

The Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136170
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	382037
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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	20
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Nicky Moss
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Various learning activities, including six lessons, involving four different teachers and an external tutor, were observed. Time was also spent in classrooms and elsewhere observing work. Meetings were held with students, a member of the management committee, the headteacher and other staff. The inspector looked at various policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding, and questionnaires from 11 parents and carers, five staff and seven students.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the centre's work, looking in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the centre is boosting attainment overall, including key skills for different groups of students.
- How well the curriculum meets the varied needs of different groups of students.
- How effectively the centre has established itself since its inception.

Information about the school

The Bridge caters for secondary-aged students who are unable to attend school because of their medical needs. The centre started operating in September 2010 and has been in its present location since October 2010. This is its first inspection. Most students are educated on site but some, whose medical circumstances preclude them from attending the centre, receive their education from home tutors or via online packages. Most students are currently in Year 11. All students disabilities often associated with long-term serious medical or psychological mental health difficulties which make mainstream school environments too difficult. Many have had some degree of emotional or psychological trauma and have been out of school for six months or more. Reasons include bullying, abuse, bereavement, self-harm and many other phobias and anxieties. Students are referred to the centre by their mainstream school and the referral must be supported by a front line professional service such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Approximately 15% of the students have a statement of their special educational needs, which is higher than usual. Their statements tend to be associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are a similar number of boys and girls. At the time of the inspection, all students were of a White British heritage. The centre aims to reintegrate its students into mainstream provision, or to secure for them training courses or places of employment at the end of Year 11.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Bridge provides outstanding education. This is a direct result of the careful, thorough and sensitive leadership of the headteacher and the sheer dedication of the whole staff, who are committed to changing and improving the fortunes of young people, many of whom have faced severe difficulties and traumas in their lives. It is a caring service that offers its students the highest possible levels of education, care, guidance and support. Almost all students achieve at least well with some making outstanding progress in their learning and personal development.

Students attending The Bridge have wide-ranging prior levels of attainment. For many their prior attainment is well-below average because of the acute disruption they have experienced in their education rather than a reflection of their abilities and potential. The centre offers all students an extremely safe, secure and supportive environment in which they can improve their educational attainment, realise their potential and develop higher self-esteem. Once they settle into life at The Bridge almost all students, including those with highly complex needs, make rapid progress in their work because of the quality of the intensive help provided. The outcomes for Year 11 students last summer were well in excess of those forecast when they first joined the centre. Most of the present students, the majority of whom are in Year 11, are working at levels that are close to national average expectations. All these students have complex difficulties.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Work with families and a range of agencies to sustain the learning and personal development of students whose circumstances make them especially vulnerable is deeply embedded. Excellent partnerships involving education, care and health professionals further ensure high quality outcomes for students. Extensive work is done to promote healthy and safe lifestyles and safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Students say they feel extremely safe and behaviour is excellent. Other outstanding features include the engagement of parents and carers, the quality of the curriculum, especially the care taken to meet individual needs, and the work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. Every student's progress is closely tracked and monitored and outcomes are highly positive, with any unevenness between different groups closing rapidly.

The students' good progress in their learning is a direct result of the consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching offered. Teachers are skilled and knowledgeable and are most adept at meeting individual needs. Lessons are

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interesting and often progress at a lively pace. Students work well independently or in groups and are acquiring work-related skills, such as decision-making and team-building. Considerable efforts have been made to improve the students' skills in literacy and numeracy. These efforts have successfully raised attainment but, in lessons, it was noticeable that key words and phrases are not always displayed or referred to and their meanings are not always checked to ensure that all have clearly understood. Assessment and tracking systems are good. Staff quickly develop strong working relationships with their students and are skilled in ensuring work is appropriately pitched.

The management committee is outstanding. It knows the centre well and thoroughly monitors its work. Many members of the management committee are medical, care or education professionals themselves and are able to provide expertise in a coordinated way to enhance the students' successes further. Much has been achieved in a short time. The centre already has a strong record of success, amply illustrating the ambition and drive of the excellent headteacher and the talented team. Rigorous self-evaluation enables strengths and areas for development to be identified and appropriate plans made for continued development. As a result, there is an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment by ensuring a consistent approach from all teachers in developing students' skills in literacy by:
 - ensuring key words and vocabulary are always displayed
 - checking that meanings are always fully understood
 - encouraging students to use these words and terms accurately in both their oral and written work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students achieve well because the quality of their learning in lessons is consistently good and it is sometimes outstanding. For example, in an outstanding science lesson all students made excellent progress because of the challenging work set on the composition of the solar system. All worked with interest and enthusiasm and their learning was further enhanced through the opportunities they had to work in groups and discuss their ideas and answers. Planning for learning was outstanding. Consequently, all contributed and made outstanding strides in their work. Students say they enjoy their work and this was clear from all lessons seen. Evidence, such as work samples, indicates at least good progress for many students, including those with particularly complex needs and those in receipt of home tutoring. Moreover, no discernible differences in the progress made by boys and girls were identifiable.

Students are highly considerate and supportive of each other and this helps their learning and their social and emotional development. Almost all students have significantly improved attendance records, with overall attendance close to the national average. Much emphasis is placed on leading safe and healthy lives, with a

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strong focus on eating healthily and taking exercise. The centre's activity programme enables students to pursue activities as diverse as fencing and kayaking. Creative approaches are made to fostering responsibility. The students contribute to the centre's newsletter, they have their own council, they help primary-aged pupils attending the adjacent special school and they help to interview new staff. As well as developing a keen sense of responsibility, they make an outstanding contribution to the centre and the wider community.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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

How effective is the provision?

Students' learning is good and sometimes outstanding because they are taught consistently well by staff with detailed subject knowledge. They are motivated and engaged by interesting lessons that offer good scope for independent and collaborative work. The working relationships between staff and students are excellent. Activities are very well planned to meet students' individual needs. The outstanding curriculum is well planned and partnership work with other schools has led to a far wider examination choice this year. The range of physical activities that the students can undertake is impressive and during the inspection a group was observed practising rock climbing skills. Outstanding learning took place. All students acted with great common sense and maturity. They all mastered the climbing wall, but what was also impressive was the way they worked in teams of three. Safety was paramount. All students showed a keen awareness of this when they practised their belaying (securing rope) safety techniques. Such activities greatly boost confidence and enhance key work-related skills such as teamwork and teambuilding. Other activities such as personal, social and health education (PSHE)

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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and thoughtfully arranged tutor periods make a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The service provides an outstanding, caring and supportive environment. There are excellent trusting relationships with parents and carers. The individual needs of all students have high priority. Families and carers are fully involved in their children's education and care. Effective partnerships with a multitude of agencies greatly enhance the students' learning and their social well-being. As one parent commented: 'The Bridge has had a massive impact on my child. He hated school... With the staff's sensitive care and support, his education has improved, and so has his confidence. I cannot thank the staff enough.'

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Actions taken by the visionary and outstanding headteacher have been conspicuously successful in inspiring all staff, resulting in high morale and a clear focus on driving improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the excellent management committee, are fully committed and involved in securing improvements. The centre maintains excellent working relationships with many agencies, and parents and carers are fully involved at every step. Such outstanding partnerships secure excellent and individualised programmes for education, health and social care and successfully promote personal well-being. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Risk assessments are detailed and thorough and all appropriate policies are in place and are monitored. There is an overwhelming determination to ensure that all students enjoy an excellent education in a safe setting; leaders and managers have been most effective in achieving this.

Academic progress is at least good because the management of teaching and learning is well focused on raising attainment. An emphasis on respect, rights, boosting confidence and encouraging responsibility underpins much of the centre's work. This makes an outstanding contribution to the promotion of equality and tackling discrimination by ensuring that the students' prospects and life-changes are significantly enhanced. Community cohesion is promoted well. Students contribute well to their own and local communities, especially through helping one another and through the work they do with the adjacent special school. Students also develop good national and international awareness through their studies of different cultures and beliefs, but also by carefully selecting charities that they wish to support.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Over half of the parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire, which is far higher than is typical, with all adding positive comments. The overwhelming message to emerge is that parents and carers value the work of the centre highly. They consider it is making a significant contribution to enhancing life chances by helping the young people to overcome their problems, anxieties and often complex medical conditions. No negative comments were received. The unanimous positive views expressed by parents and carers reflect the inspector's judgements that the quality of this centre and the education it provides are simply outstanding. As one parent succinctly commented: 'The Bridge is brilliant! We are very pleased.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bridge 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 11 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 20 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	36	6	55	1	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	82	1	9	1	9	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	36	7	64	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	36	7	73	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	36	7	64	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	36	6	55	1	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	36	6	55	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)	8	73	3	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	63	4	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	45	6	55	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	27	8	73	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	73	3	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	82	2	18	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



7 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bridge, Bletchley MK3 7HE

Thank you for making me so welcome during my recent visit. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and I have fond memories of meeting and talking with you and seeing your work. I am impressed with what you are all achieving. You told me about the high-quality education you receive and I am pleased to say that my visit confirmed your opinions; you are receiving an outstanding education. You are making excellent strides in your education and personal development. The staff help you but your positive attitudes and excellent behaviour are also important. There are so many things that are superb and this is underpinned by you having an excellent and highly committed staff who help you to learn so very well.

Many things impressed me, especially when I accompanied some of you to the outdoor pursuits centre where I watched you conquer the climbing wall. Your determination impressed me and you also taught me about the key skill of 'belaying'. Clearly this is an essential safety requirement and one you all did seriously and properly. I was so pleased to see the sensible and mature way you repaid the trust of your two instructors.

You are also taught well and your dedicated teachers deserve much praise for all their work. I am pleased with the progress you are making, but in order for you to do even better, I have asked your staff to ensure that even more effort is made to improve your standards of work, especially your literacy skills. I have suggested they do this by ensuring key words and phrases are consistently displayed in lessons and staff carefully check your understanding of such words and terms and encourage you to use them in your oral and written work.

Thank you again for making me so welcome. I enjoyed meeting you and would like to wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Lead inspector

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