

# Bridge Short Stay School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132131
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	360373
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martyn Groucutt

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>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Kulas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Wissage Road Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6SW
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Seven lessons were observed, taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, the chair of the management committee, students, parents, the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at arrangements for safeguarding, and at a range of policy and planning documentation. A total of seven parental questionnaires were scrutinised, together with 11 from staff and three from students.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following.

- The impact of relocation to the current premises on overall effectiveness.
- Ways in which curriculum developments have impacted on student engagement and achievement.
- The effectiveness of external partnerships in promoting better student outcomes.
- The impact of changes in the organisation and leadership of the pupil referral unit.

## Information about the school

The school relocated to its present site in May 2010 and now occupies newly refurbished premises that are equipped to a high standard. It provides education for permanently excluded students in the Lichfield and Burntwood areas, covering five high schools and two special schools. It also works with these schools to try to prevent permanent exclusions, together with providing education for students with complex social and medical needs, and the district's home tuition service. The headteacher and deputy, and the chair of the management committee have all been appointed since the last inspection was carried out.

**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

Bridge Short Stay School provides a good education. It enables students to experience success through courses of study aimed at meeting individual needs and which transform levels of achievement. There has been substantial improvement in outcomes and this is in large part the result of major changes to the nature of provision brought about by the local authority and inspired by the current leadership. In particular the clear and focussed vision of the headteacher is creating a learning environment in which all are encouraged to reach their full potential.

A small number make up a 'Nurture Group' of students who for medical or social reasons cannot access full time mainstream schooling and they demonstrate good progress. The Bridge has also taken over responsibility for the home tuition service which is managed effectively from the building. However, the majority of provision is for students who are at risk of permanent exclusion or have already been permanently excluded. Some students attend on a dual placement basis, remaining on the registers of their mainstream school. The Bridge provides them with opportunities for respite and for reflection on how to avoid permanent exclusion through developing better attitudes to learning and behaviour. It is also developing opportunities for outreach work with mainstream schools, but these are still in the process of implementation in order to achieve their full potential. When a student is placed at The Bridge following permanent exclusion the aim is to reintegrate into a mainstream placement wherever possible, although current systems are not easily and speedily facilitating such transfers. Where this is not possible a full curriculum entitlement is provided, reflecting a major improvement in provision since the last inspection. This includes on-site specialist provision, for example in art and food technology, and effective off-site provision that is supporting development of a good range of vocational skills. There are opportunities to gain external accreditation at a variety of levels, including GCSE, Entry Level, Open College Network and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). There is a belief that this forms part of the entitlement for all full-time students. Students feel safe and behaviour is good despite their potential for volatility, so they are better able to experience enjoyment and achievement.

Students are transforming their levels of achievement. They arrive after a history of broken education and a sense of frustration because of repeated failure. The Bridge supports them effectively in re-engaging and experiencing success. Students are supported by dedicated teachers who demonstrate empathy while still expecting good work. Teachers know their students well and there is an increasing amount of data that demonstrates their individual progress, although the monitoring and tracking of students could be further refined. For example, the school has identified the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress materials as an area for development as part of its effective self-evaluation. Teaching assistants work alongside each teacher, demonstrating excellent

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teamwork and helping the teachers to deliver individualised teaching and learning, effectively differentiated. The curriculum is often imaginative, seeking to provide learning that is different in nature to that experienced during students' years of failure. Current innovation includes a major curriculum development in out-of-classroom learning through a major project to develop horticulture, including the keeping of livestock. Such opportunities are further transforming opportunities to learn in a cross-curricular setting. Opportunities for enrichment through a variety of activities such as outdoor education are also being very effectively promoted.

Staff demonstrate high levels of care, guidance and support for all students. This is supported by effective partnerships to support learning and also wider needs, reflected in a comment from a learning mentor for the Looked After Children Service who said 'as an outside agency coming into school I feel respected and welcome'. She concluded 'the school does a fantastic job with some very challenging young people'. The focus on raising standards and enabling students to experience success has seen The Bridge improve impressively since the last inspection. While the current management committee is still developing its expertise under the effective leadership of a newly appointed chair, it knows what it needs to do to support and challenge and is committed to doing so. Its responsibilities, including that for safeguarding, are effectively discharged. The senior leadership is effective in driving ambition and raising standards, and demonstrates effective self-evaluation. There is therefore good capacity to sustain the current improvement into the future.

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

- Enhance systems that support and sustain students in mainstream education wherever possible through:
  - continuing to develop outreach and dual placement work with mainstream schools
  - ensuring that systems promote and support re-integration with appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.
- Extend the out-of-classroom curriculum planning, focussing particularly on opportunities to promote cross-curricular learning.
- Refine and develop processes for monitoring and tracking the progress and achievement of individual students.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There is now much more data available on the progress of each student from an initial baseline on entry. This shows that they make good progress and that overall achievement is good after years of failure in mainstream settings. Individualised learning programmes promote success and enable students to meet their targets and ultimately the goal of external accreditation. While attainment is therefore a little below average overall the progress made by individuals can be outstanding starting from an often below average level on entry. Students come to enjoy learning for the first time. Progress in core subjects is good, although extended writing remains a challenge for some. Practical and vocational skills enable students to experience success, sometimes through off-site providers who supplement the expertise and facilities available on-site. Because the needs of individuals

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are known and provided for, all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are able to make progress and begin to fulfil their potential.

Students enjoy contributing to their community, both in and out of school, such as their participation in the Lichfield Festival. They have a good awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles and participate in recreational activities with enthusiasm. They are learning skills to support their future economic well-being, although for some a low attendance rate, despite rigorous efforts from the school, means that overall this element is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

The teaching that was observed was good and some was outstanding. Teachers use their knowledge of their subjects and show a range of skills in bringing teaching and learning to life, including the effective use of technology. They know their students well and use appropriate strategies to get the best out of them. Planning is detailed, so that lessons show variety and pace, with students keen to participate. There is a clear rapport in classrooms that motivates and engages. The use of external providers enhances the curriculum and provides for a range of effective vocational courses. Such partnerships do much to add to the learning experiences.

Teachers are now using assessment more effectively so that individual progress can be monitored. This enables teachers to individualise the curriculum to meet the identified

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needs of every student. However, there remains room for refining tracking and monitoring systems. This explains why care, guidance and support is not yet outstanding despite the excellence of much of the provision that keeps potentially vulnerable young people safe. Positive links with professionals such as Connexions help students think about their futures, while vulnerable students are supported through educational psychology or the adolescent mental health service. The Bridge can point to good examples of how it is supporting students in transforming their lives for the better.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management is strongly focussed on driving improvement and allowing students to achieve success. It communicates high expectations to all staff and students and has transformed the quality of provision for the better. This ambition is motivating staff so that energies are channelled into a collective drive for excellence. Addressing key areas of weakness identified in the last inspection, together with a determination to maximise the impact of the move to the very well-resourced new building, has created an extremely positive ethos in the school. Parents speak highly of the school and feel very well supported, such as through the parents group that meets regularly with the headteacher and deputy. Strong partnerships are used to enhance provision to very good effect, not least the links with other pupil referral units and mainstream schools within the local authority. The school works hard to ensure that previous mainstream failures do not hinder current success. As a consequence, individuals are valued and encouraged to fulfil their potential irrespective of background, so that equality of opportunity is strongly promoted.

The management committee takes its responsibilities, such as those for safeguarding, seriously. With such a population of potentially vulnerable students great care is taken to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are thoroughly understood and implemented. A range of effective partnerships with other professional agencies reinforces this. Similarly, partnerships with a range of groups of organisations, professional and social, support the school not only in enabling it to meet the needs of its students, but also in playing an effective role within its community. It has done a lot of work to foster community cohesion and seeks ways in which it can foster positive ways in which its students view communities at local, national and international levels and engage with them.

Because the school has a clear and focussed vision, uses its resources effectively to maximise its effectiveness and engages with as wide a circle of people as possible to enhance outcomes, the school provides good value for money.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school and the impact it was having on their children. For example, one wrote 'This school is a godsend and we feel strongly that our son now has the support, encouragement and positive learning environment that he has always needed'.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bridge Short Stay School 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 seven completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 29 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	72	2	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	5	72	1	14	1	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	72	2	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	57	2	28	1	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	57	3	43	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)	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	72	2	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	72	2	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	72	2	28	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



1 December 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Bridge Short Stay School, Lichfield, WS13 6SW**

I would just like to express my thanks to you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I think that you attend a good school and I hope you agree with the findings of the report that I have written.

I was impressed by your behaviour, even when you were disappointed that the bad weather stopped your outdoor education morning. This shows that you are developing maturity and working hard to achieve your best so that you can be successful in the future, even if you have not enjoyed school in the past. The adults at The Bridge work hard to help you achieve success and so you make good progress that could help you gain a variety of qualifications. You are lucky to have such good facilities and you use them well.

I have asked that the school improve a small number of things to make things even better:

They should work with mainstream schools to try to prevent students from being permanently excluded by further developing outreach support, but where exclusions have happened to work with the schools to get students back into them as soon as possible.

The work just starting on the horticulture project is a great example of out-of-classroom learning that should be developed and extended as far as possible.

The systems that teachers use to monitor and track the progress you make in school should be developed further, so they can give you the very best help possible with learning and help you to make progress.

Keep trying your best and get involved with everything that The Bridge does on your behalf and you will continue to do well. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt

Lead inspector

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