

# Whitehouse Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134536
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bristol, City of
<b>Inspection number</b>	328927
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Frank Price

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	33
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marian McMeechan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Fulford Road Hartcliffe Bristol BS13 9PB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 9038071
<b>Fax number</b>	0117 9038072

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Most pupils at the Whitehouse Centre have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their local schools. A few pupils are registered at the centre and at their school, with a view to returning to their school following intervention. A few pupils are known to the criminal justice system. Seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs for behaviour, and emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Whitehouse Centre is a satisfactory pupil referral unit (PRU). It is improving well and heading in the right direction. As a result of recent changes to the senior leadership team, new initiatives have been implemented which are starting to have a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory, with the rate of progress increasing particularly over the last six months. However, the long-term progress of some Key Stage 3 pupils is hampered by a lack of suitable alternative placements, with the result that they stay at the centre too long. The satisfactory curriculum enables Key Stage 4 pupils to experience success in gaining accredited qualifications, but is restricted by the limitations of the accommodation. Despite the best efforts of the staff, the accommodation is dismal and does not provide a conducive learning environment for pupils. The centre was not able until recently to appoint new staff because of budgetary constraints, and this has delayed improvements. This difficulty has now been addressed and enthusiastic, experienced staff have been appointed, so the centre is now able to move forward.

Parents have mixed views on the centre. Most feel that pupils make improvements, but a few have been concerned over behaviour and have felt this affected the enjoyment of their children's education. However, inspection evidence shows that behaviour is satisfactory and improving and pupils are beginning to enjoy their lessons much more. This is mirrored by the significant improvements in attendance, which is now satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory. Many of the systems for improving teaching further are still being embedded, and there are examples of good teaching which capture the interest and imagination of pupils. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The school council has become a valuable vehicle for pupils to influence developments in the centre and has resulted in improvements to the rewards programme. However, their understanding of the wider cultural and global community is underdeveloped. The care, support and guidance the centre offers to pupils are good and staff successfully engage pupils in learning and develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory and improving rapidly. There is a clear focus on improving outcomes for pupils. The vision and direction of the centre is now clearly shared and understood and roles are effectively delegated. New systems for evaluating the work of the centre are in place and these have been used to identify where improvement is needed, and a course of well-judged actions is beginning to bear fruit. However, it is still too early to judge the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of these improvements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to improve the quality of the accommodation, so that it better meets the needs of pupils and the curriculum.
- In conjunction with the local authority, improve the arrangements for the placement of Key Stage 3 pupils into appropriate placements.
- Improve the opportunities to promote pupils' wider cultural development.

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 on entry for most pupils are exceptionally low, as pupils have suffered interruption to their schooling through fragmented attendance and exclusions from their previous schools. By the time pupils leave the centre at the age of 16, they achieve satisfactorily but because of the large deficits in their education their overall standards are still a long way behind most of their age group. Nevertheless, they attain certification in a suitable range of nationally recognised qualifications such as GCSE and entry level awards. Results are best in English and citizenship. Pupils' success in achieving their individual learning targets varies widely. However, tracking systems show, over the last six months, pupils' progress in a wide range of subjects is improving markedly. This is because teachers are clearer about setting more precise learning targets and sharing these with pupils. The progress of some Key Stage 3 pupils is slowed because they remain in the centre too long and are not able to find a placement which suits their needs more appropriately. The significant improvement in pupils' attendance rates has had a positive impact on their achievement and progress. The centre has started to set challenging but realistic targets to further improve pupils' achievements. There is no significant variation in the progress of various groups of pupils, apart from those Key Stage 3 pupils who have not been re-integrated into other schools.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils develop their moral, social and spiritual understanding satisfactorily. Breakfast clubs and lunchtimes provide valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise and cooperate. However, their understanding of wider cultural issues is more limited and is not systematically promoted enough. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is good and they participate in a wide range of physical and sporting activities. Some pupils lead turbulent lives and at times events outside of the centre affect their ability to stay safe. On occasions, this affects their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils recognise the improvements in the centre and the consequent improvements in their behaviour. One pupil commented that 'behaviour is way better.' They appreciate the supportive relationships they have with staff and feel that this helps to improve behaviour and increase their enjoyment of school. They acknowledge that bullying can happen, but are confident that staff take the right steps to address the situation effectively. The attendance of pupils has increased over the last year. It has improved from approximately 60% to now just over 80%. For many pupils this is a vast improvement. The pupils are proud of the part they play in the school council, which has helped to bring about improvements in behaviour and activities on offer. Pupils have developed a loyalty to the centre. They are satisfactorily prepared for the future through the achievement of accredited courses, work experience and college placements. Pupils develop a good understanding of their school community and learn to take responsibility for their own actions and how improvements can be made in a democratic way. However, their understanding of the wider and global community is more limited. Discussions on topical and global issues arise on an informal basis but are not planned for systematically.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and supportive. As a result, pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem. Teachers and support staff are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour sensitively. Learning mentors are particularly effective in supporting pupils, both those in school and those who receive tuition off the school site. There are some examples of good teaching. Teachers work hard to make learning lively and interesting, to motivate and engage pupils' attention. For example, in a science lesson, pupils were keen to understand about genetics through studying the capture and lifting of fingerprints. Teachers are developing the use of assessment information to track performance and set targets. Until relatively recently, the inability to recruit suitable staff with appropriate subject expertise has impacted negatively upon the quality of teaching and learning. However, specialist teachers are now in place and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Although pupils have access to the information and communication technology suite, computers are not used consistently enough to support pupils' learning in classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

At Key Stage 4, a suitable range of accredited courses is offered, so pupils can experience success in gaining a nationally recognised qualification. Work experience and college courses, such as construction, motor vehicle mechanics and catering, prepare pupils effectively for future employability. The needs of girls have been carefully considered so that they can follow courses suited to their interests. The curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities for physical and leisure activities. The accommodation restricts what the centre can offer. Practical subjects such as science, design and technology, and on-site vocational activities are severely hampered by the lack of appropriate facilities. Planning for the coverage of the wider cultural and multicultural issues has recently been improved but is not yet systematic enough.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good because staff know pupils well, and the difficulties they face, which are addressed through the daily tutor groups. This means that issues can be dealt with effectively so that pupils are better prepared for learning. Tutor groups are also used well to remind pupils of their targets for both behaviour and learning. Pupils therefore understand and remember these more effectively and this has contributed to their improved academic and behavioural progress.

Welfare, safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are thorough. There are good links with a wide range of agencies, such as the Connexions service, other schools and parents, to help minimise pupils' barriers to learning. However, the arrangements for re-integrating Key Stage 3 pupils into other schools are limited by the lack of suitable alternative placements. There are widely understood procedures for promoting positive behaviour and sanctions for unacceptable behaviour, which are implemented well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory and improving. The recently appointed teachers to the senior leadership team have provided the school with a boost and this has resulted in improved outcomes in pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic progress. The centre receives good support and challenge from the management committee and local authority officers, who hold the centre to account carefully and measure progress against agreed outcomes. This provides a good level of challenge and is helping the centre to improve. Senior leaders are beginning to make effective use of whole-school challenging targets to secure further improvement. Assessment information has started to be used perceptively to identify weaknesses. For example, better use is being made of predicted grades for each individual pupil and this is closely monitored, so pupils falling behind can be identified quickly and appropriate action implemented.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher recognises that despite her best efforts the accommodation is unsuitable and that the lack of alternative placements for Key Stage 3 pupils restricts the effectiveness of the centre to return pupils to appropriate placements quickly, which limits their achievements. Given the stability that has been achieved and the effective teamwork of staff and managers, the centre has a satisfactory and developing 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
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	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## 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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

28 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehouse Centre, Bristol BS13 9PB

I enjoyed my visit to your centre, and meeting and talking with you. Your centre is satisfactory and improving. Staff look after you well. When I spoke with the school council you commented how much more you are enjoying your time at the centre and how you feel that it is improving and that you are starting to make better progress. You told me you are enjoying learning much more than you did before. You commented on the good relationships you have with staff and how this helps you to settle in quickly and make steady progress in your personal development. You are able to study a range of courses, which are tailored to your interests, and this is helpful in preparing you for the future. The accommodation restricts some of the things you can learn.

You are soundly taught. Your teachers and support staff know you well and how to get the best out of you. Many of you make satisfactory academic progress in examination and vocational courses. Many of you have also made vast improvements in your behaviour and attendance, which in turn is helping you to learn better. Most parents feel that staff do a good job and are pleased that you are making improvements. The appointment of new staff has helped to make the centre better. Staff work well together and they are working hard to look at ways of improving the centre further. To help this process, I have asked staff to make the following changes to improve the centre.

- Work with the local authority to improve the accommodation, so that it better meets your needs and so that some subjects can be taught more effectively.
- Find alternative placements quickly for younger pupils, so that they can return to suitable schools.
- Provide better opportunities for you to learn about other people and cultures.

You can play your part by attending regularly, working hard and enjoying lessons. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price Lead inspector