

The Hollies Short Stay School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132997
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	341357
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Smith
Headteacher	Jane Spensley
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Altogether, they observed 10 lessons and saw seven different teachers. Teaching was seen at the main centre, at students' homes and on the sites of a college and a vocational training provider.

Inspectors met with staff, students, the chair of the management committee, and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents, including those linked to safeguarding arrangements, records of the monitoring of teaching, assessment data and students' work. Inspectors also analysed questionnaires from staff, students and seven parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

how effectively the centre evaluates the performance of different groups through the analysis of data

- whether the requirements for equality of opportunity are met
- whether the actions being taken to promote community cohesion stem from an audit of the context of the school.

Information about the school

The Hollies provides for a wide range of students who cannot be in school, including those who have been permanently excluded; those at risk of exclusion; students new to the area with a history of emotional, behavioural and social difficulties; those with a statement who are awaiting a place at a school; and students in need of short-term provision, including at home or in hospital. Currently, almost all students are of White British heritage and there are slightly more boys than girls. There is a very small number of asylum seekers who are learning to speak English as an additional language. There are five students in public care and four with statements of special educational needs, all describing behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average.

The principal aims of the school are to prevent exclusions by providing short-term support then return students in Key Stage 3 to mainstream schools, and provide alternative education for students in Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection there have been some significant changes. The school now caters for a wider range of students, and has developed its preventative role. In January 2009, it absorbed the home tuition service in the district, and now manages this. Fewer students with literacy difficulties are being referred to the school. The school has appointed a deputy headteacher since the last inspection but the post is currently vacant and is being filled in a temporary capacity. The school's work has been recognised by several awards, including the Healthy Schools Award and the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Hollies provides a good quality of education for its students, most of whom enjoy coming to school. It meets its aims well and improves students' life chances considerably. This is amply demonstrated by the high percentage of Key Stage 3 students who return to their mainstream schools and sustain their placements there for at least a year. In the last three years, there has been a significant increase in the proportion that successfully transfers to further education, employment or training. The school has excellent partnerships with parents and others in the area. The work done at the school is highly regarded by parents, external agencies and partners such as schools in the district of Stafford.

Teaching is good. Staff are highly skilled at managing students and engage them productively in activities that are well designed to appeal to their needs and interests. Most staff have the highest expectations of what students might achieve, but this is not always the case. Students' good behaviour in lessons and their positive attitudes to learning mean that they make good progress. This enables them to make up for time lost in previous settings. Students are well aware of how well they are getting on as there are half-termly reviews that involve students and their parents. At this time, targets are set in conjunction with both parties, so parents feel well involved in their children's learning and students know what they need to do to improve. To add to this, teachers share the lesson objectives with students and review these towards the end, although they do not consistently invite students to assess themselves. The school has increased the range of external accreditation, so that in 2009 students were successful in achieving full GCSE passes. In 2010, students are on track to do well too, and standards are broadly average. Although the accommodation at the centre is limited, the school makes effective use of facilities in the local community to extend the learning opportunities available to students. There are plans to extend the accommodation in the near future, but these do not include those specialist facilities typically found in secondary settings.

Strong partnership working ensures that there is effective guidance and support on a range of matters. Excellent arrangements to secure students' safety and well-being results in almost all feeling secure at school and they have an extensive knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. A calm, productive and pleasant atmosphere and very good working relationships with staff add to their feelings of security. Students follow well the guidance given about how to be healthy and make sensible choices at school. They contribute well in a variety of ways, including influencing what happens at school; they acquire enterprise skills when raising significant funds for charities at home and abroad. Work experience and vocational courses enable them to apply their basic skills

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effectively, so they are well prepared for leaving school in Year 11.

Parents, staff and professional partners have great confidence in the way the school is led and managed. The headteacher provides very clear direction and is well respected by fellow professionals. The strong, shared commitment to development has secured good improvement since the last inspection, despite some significant changes that have presented challenges. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and based firmly on measurable success criteria set out in the improvement plan. The school has established a system for calculating the progress made by students from the time they start at the centre until they leave, but as yet it has insufficient information to evaluate the progress of different groups. A temporary deputy headteacher makes a strong contribution, but recruitment to fill the permanent post has not begun. Nonetheless, there is a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teaching is founded on consistently high expectations of what students can achieve
 - students are routinely involved in assessing how successful they have been in meeting lesson objectives.
- Strengthening self-evaluation by:
 - embedding the use of value added measures of students' progress, and using this information to evaluate their progress and that of different groups of students.
- Liaising with the local authority to make sure that:
 - a substantive deputy headteacher is appointed
 - the accommodation is better suited to the needs of students in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Many students have had a history of poor behaviour and attendance when they arrive, and both of these improve significantly. The majority of students attend well and some have exceptional attendance, but a small number do not attend well and so the overall figure is satisfactory rather than good. Students respond well to the positive ethos at the centre and to the good teaching, so they make good progress in lessons. They observe the simple code of conduct and are keen to gain points for their engagement and conduct. Most are quick to comply with instructions or requests from adults. It is rare for a lesson to be interrupted by outbursts as staff are very skilled at intervening appropriately to avoid this. As a result, lessons are calm and purposeful. Students work effectively on their own, and become better at working with others in pairs or small groups. More mature students occasionally help to coax less enthusiastic ones, as well as reminding them about their language.

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Students complete the tasks set and often take a pride in presenting their work well, particularly when this is to be submitted for moderation as part of externally accredited courses. They make good use of information and communication technology to illustrate work, and construct PowerPoint presentations to show what they have learned. In a small number of cases, work is not well presented and this is linked to low expectations. When students are invited to appraise the work of others, such as compositions in music, they are honest and considerate. Students enjoy most lessons, particularly when there is a quiz or a practical activity. While making artwork for a display about the solar system, one student commented, 'I find art lovely and relaxing.' Students who have individual tuition are conscientious and make effective use of revision guides when preparing for examinations. They are not over-reliant on tutors and willingly study independently, highlighting key facts from texts, for instance. Older students study using online software, in mathematics for instance. Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that any group of students makes more or less progress than another, including those with special educational needs.

Students grow to recognise and deal with their feelings. As they experience success and are given a good deal of positive feedback, their self-confidence soars. They also reflect on their behaviour and appreciate the need to be more responsible. Students at the centre get on well together and report that there is no bullying. They like the fact that staff listen to them and show that they care about them. Through off-site activities they learn to take calculated risks and face physical challenges, such as wall climbing. On occasions, they show considerable determination when completing a Duke of Edinburgh Award challenge in adverse weather conditions, for instance. They socialise with others when they take part in sporting competitions. Their cultural awareness is developed well through activities such as a theatre workshop on the theme of 'masks' and opportunities that all in Years 10 and 11 have to learn about the cultures, religions and beliefs of others. Staff challenge prejudice calmly but firmly so that students become more tolerant and respectful of differences, and less inclined to make remarks that might offend others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

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

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There has been a concerted and successful effort through the local partnerships to ensure that all students arrive with sufficient information to enable the school to quickly establish the nature of their needs. Baseline assessments identify the gaps that are inevitable when students have had patchy attendance or interrupted learning. Staff get to know students very well, and they use all the information they have to plan effectively to meet their needs. For example, in teaching students who are learning English, their previous experiences are taken into account and material that might evoke distressing memories is carefully avoided. All staff are well trained in managing difficult situations and this helps to ensure a good climate for learning. Activities are designed that appeal to students and so they usually enjoy lessons. Staff make sure that students know what the objectives are in each lesson and they review these later, although not all involve students in assessing their progress towards these. Half-termly reviews and target-setting sessions ensure that students are aware of their personal targets, which enable them to continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff work well together to support learning. Occasionally, there is excellent teamwork, such as in a skill-building session, where staff intervened very effectively to keep the session flowing and contributed in a timely way that took the pressure off students when they found it difficult to respond. Almost all staff have high expectations of students, but occasionally expectations of work rate and presentation are not quite high enough.

For those with a statement of special educational needs, the curriculum meets the needs described. Every student on the roll has a personal programme, tailored to their needs, age and ability; they have an early opportunity to influence this when they arrive. The school is well placed to ensure that all students have access to the 'core offer' that will be required from September this year. What the school cannot provide on its own site, such as physical education facilities and GCSE science, is provided through partnership with other institutions. There is also an appealing and unusual range of opportunities, such as fire-fighting courses. An excellent range of activities, involving many external agencies, is effective in raising students' awareness of dangers, gun crime, internet use, road safety, fire, drugs, alcohol and smoking. Good enrichment, in the form of projects

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and sporting activities, visits, visitors and themed days, add enjoyment and variety. There is a satisfactory range of external accreditation which covers core subjects and caters for students across the ability range, and courses run by alternative providers all result in academic or vocational qualifications that can lead to further opportunities locally.

The school's breakfast club provides a healthy start to the day. In small group tutorials, students share news and organisational matters are discussed; students have an opportunity to discuss confidential matters with staff afterwards. Weekly 'person trainer' sessions provide guidance and a means of monitoring progress and attendance. Sessions encourage students to identify solutions to their problems, are affirming and help to boost self-confidence. The quality of information, advice and guidance is good. Guidance involves students, parents and the Connexions service and contributes well to leavers finding worthwhile placements. Arrangements to encourage better behaviour are particularly successful; those designed to secure good attendance are not quite as effective, although the procedures are wide ranging.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers drive improvements well. Priorities for a three-year period show a clear long-term vision. Improvement planning is of good quality and sharply focused on improving outcomes for students. Staff morale is high and staff are proud to work at the school. Teamwork is well-developed and particularly focused on supporting students. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is successful in identifying areas for improvement and coaching enables staff to learn from one another. Between them, the local authority and the management committee provide good governance. The local authority, through the management committee and district inclusion partnerships, ensures that the school and the alternative provision are held to account for the quality of outcomes for students. The district partnership makes a strategic contribution by establishing a co-ordinated approach to re-integrating students and developing policies that are useful to The Hollies and other schools.

Outstanding safeguarding arrangements include careful tracking of individuals and thorough training for staff in all aspects, including child protection and working with adolescents who have mental health difficulties. Practice in the school has been commended by professionals. The staff work effectively with a very wide range of other

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professionals to ensure that students are kept safe and that they have the support they need to increase their well-being. The management committee oversees recruitment procedures, which are robust.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of all that the school does, and it strives to ensure that no individual or group is disadvantaged. It has responded well to the changed nature of its intake by ensuring that there is appropriate accreditation for higher attaining students and that there are suitable pathways for leavers to follow. The school works constructively with other schools in the district to promote inclusion, and this is its strongest contribution to community cohesion. Its audit has identified ways in which this aspect of its work needs to be strengthened, although evaluation of actions taken is at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Although the percentage return of completed questionnaires is relatively low, parents and carers who expressed a view are very positive about what the school provides. In particular, all agree that they are happy with their child's experience at The Hollies, that it is well led and managed, the teaching is good and they feel well informed about the progress their children are making. Inspectors agree with their views. The school sent out a parental survey recently and had no responses to this. However, there have been no complaints since the last inspection and parents' and carers' comments recorded at the regular reviews are positive. No parents raised any concerns with inspectors. A few parents recognise that students do not always enjoy school and this was reflected in

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student questionnaires too.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Hollies Short Stay School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspector received seven completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	29	3	43	2	29	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	71	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	5	71	2	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	71	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



26 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Hollies Short Stay School, Stafford, ST16 1BY

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited, especially to those who talked to us about their views and experiences. We enjoyed our visit, and found that The Hollies is a good school. It successfully achieves what it sets out to do by helping students return to their mainstream schools and making sure that those who are in Year 11 have suitable education, training or employment when they leave. Your parents and carers are very pleased with what the school provides, and the work done at The Hollies is well regarded by others. Staff take good care of you and work very effectively with a large number of others to make sure that you have the support and guidance that you need. Almost all of you improve your attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Almost all of you make good progress and achieve well because the teaching is good and the school offers choices that you enjoy. This improves your chances in life. The school enables you to learn a great deal about how to keep safe in different situations and nearly all of you feel safe at school. There is a pleasant, calm atmosphere at the school. You also follow well the advice you are given about how to be healthy and make good choices while you are at school, eating and drinking sensibly and taking plenty of exercise. You influence what happens at school by contributing your ideas through the school council, and appreciate the way that the staff listen to you. Congratulations on raising such large sums of money for charities at home and abroad! You learn about the world of work, improve your basic skills well, and are well prepared for whatever you do when you leave.

We have asked the staff to improve the way that they judge the progress you make. The school is going to appoint a deputy headteacher. All teachers are going to expect great things from you and involve you in reviewing learning in lessons. The staff are going to work with the local authority to improve accommodation at the centre. You can help with improvement by attending well! We wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

Lead inspector

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