

# Bridgelea Pupil Referral Unit

Bridgelea Road, Withington, Manchester, M20 3FB

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders and managers cannot yet show that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better over time.
- Teachers do not always use information about pupils' previous achievements when planning their lessons.
- The service has not yet fully implemented systems to record pupils' progress. Reliable information held by the school has been obtained only very recently.
- The progress pupils make in developing literacy skills is not yet as good as it could be, because staff do not always use consistent methods to help them learn.
- What pupils study in some lessons is not always interesting enough to maintain their concentration.
- A few pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- One of the buildings used by the service is not fit for the purpose of educating primary pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Examples of good and some outstanding teaching were observed because of new strategies introduced by managers.
- Where teaching is good or better, pupils make good progress in lessons. In some lessons, progress is outstanding.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop and use reading, writing and number skills.
- Pupils largely enjoy their education here. They feel safe and most attend regularly.
- The behaviour management of the staff is effective. This helps most pupils maintain good behaviour and learn.
- With the help of staff, pupils make rapid personal and social developments.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has redefined the purpose of the service. As a result, many pupils have been successfully supported. They have avoided being permanently excluded from their schools.
- The new headteacher has raised staff morale following a period of uncertainty. Managers have introduced effective ways of working.
- The senior team is showing that it has the skills to make further rapid improvements to the service.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent almost five hours in classrooms and observed eight lessons given by five teachers throughout the three sites. Inspectors observed break times, lunchtime arrangements and the arrival and departure of pupils from the units.
- Pupils' work and their records were examined. Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and talked with them informally to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, teachers at the different centres and those with management responsibilities. Inspectors spoke with a member of the management committee and a representative of the local authority. The views of staff were taken into account through scrutinising their questionnaires and talking with them during lessons and in other places.
- The views of five parents were recorded at the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors studied the unit's own questionnaires that some parents had completed. An interview was held with one parent who wished to talk with an inspector.
- The work of the unit was observed and documents concerning planning, self-evaluation, safeguarding, attendance and students' progress were scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tony Price

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the pupil referral service for primary pupils in Manchester has relocated and now occupies the main site for the majority of pupils at Withington, together with two very small units located on the sites of other educational establishments in different parts of the city.
- The local authority has changed the remit of the primary service, so that it now works with schools to try to prevent pupils from being excluded. Very few pupils have been permanently excluded. Almost all are jointly registered with a mainstream school where they attend for some part of each week. There is now a clear intention to return pupils as soon as possible to mainstream education.
- It is rare that pupils arrive with a statement of special educational needs. However, all are considered to be at the School Action Plus stage of special educational needs. The service contributes to the assessment process that can result in a pupil gaining a statement of special educational needs and the subsequent placement in a special school.
- The very large majority are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding and this is very high compared to all schools nationally. However, the local authority provides funds for all pupils at a much higher level regardless of their entitlement.
- Pupils are admitted at any age from 5 to 11. Most are in Key Stage 2. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are usually very few girls on roll.
- The service does not make use of alternative education providers for primary pupils and, except for the arrangements for dual registration, there are no formal partnership or federation arrangements with other schools. Staff from the service sometimes support dual-registered pupils in their mainstream schools.
- Since the last inspection, there have been great changes in staffing and a period of instability. The headteacher was confirmed in his appointment twelve months ago and the deputy headteacher joined the service in April 2012. From September 2012, some teachers have adopted 'middle management' roles.
- Some pupils travel for up to an hour each way to attend. Some arrive well before classes are due to begin and an informal breakfast club is provided. Staff offer reading and other activities before the formal start of the day.

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

- Enable pupils to have every opportunity to make the best possible progress by ensuring that:
  - the quality of teaching is consistently good or better throughout a sustained period
  - teachers always have access to well-established systems to record the small steps of progress made by pupils, and that they can retrieve this information quickly and easily to aid their planning
  - there is consistency in the way that staff support pupils in their reading and writing
  - the curriculum enables all to succeed consistently by offering a wider range of activities.
- Work with the local authority to improve the attendance of the few hardest-to-reach pupils.
- The local authority must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that all the premises and resources used by the service are fit for the purpose of educating primary-aged pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Almost all pupils arrive from mainstream schools with educational standards well below those of their peers. Nevertheless, most settle in quickly, spending more time in classrooms because, with the help of the staff, they find ways to control their behaviour.
- Pupils are usually successful in lessons. On some occasions, when teaching is outstanding, they make excellent progress. An example of this was seen when pupils learned about positional geometry using practical methods. They responded with great enthusiasm because they learned so quickly.
- Systems are being developed by managers to gather information about pupils' previous learning. They are starting to become useful. Some teachers are already using information to help pupils understand about the next steps of learning and how to improve. In one class, pupils have individual targets set for English so that they know exactly what is expected during the lesson.
- More generally, however, the processes used by teachers to record and use the information about pupils' learning is not yet sophisticated enough to prove that pupils have made expected degrees of progress throughout longer periods of time.
- Nevertheless, during the inspection all groups of pupils made equivalent amounts of progress including boys, girls, those from minority ethnic groups, any with a statement of special educational needs and those known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding that comprise almost all of the pupil population.
- Sometimes pupils make good gains in their reading and writing. An example of this was seen during the inspection when a teacher successfully used the sounds that letters make (phonics) to help a very young pupil begin to read words. At other times, such as in assembly, inspectors saw pupils read with great confidence when they recounted the successes they had enjoyed during the day.
- Nevertheless, more widely throughout the service, the development of pupils' literacy skills is hampered by a lack of consistency in the way that staff teach and support them.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Generally, teachers support pupils' reading and writing sufficiently for them to make gains in these important skills. This is an improvement from the last inspection. However, there are no set ways for staff to support reading and writing throughout the service. Consequently, staff are liable to give pupils mixed messages that could lead to confusion.
- Throughout the inspection, examples of good and outstanding teaching were observed. In the best lessons, teachers plan very effectively to help pupils move their learning forward in very small steps. Here, teachers are starting to make use of the information emerging from the system that records pupils' achievements.
- However, not all teachers yet do this as a matter of course, so in some classes too little is done to ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' levels of ability.
- The records held by managers indicate that teaching is improving rapidly. This is closely linked to the way teachers' performances have recently been checked by managers. However, there is not yet sufficient evidence to show that the quality of teaching has been sustained. Indeed, the quality of teaching was adversely affected by a high rate of staff absence and change until recently.
- Nevertheless, teachers are determined to provide the best possible service for pupils. During the inspection, a meeting of teachers was observed where excellent teamwork and support for one another helped the group understand how to measure pupils' performance with accuracy.
- The adults enjoy the confidence of parents, one of whom reported verbally to an inspector: 'The staff here are truly wonderful – they have given my child a new life!'

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Almost all pupils come to use the service on the recommendations of their mainstream schools. Pupils have often experienced difficulties with settling into classes and managing their learning. Some have failed to attend regularly.
- Following their placement here, the majority respond well to the support of staff. They accept the behaviour management systems that reward them for getting things right.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons. This means that they spend more time in the classroom learning instead of dealing with the consequences of negative behaviour. An example of this was observed when something went wrong for an older pupil. However, with the good support of an adult, he quickly resolved the matter and returned to class.
- The records being developed by managers are sophisticated enough to show pupils' behaviour improves during time here. There are also indications that staff are becoming more proficient. For example, there are now hardly any permanent exclusions in any of the schools supported by the service and the number of serious incidents is reducing. Staff and pupils report that the service has become a safe place in which to work and learn.
- When behaviour slips, it is usually because pupils have become momentarily bored or distracted. In one of the buildings used, inspectors observed that inadequate behaviour was directly related to the very poor standards of the premises and resources.
- During lunchtimes and break times, pupils usually demonstrate good behaviour. Some is outstanding.
- Pupils and their parents report that this is a safe place and that bullying and harassment are almost unknown. This is due to the high degree of staff presence and the work done by staff to help pupils to understand the feelings of others. Other local schools respect the work done here and value the support provided to their pupils.
- In their time here, most pupils make good gains in their personal developments. They learn to get on with others. Strong relationships are forged with the adults. Through their behaviour plans, pupils quickly begin to understand about right and wrong. The improvements in their attitudes and behaviour allow them to undertake visits away from the site, so that they can find out more about the world and how others live and work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are good. Eventually, almost all return to mainstream classes.
- The great majority of pupils attend well and for most their attendance is much in line with national averages for primary schools. However, very few pupils are persistent in their absence and miss out on the opportunities being offered here.

**The leadership and management are good**

- Managers, with the support of the local authority through the management committee, have transformed the service so that staff, parents and pupils are clear that it exists primarily to help pupils to learn and be reintegrated to mainstream schools.
- The new senior team has introduced many new strategies to ensure the service runs safely and efficiently. These are leading Bridgelea towards being good overall. However, the majority of these initiatives have been implemented only within the last six months. They have not yet had sufficient opportunity to become fully effective. Nevertheless, there are clear indications that managers at all levels will ensure that standards of teaching and learning will continue to improve.
- Following a period of instability, the headteacher has raised the morale of the staff and engendered a sense of shared purpose. Almost all staff, through their questionnaires, were very positive. Some provided written comments such as: 'I have been at Bridgelea for only a short time but feel completely supported.'
- The senior team already knows the service and its strengths and weaknesses very well through examining closely the way that things are done. As a result, the plans that have been made for

improvement and associated priorities are meaningful. For example, through examining the way that the curriculum works for pupils, the headteacher is confident that all are generally included and none are left out of learning. Nevertheless, managers have discovered that to prevent some of the poor behaviour that arises when pupils are not fully occupied, more must be done to provide a wider range of activities through the curriculum.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The local authority and the management committee are effectively the same. Their actions have strengthened the service through changing its role to prevent exclusion from schools. They have worked with service managers to ensure that staffing is more stable and that the headteacher has the resources the service requires, such as specialists to work in support of pupils in their mainstream schools. They have provided advisors to explore students' learning and ensure that none are discriminated against. However, inspectors found that one of the premises where pupils are permanently based is unsuitable because of the extremely drab environment and dispiriting location. The management committee has set the headteacher appropriate targets for improvement and ensured that the use of performance management with staff is linked to the way they are paid. It ensures that funds are used sensibly and that training and other facilities will be provided to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy. The committee has ensured that all requirements for safeguarding have been met and reviewed recently.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133945
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	402586

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Carmody
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Hoyland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 December 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 234 4477
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