

Agincourt House

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100006
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	354787
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Kay (Kathleen) Charlton

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	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Ladipo
Headteacher	Poppy Berry
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Teaching and learning were observed in eight lessons, with all five teachers seen. Meetings were held with students, members of the management committee, staff and a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, assessment information, policies and students' work. Fourteen questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching with a focus on the ways in which staff use assessment to improve students' achievements.
- The success of the school in improving students' behaviour and attendance.
- The extent to which leaders ensure improvement with a focus on the work of the management committee.
- The effectiveness of the systems to track students' progress to ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable and that the school's overall performance compares well with the national picture.

Information about the school

Agincourt House caters for students from the London Borough of Camden who have usually been excluded from their mainstream schools after a period of disrupted education. Students arrive at the centre at different times but once they are on roll they remain until age 16. All have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. A small number have a statement of special educational needs related to these as well as to other learning difficulties. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from Black African backgrounds. None are at the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The centre has Healthy School status.

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

Agincourt House provides good education for its students. The care, guidance and support that students receive are outstanding and ensure that students make excellent progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem from a very low base. Students' progress in their academic learning is good and students gain qualifications in a range of GCSE and vocational subjects, through which all are able to move successfully into further education, training or the world of work. The centre uses very effective strategies to re-engage students in education and enable them to address their anxieties about school. Attendance is average overall. Behaviour is good with all students showing great improvement from when they first started at the centre.

The well-balanced curriculum gives a clear focus to the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and engages students very effectively. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish excellent relationships with the students and these are the basis of the exemplary guidance and support for students' personal development. Staff know each student extremely well and they use assessment information effectively to match work to the level of understanding of each one. The centre is aware, however, in a few lessons staff do not make the most of every opportunity to involve students in assessing their own learning or that of their peers, for students' achievements to be maximised. Staff training in this aspect is paying off with some excellent practice seen.

The headteacher has a very clear vision about how the provision should develop. She is very well supported by her senior management team. Together they have established effective teamwork across the teaching and support staff, based on a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They have mapped out a clear path for improvement. There have been changes in the structure of the management committee since the previous inspection and these are effective in ensuring that it provides the centre with a good level of challenge. The leadership has developed rigorous systems to track students' progress, and monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision, ensuring that any student in need of extra support is quickly identified. These systems form the basis of a well-focused programme of staff development and underpin an effective cycle of school improvement. However, the school does not make best use of its data about students' progress to show clearly to all, particularly its management committee, how well it is performing in relation to the national picture. Excellent links are established with parents and carers to help them to understand and support the needs of their children. Partnerships with other professionals are used extremely well to help meet students' needs, especially to support their personal development. The centre works tirelessly to support students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to overcome their personal difficulties. It makes sure that all students have high-quality opportunities for a 'second chance' in education. The improvements which the centre has effected on students'

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achievements, their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, coupled with the effectiveness of its self-evaluation, show that the capacity for further sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff make the most of every opportunity to involve students in assessing their own learning and also that of others in order to maximise students' achievements.
- Use its data about the progress of students more effectively to demonstrate clearly how well it is doing compared to the national picture.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Since the previous inspection, the number of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes has risen as has the number attaining passes at grades A* to G, so that attainment is broadly average. Given students' below, and sometimes well below, starting points on entry, this represents good progress and achievement. Students' achievement in English is particularly good. There are no differences in the progress made by different gender, ethnic or ability groups, including for those with a statement of special educational needs. In all the lessons seen, the excellent relationships between staff and students were used extremely well to engage and motivate students so that they enjoy their lessons. In an excellent art lesson the staff were very skilful in involving the students in assessing their learning at all stages of the lesson. This increased the students' determination to succeed, deepened their understanding of difficult concepts related to surrealism and ensured that their learning was of a very high quality. Such practice is not, however, consistent in all lessons.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is based on the high expectations established by all staff, the role models they present and the fact they are 'like a supportive family'. Staff are adept at encouraging students to reflect on their own feelings and on those of others and this helps students make significant changes in their attitudes and behaviour. Students develop a good awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle and this is recognised through the centre's Healthy School status. They are very enthusiastic about timetabled physical education lessons and often take part in voluntary activities, such as jogging on Hampstead Heath and after-school boxing sessions. In discussions, students acknowledged how they have used information about sexual health, tobacco and drug abuse to help change their lifestyle. Students say that they feel safe and if any issues arise they are quickly dealt with by staff.

The first-day absence procedures are operated with rigour and most students improve their attendance considerably. Students make a positive contribution to their school community in a range of ways; for example they have gained funds that have contributed to furnishing a communal area and run events that have helped towards a residential visit. When selling tee shirts of their own design for charity they contributed well to the wider community. The literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology qualifications students gain, together with the gains in their personal skills, prepare them well for their economic well-being.

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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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have very good subject knowledge and in their planning they identify the needs of individual students and how these will be met, so that the range of activities is carefully matched to students' needs. Support staff receive a high level of training and they make an important contribution to the team, both in helping to manage students' behaviour, develop their understanding and in one-to-one sessions, particularly in reading. All staff use resources, including information and communication technology well, to support students' learning and they often inject a sense of fun into lessons. In many lessons, staff engage students well in checking what they have learnt, with useful prompts from the 'I can do' statements that are available for each subject. In a few lessons opportunities to extend learning in this way are not used to advantage.

The curriculum provides a good balance between academic and vocational subjects and meets the needs and aspirations of students. A carefully planned programme of work experience supports the provision. Visits out of school, such as recent one to see basketball at the O2 arena, a wide range of after-school clubs and visitors to the school, for example by local police, enhance the curriculum well. There is a strong focus on personal and social education which forms a cornerstone of the provision. The centre recognises that the provision in information and communication technology is not as established as in other subjects and is rightly developing it further.

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Staff make sure that all students, including those who arrive at different times, settle quickly and happily into the centre. Transition arrangements for those moving on, for example to sixth forms and colleges, are excellent and contribute extremely well to reducing students' anxieties. The care, guidance and support provided by all staff for students' personal development are second to none. Staff spend a great deal of time listening to students, giving them advice and promoting their well-being to overcome difficulties in their lives. They work extremely well with others, including parents and carers, mentors, the home/school link worker, the education welfare service and other professionals to provide tailor-made advice and support. Students are given excellent guidance about careers and opportunities available when they leave the centre.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads by example and inspires both students and staff to want to do their best. There is a constant focus on improving students' life chances and all show a sense of enthusiasm about key developments with a clear focus on improving practice in classrooms. The management committee is systematic in monitoring the work of the centre. Its members have a good awareness of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and challenge leaders effectively. The centre promotes equality of opportunity well ensuring good achievement for all groups of students, including those who have a statement of special educational needs. The difference it makes to the lives of its students is a testament to its commitment to tackling discrimination.

All staff work extremely well with parents and carers to help them to support their children's needs. Links are established through half-termly review meetings, parents' group meetings, first-day absence calls, regular contact by phone and visits home that include time for student tuition if needed. The centre has very systematic procedures for checking the views of parents and carers and it responds very positively to their suggestions. Safeguarding and child protection are high on everyone's agenda and fully meet national requirements and guidelines. There are effective safeguarding policies, with good staff training on child protection. All staff are vetted and checked before working in the centre and risk assessments are thorough. The centre works extremely well with many agencies, other schools and colleges, to underpin the significant progress students make in their attitudes, behaviour and attendance.

The backgrounds of both students and staff, and work undertaken with others in the community, are used well to support students' understanding of community cohesion. Links with a school outside the area have helped to broaden students' understanding of

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those from a wider range of cultural backgrounds and also helped them gain accreditation in two different languages. The school is aware that, as yet, there are too few opportunities for its students to learn about lives of others in an international context and it is rightly developing this area of its work.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-usual number of parents' and carers' questionnaires was returned for a school of this type. These show that the overwhelming majority are very satisfied with the centre and the provision it makes for their children. Comments such as, 'They have worked miracles with my son,' sum this up. The views expressed confirmed the findings of the school's own surveys. These very positive views are fully supported by the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Agincourt House 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 22 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	21	10	71	1	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	36	8	57	1	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	29	9	64	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	21	10	71	0	0	1	7
The teaching is good at this school	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	21	10	71	0	0	1	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	21	9	64	1	7	1	7
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)	3	21	9	64	0	0	1	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	29	9	64	0	0	1	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	50	6	43	0	0	1	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	50	6	43	0	0	1	7
The school is led and managed effectively	9	64	4	29	0	0	1	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	21	10	71	0	0	1	7

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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



11 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Agincourt House, London NW3 2NY

I really enjoyed coming to inspect your school. I judged that Agincourt House provides good education. I could see that you are happy being at the centre and you make excellent progress in developing your confidence and self-esteem. You make good progress in the subjects you study and gain a range of qualifications that help you move on successfully to the next stage of your lives. The school keeps you safe and there is always someone to look after you, give you extra support, for example to help you catch up with your work, and give you advice, for instance about what courses you might study at college. Your behaviour is much improved since you joined Agincourt House and is now good.

I could see that you enjoy football, table tennis and activities, such as making pancakes to celebrate Shrove Tuesday. You told me that you particularly like visits out of the centre, for example to the O2 and activities undertaken in the various clubs.

To improve Agincourt House in future I have asked the staff to use the information about the progress you make to make it clearer to everyone how well the centre is doing overall. I have also asked the staff to make sure that in all lessons they make the most of opportunities to involve you in assessing your own work as well as that of others in the class, for example by using the 'I can' ladders. This is to improve your achievements even more. I hope all of you will help by doing your best all of the time.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead inspector

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