

Amber Valley & Erewash Support Centre

Bennerley Avenue, Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8PF

Inspection dates

13–21 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher sets high expectations for both pupils and staff. Since the last inspection, the headteacher and management committee have appointed a new head of centre, strengthening the capacity of the leadership team. As a result, leaders and managers have driven rapid improvement.
- Pupils respond well to the high expectations set and their behaviour is good. They enjoy coming to school and display good attitudes to their learning. This is because teachers apply systems to manage pupils' behaviour that motivate pupils to engage in learning.
- Leaders have prioritised improving pupils' reading skills. Recent test results are showing rapid improvements in pupils' reading.
- The rich curriculum is broad and balanced and offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to develop their academic and life skills.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to plan activities that meet pupils' needs effectively.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is good. Many pupils make rapid progress when they join the school. Pupils prepare well for their future.
- Pupils are keen to improve their learning. In class discussion, pupils are reflective and show respect for the views of others.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are robust. They identify clear targets for improvement and the impact of their actions is evident. However, the effectiveness of the management committee in holding leaders to account has limitations.
- The alternative provision team works very effectively with a wide range of providers to add significant value to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in their school. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong and based on mutual respect and care. Parents and carers fully endorse this view.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. They use this information to inform successfully whole-school improvement planning. Leaders recognise that there is more to be done to improve the quality of work and attitudes with some key stage 4 pupils who work on the Sawley site.
- Attendance is average. During their time in school, most pupils achieve significantly improved attendance when compared with attendance at their previous school. Exclusions are reducing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that the management committee further develops its processes to systematically hold leaders to account in order to measure the success of leaders' actions and evaluations.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning for key stage 4 pupils who work on the school site by ensuring that:
 - activities encourage pupils to build on what they already know
 - tasks set for pupils are consistently pitched at the right level for them
 - the curriculum is relevant to their needs and next steps in their education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has created a culture of high aspirations and expectations for both pupils and staff. The appointment of a new head of centre for Bennerley has led to rapid improvements since September and strengthened the leadership team. The heads of sites, including the leader of the alternative provision team, work closely with the headteacher to drive improvement. They have ensured that the next steps for improvement identified in the section 8 inspection held in February 2018 have been addressed.
- Pupils respond well to the high expectations. As a result, most pupils' behaviour improves rapidly from when they start the school. They quickly become ready to learn. Where this is not the case for some pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 who work on the school site, leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to support their learning.
- Leaders are aspirational and their vision is to create a 'centre of excellence.' They are relentless in their goal to improve all aspects of the school's work. They identify accurately those areas of the school's work where improvement is not as rapid as they would like and have put plans in place for it to quicken.
- Leaders freely give of their own time to make improvements, for example in refurbishing classrooms to improve the quality of the learning environment for pupils. This helps pupils to engage readily in learning and happily contribute their own ideas for further developments in the school.
- Staff value the opportunities they receive to share good practice as a result of leaders' commitment to provide high-quality professional development and training. This has added significantly to the quality of teaching across all areas of the curriculum, which has continued to improve since the last inspection.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Since the last inspection, leaders have further developed personal and social education to enable all pupils to achieve accreditation in this area. Pupils are highly appreciative of the curriculum on offer to them and recognise that staff support them to learn important life skills and keep safe. Pupils told an inspector about recent work that helped them to think about the dangers of drugs, as well as the use of prescribed drugs. An inspector observed a lesson on knife danger in which pupils were very reflective and respectful of each other's views.
- The alternative provision team works with 28 providers over a total of 44 sites, offering a wide range of academic and vocational courses to pupils. The leader ensures that every provider is rigorously checked and quality assured throughout the academic year. Most pupils readily engage in learning that is personalised to meet their own needs and interests. In July 2018, all Year 11 pupils left the provision with English and mathematics qualifications, and overall a total of 221 qualifications were gained by pupils. Alternative provision is a real strength of the school.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' social, emotional and academic achievement. A range of whole-school and individual initiatives are on offer, including supporting attendance and improving resilience.

Investment in reading resources and additional focused support is especially effective in enhancing disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive highly effective support, which is personalised to their individual needs to ensure that their progress improves rapidly. Pupils benefit from a variety of strategies that support their basic skills and personal development.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. British values are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils and staff are very respectful of each other. All speak openly, for instance, about anti-bullying, safety in their local community and drug misuse.
- The leadership team has devised a new, detailed whole-school analysis of pupils' progress, which it implemented in September. Although the results of the analysis of the data are yet to come, the school's tracking shows that pupils are making good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. Most pupils make very good progress after joining the school. Pupils in key stage 4 leave with relevant qualifications and the vast majority move on to further education or training.
- Work seen in pupils' books and on display across the school is of good quality. Pupils take pride in their efforts and were keen to discuss their work with an inspector. Leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to drive improvement for some key stage 4 pupils.
- Parents are happy with the communication they receive from the school regarding improvements in their child's behaviour. Most say that they are happy with the information that the school provides about their child's academic learning. However, a small number say that communication is not regular, and the school is hard to contact.

Governance of the school

- The management committee members are committed to their roles and provide challenge to school leaders. They recognise the need to further develop their processes and systems to ensure that this challenge is systematic. They have responded well to the recommendations from the last inspection and ensured that all areas have been addressed.
- They have a strong understanding of the effectiveness of the school. The decision taken to join the Esteem Multi Academy Trust is to support the drive for improvement and sustainability.
- Performance management is in place and effectively supports the professional development of the headteacher and staff team.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is at the heart of the school and part of a strong culture that runs throughout the provision.
- Records relating to the checking of the suitability of school personnel and visitors are comprehensive and accurate.

- All staff undertake safeguarding training. They are fully aware of their responsibilities relating to safeguarding. Discussions with staff and training records reflect this.
- Pupils are well cared for and parents support this view.
- Leaders and teachers effectively weave aspects of safeguarding through the curriculum. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example, from the risks associated with sexual health and when online.
- The school works well with outside agencies, parents and other stakeholders to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use effective questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and challenge pupils' thinking, including the most reluctant learners. Most pupils are reflective learners and keen to improve their efforts.
- Evidence in books reveals that pupils review and develop their own learning. They use teachers' feedback to re-draft work and correct mistakes. This aspect of the school's assessment policy is not consistently implemented in key stage 4.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to support learning and engage pupils in the planned activities. Pupils say that lessons are interesting and often fun and they 'enjoy learning at this school'.
- Reading is a key focus for the school and leaders have ensured that they use every opportunity to promote and encourage reading. The alternative provision leader has ensured that the providers understand the importance of consolidating the learning within their courses. Pupils say that staff support them well with their reading.
- Pupils take a pride in their work, as seen in the quality of their handwriting in books and on display across the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Teaching assistants provide good support to engage pupils in learning, promote good behaviour and to improve their learning. They know pupils well and know when to intervene and when to provide further challenge.
- Leaders have developed an effective approach to assessment that checks on pupils' progress from the moment they start at the school. Staff use this assessment information to plan activities to match successfully pupils' academic, social and emotional needs.
- Teachers do not consistently plan work at the right level for key stage 4 pupils who work on the school site. Teachers do not always build on what pupils already know, meaning that activities are sometimes too easy or too hard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Most pupils are confident, polite, well mannered and respectful. They are keen to share their learning and welcome visitors to the school.
- Entry into the school in the morning is orderly. Robust routines support this and pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils are aware of why they need to be in education and talked enthusiastically about their successes since coming to the centre. Older pupils were clear about how their learning will support them in the future.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of respect and tolerance for others. They have a good understanding of bullying and all its forms and say that when bullying happens in school, the teachers are 'onto it quickly' and 'get it sorted'.
- High levels of staff supervision ensure that breaktimes and lunchtimes are positive social learning experiences. Older pupils are allowed out with permission at lunchtimes, and this promotes independence.
- Leaders are developing the use of restorative practice rather than exclusion wherever possible and pupils are responding well to this approach. For example, after causing damage to school property, a pupil helped to make the repairs in their own time, rather than receiving an exclusion as the consequence of their actions. On the site where this practice is used, the number of exclusions has reduced. Leaders are aware of the work to be done to achieve whole-school consistency in applying this approach.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength. This allows for positive classroom management. Classrooms are calm learning environments and most pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils working with alternative providers have a mature attitude to their learning. They are keen to explain their practical work and show written work in their folders. A pupil working on his motor vehicle mechanic course explained to an inspector how he had gone about a car oil change earlier, pointing out the important health and safety issues to consider.
- The safety, attendance and behaviour of pupils attending the alternative provision are carefully checked by leaders.
- Attendance is average overall. Leaders are working, however, with individual families where pupils' attendance is of concern. Most pupils achieve significant improvements in their attendance when they join the school, in comparison with their attendance at their previous school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils improve their behaviour through their time at the school. They respond well to the rewards system and understand how this supports their learning.
- Pupils' movement around the school and at the alternative provider is orderly and dignified. Well-established routines reinforce leaders' expectations for pupils' good behaviour and ensure that the school is a calm learning environment. Where leaders have focused on de-escalation of incidents, building relationships, reflection and

restorative approaches, exclusions have reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Significant progress in pupils' reading has been made since the last inspection. Most are making good progress with their reading and many have already made significant progress this term. Leaders identify pupils' needs, then implement support effectively.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points at the centre, especially in English, mathematics and personal and social education.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, because of the effective support they receive. Many are making very good progress after settling into the centre.
- Pupils with SEND receive bespoke support to ensure that their basic skills are consolidated and personal development needs well met. They make good progress.
- Pupils prepare well for the next stage of learning. In key stage 3, they complete work with secondary schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition back into mainstream school, after short-term support by the pupil referral unit. For key stage 4 pupils, the emphasis is on accreditation and GCSE qualifications, which alongside the wide-ranging vocational options on offer, are a springboard to further training and education.
- Staff work closely with partner schools to support key stage 2 pupils back into mainstream education. Pupils told an inspector they see it as a 'fresh start' at the support centre. The school's assessment information shows that they are making good progress from their starting points and evidence in pupils' books supports this. Parents support this view.
- The school's assessment information shows year-on-year improvement in the number of qualifications achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11. In July this year, all Year 11 leavers at the alternative provision achieved qualifications in English and mathematics, with each pupil averaging four qualifications. The school's assessment information for current pupils indicates that they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils' work in books supports this. There is some inconsistency in key stage 4 pupils' work for those based on the Sawley site.

School details

Unique reference number	131632
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10053222

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Appropriate authority	Management committee
Chair	Sarah Gillrayne
Headteacher	Tom England
Telephone number	01158967545
Website	www.derbyshiresupportcentres.co.uk
Email address	tengland@avesc.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2018

Information about this school

- The Amber Valley & Erewash Support Centre consists of three sites at Bennerley, Kirk Hallam and Sawley, and the alternative provision team.
- The head of provision retired in August 2018 and the headteacher has taken over the responsibilities. A new head of centre was appointed at Bennerley and took up post in September 2018. The chair of the management committee has stepped down and a new chair, who is an experienced headteacher, has taken over the interim role.
- Leaders and managers have made the decision for the school to become an academy and it is due to join the Esteem Multi Academy Trust on 1 December 2018.
- The provision caters for pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 who are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have been permanently excluded.
- The centre currently caters for around 123 pupils. Pupils attend for an average of two terms.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The majority are boys, although

the number of girls on roll is rising.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The centre currently uses 28 alternative providers over 44 sites, covering a wide range of vocational and academic courses.
- The support centre is a member of the Federation of Derbyshire Special Schools and the Matrix Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning jointly with leaders, across all three sites and by the alternative provision team. They observed a wide range of lessons and learning activities.
- An inspector visited external provision at two REAL Education (Re-thinking Engagement and Approaches to Learning) sites and observed pupils working on music production, digital arts and motor-vehicle mechanic courses.
- Pupils' written work in books and folders and displays around the school was evaluated.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct while they were arriving at and leaving school, as well as during lessons, and break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils both formally and informally, and spoke with some parents on the phone.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, heads of sites and representatives from the staff team.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with the senior school improvement adviser from the local authority, the chair of the management committee and a member of the management committee.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation report, the school improvement plan and pupil premium documentation. Inspectors also reviewed the most recent headteacher's report to the management committee, records of the monitoring of teaching, and information relating to attendance, exclusions and achievement. Safeguarding documentation and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Lynda Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Karen Hayes

Ofsted Inspector

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