

Cloughwood School

Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1NU

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students enrol here because they have been unable to thrive in mainstream schools owing to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. However, within a short time of arrival the great majority are successful in their learning.
- For most, their educational standards are well below those of the same ages in mainstream schools. Nevertheless, almost all make outstanding progress and begin to make up the lost ground.
- These early successes are due to the effective behaviour management of the staff. This helps students overcome their difficulties and take part in lessons, aided by the strong relationships they form with the adults.
- The school cares equally well for day students and boarders. The excellent guidance and support from staff helps them gain useful qualifications. They move on successfully to the next stages of their lives.
- Students do so well because of the outstanding teaching. However, they do not yet make the maximum gains in their learning because teachers do not always provide targets that would challenge students individually.
- Students enjoy school very much and almost all attend regularly. However, there are a few persistent absentees. Students feel safe here and at alternative education. They accept the high expectation of the school concerning their behaviour which, overall, is outstanding.
- Throughout their time here students make outstanding gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn how to get on with others. These advances enable them to take part in a wide range of activities inside and outside of school.
- The recent great improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour are due to the diligence of the headteacher and senior team. School managers have received excellent support from the governing body and the local authority.
- The outstanding work of leaders and managers has improved the school in every respect since the last inspection. This has led to the very great gains that most students now make in their reading. These successful strategies must now be used to help students catch up in their writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons given by six teachers and spent more than three hours in classrooms. Students' reading was seen and heard, including in a whole-school reading session.
- A visit was made to one of the providers of alternative education used by the school to check that students are safe and that they have opportunities to make academic progress.
- The inspector watched students having lunch, enjoying their break times and arriving at school in the morning.
- Students' work was studied. The inspector spoke with students informally to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior team, teachers, the school business manager and two members of the governing body. A representative of the local authority spoke with the inspector via the telephone.
- The views of staff were noted through meeting with them and by scrutinising their returned questionnaires.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire but two parents registered their views of the school by writing to the inspector.
- The work of the school was observed and important documents concerning planning, self-evaluation, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the progress of students were looked at.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cloughwood School admits boys who have a statement of special educational needs in respect of behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (BESD). Students can arrive at any time in their school career between ages 9 and 16 but currently only secondary age students attend.
- The numbers of students are almost evenly divided between Key Stages 3 and 4. Just under half are known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding. The great majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The school provides a weekly residential facility for up to 16 students, some of whom are occasional boarders. The school serves a wide area of Cheshire and some of the day students travel for over an hour each way to attend. The residential facility was not part of this inspection but, in June 2012, it was found to be outstanding when inspected by Ofsted.
- The headteacher was in post at the time of the last inspection but since then changes have been made to the 'middle management' team of the school.
- Arrangements are made for one student to attend alternative education provision. The providers used are: Trade Skills (Macclesfield) and Reaseheath College (Nantwich).
- Since the last inspection the school has gained The Healthy Schools Award and The Sportsmark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work even more effectively with the local authority and some parents to encourage the very small number of persistent absentees to attend more regularly.
- Ensure that students have every opportunity to make the maximum possible progress in lessons by directing all teachers to:
 - provide students with individual small step targets for learning that can be easily measured to confirm the progress they make in lessons
 - employ a consistent approach to supporting the developments in students' writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Almost all students arrive having fallen behind because of their learning difficulties. The great majority demonstrate educational standards well below that of their peers in mainstream schools; but they catch up quickly, gain in reading and other skills that help them access other areas of learning.
- All make outstanding progress including those from minority ethnic groups, each of the key stages, boarders, day students and those known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding. This is because the adults successfully manage their behaviour so that most of their time is spent learning. Serious incidents are rare but when something goes wrong it is very quickly dealt with effectively by staff so that others are not disrupted.
- Furthermore, the courses of study help students fill the gaps in their learning, so that by the end of Key Stage 3 many have begun to catch up in English and mathematics with those in mainstream schools. Students then gain useful qualifications by the time they leave school.
- Students build strong relationships with the adults and learn to trust them. They want to do well to please them. One student said, 'This is the best school I've ever been in because you get so much help.'
- Students' successes are captured by the school to show how well they are doing. Teachers use this information so that students know the next steps of learning and how to succeed. Students are motivated by knowing what is expected of them. They respond very well to the targets set by adults. This was observed during an outstanding art lesson in which each student was clear about what was expected, how to succeed and how to improve even further.
- Students very much enjoy their learning because teachers generally make lessons very interesting. Students succeed in class, often for the first time. They become proud of their efforts and value their work.
- Most gain valuable qualifications that help them move on successfully from school. Last year all went on to further employment education or training following the considerable efforts of staff in helping them gain placements.
- Examination passes have increased regularly since the last inspection. This year all are predicted to gain GCSE passes and a significant number should succeed at higher levels. This has been made possible by the rate of progress students make compared to other similar schools, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Students' outstanding progress comes from the high quality of the teaching.
- Teachers plan very thoroughly so that students mainly have targets for improvements. These help students to progress; they recognise the value of targets and respond by working hard to meet them. However, this method is not operated yet by all teachers, and so some do not always make the best possible progress.
- In the very best lessons, teachers give students small-step targets to be met within the lesson. Here, the degrees of progress are obvious. Students measure their own learning with great accuracy and, consequently, know how well they are doing.
- Teachers manage their classroom spaces well. Good resources such as laptops and interactive white boards help students' learning. Teaching assistants support students well. They intervene to help manage behaviour and keep students going when they flag.
- Too few lessons provide students with good opportunities to practise their skills in writing and so students' confidence to write is lower than their confidence as readers. Occasionally worksheets are used that are too difficult for weaker readers to manage.
- Staff are skilful in helping students develop reading. This is because of the good training that

teaching assistants have received. From a low base, many students improve their reading in a very short time. In many lessons teachers pay great attention to reading and literacy. A science lesson seen was as much about literacy as the science. This is indeed outstanding practice.

- During the afternoon of each day, lessons are halted and the whole school reads silently for 15 minutes. This is a remarkable accomplishment for students with behavioural difficulties.
- The outstanding work of staff in educating and caring for students results in the majority gaining useful GCSE and other qualifications.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are taught to manage their behavioural, social and emotional development so that within a very short time most are successful in school activities.
- The systems that help staff manage behaviour are consistent and established. A 'zero tolerance' policy about smoking has been successful. The high expectations made of students during lessons and around the school are particularly noticeable. Students respond very well to the challenge of maintaining high standards of behaviour.
- When behaviour slips it is usually because frustration has set in about undertaking a task in a lesson that is not well matched. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and students become restless.
- Students report that they feel safe in school and at alternative provision. Some said the school is now much safer because of the behaviour management. For example, there are now many fewer restraints.
- Furthermore, students are safer by being in school instead of being excluded. It is now rare for any to abscond and the school always knows where they are. Students say that bullying is rare and there is very little harassment. This is because of the diligence of staff.
- The majority of students have experienced great disruption in their school careers. Many have experienced low levels of attendance. Here, however, except for a very few who fail to attend, the great majority attend as well as those in mainstream secondary schools. This is because they enjoy coming to school and value the opportunities provided.
- Students make great gains in their personal and social developments. They are extremely well prepared for moving on. One parent reported that, through the work of the school, her child is much better behaved and that the whole family has benefited from this. Indeed, throughout the inspection students were a credit to themselves and the school.
- Students gain from their interactions with the wider community. They go to work, undertake trips and visits and play sports against other schools. They get to know how others work and play. More particularly, they build relationships that are positive. This enables them to trust the adults with whom they work; they gain greatly from this in lessons. They become successful at getting on so they benefit from team games and working together. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers have transformed the school since the last inspection and improved it in every respect. Their outstanding work has led to rapid rises in the qualities of teaching and learning so that students' progress is now exceptional.
- The excellent curriculum allows all to be included and to succeed, including at the good alternative educational provision. In school, a range of additional activities is provided, for example, students stay behind after school for sports. Boarders have access to computers and other resources for homework and private study.
- Managers have implemented new systems that inform them about what is going on in school, and in alternative provision, such as those that show how well students are doing. These are highly effective and teachers now have much better information on which to base their planning

and move students forward to the next stages. Robust arrangements for safeguarding ensure that all are appropriately protected including at alternative provision.

- Managers can see quickly when students are falling behind. They can tell if teachers are underperforming or might need additional help. They ensure that none are left out of learning or discriminated against.
- The headteacher has introduced performance management that is highly effective in identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses. As a result some have been promoted and there is now a clear link between performance and pay. Additionally, the management of almost all curriculum subjects has been strengthened.
- Staff morale is high, as indicated from their confidential questionnaires. The headteacher has instilled a common sense of purpose. All know the school is concerned with education rather than simply supporting behaviour. This was illustrated when, whilst waiting for lunch, the deputy headteacher asked students, 'What have you *learned* this morning?'
- The local authority has provided services such as therapists and educational psychologists and the school has benefited from their training. The local authority values work done by the school with mainstream schools in helping them understand and manage challenging behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is committed to the school becoming a centre of excellence. Members aim to provide the best possible service for students. They challenge and support the senior team, including through the use of performance management, and have helped the headteacher strengthen the middle leadership of the school. The governing body has allocated funding wisely including that for the pupil premium. This has been instrumental in raising literacy and reading skills for all students because additional funding has been made available so that all benefit from literacy initiatives such as training for teachers and teaching assistants and the acquisition of laptops to aid learning. Members have ensured that all of the requirements for safeguarding are met. They are committed to the school becoming a centre of excellence and members aim to provide the best possible service for students.

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	111502
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	401187

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	9–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Swaffield
Headteacher	Adrian Larkin
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
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