

Will Adams Centre

Woodland Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 2BX

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Almost all students make good progress and leave the centre with GCSE and vocational qualifications which enable them to go on to college courses, apprenticeships or into employment.
- Students are cared for and supported well. They feel safe while at the centre and at alternative settings and their behaviour and attendance improve, often rapidly.
- Teaching is good. Teachers take each student's individual needs carefully into account when planning work and lessons. The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants supports students very well.
- The headteacher and senior team have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and priorities for further improvement to enable students to achieve even more.
- The management committee now provides good support and challenge to leaders to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The contribution of work in art, textiles and photography is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in English is not as good as it is in mathematics. Students' writing skills are weaker than their reading skills.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to raise students' expectations of what they could achieve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 11 lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Informal discussions were held with current students and one former student about their experience at the centre and in off-site settings.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Management Committee, the headteacher, senior leaders, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector had telephone conversations with some of the off-site providers where students attend courses.
- The inspector took account of the centre's own surveys of parents and carers and spoke to some parents and carers either in person or by telephone. Submissions to the online Parent View were not available because fewer than 10 parents and carers had completed it.
- The school's own survey of staff views and the views of the 18 staff who completed the questionnaire were considered.
- The inspector evaluated documentation, including information on the students' current progress, the curriculum, and development plans, as well as procedures and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Will Adams Centre currently caters for 40+ students in Years 10 and 11 who have behavioural, social and emotional needs which have resulted in their being excluded from mainstream school. The centre takes students from the whole of the Medway local authority and other local authorities.
- A high proportion of the students are supported by the pupil premium which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority. This is well above the national average.
- Most students come from families of White British heritage, with a small number from minority ethnic groups.
- All of the students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are supported through school action plus. No students currently have a statement of special educational needs.
- The centre operates on one main site, with students also having access to a wide range of specialist off-site alternative provision and local colleges. This enables them to take vocational courses in areas such as motor vehicle studies, sports leadership, construction and hair and beauty.
- The acting headteacher at the last inspection was appointed to the permanent post in February. The management committee has been expanded in size to include more representation of parents and carers and a new Chair of the Management Committee was appointed in the autumn term 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that existing good practice is shared and ensuring that teaching is focused on raising students' aspirations and expectations for what they can achieve.
- Develop the students' ability to write for a variety of purposes and in ways that help them to understand why having good literacy skills, but particularly writing skills, is important to their future careers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the centre with knowledge and skills that are typically below the expectations for their age. The inspection evidence and the school's own records show that progress is continuing to improve rapidly, with most students, irrespective of their ethnic heritage, achieving higher standards in English and mathematics than at the previous inspection. They do much better than most students attending pupil referral units.
- Most students make good progress and achieve GCSE or other accredited qualifications in English, mathematics and a range of academic and vocational subjects. They do particularly well in art, photography and textiles. Although their attainment does not reach the levels expected of all students nationally, most achieve the qualifications they need for the next stage of their education or training. Students are not normally entered for GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11.
- Students achieve well on the alternative provision. The qualifications they obtain enable them to go on to apprenticeships or higher-level courses in areas such as motor vehicle maintenance, hair and beauty therapy, animal husbandry and performing arts.
- Students' progress in mathematics is better than in English and some students make particularly good progress because lessons meet their individual needs very well. Students are able to apply their learning well in other areas, such as cookery and motor vehicle studies.
- Most students make good progress in reading but this is not always matched by similar progress in writing. Students are often reluctant to write and do not always get enough opportunities to write for a variety of purposes.
- The centre strongly promotes equality of opportunity. Students entitled to support through the pupil premium make progress and achieve at a similar level to their peer group, as do those students who speak English as an additional language.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers plan activities which engage students quickly and help them to make rapid progress. The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is strong. Teachers work very closely with support staff to ensure that students get as much individual attention as possible so that all students can make equally good progress.
- The leadership team has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. The marking of students' work has improved and students are now given much better guidance on what they need to do to improve it. Teachers also now have access to much more accurate use of assessment to help them match work to what students have already achieved. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson, the teacher quickly assessed students' attainment and progress and moved them on very quickly to more difficult work.
- Teachers know their students' abilities well and are able to match work to their different needs. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of approaches to enable students to make outstanding progress and raise students' own expectations for what they can achieve. This was not consistent enough in all lessons.
- In outstanding lessons as, for example, in art and textiles, where expectations were high and at an appropriate level for each individual, students were responding very well. They were being encouraged to take risks and experiment with different ideas and media to achieve a high standard of work.
- Teachers regularly encourage students to use and apply basic reading and numeracy skills in lessons other than English and mathematics. Teachers are less successful in developing students' ability to write for a variety of purposes. Where this is done successfully, students

understand that the written work is an integral and important part of their learning but this is not the case in all lessons.

- Learning resources are prepared well. They are usually high quality and are used effectively to stimulate students' interest. Displays of art, photography, poetry and current events are used very effectively to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In a very few lessons, the pace of work was too slow and students lost interest or the level of challenge was not high enough so that students did not make fast enough progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students join the centre with a history of negative attitudes towards school and associated behavioural issues. Staff work very hard to engage their interest and, as a result, behaviour improves rapidly and lessons are generally calm and orderly. If behaviour issues arise with individuals, they are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others. Behaviour in the corridors is generally calm and overall behaviour is good.
- Relationships are generally good with the result that, if any issues arise, they can be dealt with effectively and calmly. Students feel valued as members of the school community.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students were able to explain how the centre helped them to understand and deal with different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is relatively rare because, if it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Students were very positive about the opportunities they have through activities such as the 'Challenger Troop', sports leadership and the Duke of Edinburgh Award to develop a range of skills in teamwork and leadership.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Students often join the school with a history of poor or irregular attendance. The staff work very hard to make sure that students and their parents and carers understand why good attendance is important. As a result, most students improve their attendance significantly while they are at the centre.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the leadership team have systematically tackled the issues raised at the previous inspection. Their clear vision and determined approach are shared by most of the staff. The focus on improvement has ensured that both the quality of teaching and the achievement of students have improved.
- Teaching is regularly monitored and effective action is taken to help teachers improve their skills further and to deal with any underperformance. Staff know that they are accountable for students' progress. Professional development to support improvement is focused well on meeting both individual and whole school needs.
- Performance targets for staff link directly to achievement and targets within the school's development plan. Staff know that this information can be used when decisions are being made about pay and promotion.
- The leadership team takes every opportunity to provide the academic and vocational courses which will prepare the students well for the next stage of their lives. The curriculum offers students a very wide variety of different experiences both inside and outside the classroom which helps to make students much more positive about learning and therefore more successful. The staff work closely with a number of different organisations and the feedback about the students' performance is very positive.
- The local authority has given the centre a good level of support.

The governance of the school:

- The work of the management committee has improved greatly as it has responded to the issues raised at the previous inspection and undertaken appropriate training. The committee now includes more representatives of parents and carers, as well as organisations with which

the centre works. A programme of regular visits and reports to the committee means that members are now much more knowledgeable about the work of the centre and are better able to provide both support and challenge for the leadership team. This includes information on students' achievement, attendance and behaviour as well as on the quality of teaching. The committee monitors performance management procedures and understands how good teaching is rewarded. It is also supportive of the leadership team in tackling underperformance. The management committee is fully involved in the planned development of the centre and checks progress carefully. The committee makes sure that statutory duties are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

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	133767
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	431033
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Fiona Miller
Headteacher	Karen Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 July 2012
Telephone number	01634 337111
Fax number	01643 337111
Email address	office@willadamscentre.co.uk

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