

INSPECTION REPORT

DACORUM EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 131100

Headteacher: Mrs R Harris-Cooksley

Lead inspector: Jacque Cook

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 April 2004

Inspection number: 265724

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | For pupils permanently excluded, at risk of exclusion, on long fixed exclusion or with no school place. |
| School category: | Pupil Referral Unit |
| Age range of pupils: | 5 – 16 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 21 |
| Centre address: | 30 Tenzing Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire |
| Postcode: | HP2 4HS |
| Telephone number: | 01442 247476 |
| Fax number: | 01442 243327 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Local Education Authority |
| Name of responsible officer: | A Sapsford |
| Date of previous inspection: | 1 February 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Dacorum Education Support Centre has a maximum of 15 pupils, who are of secondary age, at the centre at any one time. Many have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion and a few are referred because of their poor attendance at school. At the time of the inspection, there was a special arrangement where a Year 5 pupil attended for individual tuition while suitable provision was sought. During the inspection, there were 21 pupils on roll, five of whom are dual registered, seven were full time. The centre has an extremely flexible range of provision in response to the needs of pupils, parents, schools and the local education authority:

- Twenty-five hours a week teaching at the centre for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- Ten hours a week teaching for pupils in Year 11 at the centre, and ten hours a week tuition for pupils in Year 11 at two off-site centres, part of wider full time provision for these pupils.
- A range of short term individual tuition arrangements, where pupils are either working towards joining one of the groups, there is additional provision, such as a work placement or alternative provision is being sought.
- Extensive outreach provision to 61 primary, two middle and nine secondary schools involving 104 pupils at the time of the inspection, to maintain pupils in school at risk of exclusion and to support those returning to school post exclusion. A significant proportion of this work is with staff and parents.

Pupils are from the West Quadrant area of Hertfordshire which includes Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley and part of St Albans. All except one of the pupils taught in the centre are of white British ethnicity and no one is learning English as an additional language. One pupil is from a traveller family. Two pupils are looked after by the local authority and two have statements of special educational needs. Most experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The nature of the provision means that pupils may be admitted to, or leave, the centre at any time during the year. When pupils enter the centre, their attainment is often below, and at times very below, that expected for their age. They are from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. The centre gained Investors in People status in 2002 and is awaiting assessment for the Healthy Schools Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| 2351 | Jacque Cook | Lead inspector | Mathematics Art and design Cultural studies Drama Music Modern languages Physical education |
| 13762 | Norman Shelley | Lay inspector | |
| 20444 | David Hughes | Team inspector | Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Personal, social and health education and citizenship |
| 10781 | Robert Thompson | Team inspector | English Geography History Special educational needs |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the centre is very good. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, an extremely broad range of very good provision ensures pupils are successfully re-engaged with education. As a result, overall, they do very well, many returning to school and others gaining examination grades and awards. The outreach service is outstanding and instrumental in many pupils remaining in school. **Value for money is very good.**

The centre's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress.
- The outstanding ethos of the centre together with the excellent care, guidance and support offered to pupils helps them to build strong relationships with staff, improve their behaviour dramatically and develop positive attitudes to their work.
- The close team work of the staff leads to a consistency which contributes to the very good quality of teaching and learning.
- The centre is managed very well with the support of a committed and effective management committee.
- The very good partnership with parents makes a strong contribution to pupils' success.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. All the key issues have been dealt with very well. The excellent improvement in the leadership and in the management of the centre has led to very good improvements in teaching and learning and as a result, pupils' achievements and their attitudes and behaviour have also improved significantly. The curriculum is now much broader and the care and guidance pupils receive has considerably improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Pupils' achievement at the end of: | in relation to individual targets in: | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Subjects of the curriculum | personal and social education |
| Year 2 | n/a | Very good |
| Year 6 | n/a | Very good |
| Year 9 | Very good | Very good |
| Year 11 | Very good | Very good |

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Pupils' progress and achievement are very good overall. On the whole, pupils in Years 10 and 11 make slightly better progress than pupils in Years 7 to 9 because they often have a more mature attitude to their learning and are more focussed on achieving examination success. Pupils achieve very well in English and mathematics, making significant gains which help them to move to their next stage of education: to school, college, or to begin work. In science, pupils make very good progress, but the limited time for teaching means that their achievement is good. The very good progress that pupils in Years 7 to 11 make in personal, social and health education and citizenship is replicated by the pupils involved with the outreach programme. This contributes to pupils' **very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** and **the considerable improvement in their personal qualities**. The staff have very high expectations indeed of work and behaviour which contributes to **pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour. Attendance is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. All pupils from the centre who reintegrated into schools last year successfully maintained their places. **The quality of teaching and learning is very**

good. Lesson planning and teaching methods are excellent and ensure pupils build their knowledge and understanding effectively. Interesting lessons help pupils to concentrate and work hard. They develop the confidence to rise to challenges.

The very good curriculum is tailored according to the needs of the pupils ensuring those that are aiming to return to school study all the subjects they need. A good number of examination courses give pupils the success they need to be better prepared for the next stage in their education or employment. **Excellent care, guidance and support** of pupils ensure their progress is carefully monitored and key workers are particularly important in this process. They also are an important part of the **very good partnership with parents**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the centre is excellent and the management is very good. There is a real clarity of vision focussed on improving the achievement of the pupils. The work of the centre is very well monitored and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness. The leadership and the management of the outreach provision are excellent. The role of the management committee is very good, filling the role of critical friend very well. The Local Authority is very supportive of the centre. However, there is not adequate provision to meet the requirements of the statement of special educational need of one pupil.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Almost all parents are very pleased with the work of the centre and feel it is making a significant difference for their children. They were particularly complimentary about the quality of the teaching and the high expectations for the pupils, which the inspection team agrees with. A few parents of Year 11 pupils commented that the range of activities was limited. The inspection team agrees that the number of examination courses is limited, but to a more than adequate five or six subjects and pupils also had, and needed, the life skills part of their curriculum

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

No significant improvements are needed.

To meet statutory requirements:

- The appropriate authority should ensure that the requirements of any statements of special educational need for pupils temporarily placed at the centre can be met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement and progress are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, pupils make marginally better progress and achievement than pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils make very good progress towards General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations and unit awards in a range of subjects.
- In Years 7 to 10, pupils gain unit awards and the range is planned to increase this year.
- Pupils do very well in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- Progress in cultural studies, a new and developing subject, is satisfactory.
- Pupils make very good progress towards their targets.

Commentary

1. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are, on the whole, more focussed on their learning than those in Years 7 to 9. It is also the case that many of the younger pupils had not been attending the centre for as long as the older pupils. Most Year 11 pupils are very keen to gain examination successes. Their time is limited and many have missed a significant amount of their education prior to attending the centre. They have only one year and a concentrated ten hour programme of work on their academic subjects, which complements the provision they have for the rest of the week with the Youth Team. The centre has been successful in making a steady improvement in the number of subjects studied in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination. In 2002, 12 pupils gained grades in four subjects, whereas, last year 16 pupils gained grades in five subjects. The average number of grades awarded per pupil has increased from just over three to approaching 4 last year. The number of A to C grades has increased from three in 2002 to 14 in 2003. Steps are being taken to improve results further and this year many of the pupils are making very good progress towards gaining grades in six subjects. Additionally, in mathematics, pupils are attending an extra lesson to enhance their opportunities of obtaining a higher grade.
2. Alongside the GCSE examination, pupils also gain Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards. Last year, Year 11 pupils gained 236 awards during the course of the year and one Year 8 pupil gained an award. This year, this is set to improve because more subjects are being included for pupils in Years 7 to 10 who are making at least good progress towards gaining awards. Also, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are gaining awards as part of the outreach provision. Four pupils last year gained a unit award in 'Story Writing', a course designed to help pupils with low literacy skills achieve by improving their skills and enabling them to write an extended piece of work. This year for this age group, there is also a personal, social and health education (PSHE) award and another attached to the reintegration programme.
3. There is no measurable difference between the achievement and progress of girls and boys or pupils of different ethnicities. On the whole, pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. However, one pupil, who has a statement of special educational needs to study all the subjects of the National Curriculum is making good progress in the subjects he is being taught in individual tuition at the centre but is clearly missing out on the others.
4. In terms of progress and achievement, targets are set for individual pupils rather than for the centre. These are being very well met.

5. Pupils make very good progress and achievement in English and mathematics. In both subjects, pupils are making very good progress towards achieving GCSE grades, two in English, language and literature, and unit awards. They increase the range of vocabulary that they use and understand which improves their speaking and listening and develop reading skills, which for many are at a low level. Pupils' writing improves very well with many creating short stories that are interesting to read. Plays, poetry and novels are studied and pupils learn to analyse the way newspaper articles are written. Pupils' understanding of mathematics is increased through the practical activities. They learn about perimeter and area of two dimensional shapes and the names and properties of three dimensional shapes. Numeracy skills improve well as there are often practices during the starter activity in lessons. Their gains in literacy and numeracy contribute enormously to their progress in other subjects.
6. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 make very good progress in science but their achievement is limited by the lack of a science room and the time available. However, there are firm plans to introduce unit awards shortly. Pupils develop an understanding of the effect of forces including upthrust from liquids.
7. In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. They gain unit awards and in Year 11 successfully work towards the Computer Literacy and Information Technology (New CLAIT) accreditation. The skills pupils develop are used very effectively in other subjects to improve the quality of their work.
8. Pupils, at the centre and as part of the outreach provided, make very good progress and achieve very well in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. This is partly because the subject is woven through the curriculum at the centre as well as being taught in separate lessons. In most other subjects pupils are making at least good and often very good progress. In cultural studies, which is a very new course, their progress is satisfactory because it is at the early stages of development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development including their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships throughout the centre are excellent.
- There are very good procedures to ensure pupils settle in well.
- Staff are extremely skilled in helping pupils develop a desire to learn.
- Expectations of how pupils will behave are very high indeed.
- There have been no exclusions from the centre in the last year.
- Pupils helped through outreach make significant improvements in their behaviour.

Commentary

9. Improvement since the time of the last inspection in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development is good. Throughout the centre there is a calm, businesslike atmosphere. Pupils are very aware that they are expected to do their best. Staff continue to engender this atmosphere when they are working away from the centre in outreach activities or working in the learning zones. Strong relationships, built on mutual respect, help to build pupils' self-esteem and their confidence grows. Comments from pupils included "we are expected to do well here" and "we know that staff believe we can do it". Not only do pupils become more effective at expressing opinions but they also listen to and take account of the views of others. They take responsibilities in the centre, including preparing the breakfast and are courteous and helpful to staff.

10. Pupils are keen to learn. Very effective, gradual induction procedures ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them by the time they join their group. They are prepared to make the best use they can of the chances offered to improve their behaviour and remain in or return to school or, in Year 11, transfer to the Youth Programmes. As a result, the success rate of pupils maintaining their place in school following work with outreach staff or returning to mainstream schooling after attending the centre is very high. Additionally, Year 11 pupils that stay in the centre often continue to further education. Staff continually point out to pupils examples of acceptable behaviour: “when you return to school your teachers will know you are ready to start if you look at them”. They also ensure that pupils are aware of unacceptable behaviour, for example, a pupil fiddling with a pen was asked “what are you doing that your teachers may find irritating?”
11. An extremely effective points system linked to individual targets helps pupils improve their behaviour considerably. Pupils are keen to gain points as they can be saved and exchanged for rewards such as a drink or vouchers for a fast food outlet. Also, as a further incentive, the pupils agree to donate a set number of points each week to reach a target for an outing each term. This term they are saving for a visit to the dry ski slope. Expectations are made clear and levels of seriousness and consequences of infringements established. Staff skilfully praise pupils for conforming, participating actively in lessons and achieving success. As a result, there have been no instances leading to pupils being excluded from the centre in the last twelve months, which is an excellent record. It demonstrates how flexible and effective strategies and a positive outlook from staff can support pupils to stay in education. The improvement in behaviour is clearly a steadily improving trend as each year the number of records in the incident book gets less and less.
12. Staff at the centre are very vigilant and breaks and less formal activities are very well supervised. This, combined with specific and early intervention at the first sign of any potential bullying and helping pupils to become more considerate of each other is very effective. No evidence could be found of incidents of bullying from records or from discussions with staff and pupils. Indeed pupils that had attended the centre and who had recently successfully returned to school commented that there was no bullying because “it is easier to get on with each other at the centre” and “people don’t tease me here, so I don’t get angry”. Another who had left the centre two years ago said there had been some name calling but this was quickly dealt with by staff.
13. Headteachers and staff in schools where the outreach team operates comment that the great improvement in the behaviour and attitude of the targeted pupils is also reflected in other pupils involved in the group work and projects. For example, the friends in the *Circle of Friends* strategy that support a targeted pupil learn to be aware of the needs of someone else and to pre-empt difficulties as diplomatically as possible. Work with pupils has a positive effect on their learning as well as their attendance at school. As a result, pupils are less at risk of exclusion and are more fully included into school life.
14. Staff are excellent role models for pupils particularly in respect of their very good moral and social development. They work very well with pupils identifying clearly the differences between right and wrong and encouraging them to debate issues of behaviour, relationships and morality. Topics selected for the well structured breakfast sessions which are used to explore issues selected from the newspapers, contribute effectively to the good preparation pupils have for life in a diverse multi-ethnic society. Opportunities are taken in drama to explore social situations. For example, pupils improvised a scenario of parents confronting their teenage child after discovering evidence of drug taking. Pupils’ spiritual and cultural development is good. They are helped to learn about themselves and to consider arguments about the existence of a supreme being in a world where there is pain and suffering. Opportunities are made for pupils to reflect on the work of artists and to experience wonder, for example, at the effects of magnetism. Subjects such as art and design, design and technology, cultural studies and English have strong cultural elements. Pupils study Aboriginal

art and learn about the dreamtime as well as the work of artists through the centuries to the modern era. Classical pieces of literature, including Shakespeare and a twentieth century novel by Steinbeck and poetry broaden pupils' cultural perceptions well.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 7 | School data | 10 |
| National data | N/A | National data | N/A |

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

15. Pupils' attendance has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Due to the relatively small numbers on roll, if the effect of two instances of pupils moving away from their homes is taken into account, the overall attendance figures improve significantly. Additionally, all pupils who have experienced prolonged absence from school prior to attending the centre develop much improved attendance, which is often one of their targets and a condition of being offered a place. Very effective systems for checking on absence, including a phone call home if the pupil is overdue by 15 minutes, tend to nip any difficulties in the bud. Strong links with the education welfare service ensure that any necessary further action is swift. Punctuality is good overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is very good. The strengths are in the excellent care, guidance and support pupils receive, the very good quality of the teaching and learning of a very suitable curriculum and the very productive links with parents and with schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are planned extremely well with activities pitched at the right level so all pupils learn effectively.
- The content of sessions is made interesting and exciting.
- Staff have very good expertise.
- Very high standards of behaviour and application to work are expected.
- Teaching and learning are very good in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education.

Commentary

16. Regular and focussed monitoring and relevant inservice training have made a major contribution towards the very significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The number of lessons where teaching and learning are very good or excellent has more than doubled.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 13 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons

17. All relevant national strategies are used very effectively and lessons are very successfully planned to capture and sustain the interest of pupils. They know what they will be learning because this is explained at the beginning of each lesson and checked at the end. Very good introductions review previous work helping pupils to consolidate their knowledge. Pupils often work at different levels of difficulty on the same topic or may move ahead of their peers. In mathematics, for example, pupils are pleased to be told they may “jump ahead” and miss questions that it is clear they can do and are spurred on to work on the next section. In all subjects, teachers pose questions skilfully often directing easier or more difficult ones as necessary. Practical activities are used, where possible, such as experiments in science, which the pupils enjoy. They rise to challenges, for example exploring whether, unlike other objects tested, a sponge will be heavier in water than in the air because it will become waterlogged. Learning support assistants work very well with pupils and also use their skills effectively to teach classes including ‘Brain Gym’, a series of simple movements designed to help learners co-ordinate their brains and their bodies better and create a calm start to the day, and modern foreign languages. Pupils appreciate their enthusiasm and participate well in these lessons.
18. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use with their awareness and understanding of the needs and levels of working of the pupils to ensure work is relevant and pitched at the right level. This is informed by the very effective assessments (baselines) made when pupils have been allocated a place at the centre. Staff establish how each pupil learns best and how difficulties such as low reading or comprehension skills can be managed. Targets are closely monitored and reviewed regularly. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. For example, in art they need to do some further research into the work of the artist they are studying. Teachers and learning support assistants use their skills extremely well in outreach sessions pitching work at the appropriate level whether teaching individuals, groups or mixed groups of pupils and adults. They are especially good at getting to the root of difficulties and helping to overcome them.
19. Pupils respond well to the high expectations that are set for them and as a result time in lessons is used for learning and pupils work hard. In the centre, homework is taken very seriously, particularly for those pupils who are working towards a GCSE examination in a year. It is also seen as important for pupils to get into good habits prior to returning to school. It is used very well to extend or consolidate work and if not complete, time is taken on a Friday afternoon when pupils would prefer to be doing something else in negotiated time.
20. All staff are very skilled in preventing behaviour becoming a problem. They use a broad range of strategies and follow the centre’s procedures and keep pupils involved. An excellent example was seen during a thinking skills lesson. Here, pupils were happy to pass the ball giving possible questions to the answers provided but a few were of the opinion that the parachute activity was “what they did in primary school”. However, the positive response from the teacher and insistence that they join in very quickly led to a total involvement and the comment “that was fun”.
21. Teachers consistently maintain a good pace when teaching English and mathematics. They keep pupils’ attention through planned changes in activity such as sequencing a series of paragraphs where the sentences have been cut up, followed by discussion on how words are used in newspaper headlines. Pupils are clear that they want to achieve and they strive to understand difficult concepts. For example, when studying the poem *Night of the Scorpion*, Year 11 pupils gained a good understanding of the complexities of the mix of the Hindu and the Jewish viewpoints. In a mathematics lesson, squares, cubes and prime numbers were revisited successfully in quick succession. Personal and social education and citizenship are very effectively taught during ‘breakfast club’. Pupils are helped to use newspapers successfully to gain information about selected topics and they discuss pertinent issues. Teaching and learning on courses that are less well developed, such as cultural education, are

satisfactory. Pupils gain knowledge but activities are not always sufficiently clear. For example, pupils become uncertain because they have too many newspaper articles to sort into categories that sometimes overlap.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The flexible and innovative curriculum is very well planned to provide pupils and students with what is most needed to return to or maintain places in mainstream education.
- Provision for pupils who are permanently out of school is very well organised to ensure it is appropriate for their needs.
- Personal, social and health education and citizenship pervade the whole curriculum
- Parts of the curriculum are limited by the nature of the accommodation and resources.
- The number, experience and expertise of all staff to meet the needs of the pupils and students are very good and result in the provision of very good learning opportunities.
- Individual tuition does not provide the National Curriculum for those pupils who have statements that demand it.

Commentary

22. The curriculum is worthwhile and relevant and is as broad, balanced and rich as is required to meet very effectively the needs of pupils and the reduced statutory requirements for a pupil referral unit. The provision is complex and very well co-ordinated. It is inclusive in ensuring that courses offered to pupils are appropriate. All elements support pupils very well for their subsequent education or employment. This represents very good improvement since the time of the last inspection.
23. A major thrust is to enable pupils to remain in their schools. This is achieved through support for pupils in school and may involve staff and parents usually working on strategies to improve personal development, attitudes and behaviour. Activities such as *Acting out in Class* which seeks to help staff improve the self esteem and co-operation of pupils; the six week *Key Stage 1 Group* which is for pupils whose behaviour at home and at school is causing concern where they attend with their parents and *The Transfer Programme* which supports identified vulnerable pupils prior to their move to secondary school are very effective. Similarly at the secondary level, *Circle of Friends*, *Building Self Esteem and Confidence and Enhancing Personal and Social Skills* all work well to give staff and pupils strategies to improve behaviour and attitudes to work.
24. A second strand is working with pupils that have been excluded to return them successfully to school. These pupils attend full time at the centre and study the subjects from the National Curriculum so, as far as possible, they do not fall behind their peers. Additionally, they are well supported by a wide range of experiences provided by teachers to enhance learning, self-confidence and the formation of relationships, such as 'Brain Gym', breakfast club, thinking skills and drama. During 'negotiated time' on a Friday, pupils negotiate their choice of activity from a menu which changes each term. At present they can select from a broad range including ICT programs, gardening, extra food technology and paired or group games. Through the provision of PSHE the centre provides clear and informative programmes of both education in drug and alcohol misuse and sex education. Thus, pupils are prepared very well both academically and through improving their behaviour to return to school.
25. The third strand is two projects for Year 11 pupils well designed to help them complete their compulsory education. The first, the Youth Programmes Unit (YPU), takes place at the centre in the afternoon when pupils study six examination courses. In the mornings, they work with the Youth Team on a personal and social development programme. One pupil from this course has already decided she is working towards gaining a place at the local sixth form

college. Another has a place at college. The second is the learning zone which takes place at two off-site locations, run by the Youth Team. Although these pupils are not on the roll of the centre, the centre staff provide the formal tuition in five examination subjects. Suitable examinations for both these groups include GCSE and the unit awards. A numeracy examination helps all pupils gain a basic award in mathematics and in ICT pupils study for the New CLAIT award. Connexions (a service that provides information, guidance, referral and support for young people aged 13 to 19 to help them make a smooth transition into adulthood) effectively arranges links with colleges and work placements for students who move on to the next stage of education or work.

26. Finally, a few pupils, often very troubled or disruptive, receive individual tuition which is very much tailored according to their needs and usually includes English and mathematics and they may also study subjects such as science, food technology, geography and personal, social and health education and citizenship. This is effective and usually a short term arrangement for specific reasons and it is part of the centre's ability to respond quickly when pupils are without a school place. For example, the Year 5 pupil receives individual tuition while a suitable school is sought for him as there are no places currently at the primary unit. Looked after pupils, where the home provision is unstable, are supported in the centre and by support workers elsewhere. The provision may include counselling or therapy sessions and be linked to other activities such as work experience or college attendance and can be built up to one of the other options. In one instance there is provision of specialist teaching for a pupil with specific literacy difficulties (dyslexia). However, this type of placement is not suitable for a pupil with a statement of special educational needs as the provision does not meet the stated requirements for being taught the full National Curriculum.
27. There are a good number of well qualified enthusiastic teachers at the centre. This is complemented by a good number of competent and very enthusiastic support staff. Resources are very good for ICT and otherwise are good for the curriculum that is taught. The accommodation in the centre is good overall even though in some subjects such as science and design and technology the scope of study is limited through lack of specialist facilities and space. Staff use additional facilities to enhance and extend the curriculum, for example, the local running track and theatre and provide for extended cultural and artistic experiences through visits to art galleries and theatres. For example, a visit was being arranged during the inspection to the Vivienne Westwood exhibition in a museum in London for pupils working on textiles and fashion as part of their GCSE examination coursework. Many of these activities take place outside the normal school day.

Care, guidance and support

Excellent standards of care, guidance and support are provided for pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school goes to great lengths to know and understand the pupils and to provide for their relevant needs.
- Excellent use is made of the services of external agencies.
- Staff meticulously attend to health, safety and welfare needs.

Commentary

28. Relationships between all adults and the pupils in the centre are very constructive, trusting and mutually respectful. Pupils feel valued, supported and safe because of the way they are treated. They have no hesitation about confiding in members of staff and seeking their help and guidance. Teachers and helpers know the pupils extremely well and go to considerable lengths to understand and provide for their needs. Each pupil is specially supported by an assigned member of staff (a key worker) who takes a particular interest in and responsibility for the pupil. This approach is very effective in providing a sense of security for and commitment from the pupil.

29. Procedures for health and safety are very well implemented and risk assessments are in place for each pupil and situation. All members of staff receive training regarding child protection matters and requirements for children in care are fully complied with.
30. The induction of new pupils is undertaken with considerable care. The centre ensures it obtains all relevant details about each pupil and very effectively employs a staged approach to the pupil joining the centre. Initial assessment is extremely thorough and is updated continuously throughout the pupils' time in the centre. Pupils enter selected details about their own progress onto the database so they are aware of how they stand. A regular report and weekly discussion with parents and pupils ensures all parties are aware of academic and personal progress, strategies and expectations. On these occasions the views and opinions of pupils and parents about aspects of provision are noted and parents are able to comment in writing about the reports. A questionnaire is sent to parents each term and parents and pupils also feedback to the centre during review meetings.
31. There is very close liaison with the advisory teachers for looked after children in the local area and in other areas as a number of pupils move into the area served by the centre. Special arrangements are often made to work on a one-to-one basis with these pupils and additional facilities are provided where needed to help them return to their learning.
32. The centre takes full advantage of the services of specialist agencies such as educational psychology and psychiatry, counselling and nursing. Public service organisations such as the police contribute to the curriculum and support pupils individually when called upon to do so at times.
33. A careers education module is taught for pupils in Year 9 and a careers adviser provides a limited but good service to the centre. The Connexions Service, part of the Youth Programmes Unit, arranges most of the careers education, guidance and work experience for pupils and transition to further education, when applicable. Links with the Youth Team are particularly good. The headteacher of the centre meets with the manager of the youth team to discuss and select appropriate courses for the pupils each year. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is very good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The centre has a very good partnership with parents and other schools. It has good links with the community. The centre's outreach services provide excellent support programmes for pupils and staff based at other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents express a great deal of confidence in the centre
- The centre very successfully engages parents' involvement
- Relationships with other schools are excellent and very good arrangements are in place to support selected pupils and parents

Commentary

34. Parents are delighted with almost all aspects of the centre's work. They are very pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided and the progress that their children make. Two parents are not happy with the range of extra curricular activities but inspectors judge that, given the circumstances of the centre, the range is satisfactory. Two parents are not happy with homework and arrangements for pupils to settle in but inspectors judge that provision is very good in both respects. The centre is aware of parents' views through its various forms of feedback.
35. Communications between the centre and parents are exceptionally good. Daily contact by telephone is made in most instances and individual discussions are arranged at least fortnightly

but preferably on a weekly basis when an updated report is provided. On these occasions strategies to support the pupil are discussed and guidance given, if required, about how to support the pupil at home. Where necessary, to ensure these meetings take place, taxis and childcare arrangements are provided. A very detailed report is published each term and parents are invited to respond to it.

36. Parents confirm that the centre works very closely with them to support them and their children at all levels. Coaching and workshops are arranged for example to help parents manage behaviour and transition to next school. The centre responds quickly and appropriately to parents' concerns.
37. The centre maintains exceptionally strong links with the primary, middle and secondary schools under its umbrella and referrals to the centre elicit a much appreciated rapid response. All pupils who are helped by the centre, in whatever setting, are precisely monitored and centre staff continue to 'keep an eye' on pupils after planned programmes of intervention are ended. This results in pupils remaining in school with clear improvement in their behaviours and is much appreciated by parents and the staff of participant schools. Pupils, parents and staff are all fully included in planning, meetings, strategies and progress reviews. Pupils are carefully monitored by school and centre staff and as a result this enhances pupil progress in many areas.
38. The outreach staff provide supported schools with precise and specialised programmes of work that ensure full participation in school life for targeted pupils. They ensure that pupils are well supported by a range of adults such as their mainstream teacher and, for example, by parents working and forming relationships with their own and other children such as in the *transition parenting group* sessions held at the centre. Staff provide very high quality in-service training to other schools and staff who appreciate the increase in knowledge and awareness they develop.
39. Links with businesses are being developed at present. The headteacher has a link arranged with a large international business locally. Links with employers are arranged through the Connexions service as part of the Youth Team.

Example of outstanding practice

Formation of a *Circle of Adults* to prevent exclusion of a primary age child.

You don't often get staff meetings like this! The outreach support team invited adults who had contact with the child causing concern to a twilight session and the whole school staff were there. The headteacher of the Dacorum centre led a brainstorming session where the adult circle raised issues and concerns and later, hypothesis, reasons and solutions, in a semi formal setting.

Only one person talked at a time and one person took on the role of the 'voice of the child' – his representative. Comments, concerns and suggestions came swiftly. They felt angry, the pupil was aggressive and there were complaints from parents. The head of outreach created a large and colour coded 'graphic' wall display of the issues as the session went on under headings of 'Hot Issues' 'Relationships' 'System Issues' 'Hypotheses' and 'Strategies'. Amongst the comments made - under 'hypotheses'-staff wondered if the pupil felt overwhelmed or left out or found it difficult to adjust to changes. The remarks made by the voice of the child included "people say different things" and "people say I am aggressive, but I don't always mean to be".

The result, a very clear insight by all into the pupil's needs and following from this, practical plans and programmes of work specifically for this child created by the circle and therefore fitting perfectly into the work of the school. For example, finding a male role model, and a Year 6 buddy, also meeting and greeting each morning. Their solutions, copied and sent to the school later for reference, to make a positive difference - a happy child, learning effectively and no longer in danger of exclusion.

40. The centre uses the community well overall to enhance pupils' experiences. They include coaching at a sports track, use of a local theatre for drama and supermarket visits to support relevant studies. Pupils are entered for local competitions, for example involving poster design.

Various visitors such as theatre groups and an artist supplement teaching and other local groups contribute to the curriculum. There are a number of visits to places of interest such as museums and theatres. Involvement with employers is underdeveloped; however, a business partnership involving the headteacher has recently been organised. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the centre is excellent and the management is very good. The headteacher of the centre provides inspirational leadership and is very well supported by other staff. Governance of the centre is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership from the headteacher, supported by key staff, builds very effective teamwork by all staff.
- There is an excellent ethos where all pupils are keen to do well and improve.
- The centre has a clear role of supporting mainstream schools by its very effective outreach work.
- The management of the centre is well supported by the management committee who undertake an active role in the development of the centre.
- Comprehensive monitoring of the work of the centre and the capacity to solve problems creatively are strengths.
- The requirements of a statement of special educational needs are not met.

Commentary

41. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. She has high expectations and a total commitment to moving the centre forward to achieve higher standards. Her strong leadership and clear vision have ensured the management committee members and staff know what they are working towards. This helps the centre to fulfil its aims and targets for development successfully. The headteacher and her small senior management team of two senior teachers have recognised the centre's strengths and perceptively analysed areas for development. They have ensured these targets have been met. They have forged extremely effective teams of teachers and support staff and this has a beneficial effect on the progress pupils make. At the time of the last inspection, both the leadership and the management were unsatisfactory. Improvement has been excellent since the time of the last report.
42. Staff create an excellent atmosphere in the centre which leads pupils do their best to succeed. An example of this is pupils in the Year 11 who are so keen to improve their GCSE grades, they are prepared to put in extra hours of study in order to perform better and gain higher grades. The centre consistently aims high for each pupil and goes to great lengths to juggle and tailor the provision to meet needs. For example, funding for a few hours of learning support assistant time has enabled a primary aged pupil to stay in school. Short term individual packages are devised often using individual tuition as a means of supporting pupils to re-engage with learning. The ability to be flexible is a real strength of the way the centre is managed.
43. The management of the outreach service is excellent. Feedback from mainstream schools is very complimentary about the service they receive from the centre. They are clear that the centre's involvement improves pupils' attendance, develops more positive attitudes and behaviour and increases self-esteem and confidence resulting in pupils increasing their inclusion within school. One of the most important benefits reported by mainstream headteachers was that not only did 'targeted pupils' improve, but also their peers who took part in the activities provided by centre staff.
44. Evaluation of the work of the centre is wide-ranging and systematic. Time is very well spent reflecting on how to improve. For example, the extension of the school day enables pupils who are full time to finish by 1.30 each day, still have 25 hours teaching and enable other pupils who only receive part of their provision at the centre to attend in the afternoon. Data about pupils'

performance is systematically analysed including examination results, improvements made from initial assessment information and attendance figures. Comparisons are made with other centres. Additional mathematics lessons are one result of this evaluation. Last year there were a number of D grades in the GCSE examination, this year it is expected that with the extra teaching, there will be more C grades and above. Staff have individual targets which effectively support improvements in teaching and learning through lesson observations and constructive feedback. Performance management is very well done. Teachers and support staff have very good opportunities to take part in a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. This has made a major contribution to the improvement in teaching and learning. Staff induction is very well structured and ensures that new staff get to know important elements, such as behaviour management strategies, to maintain the necessary consistency in dealing with pupils, as quickly as possible.

45. The management committee carries out its duties conscientiously and is very supportive of the centre. They make a significant contribution to the improvement plan and through reports received at regular meetings and visits to the centre, gain an understanding of its daily work. They have a good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses and the part they have to play in bringing about further improvements. An indication of the importance and the effectiveness of the centre is the number of professionals who give their time to serve on the committee. Notably, there are five headteachers as well as representatives from the local authority and relevant services. The role of the management committee is complemented very well by the additional support from the local education authority. However, the statutory specified needs of a pupil with a statement of special educational needs are not being met through attendance at the centre. What was initially a short term placement while alternative provision was sought is now at three months and in spite of representation by staff and the management committee to the local education authority no satisfactory solution has been reached.
46. Day-to-day administration is very good. Administrative staff provide high quality support and information for the headteacher and management committee. There is very careful spending within the centre indicating prudent financial management. An underspend, accumulated from previous years is carefully meted out to provide additional provision. It is planned to reduce significantly in this financial year, for example, to fund work on the building and expenditure on ICT equipment. The principles of best value are applied very well, including comparisons with similar centres in the authority. Taking into account the outstanding effectiveness of the centre and the reasonableness of expenditure, the centre gives very good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 555334 |
| Total expenditure | 559181 |
| Expenditure per pupil | N/A |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Balance from previous year | 66000 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 63153 |

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is consistently very good as a result of very high quality teaching.
- All pupils in Year 11 study for examinations in English.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

47. Pupils from Years 7 to 11 achieve very well in English and make very good progress. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when progress was satisfactory and is largely due to the improvement in planning and the quality of teaching. Lessons are planned in great detail and focus on individual areas for development. All pupils have an initial 'baseline' test in English when they join the centre and this information is used well to plan lessons that build on and move learning forward. This is particularly helpful for pupils with special educational needs as extra support or specific teaching can be organised.
48. The National Literacy Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy are well used. Staff have good subject knowledge and also detailed knowledge of the pupils, their needs and levels of achievement. There are very good relationships and trust in lessons. This enables teachers to challenge pupils and extend knowledge and skills. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make very good gains in their speaking and listening through well structured discussions and responding to probing questions from staff. Reading and writing skills are improved well which is important as a number of pupils have difficulties with their literacy skills when they join the centre.
49. By the end of Year 10, those pupils who stay into Year 11, or join in Year 11, pursue the GCSE English courses for English language and English literature. The centre is very successful in both courses. Last year eight pupils gained grades in both English language and literature. They study novels such as *Mice and Men* and continue to improve their literacy skills and their speaking and listening effectively through well planned teaching. Their writing continues to make very good progress.
50. Leadership and management are very good. Observations of lessons are carried out regularly by the headteacher and senior staff and feedback given to staff. This is good practice and has improved the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.
51. The literature studied and the way the subject is taught contribute well to pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils considered maturely multi-cultural issues when discussing the poem '*The Night of the Scorpion*' by Nissin Ezekeil. They read well and showed good understanding and comprehension of the poem offering their ideas freely.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. The development of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects and areas of study is very good. Individual programmes are supported in all lessons and there is an emphasis on speaking and listening skills. Pupils are challenged to develop their discussion skills and listen to others points of views and show tolerance to others. Teachers use a range of resources in their

lessons pitched at the right levels of literacy for pupils. For example, in the breakfast club pupils read a range of newspapers and compare and contrast stories that appear, such as news headlines, sport, fashion and even the weather. This contributes effectively to their progress in developing literacy skills. In all lessons, key vocabulary is systematically taught. For example in mathematics, the appropriate vocabulary, such as circumference, radius, diameter, is written up and frequently referred to and explained.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work successfully towards examination successes.
- More able pupils voluntarily attend an additional lesson.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good.
- Lessons are planned to ensure all pupils learn very well.
- Assessment is used very well.
- Practical activities help capture pupils' interest and concentration.
- The subject is very well organised and led.

Commentary

53. All pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in mathematics. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection when progress was only satisfactory. Many pupils, as a result of the quality of teaching they receive, now achieve grades at GCSE as well as unit awards and a numeracy certificate. In order to improve the grades in the GCSE examination a session on Fridays has been organised and is well attended and appreciated by pupils. This includes pupils from the learning zones who would not usually attend the centre. The Key Stage 3 and National Numeracy Strategies are used very effectively. Fast moving question and answer starter activities, often a game for pupils in Years 7 to 9, serve to 'warm pupils up' and begin lessons very well. Activities are chosen to suit each member of the class, perhaps starting at different points or moving more quickly through the work. For example, one pupil calculated the area of shapes, while others were continuing with perimeters.
54. A number of pupils commented that they now enjoy mathematics because they feel they are making progress. Initial testing when they join the centre is used to plan targets, which pupils can see are being achieved. Teachers constantly check work to ensure errors are swiftly rectified. As a result pupils in Year 9 quickly learn the difference between area and perimeter and also to measure accurately. Practical sessions are particularly useful in helping understanding. Year 10 pupils were amazed to discover that the circumference of a circle is, as they calculated from measurements taken, always "three and a little bit" times the diameter whether the item is a kitchen colander or a roll of sticky tape.
55. Very good leadership and management include monitoring the work of pupils and other staff consistently. Analyses of pupils' achievement in each centre are compared to enable steps to be taken if any group or individual is doing less well than they should. Development plans show how the subject is being systematically improved. Decisions made to teach short modules of work are effective so pupils joining a class can swiftly start a new topic without the added pressure to 'catch up' with their peers.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Opportunities are effectively taken to teach mathematics in other subjects. In science, for example, pupils learnt how to read the figures on a piece of equipment used to measure the weight of an object accurately. During the breakfast session, weights and measurements are discussed, such as the record breaking fish caught.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching of science is very good.
- Pupils' involvement in lessons is excellent.
- Planning of individual lessons and programmes of work is very good.
- Time allocated to teaching the subject restricts the breadth of the curriculum studied.
- Limited accommodation inhibits the teaching of a full range of science investigations.

Commentary

57. Science is taught to pupils that attend the centre for all their education. Pupils make very good progress in lessons, as they are taught very well but their achievement is good overall. This is because pupils have only two lessons a week and the accommodation for teaching science is unsuitable. Very good lesson planning makes effective and careful use of the satisfactory resources.
58. Pupils' interest is gained extremely successfully and sustained through practical activities. While investigating forces, as part of a series of studies linked to the National Curriculum, all pupils improve their understanding of what makes a fair test. They explore, for example, whether an object held horizontally will experience more support from water than if held vertically. The teacher insists on very high standards of behaviour and as a result, pupils are able to work on their own and also discuss their findings as a group. Pupils' social awareness and social acceptance are improved as well as their gains in day-to-day knowledge of the way the world works.
59. The subject is admirably led and managed by the co-ordinator who plans, teaches and monitors the subject very well, providing a range of scientific experience for students. Unit awards are planned to give pupils the opportunity to take evidence of what they have achieved back to their schools. Overall, this is good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in ICT.
- There is a good, well used range of equipment.
- ICT is well embedded in other subjects and used throughout the centre curriculum and within outreach programmes.

Commentary

60. No lessons in ICT were seen during the inspection so no judgement on the quality of teaching is possible. In Year 11, pupils are making very good progress towards a Computer Literacy and Information Technology (New CLAIT) qualification. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 are very successfully following an advanced competence based programme of study to improve their skills and can gain unit awards. It is clear from seeing pupils use ICT in their lessons in other subjects, that they have a broad range of skills. They access information, enter data, present their work very well. Pupils use ICT equipment confidently and easily for example 'clocking in' each day and putting their own behaviour points on to the school's central database.

61. The centre has a very good ICT suite and equipment is available in all classrooms except the art room. Additional facilities include pupils' remote control of interactive white boards to enable direct interaction during group sessions.
62. ICT is well used in the school's outreach function; all teachers have laptops and pen drives (equipment used instead of a number of discs to store information from a computer so it is easily transferable from one machine to another) thus, for example, pupils in supported schools are able to edit and sequence their work. They present their work very well and access information from a variety of sources.
63. The subject is well led and managed by senior teachers during the absence of the co-ordinator. Much work has been done since the last inspection, when pupils' progress and the provision for ICT were unsatisfactory, to improve facilities and ensure staff are well trained. The resulting very good achievement now made by the pupils reflects the very good improvement made overall.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. The use of ICT other than in ICT lessons is very good. It is used effectively in support of English, mathematics, cultural studies and in other subjects through, for example, Internet research. Additionally, examples of pupils' work showed extensive use of word processing to present work very well and make good use of a range of graphs and tables.

OTHER SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM

65. Pupils rightly gain a great deal of pleasure from their achievements in **art and design**. Those working towards examinations often sustain their concentration for long periods and many gain GCSE grades. Pupils' sketchbooks demonstrate how they strive to improve their work, for example, to create the right shade and texture to represent denim. Lessons are very well planned to ensure pupils gain skills in using a range of media and techniques. Although space is limited, three dimensional pieces such as highly decorated jugs, masks and traditionally decorated Aboriginal didgeridoos are included. The study of artists and cultures contributes strongly to pupils' personal development.
66. **Cultural studies** has only recently been introduced to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education. It is too early to make judgements about pupils' achievements. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and pupils make sound progress as they retain knowledge for example about types of suffering and the Buddhist beliefs and way of life. Unit awards are planned for the course. This course contributes very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
67. Only one lesson in **design and technology**, which was food technology, was observed during the inspection. From this lesson and from discussions and the scrutiny of pupils' work and records it is clear that pupils make good progress even though the size of the room and the limited equipment available restricts work that can be undertaken with resistant materials such as wood, metal and plastic. Pupils' work shows they have a good understanding of design principles including those of evaluation and modification. They have designed clocks and simple buggies with automatic lighting using basic electronics. In food technology pupils do well making bread in a bread making machine and encouraging their friends to sample the bread at break time. Staff aim for pupils to prepare and cook a three course meal developing an understanding of basic hygiene and nutrition. During the week of the inspection, they successfully made soup selecting and evaluating their own flavourings. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 make good progress towards unit awards in health and hygiene and food technology.
68. **Drama** is taught very well indeed. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 work on the characteristics of drama, finding the right gestures for characters to use in tableaux, which builds their self-confidence. They enjoy the lessons and participate with enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 11 make

very good progress towards gaining grades in the GCSE examination and unit awards. They study a play *An Inspector Calls* and are helped to explore and rehearse their responses to a range of social situations. In one instance, for example, pupils worked in pairs and improvised the scenario of a child asking a parent for something. A spirited exchange concerning the impact on the household budget of the proposed purchase of designer trainers by one pair followed. However, pupils were amazed when the 'child' in another pair was instantly told he could have the money he asked for! This subject makes an excellent contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. ICT is used effectively to video sequences for later dissection and discussion and to prepare scripts as improvisations take shape.

69. No lessons were seen in **history and geography** as they were taught later in the week. Records show that pupils have gained an understanding of river systems and the water cycle. This was reviewed successfully in a thinking skills session. The effects of the Holocaust were studied in history and good use was made of the Internet to research evidence for this topic. Literacy skills were also developed in looking at *The Diary of Ann Frank*. Pupils are able to study for unit awards in history and geography.
70. Pupils in full time education at the centre have a lesson in **modern languages** each week. It was not possible to see any lessons during the inspection but discussions with staff and pupils show that the aim to boost pupils' confidence in speaking a foreign language and to build self esteem is well met. The underpinning philosophy that "the pupils will be successful and they can't fail" is very effective. French and Italian are taught on a half termly basis. All pupils do their homework and they enjoy the fun element of competitions introduced by the skilled staff. For example, they are asked to describe accurately what the person next to them is wearing using French or Italian.
71. A specialist teacher has recently started **music** lessons each week. Pupils in the full time provision are learning to play the acoustic guitar and how to compose and write songs. There are limited resources but they are used well. Pupils listen to music and have also enjoyed making music without instruments – where they clap and slap parts of their bodies, stamp their feet and use their lips to make 'body music'
72. **Physical education** has recently been introduced to the timetable. It is taught knowledgeably by an athletics coach. One session is in the centre and aims to build pupils' flexibility and strength to improve overall fitness. The second session is at the Hemel Hempstead track and pupils are learning techniques to improve running and throwing activities. In the short time it has been running, all pupils have participated and are keen to improve their personal performances. The course complements the building of confidence and self esteem by encouraging pupils to keep healthy and in good shape. It is appropriately linked to the Healthy Schools Award.
73. **Personal, social and health education and citizenship** are taught as a separate subject and pupils' skills and knowledge are very well developed through many other subjects and specifically at breakfast, break and lunch times in the centre and in outreach activities. Pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities. They discuss topical events from newspapers, making comparisons between accounts and forming their own views. Pupils are very successfully taught to improve their social and thinking skills, which helps them to control their emotions more effectively and minimise antisocial or disruptive behaviour. As a result, they are more able to learn wherever they are being taught, which is a marked strength of the centre. During lessons, both in and out of the centre itself, staff use an impressive raft of ideas and techniques, for example, the *Circle of Friends* or with the mixed parent and pupils sessions in transition parenting groups. Pupils are quickly reminded by staff about their responsibilities as members of the group and the need to speak courteously to each other and to adults. They learn rapidly and work well together in resolving conflict, disagreement or misunderstanding. These are skills of immense value, notably, to those who return to mainstream schools.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the centre | 2 |
| How inclusive the centre is | 1 |
| How the centre's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 2 |
| Value for money provided by the centre | 2 |
| Overall standards achieved | 2 |
| Pupils' achievement | 2 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 2 |
| Attendance | 3 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The quality of education provided by the centre | 2 |
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| How well pupils learn | 2 |
| The quality of assessment | 2 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 2 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 3 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 1 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 1 |
| How well the centre seeks and acts on pupils' views | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's links with parents | 2 |
| The quality of the centre's links with the community | 3 |
| The centre's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |
| The leadership and management of the centre | 2 |
| The governance of the centre | 2 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 1 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 1 |
| The effectiveness of management | 2 |

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).

In a referral unit such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not against national standards.