

Newbridge Learning Community

Moss Lane , Platt Bridge, Wigan, WN2 3TL

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Students make good progress, often from low starting points. Attainment nearly always improves even though most students leave with below average qualifications.
- Achievement in English is outstanding. The school stands out as a beacon of excellence in the teaching and learning of literacy skills. Writing is especially good.
- Teaching is good. It has improved since the last inspection because the people who run the school have paid good attention to make sure that this is the case.
- Staff help students to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values. Most students rediscover a sense of pride in their achievements, grow in confidence and learn how to get on better with other people.
- The Pupil and Family Partnership Team plays any important part in helping students and their parents to make the best of the support that is available to them.
- Leadership and management are good. A school with a single identity has been created from two very different ones. Leaders and managers are now refocusing on how to maintain the improvements in teaching and students' achievement as the school faces more staffing changes and re-structuring. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge
- Students behave well in class and the school places a high level of importance on teaching them how to avoid dangerous situations. Most students attend reasonably well but a few remain very hard to keep in touch with.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics and science falls short of the excellence seen in literacy because teaching is not as strong and progress is slower.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not fully succeed in making sure that they get the best value for money out of all teachers.
- Extra funding for groups of students recognised as underachieving is sometimes diluted because the governing body feels that all students have difficulties and disadvantages and are, therefore, equally deserving of a share.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons; four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and many senior staff. Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and an independent consultant who used to be the school's improvement partner.
- Many informal discussions took place with staff and students.
- No information was available about responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took account of a recent survey of parental views conducted by the school as well as the views of the Pupil and Family Partnership Team.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and the school's data about their past and current progress.
- Documents relating to behaviour, students' safety, attendance and school improvement were looked at alongside those relating to how accurately the school views its performance.
- An inspector visited the two main sources of alternative provision used by the school.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a school for students who have difficulties relating to their behavioural, emotional and social development.
- Most students are boys.
- Many more students than average are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money for those known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority). Many are involved with mental health and youth offending teams.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- Some students spend part of their timetable with alternative providers, mainly with 'CAST NW' and 'Fix It'. Both were visited during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in mathematics and science so as to bring achievement in those subjects in line with English by:
 - raising expectations of what students can realistically achieve in mathematics and science lessons
 - making sure that teachers are clear about what they expect students to learn as a result of what they teach
 - making sure that all teachers pay as much attention to promoting numeracy across the whole timetable as they do literacy.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that all teachers are held to better account for the quality of their teaching so as to eliminate the current situation where a few are not consistently demonstrating the qualities that brought them promotion in the past
 - making sure that extra money given to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is directed more openly towards supporting them and their achievements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students join the school at a low ebb in their lives. Many have been underachieving for several years previously as their emotional state has deteriorated and their behaviour and interest in learning have worsened. Attainment on entry is usually low, not because of any significant degree of learning difficulty, but because students have simply lost track of the importance of education. The school is helping these students to develop better attitudes and standards are rising as a result. Last year's results were the best since the school opened.
- From a situation of failure, most students go on to continue their education, gain extra training or get jobs when they leave.
- Many students join the school either having forgotten how to read or never having learned how to in the first place. By the time they leave, nearly all can read well enough to improve their chances of success in later life.
- During the inspection, most students were showing interest in what was being taught. They were working hard and making good progress. One or two, especially in mathematics, said the work was 'a bit easy' but that they had still enjoyed the lesson and felt it was useful.
- Achievement in English is exceptional. Literacy is outstandingly well promoted across the whole timetable. This is a very rare achievement in a school such as this. It happens because outstanding teaching captivates students' interests, makes learning relevant and celebrates every snippet of success. Examples of students' best writing are prominently displayed around the school. Written work in their geography and science books is of a very high standard.
- Achievement in mathematics lags behind. Whilst every student entered for an English examination at any level exceeded their target by at least one grade and frequently two, very few did so in mathematics last year. The same is true of science.
- Vibrant displays around the school, and the results of examinations, show how well many students excel in developing their artistic talent. This is accompanied by the contribution the subject makes to students' spiritual and cultural development, such as when they develop work in the style of artists associated with the sadness of warfare or the persecution of minorities.
- Students receiving the pupil premium did not perform as well as other students last year. There is not enough evaluation of the effectiveness of pupil premium expenditure.
- There is very little difference in the achievement of girls and boys.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good. It is outstanding in English. It is weaker in mathematics because, although most of it is good, there is a little that is not good enough.
- Teaching in English is special because teachers bring the subject to life. This makes learning relevant to students and makes them want to find out more. As a group of Year 10 students studied a character from the book 'Of Mice and Men' the teacher threw in the fact that the character was never named in the story. Students were incredulous and became obsessed with finding out the non-existent name before the teacher tantalisingly told them that there might be a reason, motivating them to find out why.
- Teaching in mathematics is less inspiring because activities and their purpose are not as well thought through as they are in English, nor are they as challenging. This leads to some activities resulting in little new learning.
- In other subjects, there is variation in the quality of teaching. There is some inspired teaching in art but, in design and technology, it is sometimes more mundane.
- Most teaching builds good relationships between adults and students and includes the effective management of students' behaviour. Teachers' plans are very variable in quality. At their best, such as in English, they identify exactly what each student is expected to learn during the lesson

and what support they will need. Less effective planning makes few links between what is going to be taught and what students will be expected to learn. In nearly all lessons, teachers pay good attention to encouraging students to improve their literacy skills. However, they do not recognise in enough lessons how they can help students to improve their number skills.

- Students are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive and parents say their children are being well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students behave well most of the time and learning is rarely interrupted. When individuals behave in such a way that has in the past resulted in them needing to attend a school such as this in the first place, staff skilfully help them through their moments of personal crisis with as little loss of learning time as possible.
- Parents express very few concerns about the behaviour of other students and its effect on their own children. A few students say they get bullied at times but most are happy with the way staff deal with this to keep them safe and put their minds at rest.
- After three years of improvement, attendance dipped a bit last year. It is now back on track and not far off the national average for all schools. The work of the Pupil and Family Partnership Team has made a big contribution to this. So have developments to the curriculum, such as the involvement of alternative providers, which attract the involvement of students who otherwise show little interest in the conventional timetable.
- Students are made aware of the difference between minor misdeeds and serious misbehaviour. Exclusion is used sparingly so that it maintains its status as the ultimate sanction rather than becoming just another punishment. Over recent years, there has been a downward trend in the frequency of exclusion.
- Students are strongly encouraged to get on better with each other and with adults and to behave better than they have done in the past. This plays a major part in contributing to their good moral and social development.
- Students take great pride in their reading and writing achievements. They have less to say about their progress in mathematics and science. Several students who could barely read when they joined the school are now reading texts that challenge prejudice and opinion and help them to understand the impact of their own actions. In art, they regularly explore the thought and emotion that goes into great work.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management have helped the school to develop well over the past five years. Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses because they are perceptive in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. There has been past reluctance to confront under-performing teachers with the fact that they need to improve and earn the money they are being paid; new appraisal systems are now in place and staff are being made more aware of their accountability.
- There is good attention to making the timetable more interesting to more pupils. There are good initiatives to encourage students who are reluctant to join in with normal school activities and to re-engage with different learning opportunities. Fishing, (CAST NW) has had resounding success in drawing students towards joining in with the more conventional timetable. 'Fix It' serves a similar purpose and also opens up opportunities for employment in the motor trade.
- Literacy is especially well promoted in other subjects but numeracy less well so.
- The Pupil and Family Partnership Team makes a very positive contribution to the school by extending its impact over the whole year and at weekends. Staff are able to provide valuable insights to teachers as to why students might underperform at times.

- Since the school was founded five years ago, the local authority has gradually decreased its support as the school has steadily improved. It is about to increase its involvement as the school faces a staffing review and possible restructuring.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - has effectively helped the school to improve over the past three years. Because of some recent resignations a third of the governing body are staff. This is not a good arrangement. Governors are confident that this situation is temporary. The governing body shares the view that all students attending the school have circumstances that make them vulnerable and, as such, deserve a share of the extra funds allocated to the school under the pupil premium. The reality is that students entitled to it did not achieve quite as well as others. Too little consideration is given as to how this funding is spent and to what effect.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135199
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	402676

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Gardiner
Headteacher	Elaine Kucharski
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	01942 776020
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