

The Gillford Centre

Upperby Road, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 4JE

Inspection dates 20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It is very effective in making sure that they are able to study a range of courses that are individually matched to their needs and aspirations.
- The school provides a welcoming and very safe environment. Pupils show good levels of respect for the school, for staff and for each other. In many cases, there are dramatic improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance. As a result the majority of pupils are able to return to their mainstream schools.
- All Year 11 pupils in 2012 gained GCSE or vocational qualifications and moved on successfully to further education, training or employment.
- The headteacher provides a very strong lead for the school. He makes sure that the Gillford Centre builds effective partnerships with a wide range of primary and secondary schools. As a result of these partnerships, the number of pupils permanently excluded from mainstream schools has fallen significantly.
- Staff have accurate information about pupils' skills, knowledge and attitudes to learning. They use this information well to plan interesting lessons that help pupils to rapidly improve.
- Pupils with medical needs, and those pupils who have fallen behind in their reading, are very well supported and make significant strides to catch up. Pupils eligible for funding through the pupil premium make the same good progress as other pupils at the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching develops pupils' learning quickly enough. In some lessons, higher-attaining pupils spend a little too long practising what they already know and do not get enough time to cover new ground. Leaders' checks on teaching quality do not always pinpoint clearly enough how teachers can improve their practice.
- The roles and responsibilities of the management committee and the local authority are not clear enough. This means that the headteacher's targets and the impact of pupil-premium funding have not been thoroughly checked. The school's website does not currently provide all the information required by government guidelines.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 teaching sessions, including a guided reading lesson for pupils in Key Stage 2. The lead inspector went to see the school's off-site assessment centre and observed part of a teaching session during the visit.
- The inspection team held discussions with the headteacher, with key stage coordinators and with other members of staff. During these discussions, inspectors looked at teachers' planning, assessment records and examples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also met with the acting chair of the management committee and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector talked with two pupils from Year 11 and met with a parent of a child at the school. An inspector also had telephone discussions with three other parents. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The lead inspector held a discussion with two staff from the hospital and home tuition service, which is based on the same site as the main school building. Jointly with staff from the service, he looked at assessment information, scrutinised teachers' planning and checked the quality of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation related to safer recruitment, improvement planning, self-evaluation, performance management and staff training, together with pupils' attendance, behaviour and incident records. A sample of reports from the assessment centre was evaluated and records of the minutes of the management committee were scrutinised. The responses of five members of staff to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Lee Northern, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jim Bennetts

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Gillford Centre is a pupil referral unit for the north and east of Cumbria and is situated in a residential district of Carlisle. It provides full- and part-time education for pupils aged between 5 and 16 who have been excluded, or are at risk of exclusion, from mainstream schools. The great majority of pupils who attend the school divide their time between the Gillford Centre and a mainstream school.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded its provision for primary age pupils to include pupils in Key Stage 1 and the school buildings have been extended to provide additional space. Since 2011, the school has taken responsibility for the provision and management of the hospital and home tuition service within the area it serves. Altogether, there are 48 pupils currently registered on the roll of the school and a further 10 pupils supported through the work of hospital and home tuition staff.
- The Gillford Centre also uses an additional site for pupils' assessments and vocational education and this is located some miles away. For a very small number of pupils, the school also makes use of two alternative providers situated in the city centre.
- Almost all pupils are White British and most are boys. Over 40% of pupils are eligible for pupil-premium funding (additional funding from the government for those pupils eligible for free school meals, for pupils who have been looked after continuously for more than six months and those who are the children of service families). This proportion is higher than the national average. The school receives this funding according to the number of eligible pupils who attend full-time or who are registered jointly with a mainstream school.
- The school offers a free school meal at lunchtime to all pupils and many choose to stay and eat with staff and other pupils. Some pupils also attend the breakfast club before the start of the school day. Almost all students have social, emotional and behavioural concerns. At the time of the inspection, around a quarter of pupils had a statement of special educational needs.
- At the time of the inspection, staffing in Key Stage 3 was affected by the long-term absence of a member of staff. In addition, there is currently a vacancy for the position of Chair of the Management Committee. It is expected that the management committee will assume responsibility for the school's budget from April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of lessons that deliver outstanding learning by:
 - ensuring all teaching provides consistent levels of challenge for all pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils, and moves them on rapidly
 - developing effective strategies for identifying and sharing outstanding practice in the school
 - improving the effectiveness of the checks on teaching by pin-pointing more precisely how teaching can be improved.
- Strengthen the work of the management committee and the local authority in driving school improvement by:
 - establishing more clearly the respective roles and responsibilities of the management committee and the local authority, including with regard to the performance management of the headteacher
 - challenging school leaders about how effectively pupil-premium funding is used and making sure this is reported clearly on the school's website.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Although a small number of pupils attend the Gillford Centre on a full-time basis, the great majority of pupils follow a part-time timetable at the school and also attend a mainstream school for the remainder of each week. The school regularly reviews these arrangements to make sure they fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- A particular strength of the school is the quality of this partnership working with a large number of mainstream primary and secondary schools. This ensures that most pupils re-engage positively with education and develop improved attitudes, outlook and behaviour. In 2012, 60% of those pupils referred to the Gillford Centre were either fully or partly re-integrated back into mainstream schools. This is an important measure by which school leaders, and the management committee, rightly gauge the effectiveness of the school's work.
- Although overall levels of attainment remain low, pupils make good progress in learning from their starting points when they join the school. This is because much of the teaching that pupils receive takes careful account of where they are in their learning. A small number of pupils, particularly in Key Stages 2 and 3, are working close to, or above, national expectations. Not all teaching ensures that these pupils move on quickly enough to new work that pushes them to achieve more highly.
- Younger pupils benefit greatly from teaching that helps them to gain confidence and to succeed. Although most pupils in Key Stage 1 develop their social skills and use of language well, some could make faster progress in developing early writing skills.
- Older pupils say they appreciate the recent expansion in the choice of accredited courses in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow programmes that develop their skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and in using computers. Many pupils also access a well-chosen range of vocational courses that prepares them well for the world of work. Inspectors looked closely at work belonging to pupils following a National Vocational Qualification in engineering. This work is of a high standard and shows that pupils are making good and sometimes outstanding progress in this subject.
- Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. This is because the school ensures that every effort is made to provide individualised support that helps pupils to achieve and succeed. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very well to provide pupils with encouragement and guidance, but also ensure a focus on improving pupils' levels of independence and self-esteem.
- The school has used its pupil-premium funding to support an appropriate range of resources and activities. Although pupils eligible for support from this funding make the same good progress as other pupils, the school is not able to identify clearly how this funding is contributing to this improvement.
- Pupils supported by the hospital and home tuition service make swift progress, quickly closing the gaps in their learning that have built up while they have been unable to take part in formal schooling. This is because the teaching they receive takes very careful account of the small steps needed to gradually build pupils' confidence and this is very effective in helping them catch up. High quality assessment and planning contributes markedly to the success of this aspect of the school's work.
- As a result of the support provided, pupils are very well prepared for the next steps in their education, training or employment. The school ensures that older pupils have access to good quality careers guidance and it measures the success of its work by checking on how well pupils who leave the school continue to progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The overall quality of teaching is good, and pupils respond well to the support they receive. Where teaching is even better than this, teachers take careful account of what pupils need to do to improve and plan very effectively to provide it. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Key Stage 2 pupils, having grasped the strategy for the mental calculation of percentages, and explained it clearly to his teacher, a higher-attaining pupil was able to demonstrate his fluency with the method by working independently on the computer. He was not held back in his learning by spending too long practicing lower-level skills. In less effective teaching, pupils are not always provided with opportunities to move quickly on to more challenging work.
- Pupils take pride in their work and books are generally very well presented. Marking is regular and provides much praise and encouragement. In the best examples, as in the feedback provided by hospital and home tuition staff, marking provides very precise guidance to which pupils are expected to respond.
- Teachers and teaching assistants listen carefully to pupils' responses in lessons and are quick to adapt the level of their input and support. As a result pupils gain confidence in expressing their own ideas and pushing themselves to tackle more challenging tasks. For example, in an English lesson for Year 11 pupils, one boy who spoke to the inspector was particularly proud of his response to a task requiring him to write a business email. His understanding of the importance of writing in an appropriate style for the intended audience, as well as demonstrating good grammar, spelling and punctuation, was very impressive.
- Practice at the assessment centre site is of a similar quality. Staff work closely with a small number of pupils from Key Stages 3 or 4 who are at risk of exclusion and have been referred to the Gillford Centre from other schools. Frequently, the impact of this work is such that pupils are quickly able to return full-time to their schools. Where this does not happen, the assessment centre provides a detailed profile of each pupil before they join the main school site. Although this approach is very effective in helping pupils settle quickly into the Gillford Centre, it does not always provide enough detail on pupils' academic potential and targets.
- Existing partnerships with other schools have been developed to include 'outreach' visits to mainstream settings to observe 'at risk' pupils in their lessons. This has enabled staff to provide support for teachers in these schools, as well as providing insight into the needs of those pupils who may be at risk of exclusion.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and learning is only rarely disturbed by refusals or outbursts in lessons. These incidents are usually linked to issues affecting individual pupils, or pupils' inability to cope with challenges. In a very few instances of more extreme behaviour, the school makes good use of alternative provision and specialist agencies to help find a solution. Fixed-term exclusion from the school is very rarely used as a sanction.
- There is a positive and calm atmosphere throughout the school. Given that previous challenging behaviour was a prime reason for most pupils coming to the school, this speaks well of the improvements in pupils' attitudes and dispositions over time. This is clearly seen in pupils' interactions with staff and with each other during social times. They join in sensibly in activities such as playing pool and table tennis and those pupils who take advantage of the free school meal at lunchtime engage well with adults and other pupils. Pupils were keen to be involved in choosing the new school uniform and they understand the need for school policies that support good behaviour, including those that relate to not having mobile phones in lessons.
- Staff work hard to ensure that pupils have opportunities to explore challenging issues and to consider how certain actions or points of view might lead to discrimination or bullying. For example, a lesson for Year 9 pupils explored a range of themes, including sexuality and disability, with great sensitivity and care. No pupils, parents, or members of staff raised bullying or safety as an area of concern at the school.
- Attendance improves markedly for most pupils when they join the school. Although overall

attendance at the school is low compared to mainstream schools, a small number of pupils have 100% attendance and over half have 85% or more since September. Despite the range of strategies in place to support better attendance, such as home visits, meetings with parents and reward trips, a small number of pupils remain persistently absent from school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, teaching and support staff form a strong team. There is a clear objective for the school to be at the centre of a 'hub' of support for pupils, parents and other schools. A successful focus on partnership and multi-agency working, which underpins the headteacher's vision for the future of the school, is seen in the positive outcomes achieved by pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the remit and scope of the school has widened significantly. This has included establishing provision for Key Stage 1 pupils, taking on management responsibility for the hospital and home tuition service and developing significant outreach work. Staff have very successfully managed these changes, while sustaining the quality of pastoral care for pupils, extending the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and tackling the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report. This demonstrates leaders' good capacity to maintain the momentum for future improvement.
- Good procedures are in place to ensure that the school can continue to improve. The quality of provision, including teaching, is checked regularly and robust action is taken where performance does not meet expectations. As part of this process, staff receive useful feedback on the quality of their work. However, this feedback does not always pinpoint precisely enough how teaching can be improved. Similarly, although leaders are aware of the benefits of sharing the very best practice, approaches to do this effectively have not yet been fully developed.
- Much of the daily life of the school, including in lessons and at community times, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A number of educational visits, such as to the Buddhist temple at Eskdalemuir, also make a significant contribution to this. An attractive display in the Key Stage 2 area, with the theme of 'belonging', illustrates pupils' work on the nature of spirituality and identity.
- The widening of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been managed well to make sure that it provides choices that pupils value and enjoy. Effective steps have been taken to ensure all pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, particularly where this is provided in conjunction with mainstream schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is an expert body that supports the school well. It is getting ready to assume full responsibility for the school budget from April 2013. The headteacher provides regular reports about the work of the school and committee members are well placed to ask detailed questions about improvements in pupils' outcomes and progress against the school development plan. However, the management committee has been less effective in holding school leaders to account for the use of pupil-premium funding and how this is benefitting pupils. In addition, this information is not published on the school's website. The roles and responsibilities of the management committee and the local authority have not yet been fully clarified, including in relation to the performance management of the headteacher.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112095
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401235

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 of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Currently vacant
Headteacher	Robert Hewson
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2009
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