

Nene Gate

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135386
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	363327
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	George Derby

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Kirkpatrick
Headteacher	Jim Simon
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Twelve lessons or part lessons were observed and 13 members of staff seen; these included lessons taught by teachers, instructors and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with the governing body, a group of students, staff and the school's senior leaders. The inspector spoke to two officers of the local authority and observed the school's and students' work, looked at assessment records, the school's self-evaluation, policies and minutes of meetings.

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

- The progress of students was evaluated and the impact of the school's work to reduce the levels of absence and exclusions was checked.
- The inspector assessed whether teaching challenges sufficiently the students' learning.
- An evaluation of the curriculum was made, checking that it meets the needs, interests and abilities of all students and that all students receive the full number of recommended hours of teaching time.
- An examination of the school's literacy strategy and its impact was undertaken.
- The system for assessing and tracking students' progress was checked to evaluate how the data was used to plan future learning.

Information about the school

Nene Gate is a special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. It has 44 students on roll and can admit up to 55 boys and girls, aged 11 to 16 years. All have a statement of special educational needs. The school is similar in size to other schools of this type. Since the school was last inspected, when it was judged to require special measures, the vast majority of staff have left and a vast number of new staff have been appointed. Students at the school are almost entirely White British in origin, although there is a very small number from other minority ethnic groups. An exceptionally high percentage of students, about 65%, are known to be eligible for free school meals.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Steady progress overall, and more recently good improvement, has been made in resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection. The school now provides its students with a satisfactory education.

The school has turned a corner and has developed a positive 'can do' culture among staff and students. Staff morale is high because relationships in the school have improved and there is a clear view of the way ahead. The oldest students are very positive about the developments and view the school a calmer place, conducive to learning. The headteacher and senior staff have worked hard and have been well supported by the local authority. Leaders' capacity to improve is satisfactory and there is a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has responded suitably to the challenges presented over the past two years and in recent months accelerated the improvements, largely through improving teaching, a curriculum more relevant to students' needs and better systems for managing behaviour. The headteacher has been a key driving force and has tackled some very difficult situations, showing considerable resilience, determination and tenacity. However, while subject leaders have responsibility for their subjects, there is not a clear line of responsibility for students' progress across key stages. This development is now being planned for.

The school has had significant barriers to overcome. It knows there remains much to do to improve provision even further in order for students' outcomes to be good. Recent improvements mean that teaching is now effective and learning in lessons is good. This is because there is now a clear focus on learning with all adults, including teaching assistants, supporting and guiding students well. However, there are missed opportunities to share good and exceptional practice so that staff learn from each other. The importance of accurate assessment and its use to plan lessons has been at the heart of much of the work and staff take better account of this when setting objectives. However, this is not always consistent, nor is the way staff review learning during lessons.

Students' progress is satisfactory, including the very few who find learning difficult. It is not good because the school still has work to do to improve attendance. This is low but for most is improving quickly. While just under 50% of students have attendance above the national average, a small minority of students still have attendance below 80%. Progress in English lags behind that of mathematics and science. Progress accelerates in all subjects in Key Stage 4 but weaknesses in the literacy skills of students have limited their progress in English, especially in Key Stage 3. All students have a full programme of education, either in school, with an alternative provider or home tutor.

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Systematic approaches now in place to manage behaviour mean that students are clear about the staff's expectations and the consequences of any misbehaviour. The points reward system is well received and valued. Older students say that a big improvement is how the school emphasizes the way that they are expected to reflect on their behaviour and make reparation. Behaviour is satisfactory and improves over the time the students are in the school. Exclusions have reduced significantly over the past few years. The school collects a lot of data about students' behaviour. However, it cannot always demonstrate easily trends, patterns and improvement in behaviour and the impact of its different approaches to helping students.

The curriculum better meets students' needs and is satisfactory. The recent emphasis on students' reading and their use of literacy skills in lessons is paying dividends. Students now have a greater awareness of the techniques to use to read words, about the vocabulary they use and how they spell words. Older students excel at sporting activity and their commitment to health promotion is good.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Improve attendance so that it is in line with the national average by
- significantly reducing the proportion of students' whose attendance is under 80%
 - ensuring that there is a concerted effort to engage with very small number of students whose attendance is extremely limited
 - the governing body having greater involvement with parents.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that 80% is good or better by
- sharing good practice
 - ensuring assessment information is fully utilized when planning lessons so that learning outcomes are specified for each student
 - staff checking even more regularly on how well students are learning in lessons.
- Strengthen the progress that students make in their English and particularly their literacy skills in Key Stage 3 by
- improving students' reading skills so that their reading age improves by at least a year in sixth months
 - ensuring that their literacy skills are even better focused upon in subjects and activities,
 - strengthening the links between what is being learned in English and other subjects
 - key staff monitoring the students' performance across key stages.
- Ensure that the school can account better for the improvements in students' behaviour by
- providing improved information and data about how students' behaviour improves over time

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- identifying the success of the impact of the different approaches the school has to managing this.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment is low but improving strongly. Students enter the school with low attainment, often because of their previously disrupted pattern of education. The school is successful in re-engaging the majority of its students. However, there still remains the challenge to ensure all students make the progress of which they are capable as some students' attendance is poor.

Attainment is rising rapidly because of better tailoring of programmes on- and off-site. Older students say they get a positive boost from the feedback from assessments and modular tests already undertaken. These show that Year 11 students are on course to build on their previous successes in Year 10 and gain passes nearer to GCSE grade C and/or Level 1 in vocational qualifications. They feel well prepared for futures at college or work, although recognise that those who do not attend regularly miss out on valuable opportunities to learn and develop basic life skills.

Although students' progress over time is satisfactory, learning in lessons has improved recently and is now good. Students often apply themselves well and work hard and productively, because they are better motivated. There are very few occasions where students are off-task during lessons and they enjoy most of their activities. Assessment information is more accurate and staff are much more aware of the targets set for students. Students are better informed of what they must do to meet these and they actively rise to the challenge in lessons. There is a good commitment to learning in Key Stage 4, although a few students in Key Stage 3 sometimes find it difficult to settle and manage their behaviour.

Those who attend regularly feel that the school is a safe place. They say that the school's restorative justice approach has helped them understand the consequences of their actions and develop a sound sense of what is right and wrong. Cultural days develop an understanding about ways of life in other countries. The high level of focus on tolerance and harmony of faiths and cultures in Britain has led to significantly reduced incidents of racial abuse.

Students are keen to take on responsibilities and contribute to decisions about school life, such as the recent appointment of new teaching staff. They are keen to contribute to the wider community but take up for activities is often limited to a small number of students.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Most teaching is now good with some that is satisfactory and some which is outstanding. The good teaching is the main reason why students' progress is beginning to accelerate. In the best lessons, teachers exude a passion for their subjects which enthuses students, and use an exceptionally wide range of ways, including multimedia, to motivate them. For example, in a humanities lesson, students developed considerable understanding of the economic context of a country and its impact on disaster relief. They then acted as a newsreader to produce a BBC report in front of other students. Effective monitoring has encouraged teachers to develop and extend their practice. Planning is usually thorough and is based on an understanding of the levels at which students are working. It includes not only what they will learn but attention is also drawn to the risks associated with their behaviour and how staff should respond. Occasionally, learning outcomes are not specific enough, with planning just identifying those for 'all, most or some' students, despite small numbers in each class. Activities are motivating, challenging students to think; they rise to the challenge as a result. Information and communication technology is well used. Staff provide a good range of activities into lessons; the pace is brisk but never too quick. Students enjoy having to think quickly, while if any have difficulties learning appropriate support and time is provided. Tasks are now better matched to individual needs and teachers make much better and more consistent use of questioning to assess students' understanding. Many students know how well they are doing and how to improve, although not all. Marking has improved and is satisfactory. Feedback is largely

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constructive, although not always stating how students can improve their work. Occasionally, plenary sessions to assess and draw together students' understanding are too rushed.

The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved recently to include a wider range of BTEC vocational courses. It now meets the needs of the majority of students and includes an appropriate range of work related learning opportunities. Students are offered a full time place and 25 hours of education is provided. All subjects of the National Curriculum are timetabled. Off-site provision is widely used to cater for the students who find attending school a challenge. While there is close attention to the relevance of course contents and tracking on students' progress, the school has limited information from some course providers. A big improvement has been in the use of literacy across the curriculum. After-school clubs have been developed in partnership with Peterborough College. Although well received, only a small number of students attend.

Students know who to speak to when they need to resolve issues and concerns. The school's therapeutic approaches are used well to calm students who are anxious. Suitable transition arrangements and support are in place to help students with their admission and when leaving. Support for the small minority of students with challenging behaviour is now better organised. The school makes effective use of local agencies to support learners with mental health needs. There are a reasonable range of procedures for encouraging regular attendance, including prosecution in extreme cases; however, not all of these work with persistent non-attenders.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

In the face of considerable difficulties, the headteacher's relentless pursuit of improvement is now bearing fruit. Two major reviews in the last year have had a significant impact on moving the school forward. The assessment of the school's ethos by the senior team identified ongoing strengths and areas for improvement by the staff team and helped to raise their expectations. The review of the senior team's performance, taken from staff feedback arranged through the local authority, has bonded relationships and lifted morale, which are now good. This has helped the school to move rapidly forward.

The concerted effort to improve teaching has paid off. This is because rigorous monitoring, support and coaching have focused well on the school's weak areas. Equality of access and opportunity are also satisfactory. There is a better tailoring of work to individual needs, based on satisfactory assessment and progress monitoring systems. Realistic and challenging targets are now set for students. The school also has a target to

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improve teaching even further and is well on its way to achieving this. The improvement in the management of behaviour has helped to reduce difficult behaviour, bullying and racism so they are now rare occurrences. The school's focus has been on putting 'its own house in order'. It has ensured that it is a safe, cohesive and harmonious environment in which to learn. Consequently its work on community cohesion has had limited impact beyond school, although students regularly raise money for charities.

The Chair of the Governing Body and the vice Chair have been a mainstay in supporting the headteacher, offering much valued support and challenging the school in the areas it needed to improve. Together with the headteacher, they have a clear understanding of strength and weakness. Alongside the local authority, they have rigorously evaluated school improvement. Although the number of governors has been low, numbers have increased recently. The team is now in a position to plan for the future development of the school, beyond the narrow focus it previously had. Governors also recognise that they now need more effective ways of engaging with parents and influencing provision so that it is attractive to even the poorest attenders.

Safeguarding procedures are good; there are robust procedures on the school site, safeguarding checks are made in relation to offsite providers and those students with poor attendance are checked upon regularly. The school's full time police officer, through the Safer Schools Partnership, is helping to ensure students' safety in school, their community and the family homes. Other links with a wide range of agencies, to help students, are strongly forged. Despite some stringent action in part, a few families have limited engagement with the school. The school does, however, do a lot to help its families. It regularly communicates with them, has done much to reduce the barriers about school that some parents perceive and has provided opportunities for them to make their views known. However, there are still a few it fails to reach, especially in encouraging them to send their children to school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Nene Gate, Peterborough, PE1 5GZ

Over the past two years I have seen your school improve steadily, although its development has been more rapid recently. I have decided that the school has improved enough to be removed from 'special measures'. It is now judged to be satisfactory but still has things to do to improve further.

Your progress in lessons is accelerating because teaching is now good. Behaviour in the school is satisfactory and the small number of difficult situations which arise are better managed. You like the school's systems for rewarding good behaviour. Now that the rules are applied consistently you feel that everyone gets their points fairly.

Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have worked hard in the face of many difficulties. This has helped you improve your chances of getting GCSE passes and awards, which also helps you prepare for the future, in work or at college. The results of tests and assessments over the past year show that the work that Year 11 students have done is helping them to be on course for good GCSE grades in a small number of subjects.

For many, your attendance improves significantly. Staff work tirelessly to help you and your parents ensure you all attend regularly. However, some of you still have poor attendance. This means that you reduce your chance of a good future. In order to help the school to continue to improve and help you to do well I have asked the headteacher to:

- improve attendance, especially of those students who are persistently absent
- improve teaching so there is an even higher percentage of good and outstanding teaching
- improve progress in English, especially your literacy skills in Key Stage 3.
- ensure that the school can fully account for improvements in your behaviour and to identify which approaches to helping you the best.

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

George Derby
Lead inspector

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