

# New Horizons

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133572
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	381514
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Linda Clare

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local Authority/ Management Committee
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Sue Dodd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Thomson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Fallowfield Grove Padgate Warrington WA2 0QQ
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Clare

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In addition to eight lessons and six staff being observed, one 'learning walk' to check students' participation in lessons was undertaken together with two tours of the school, one accompanied by students. The inspector also visited the second site on both days of the inspection. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, a member of the management committee, the local authority manager, the leader of the day nursery on site and a representative from a local high school. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, safeguarding and case study documents, assessment tracking and attendance data. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and reviewed information provided by parents and carers in six completed questionnaires. The inspector also took into account the views of students and those of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

## Information about the school

New Horizons is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which provides alternative schooling for excluded students and those at risk of exclusion. Students may enter the PRU at any age from 11 to 16. Students stay between one term and two years. At the time of inspection there were 24 students on single roll and 22 students on dual rolls with local secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Students come from all parts of the local authority and all are from White British backgrounds. The headteacher has been in post since September 2009, the deputy headteacher since the previous inspection.

New Horizons opened in November 2011 on its present site following the amalgamation of two of its previous three sites. Horizon Place, its second site, caters for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and has relocated twice since the previous inspection. It is due to relocate again to a purpose-built unit in September 2012. The PRU will become a delegated budget school from April 2012.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory PRU. Its ethos of ‘calm correction of behaviour’ and good relationships create a welcoming environment which promotes students’ confidence in themselves as learners and their respect for staff. In order for it to improve to good, the PRU needs to provide stability in the leadership and teaching of English and to particularly improve writing skills. It also needs to extend the vocational curriculum offer at Key Stage 4 and provide opportunities for the extension of literacy and numeracy in meaningful contexts.
- Overall, achievement is satisfactory and students’ personal and social skills develop well. Progress in mathematics is better than in English for older students at the main school as a result of focused specialist teaching for mathematics. Personalised learning for students at Horizon Place and the steadily increasing re-engagement of referred students, formerly out of school, contribute suitably to this strength and to closing the gap in their achievements.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is improving and some good and occasionally very good aspects of teaching were seen during the inspection.
- Behaviour is satisfactory and students generally show respect and consideration to others. The school provides a safe environment and staff concern for students' well-being and security is appreciated by parents and carers.
- The headteacher provides aspirational and clear leadership for the school as senior managers assume their new responsibilities. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The management committee provides appropriate support for the ongoing re-structuring of staffing, development of distributed leadership and the goal of continuous school improvement. The management of teaching and performance is satisfactory. The curriculum is also satisfactory. The school recognises that its work to develop existing partnership arrangements is at an early stage and consequently, the range of vocational courses on offer is limited.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure support and interventions for students in English to raise their achievement and progress at Key Stage 4 to match the levels they achieve in mathematics by:
  - providing stability in the leadership of English and ensuring continuity in the delivery of the subject through dedicated teachers and teaching
  - providing appropriate in-service support and guidance to strengthen the strategies teachers may use to promote writing skills more effectively.
  
- Develop the PRU's curriculum at Key Stage 4 to:
  - increase partnerships with local and community organisations and employers
  - develop a range of vocational pathways to better meet students' needs, interests and aptitudes
  - provide ample opportunities for students to practise and develop their numeracy and literacy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Students' attainments on entry to the PRU are generally below those of students of a similar age nationally, although many may have achieved broadly expected levels at Key Stage 2. Their progress prior to joining the PRU has often been impeded by a combination of previous poor attendance, long-term absence, gaps in their learning and disruptive or behavioural difficulties. By the time they leave the PRU, their attainments are approaching national average, and this compares acceptably with other similar units.

Students' rate of progress from entry to leaving school is closely monitored. Over time this rate is improving. Students attending the unit even for short stays, close the gaps in their learning as their rates of progress accelerate. Students with additional needs, disabled students, those in the care of the local authority, different groups and those known to be eligible for free school meals make similar levels of progress.

Tracking information is evaluated regularly and suitable interventions provided for those at risk of under-achievement. In 2011, all students achieved an English and mathematics grade at GCSE or equivalent levels alongside a wider range of GCSE and unit awards. The range of accreditation has broadened over time to meet students' needs more appropriately. However, the number of college and vocational courses and awards are minimal which limit opportunity, choice and interest at Key Stage 4.

Over two thirds of the students feel that they learn a lot in school most of the time. They develop trust in the staff as they work towards their academic and behavioural targets. At both key stages, students learn to put forward their thoughts and ideas in discussions and to work collaboratively in teams, groups or with partners. In one English lesson observed, students demonstrated appropriate speaking and listening skills and showed increasing insight in their responses. In response to the book 'Stone Cold' they provided thoughtful answers to challenging themes of homelessness and poverty and how this affected their views of society. Their written work is of a satisfactory overall quality.

A very small number of responses from parents and carers expressed reservations about progress and the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills. The inspection found that progress overall is satisfactory and that, although the school has improved the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills since the previous inspection, it is not fully consistent across all subjects. Students say that they enjoy the more practically-based mathematics subjects but some find the written content of lessons more difficult and less engaging. This accords with their relative progress in these subjects.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers indicate that they are generally pleased with the quality of teaching provided for their children. Students report more mixed views. Inspection found teaching to be satisfactory with good and better elements in a small number of the lessons observed.

In better lessons, teachers plan well for groups and incorporate a solid range of activities and strategies to sustain interest. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is typified by good expectations, effective use of questioning to ensure students' understanding and good pace to lessons. Students thrive on the investigative mathematics which enables them to learn whilst being active and seeking their own solutions to problems. English teaching at the PRU is stronger at Horizon Place where teachers' subject expertise enhances students' learning. At the main site, there are fewer permanent staff teaching the subject and continuity of learning is more fragile. Students are more reluctant to use their writing skills than employ listening and reading skills. This leads to a dependence upon worksheets and activities which do not challenge them as much as they should. Students learn to develop curiosity, exemplified particularly well in a history lesson observed around an artefact that had seen '4 million sunsets'. Students gave unwavering attention as the teacher drew from them well thought out possibilities until the answer was revealed.

However, not all aspects of the planned curriculum are delivered in the classroom. When this happens and work is not focused and specific, students find tasks too easy or too difficult, they reduce their effort or become frustrated, and both behaviour and progress suffer as a result. Although communication skills are incorporated into each lesson, literacy and numeracy are as yet insufficiently emphasised in all subjects. The acquisition of higher-order reading skills is rightly a current focus but work to develop these is in its early stages. Numeracy has been recently linked to the forthcoming Olympic Games as students research the points system for each sport.

Teaching and support assistants have a generally good understanding of their roles and contribute appropriately to learning and progress. In all lesson observations, relationships between staff and students were at least satisfactory and in many instances good. Social skills and emotional literacy lessons develop students' moral understanding. Students learn about consequences and right and wrong by dramatically portraying the characters in 'Of Mice and Men' in which they also discussed prejudice and racial harmony.

Students' attitudes to learning are improving over time and they show an increased willingness to work together and maintain concentration. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used appropriately at both sites to enable students to achieve greater independence, for research and extension work. Students mainly know their behaviour and learning targets and how they may improve their work.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students generally respond positively to staff and teaching is underpinned by a caring and supportive environment. Behaviour is mostly satisfactory around school and any issues in lessons are managed discreetly with calm resolution or time out for reflection on actions taken. Two thirds of parents and carers returning the questionnaire and over half of the students felt behaviour to be good most of the time. One of a number of responses from parents and carers indicated provision to be 'so good for my son' another praising Horizon Place as 'a fantastic environment for vulnerable pupils'. A more collaborative approach is being developed towards supporting the individual needs of students through work with other agencies. Partnership work is valued and growing as the PRU seeks to develop a more collegiate approach with a wider range of vocational options to better engage students in Key Stage 4.

Students say that they feel safe in school in their conversations and on their questionnaires. All parents and carers responding to the questionnaire felt that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively. Students confirm that bullying is rare in any form and if it does occur it is dealt with well by staff. The use of fixed-term exclusion has reduced over time and behaviour observed in school appeared typical for the PRU. A scrutiny of behavioural records and discussion with staff and students confirm this. The majority of incidents recorded are dealt with appropriately through the revised school's systems and individual key worker support.

The majority of staff use the calm correction approach appropriately. Behaviour is rewarded through a points system. Students who have needed additional time then return to their lessons and settle satisfactorily. Students report that staff are interested in their views, and opportunities for students to speak out through the school council are being enhanced through the student leadership. Attendance within the PRU's control and over time is rising and is now broadly average.

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The PRU has been on an eventful journey since its previous inspection. The headteacher is a highly strategic leader who has started to embed improvements and, despite a number of relocations, has

endeavoured to keep the focus firmly on school improvement. A new, more cohesive New Horizons is emerging under her skilful guidance. The senior management team is evolving but not yet fully in place as the PRU moves towards its first delegated budget in April and its new staffing structure takes shape. The leadership of mathematics is established and effective, however, the equivalent post in English is not being currently managed due to staff absence. The extended period of heavy reliance on supply staff to fill posts has had an impact on continuity and progress, particularly in English.

In unanimous support of the vision and leadership of the headteacher, all staff responding to the questionnaires say they feel proud to be on the staff and know what the PRU is trying to achieve. Continuous professional development has been provided but is not yet impacting sufficiently to ensure consistently good teaching. Senior leaders evaluate the PRU's work accurately and acknowledge that teaching, and particularly the extension of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, need greater emphasis and rigour. The management committee is satisfactory and provides experience and support. Self-evaluation shows a sound awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and development planning is based securely in accurate data analysis. Much of the development taking place is in its early stages with emerging effectiveness and potential sustainability. However, the PRU has built a sound foundation and put into place many of the building blocks essential for future development. There have been some tangible improvements and so capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides breadth and balance and opportunities to develop off-site learning to meet the needs of students adequately but pathways at Key Stage 4 are limited. Students' appreciation of the community and life beyond school is enhanced by links with Soweto, visits to local theatres and the international market in Manchester. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as students learn appropriate behaviour, to socialize and develop curiosity in their learning. Reflection is promoted well in lessons.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, recruitment procedures in place, risks indicated to be assessed and the monitoring of site security is satisfactory. A high proportion of parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school and all students agree, saying also that they feel well looked after. The PRU promotes equality of opportunity and addresses discrimination appropriately. This is illustrated in the closing of the learning gap for the students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable at the PRU on a short-stay basis.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



1 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of New Horizon, Warrington, WA2 0QQ**

I am writing to thank you for your assistance last week when I visited your school. Your thoughts and comments were really useful in helping me to come to my decisions. This is what I found.

- Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and all of the adults there keep you safe and look after you well. I was pleased to hear that you like school and that you feel the staff help you to do as well as you can.
- Your attendance is improving and you are making satisfactory progress in your work. This leads to success in GCSEs and Unit accreditation when you reach Year 11. These are also improving but there could be more choice for you.
- The teaching and learning in your school is satisfactory overall and is good and sometimes better in some subjects. You do better in mathematics than in English at the moment and some of you said it is because you do not like writing very much. Your literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory.
- Your personal and social skills develop well as you go through the school. It was good to hear some of the discussions you had in class where you shared your views and opinions in a very mature manner.
- Your behaviour is mostly satisfactory and you have the opportunity to make your views known through the school council. I hope that your views on the internal door system have now been taken into account as you made a very convincing argument to your headteacher.
- Your headteacher provides very clear and accurate direction for the school. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and your headteacher knows what needs to be done to make it better for you.

I have asked your headteacher to:

- ensure you get more support in English and particularly at Key Stage 4 so that your work at least matches the levels you achieve in mathematics
- improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in all of your subjects and improve teaching so that it is good in all lessons.
- find ways to provide you with choice at Key Stage 4 in the type of courses that you want to follow, particularly college and vocational links.

Yours sincerely,  
Linda Clare  
Lead Inspector

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