

The Clifton Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135504
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	381900
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Eric Craven

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Steven Coen
Headteacher	Alison Johnston
Date of previous school inspection	01 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Eight lessons were observed being taught by four teachers and two training officers. Meetings were held with staff, an officer of the local authority and an elected member of the council, a national leader for education who is working with the centre and with two groups of students. A telephone conversation was held with the centre's Improvement Partner. The inspector observed the centre's work, and looked at policies, planning, minutes of the management committee's meetings and the centre's monitoring and evaluation records. Data about the students' progress and attendance was examined. The eight questionnaires returned by parents were scrutinised along with the 12 from students and 17 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the centre and its partners are working to improve the rate of attendance and reducing the number of students whose attendance is particularly low.
- The success of the centre in getting students back into mainstream schools.
- The impact of the restructuring of leadership and management and the 'acting senior appointments' are having on staff morale and the drive and direction of the centre.

Information about the school

The Clifton Centre provides for students who have been permanently excluded from secondary schools and for a small number who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Seven are currently on the register of both the centre and mainstream schools. Students come from all parts of Salford. The great majority are transported to and from the centre with a small number who live close by making their own way. There are about twice as many boys as girls. Almost all students are of White British heritage and nearly 60% are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above average. A very small number of students are in the care of the local authority and five have statements of special educational needs. The centre has been awarded Healthy School status. It has recently registered with the British Council and is beginning work toward International School status. The centre is part of the local authority's impending restructuring of its Inclusive Learning Service and as such three senior staff, who took up their positions in September 2010, are currently in 'acting' capacities. A relocation of the centre is planned.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Clifton Centre provides its students with a good education. The good care, guidance and support provided by staff engender good relationships with students which in turn helps them rebuild their confidence and self-esteem. Because of good-quality teaching and an interesting and relevant curriculum students make good progress and as a consequence many reach broadly average levels of attainment by the time they leave. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from staff's understanding of their needs and their vigilance in ensuring they continue to make at least good progress as well. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons is consistently good and students appreciate the relevance of what they are learning particularly in their vocational studies. Assessment is improving but opportunities are not always taken to check on understanding, to give feedback about next steps needed to improve further or to include individual targets in lesson plans despite there often being small numbers of students in lessons.

All of the questionnaire returns from parents and carers, students and staff supported the assertion that the students are safe at this centre. Good inroads are made into helping students understand how to live healthy lives. The behaviour of the students is good overall. In lessons the majority behave well even though they might not always show great enthusiasm for their learning. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the work of the centre, having had some influence in spending funds and fundraising. In many ways students are well-prepared for life once they leave the centre. They develop good workplace skills as a result of the strong vocational programme they receive. They benefit from the effective links the centre has with colleges, training providers and the Connexions service. Nevertheless, the judgement on this aspect of the centre's work is satisfactory rather than good because of the overall poor rate of attendance. Although it is on the rise and many students improve their attendance whilst at the centre, it remains too low.

Despite facing an uncertain future staff morale is high. This is because of the good work of senior leaders who are driving forward improvements and taking staff with them. Testimony to this is that all staff who returned the questionnaire said the centre is well-led, their contribution is valued and they are proud to be a member of staff. The centre has made good progress in dealing with the four areas for development from the last inspection, particularly the use of electronic whiteboards and separation of provision for students temporarily excluded from school. Senior

staff evaluate the centre's work well and plans for dealing with its priorities are well-formed and regularly monitored. As a consequence the centre has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of attendance so it is much closer to the national average by:
 - using the recently-revised multi-agency meetings to target hard-to-reach students and families
 - further personalising the curriculum for those students whose attendance is particularly low, using where necessary other locations for learning and innovative packages of study.

- Make better use of assessment in order to further improve the quality of teaching so that even more is good and outstanding by:
 - making sure that marking consistently gives students feedback about what they need to do to improve further
 - using focused questioning more to check on students' understanding
 - including individual targets in lesson plans to provide even more challenge for some students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most students arrive with attainment below that expected of those of a similar age nationally. Examination results improved in 2011 compared with the previous year and when GCSE equivalent scores are considered students reach broadly average standards, which represents good progress from their starting points. This is the case for students from different backgrounds and there are examples of students with statements of special educational needs making very good progress. Students also learn to manage their own behaviour and emotions well as a result of good support from staff who have recently received training in managing and diffusing difficult behaviour. Nevertheless there are infrequent low-level disturbances from a few students and sometimes these are not tackled swiftly or robustly enough by staff. Fixed-term exclusions, as measured by student numbers and days lost to exclusion, have halved in the last year or so and there are very few incidents of restraint required. Most students are diligent in lessons and are willing to engage with staff when questioned and in discussions. Those who attend regularly enjoy their time at the centre and can explain how they are benefitting. They influence their own learning in negotiations about their behaviour targets and in termly reviews. Students generally interact well with one another and most show respect for adults at the centre. They engage in a great deal of physical exercise. For example, every student has a weekly gym programme where they monitor their fitness. They all take part in the daily breakfast club, which does recognise healthy options and also provides a useful forum for students to discuss topical issues and to settle into the daily routine.

A very large majority of students move on to further education, employment or training at the end of their time at the end of Year 11 as a result the centre's focus on preparation for life beyond the centre. However, the full impact of this work is

somewhat thwarted by the low but improving rate of attendance. Students’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall. It is strongest in the areas of social and moral development because of the successful work of staff in helping them re-engage, get on with one another and control their behaviour. Their spiritual and cultural development is less well-developed but improving.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The characteristics of the good teaching observed are: consistently good use of ICT to stimulate students’ interest and to maintain pace to the lesson; good relationships between staff and students; staff modelling calm responses to difficult situations; and lessons made relevant to the students’ experiences which helps greatly to ignite and sustain their interest. This is particularly the case in vocational areas where the authenticity of the work environments is attractive and valued by the students. In less good lessons and to a lesser degree in some of the lessons judged good there are opportunities missed to check on and challenge all students’ learning fully.

The curriculum provides a helpful balance of academic and vocational opportunities that enable staff to match packages of provision to individual students. Indeed, each student has a bespoke timetable. The curriculum is bolstered by the centre’s partnership with other agencies and services including the Fire Brigade, Health Authority and the Youth Engagement Team. There are increasing opportunities for students to gain externally-recognised accreditation for all elements of the curriculum including vocational strands. The staff work earnestly to help students continue with examination studies they might have begun at their previous schools and partly as a result the rate of re-integration into mainstream schools is on the rise. The breakfast club and the ‘I Can Do It’ outdoor education programme enrich the curriculum well. Nevertheless, for a few students with particularly poor rates of attendance the curriculum has yet to ignite their enthusiasm for learning.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Staff quickly get to know each student well because of good induction, early baseline assessments and close liaison with their families and other involved agencies. They build trusting relationships with students and frequently discuss their needs on a one-to-one basis. The sharing of information between staff is good. Attendance has improved because of the rigour with which senior staff deal with absence. They work well and regularly with staff from the education welfare service. Transition arrangements are very effective and supported well by the Connexions service. The 'points' system is valued by students and plays its part in helping them improve their behaviour and attitudes. However the system is not always used to full effect when reference to the points is left to the end of the lesson rather than it being used as a tool to keep students on-task throughout. All parents and carers and all but one student who returned the questionnaires felt the centre prepares them well for the future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The relatively new senior leadership team has gelled well; each knows their role and plays their full part. They have quickly earned the confidence of staff and are driving improvement well. A comment from a member of staff, typifies the sentiments of others, 'I have a strong belief this centre is making strong improvements in all areas. I feel valued and I know that students also feel valued.' The centre's development plan suitably includes targets for improving students' progress and improving the quality of teaching. However, it could be further informed by the views of parents, carers and students and by a fuller involvement of the management committee in its compilation. Governance is satisfactory and the local authority has recently strengthened the management committee to help it operate even more effectively as a critical friend to the centre. The use of data is good and enables staff to evaluate much of the centre's work rigorously. Lessons are monitored regularly and feedback to staff, along with an effective training package has improved the quality of teaching. There is good communication and engagement with parents and carers. All those who returned the questionnaire felt informed about their children's progress and that the centre takes account of their views and concerns. There are good examples of partnerships with other agencies making a positive difference to individual students, notably through the formal multi-agency meetings which the centre regularly hosts. Links with mainstream schools have improved as a result of the efforts of the acting executive headteacher and the centre has good working relationships with the colleges and work placement providers. Staff ensure that no student misses out. Their personalised timetables and regular discussions with staff result in them getting a fair crack of the whip at all times. Any form of discrimination is robustly tackled. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. A priority for the

centre is to re-engage students and to get them to become part of a learning community once again and it is being increasingly successful in this task. It has given less attention to students' appreciation of wider communities in Britain and abroad although this has begun to become more prominent as the centre starts to work toward International School status. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Due attention is given to health and safety through risk assessments and the application of safe practices in vocational studies. The arrangements for checking on prospective employees are secure. The centre achieves good value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of the parents and carers responded to the invitation to complete the Ofsted questionnaire. For 10 of the 13 questions they were unanimous in responding positively. A couple of respondents disagreed that their children enjoyed school and that they were making sufficient progress but one of these nevertheless made complimentary comments about the work of the centre and its impact on their child's behaviour. Indeed, those who disagreed with these few statements did agree that they were happy with their child's experience at the centre. Overall, there was a positive response from parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Clifton Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received eight completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 35 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	25	3	38	1	13	1	13
The school keeps my child safe	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	13	5	63	2	25	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	38	4	50	1	13	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well-prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	38	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Clifton Centre, Manchester M27 8GW

Many thanks to those of you who met with me and helpfully provided me with your views during the inspection.

I have judged that the centre is providing you with a good education. Staff care for you and guide you well. The fact that the great majority of students move into further education, employment or training when they leave is testimony to their good work and your good progress. Those of you with difficulties managing your behaviour learn to do so well. You engage in a good deal of physical exercise and breakfast club is a beneficial way to begin each day. Those of you who attend regularly enjoy the opportunities the centre gives you and you made it clear to me that you feel safe. The quality of teaching is good and the things you are taught are very relevant and beneficial for your futures. The centre's work with parents, carers and partners from other agencies makes a positive difference to many of you. You learn to be part of a community at the centre despite coming from many different parts of Salford, but I did find that you learned less about other cultures and religions. The relatively new management team is working well and staff are pulling their weight in making improvements to the work of your centre.

There are a couple of things that could improve and I have asked staff to tackle these. Firstly, not enough students are attending regularly enough. You can play your part by ensuring you attend as this will put you in a good position to get the most out of employment, further education or training when you leave. Secondly, the quality of teaching could be even better if staff checked on your understanding more, gave you better feedback through marking and had individual objectives for you in some lesson plans.

You have my good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead inspector

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