questioning very well so that pupils had to justify why they were taking the decisions they made in a game about managing budgets. For example, whilst several thought the purchase of a swimming pool was a good idea, others could see that it left the teacher with no money to pay the bills! Staff are effective in their mentoring role, providing good opportunities for pupils to review their behaviour and their progress in their personal development on a weekly basis. This is valued by pupils. Pupils talk very positively about the way they are treated by staff and like the range of activities they are offered. They particularly enjoy the cooking lessons and show a good awareness of healthy living. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in the running of the centre. The centre has established good links with mainstream schools that are enhancing pupils' opportunities to return successfully to mainstream. It is however intending to develop closer links with the wider community through its work in Healthy Schools Plus.

Guidance to support pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory. Recent initiatives are improving the setting of targets for pupils' academic and personal development. Targets are beginning to be more specific and measurable so that staff and pupils can be clearer about how well they have been achieved. Staff are not always using their good knowledge of pupils' progress to ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve further. The marking of work varies in quality and is better for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Comments in pupils' books are positive but do not often indicate the level pupils are working at or what they could do to improve their work.

Effective leadership and management has enabled the acting headteacher to build upon the systems in place. He has brought about a more rigorous approach to assessment which is enabling the centre to have a clearer understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior managers have been effective in addressing the concerns about achievement in English and have been reviewing the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 to better meet the needs of pupils. The centre is in the process of reviewing its improvement planning. It rightly recognises that although it sets itself challenging targets in some areas, particularly in improving attendance and behaviour, targets for improvement are not always clear or measurable. Senior staff recognise that they need to make better use of information about pupil progress in order to improve whole-centre target setting. Staff are becoming more involved in self-evaluation recently through the introduction of strategy working groups and this has added to the strong sense of teamwork that exists in the centre. This, together with the commitment of staff and leaders to provide the best for pupils, ensures that there is good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that primary-aged pupils receive sufficient taught time to enable them to make the same level of progress as others in the centre.
- Improve the setting of pupils' learning targets and quality of marking so that pupils know how well they are doing and understand what they have to do to improve
- Make better use of information about pupils' progress so that the centre can set itself comprehensive, clear and challenging targets for improvement.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christchurch Learning Centre, Christchurch BH23 1PJ

Thank you for making me so welcome during the inspection. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk to you during the day. You were very positive in your comments about the centre, as were your parents and carers. The centre provides you with a good education and you make good progress in your learning.

Here are some of the most important findings of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- There is good teamwork between staff, and your relationships with them are good.
- Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations that you will gain accreditation by the time you leave the centre.
- You are learning how to manage your behaviour well and have a good understanding about how to stay healthy.
- Staff support you and your families well and work closely with other agencies to help you.
- Many of you improve your attendance and are keen to return to mainstream schooling or go to college.

In order to make the centre even better I have asked staff to do the following:

- Ensure that primary aged pupils receive sufficient taught time so that they can do as well as the rest of you.
- Improve your targets for learning and the marking of your work so that you are aware of the next steps in learning and understand what you have to do to improve.
- Make better use of information about your progress so that the centre can set itself clear and challenging targets for improvement.

I wish you well for the future and hope that the small number of you who are struggling with your behaviour listen to staff and try harder to conform.

Best wishes,

Yours faithfully

Sarah Mascall Lead inspector