

The Wycombe Grange Pupil Referral Unit

56 Amersham Hill, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP13 6PQ

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is outstanding and students perform much better than expected, given their low attainment on entry.
- Students for whom the unit receives additional funding make excellent progress.
- Orchard House provides outstanding support to students. Very effective teaching inspires them to produce some high quality work.
- By the end of Year 11, students gain a wide range of qualifications and most go on to further education, training or employment.
- The unit enables students to turn their lives around. Students make outstanding improvements in their behaviour. They feel extremely safe in the unit and have trusting relationships with the staff.
- The outreach service provides outstanding support to mainstream schools. It is held in high esteem because it is so successful in preventing students being excluded from school.
- High quality teaching is underpinned by exceptionally thorough assessment of students' needs.
- The subjects and courses provided closely reflect students' learning needs and hopes for the future. Specialist facilities within the new Chiltern Skills and Enterprise Centre contribute greatly to this.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has high expectations and a very clear vision for the unit. She is supported exceptionally well by the deputy and assistant headteachers in putting her vision into practice. Together, they make sure achievement and teaching remain outstanding.
- The management committee is knowledgeable about the unit's work. It closely monitors the unit's effectiveness and provides both support and challenge to senior leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 18 lessons across the different sites, many of which were seen jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers. Informal discussions took place with some other staff and students. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Management Committee, and a telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- There were not enough responses to the online survey, Parent View, for these to be taken into account. However, the inspector looked at responses to the unit's own parental survey and at written comments received from a few parents. She also considered the 30 completed staff questionnaires and a number of letters from mainstream schools.
- The inspector observed the unit's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the unit's checks on teachers' work and development plans; records of students' attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; samples of students' work; and evidence of systems for protecting and safeguarding students.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The pupil referral unit is based on three sites: two in High Wycombe and one in Chesham. The Chiltern Skills and Enterprise Centre, in Chesham, is a purpose-built centre with facilities for a wide range of work-related activities which opened earlier this year. At the main High Wycombe site and at Chesham, the unit makes full-time provision for students who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. It also makes part-time provision for students who are dual-registered with their mainstream schools but who are at risk of exclusion. The third site, the school room at Orchard House in High Wycombe, provides for students with mental health issues who are receiving support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Staff from the unit provide outreach support to local schools for students who are at risk of permanent exclusion, as well as supporting reintegration into mainstream school. In the last academic year, 234 students were supported through the unit's outreach service.
- The unit runs home tuition for students unable to attend school for medical or other reasons.
- With the exception of the latter group, students all have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and some have additional learning difficulties. Students are all supported either at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well above average. (This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average. An above average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. This is because the unit provides an assessment service for the local authority for students newly arrived into the county with little or no English before they are placed in mainstream schools.
- The headteacher was appointed in 2012, having previously been the deputy headteacher in the unit. Since then, the leadership team has been completely restructured with a new deputy headteacher and four assistant headteachers. There have also been some changes in teachers.
- At the time of the inspection, students in Year 11 had already completed their courses and were no longer on site. When the unit has a full complement of Year 11 students, it typically has around 120 students on roll rather than the smaller number present at the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend students' learning experiences by:
 - improving the technological facilities at the High Wycombe and Orchard House sites, so that they are more in line with those at the Chiltern Skills and Enterprise Centre
 - putting plans into practice for increasing students' participation in activities that develop their enterprise skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the unit with attainment that is often well below national expectations for their age because of a history of poor attendance, disrupted education and negative attitudes to learning. Most students have a reading age on entry that is at least two years below their chronological age, and in some cases four or more years below.
- Achievement is outstanding because most students at both key stages make much better progress than expected. Parents agree that their children learn more at the unit than they have at any other school. Even those who join the unit in January of Year 11 usually exceed their predicted GCSE passes by at least two grades.
- Many students gain a number of GCSE passes at A* to C grades and they nearly all gain several at A* to G. In addition, students gain vocational qualifications and a range of work-related learning skills.
- The unit enables the most-able students to make exceptionally good progress. They gain up to 10 GCSE A* to C grades and, at Orchard House, in particular, they produce some high quality work. A Year 8 student wrote, 'I wait in the dark absence of the sun. I lie in darkness and despair. I am forever awake in the day, but at night you will scarcely see me. I am the child scarer and I cannot be controlled. In the dark, egregious night, I lie omnipotent as I wait for my prey. On earth, I am bound forever to the walls, doors and floors but in space, I roam freely. Wherever you are, I will always be there.'
- All groups of students make similar progress, including those of minority ethnic heritage. As a result of the academic and personal progress they make during their time at the unit, nearly all students go on to employment, training or further education when they leave
- The unit supports students who have home tuition to keep up with their learning, including their GCSE coursework, despite being out of school. This enables them to meet, and in many cases exceed, their predicted grades.
- The unit makes exceptionally good use of its additional funding for students eligible for the pupil premium. As well as providing intensive support programmes to improve their basic skills, the unit gives students opportunities that expand their horizons. This has had a very positive effect on their academic progress and confidence as learners. In 2013, students for whom the school receives this funding made faster progress than their classmates. They performed at a similar level to other students in English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good or better progress. Those who join the school with low reading ages make substantial gains in their reading, often over only a few months. Students with additional needs, such as autistic spectrum disorders, meet with success, often in activities they have not had the chance to experience before.
- Students who are dual registered with mainstream schools fill important gaps in their learning. They develop the right attitudes and skills for return to mainstream school or, in a few cases, transfer to special schools.
- Students at an early stage in learning to speak English as an additional language quickly gain a basic grasp of English because their needs are met exceptionally well.
- Nearly all the students who receive outreach support are enabled to remain in school. They make much better progress than they would otherwise do and they complete their courses.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The unit has sustained the high quality of teaching since the previous inspection despite staffing changes. This is partly because it has been careful to appoint subject specialists, most of whom have secondary school teaching experience. It is also because leaders' expectations are made very clear to new teachers.
- When students join the unit, staff conduct precise assessments using a number of different

tests. These identify exactly what students know and can do, what they need to learn next and in which areas they would benefit from extra help. A detailed system for assessing students' behavioural and emotional needs also enables the unit to track progress in all areas of their development.

- Teachers on all sites establish excellent relationships with students. They understand their individual needs and difficulties extremely well, and they discuss students' progress in detail at the end of every day.
- Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. They make careful use of information about students' previous learning to set tasks that provide the right level of challenge. Staff are highly skilled in providing activities that engage students' interest, particularly in the range of exciting vocational courses at the Chesham site.
- Teachers communicate clear expectations for students' work and behaviour. At Orchard House, the staff work in very close partnership with CAMHS and provide exceptionally sensitive support for students' mental health needs. Inspirational English teaching at Orchard House enables students to make excellent progress in expressing their feelings and ideas in writing.
- Teaching and support for students who are newly arrived with little or no English are of high quality. The teacher's questioning is very skilled and excellent attention is given to the exact pronunciation of words. Very enthusiastic and focused teaching, together with the use of carefully-chosen resources, leads to outstanding motivation and concentration by students.
- The home tuition service has thorough systems for quickly gathering information from students' home schools on the level at which they are working and what coursework they should be doing. This enables staff to provide students with exactly the right learning experiences that contribute to their progress.
- Teachers provide students with a great deal of encouragement, advice and guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve their work. This typically takes the form of one-to-one tutoring within lessons, with plenty of opportunities for students and staff to discuss the way forward.
- Students benefit a great deal from most of the teachers being specialists in the subjects that they teach. This provides them with particularly good opportunities to learn about the application of technology to subjects at the Chesham site. It also enables them to try a range of experimental techniques in the arts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They quickly develop trusting relationships with the staff, who are skilled at motivating them and instilling in them a belief that they can succeed. Students soon come to realise that the unit is giving them the chance to turn their lives around. A parent said, 'My son has turned around in such a short space of time and is a different boy.'
- The highly supportive environment provided by the unit transforms students' attitudes and raises their self-esteem so that the students want to learn. Their greatly improved attitudes, attendance and behaviour soon contribute to significant gains in their progress.
- The unit is calm and orderly. Staff are very skilled at managing students' behaviour and consistent in communicating high expectations. Lessons proceed without disruption and breaks are sociable, harmonious occasions where staff and students sit together.
- Students are motivated by the subjects and courses on offer, and eager to contribute their ideas in lessons. They take a pride in their achievements. They show particular enthusiasm for learning at the Chesham site, where the excellent facilities and flexible learning areas provide a college-like atmosphere.
- The unit's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Staff conduct thorough risk assessments to make sure all activities are safe. Through the personal, social and health education programme, students learn about the importance of making safe choices for themselves. Special programmes also raise the awareness of particular groups of students. For instance, a programme tailor made to the needs of a group of girls who might be at particular risk is proving very successful.

- Students know about different types of bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber bullying; some have been bullied in their mainstream school. Parents and students confirm that there is no bullying at the unit and students' feelings are treated with great sensitivity by the staff so that they feel safe and confident.
- Mainstream schools comment on the very positive effect that the outreach service and part-time attendance of some of their students at the unit has on their behaviour.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership during a period of much staffing change and the opening of a new site. She has successfully sustained and built on the many strengths found at the previous inspection. There is a strong sense of teamwork and all the staff work towards a common goal, to make things better for the students. Leaders are highly ambitious and the unit is very well placed to improve further.
- The headteacher is supported exceptionally well by the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers and by middle managers, including those responsible for subjects. The headteacher and the management committee have been careful to appoint key staff with very particular skills that meet the unit's needs.
- Senior and middle leaders undertake very regular checks on teachers' work and students' progress to ensure all receive equal opportunities and no groups are discriminated against. Leaders conduct daily learning walks, where they go into all classrooms to look at teaching, as well as more detailed checks on aspects of the unit's work. In managing teachers' performance, leaders make clear exactly what staff need to do to improve and provide intensive support where necessary.
- Groups of staff have opportunities to work together on different aspects of continuous improvement and teachers are able to observe one another. This helps to spread the best aspects of teaching across the unit and to develop the expertise of individual teachers. All the staff receive personal coaching to improve their effectiveness and increase the contribution they make to raising achievement.
- The school works exceptionally well in partnership with mainstream schools and other agencies. It is held in high regard by mainstream schools for the flexible and supportive way in which it works to meet each student's particular needs. It does this through outreach and by developing programmes precisely matched to the requirements of different mainstream schools.
- The unit is a key partner in the ASTRA Teaching School Alliance, along with Challoner's Grammar School and Wycombe High School. In this capacity, it contributes to the training of teachers and works closely with Oxford Brookes University.
- The range of topics and subjects meets students' needs and interests exceptionally well. Every student has a personalised learning programme. By drawing on the skills of all its teachers and tutors, the unit is able to offer GCSE courses in 11 different subjects. It also provides a wide range of vocational and work-related courses that appeal both to boys and girls.
- The strong emphasis on changing students' attitudes and enabling students to make much better progress than expected has a strong impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The excellent facilities at the new Chiltern Skills and Enterprise Centre contribute greatly to the range of learning opportunities available. These include outstanding opportunities to use technology across a range of courses. However, the other sites do not currently offer such good opportunities.
- Increasingly, students are having opportunities to develop their enterprise skills through activities that take them beyond the classroom. For instance, from time to time, they sell items to members of the public at Chesham market and they have produced designs for a local event. The unit has plans to extend learning of this type as such activities are proving particularly successful in motivating students and preparing them for the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local authority, in its governance role, has a good knowledge of the unit's work and, partly

through the work of the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, provides effective support for school leaders.

- The management committee makes a significant contribution to the work of the unit and it is very closely involved in developments. Its members are very well trained and bring a wealth of relevant expertise. Several are mainstream headteachers which helps to ensure appropriate students are referred to the unit and assists in the process of reintegration into mainstream.
- Members of the management committee challenge senior leaders and check on how well students are achieving. They are very well informed about how teachers' performance is managed and have supported the headteacher in ensuring the effectiveness of all the staff. They make sure that teachers' pay is determined by their effectiveness. The management committee has been instrumental in the appointment of the right teachers and leaders for key posts. Its members check closely on the use of pupil premium funding to ensure it is effective, and contributes to extending links with business. The management committee makes sure that systems for safeguarding students are very thorough.

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	110205
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	426564

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Debra Rutley
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2008
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