

# The Darley Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117704
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326666
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Farrow

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	17
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Snowden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	School Road Ashby Scunthorpe DN16 2TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01724 296263
<b>Fax number</b>	01724 281704

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Darley Centre is a pupil referral unit that provides full time education for students aged 11 to 14 with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream school. All students currently attending the unit are of White British origin. The school intake includes children in care and pupils with a statement of special educational need. Students are admitted to the centre following referral to a Local Authority Admissions Panel. Placements generally last about two terms but can be as short as six weeks. Students then either return to mainstream school or other appropriate full-time alternative educational provision. The school recently gained the Healthy School Award.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Darley Centre is a good pupil referral unit that is successfully re-engaging students who have been disaffected with education. The centre has a good track record preparing students for a successful return to mainstream school, or alternative full-time educational provision. Students' attainment on entry is typically exceptionally low, often as a consequence of their challenging behaviour and entrenched patterns of poor attendance. Because the quality of provision made by the centre is good, students make good progress and meet, and often exceed, their challenging individual targets set in mathematics and science. Although students began to reach their targets in English at the end of Year 9 for the first time in 2008, their relative performance in this subject still lags behind that of other two core subjects. The school is aware this needs to improve. Strong emphasis is placed on setting targets designed to support students' personal development as well as their learning, so most students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and potentially higher attaining students, all make equally good progress.

Students' personal development is good. Their needs are assessed thoroughly before and on entry to the centre, in conjunction with their mainstream school. The students are then effectively involved in setting and reviewing their own learning and behaviour targets. This means that they quickly realise that the centre holds high but realistic expectations of how they should behave and what they can achieve. Consequently, students soon feel confident enough to re-engage with learning, and they improve their attitudes to their work. Students also learn to think about how their behaviour affects themselves and others, and how it needs to change if they want to reach their full potential. As they do this, they say they begin to enjoy coming to the centre because of the success they experience. Their improved attitudes are also reflected in their improving self-esteem, good and improving attendance, and a corresponding reduction in the number of short fixed-term exclusions. Highly charged emotional outbursts do still occur, and these incidents can challenge staff expertise and tolerance. However, they are well managed and quickly resolved, thus minimising disruption to the orderly operation of the centre. The centre works hard to promote students' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and has recently gained the Healthy Schools Award. Students do not always act on what they learn however, and many admit to being habitual smokers when off the school site.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and teaching assistants show great enthusiasm and a common sense of purpose when working with students to encourage them to strive to achieve their individual targets and enjoy their time in the centre. Teachers' subject knowledge, understanding of the national curriculum programmes of study and their ability to judge where to pitch each pupil's next learning challenges are now good. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection with the help of some focused support from the local authority, and a relentless whole school determination to improve students' learning, behaviour management and the curriculum. Although staff know the students well and review their progress systematically, the development of a whole school target-setting and tracking system has been slow and has just been put into operation. This has limited the capacity of the centre's senior leaders to identify and address any remaining areas of potential underachievement quickly and efficiently.

The good curriculum meets the needs of students well and reflects much of the work they would be following in mainstream schools. There is good provision to improve students' reading

and numeracy skills. Teachers use classroom talk particularly well to help students develop their vocabulary and thinking skills. Students, and the many visitors to the centre, highly regard the good quality care and support it provides. The quality of educational guidance in the form of marking and verbal feedback has improved significantly as teachers' knowledge of progression through national curriculum levels has developed. The centre works closely and successfully with parents who are very appreciative of the support they receive. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire report the positive difference the centre makes to their children's progress and behaviour. As one of the parents commented, 'There is good contact between the school and myself and I know the teachers show a great deal of patience and perseverance and put in 110% to help the children's deep seated emotional difficulties.'

The headteacher provides good leadership and is ably supported by his deputy and staff, together establishing a clear and shared vision for the centre's continued development. They have secured a sound platform from which to secure further improvements and show commitment to improving students' standards by making up lost ground. The management committee discharges its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily and has an honest and objective understanding of the centre's current strengths and areas in need of improvement. However, it does not yet fully involve itself in the centre's self-evaluation processes and has yet to establish a longer term and sustainable vision for the centre's future. Given the good progress made since the last inspection, the empowering leadership of the headteacher and the good progress students make during their short time in the centre, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement and standards in English to match those in mathematics and science.
- Implement, monitor and review the newly developed progress tracking system to help identify and address any remaining areas of underachievement.
- Ensure the management committee is fully involved in the centre's self-evaluation processes so they can understand, challenge and direct future improvements.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are exceptionally low on entry to the centre, mainly because of the extent of students' emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, unsatisfactory past attendance or negative experiences within mainstream education. Because of good teaching and high expectations, students make good progress towards their personal and academic targets and achieve well. Despite the good progress standards do not improve enough to reach the expectations for their age. When students move on from the centre standards are well below those expected for their age. Students with weak reading and numeracy skills usually make rapid progress, closing the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of these basic skills. This is because of the effective individual support they receive. Students quickly sign up to working towards ambitious individual targets for English, mathematics and science and respond well to the high expectations evident in lessons. While they regularly meet or exceed their targets in mathematics and science they achieve less well in English. There are signs that this gap is being closed and for the first time, most students began to meet their Year 9 English targets in 2008. Several impressive pieces of fluent and engaging extended writing were produced by this group of students. However, too much of students' day-to-day written work, while clear and well

presented, is overly reliant on teacher support strategies, such as the use of writing frames, that inadvertently restrict their opportunities to write creatively and at length. Due to the quality of individual support provided there are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by students of differing abilities.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to distinguish between good and bad personal decisions and to consider the impact of their behaviour on others' feelings. They subscribe to a strong sense of fair play and justice even when they know they fall short of their own ideals. Students eat healthily during the day and clearly understand the importance of exercise and a healthy lifestyle, despite many admitting to being regular smokers. The centre lacks dedicated exercise facilities but students enjoy participating in regular off site physical education lessons, although they say they would appreciate better sports facilities at their base. Pupils say that the centre provides a safe, tolerant and welcoming environment and this helps them settle in quickly and make new friends when they first arrive. While they usually get on well with each other, they know that when things go wrong, as they sometimes do, adults and even other students will talk honestly about why it happens and 'get it sorted out'. Attendance is good because students learn to enjoy coming to the centre regularly. As attendance rates have improved, the use of fixed-term exclusions has continued to fall sharply to their current very low level. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the local community such as working to develop the centre's garden for community use, providing a vegetable delivery service to the elderly and by supporting disabled adults at the local community centre. They are well prepared for a successful and seamless transition to the next stage of their education because of significant improvements in their attitudes and behaviour as well as in their academic achievement.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good relationships are evident throughout the centre and are generally characterised by mutual courtesy and respect. This helps to quickly defuse confrontational behaviour when it does occur. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly regarded by the students, who recognise the patience and tolerance shown to them even when they are behaving badly. As one boy said, 'They treat you like equals here; they just shouted at me at my last school, so I shouted back!' Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in engaging students in lessons, including those who are initially reluctant to learn. Regular ongoing assessment is used well to ensure the students are working at the right level and they are fully involved in monitoring their own progress through half termly reviews. Lessons are well planned and effectively resourced. Now that teachers are more confident about the progress they can realistically expect, they are using a wider variety of teaching styles better suited to students learning and emotional needs. This is making a positive difference to students' progress and attitudes in lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

In partnership with the local authority the centre has worked hard to develop a flexible and exciting curriculum. As a result, students are well served by an increasingly sophisticated, well planned and carefully resourced curriculum that promotes rapid progress while remaining responsive to their individual needs. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used successfully to enhance students' learning opportunities across the curriculum and they make good progress in gaining basic skills in its use. This helps prepare them for a successful return to mainstream education or transfer to other appropriate alternative full-time placements. The range of extra curricular activities on offer is limited but students say they enjoy meeting up with staff at weekends to participate in a fishing club. The headteacher says under these circumstances students can show commendable patience 'watching their lines for hours'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff are highly committed to, and effective in, ensuring the good progress and well being of their students. Academic guidance is good and is used to help encourage students to enjoy and take risks with their learning. This results in improved pride in both their work and their achievements. All adults provide positive role models for the students and help them develop more constructive attitudes to learning. Systems to ensure students health and safety, including child protection procedures and the safe recruitment of staff, are robust and meet current legal requirements. Good links exist between the centre and mainstream schools and the other alternative education providers to which students will transfer. Links with other agencies such as Connexions and the Youth Service are also effective in supporting students to make good progress during their brief placement in the centre.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and senior staff are successfully focused on promoting students' good personal development and learning and all staff share this common purpose. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning regularly and has an accurate view of teachers' relative strengths and any areas for development. This informs the good arrangements for the professional development of staff, and has helped to build a strong learning ethos. School self-evaluation is increasingly accurate and is used well to inform school improvement priorities. This has led to good improvement since the last inspection and gives the school a good capacity to improve in future. Senior leaders, for example, are not complacent and know more can still be achieved particularly in improving students' achievements in English and consolidating their use of target-setting and tracking data. The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. It provides a stable learning environment for students and makes good use of all resources available to it. The centre makes a satisfactory contribution to promoting community cohesion. This is mainly through positive interactions between students and staff, but teaching and the curriculum are now also developing well to increase students' understanding of the UK's diverse religious and ethnic populations. The management committee brings a wide range of relevant expertise to the centre and fulfils its statutory duties conscientiously. It does not however fully

embrace its role as a 'critical friend' or support the development of a longer term strategic vision for the centre.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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**Overall effectiveness**

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Darley Centre, North Lincolnshire, DN16 2TD

Thank you for your making me feel welcome and the help you gave me during the recent inspection of your school. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing about what you think of the centre. I judged your school to be good because it helps you make good progress and supports you effectively to improve your behaviour.

There are some things that are particularly good about the centre. These are:

the good quality individual support you are given that helps you improve your attitudes and behaviour

effective teaching that is helping you make good progress and which is preparing you well for your next school

the good relationships you have with staff; you like the way you can talk to them and the way they will listen to you

you enjoy coming to the centre and this helps you attend regularly, to work hard and achieve well

when you do not behave as well as you should, staff and even other students help you to sort out your feelings as quickly as possible to get you back on the right track.

I have asked the centre to improve a few things to make the centre even better. These are:

improve how well you learn in English to make the results for this subject as good as in other subjects

make sure teachers follow your progress even more closely to help them understand why you sometimes still work at a level below your targets

involve the members of the management committee more in checking the progress you make to help them plan for the centre's future.

I would like to wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Farrow

Lead inspector