

# Parklands Campus (Action for Children)

Bessels Leigh, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX13 5QB

## Inspection dates

19–20 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement is inadequate. Achievement in English is particularly low. There are significant weaknesses in the school's promotion of students' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Teaching is inadequate and some staff have low expectations of what students can achieve. Staff lack sufficient expertise to meet the full range of special educational needs of the school population.
- Although recent steps have been taken to monitor teaching and identify areas that need to improve, the leadership of teaching and the management of teachers' performance are inadequate.
- Behaviour and safety are inadequate. Many students have poor attitudes to learning and few show respect or courtesy to others. The management of students' behaviour is inadequate. A small minority of students say they do not feel safe and lack confidence in the staff to keep them safe.
- The roles and responsibilities at different levels of leadership and management are not clear and leaders have not been held suitably accountable. Arrangements for safeguarding students give cause for concern.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school takes care to work with students' families to support them when their child joins the school.
- Students enjoy opportunities to pursue particular interests, such as in music, farming and other practical activities.

## Information about this inspection

- Two inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at and considered a number of documents. These included the school’s self-evaluation and planning, arrangements for safeguarding and promoting equality, and details of the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed six teachers teaching 11 lessons; one of these was a joint observation with a member of the school’s senior team.
- Inspectors joined students in lessons and out of lessons, talked to them in class and heard one student read individually to check progress in reading. They considered the comments and responses to questionnaires from students, parents and carers that were provided by the school.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Local Governing Group and with school staff, including senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff. Telephone discussions were also held with a representative from the parent organisation, Action for Children.

## Inspection team

Anne Duffy, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Alison Storey	Her Majesty’s Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

## Information about this school

- Parklands Campus opened in September 2011 on the site of a previous school. It is owned by the charity, Action for Children. All-year residential provision for a small number of students is provided in a children's home that is also run and managed by the charity.
- The school is registered to admit students aged between eleven and nineteen years. At the time of the inspection there were very few post-sixteen students.
- Students have previously experienced significant disruption to their education due to exclusion from school or non-attendance.
- All twenty six students have statements of special educational needs. The range of needs includes social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties and autistic-spectrum condition. While a number would be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is additional funding for schools in respect of students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, the school has records of receiving this for only one student.
- The school takes students from outside the local area. Currently six local authorities send students to the school.
- At the time of the inspection a number of key staff were absent for a variety of reasons. These included the Principal, a vice-principal, a senior teacher and the business manager. The interim lead for education for Action for Children had taken up the post of Acting Principal in the week before the inspection.
- At the time of the inspection two investigations were taking place. A serious incident had occurred at the school which was being investigated by the appropriate authorities. In addition, a separate Ofsted safeguarding investigation was underway. School inspectors met with the team investigating the safeguarding arrangements during the inspection to share relevant information.

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

- Make sure that safeguarding arrangements comply with all statutory requirements and are of consistently high quality.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to enable all students to make the best possible progress in all areas of their learning and development by making sure that:
  - leaders are clear about the type of special educational needs that the school can meet and align provision to ensure that it does this effectively for each student
  - all staff have the skills, knowledge and training to teach and effectively support the students
  - teachers are clear about what they want students to learn in every lesson
  - the content of lessons motivates and engages students in their learning
  - inappropriate behaviour is managed consistently by all staff and all aspects of school life effectively promote students' personal development.

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the leadership and management of education, care and governance of the school so that decisions are made in school as far as possible while all leaders are held suitably accountable.
  
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Information held by the school on students' achievement is limited. The school's estimation of levels reached and progress made by students is often over-generous. There are too many students who fail to make enough progress. Overall, students in Key Stage 3 make less progress than those in Key Stage 4.
- The increasingly wide range of needs of students who are being enrolled are not met well. For example, those who are on the autistic-spectrum continuum are sometimes prevented from learning because they find the behaviour of those with more challenging needs alarming.
- A few students are poor attenders and some of those who attend more regularly miss parts of lessons because of their disruptive behaviour or that of others.
- Students do not achieve well in English although a few make good progress in mathematics. Many fail to make progress in improving their skills in both subjects. As a result they are not well prepared to move on to the next stage of education or training when they leave the school.
- Students' progress in developing their reading, writing and communication skills is limited. This is because insufficient attention is given to improving these skills in a consistent way, particularly in the teaching of other subjects. A newly established system of intervention for individual students shows signs of having some positive early impact in improving their reading and communication skills.
- Students make the most progress in aspects of subjects that interest them. For example, practical skills and understanding are developed well for some students in art, music and work-related subjects.
- The very small number of students currently following an A-level course made good progress in GCSE mathematics, attaining A\* at GCSE, and are on track to continue to do so.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teachers' expectations are generally too low. There is a high level of staff absence and many lessons are covered by staff on a temporary basis.
- Inconsistent use of information about students' progress hinders learning. Lessons are often planned around what students are going to do, rather than the skills or knowledge they need to develop. As a result, although students know what they have been doing, they are less sure about what they have learnt. This makes it difficult for both the teacher and the student to build on secure knowledge and understanding as they move on to the next steps within a subject.
- Tasks and activities are not well matched to the needs and interests of the students. Many students react negatively to being given work-sheets or tasks that they do not find interesting or which require high levels of staff support in order for them to be completed. Staff are often too quick to provide answers or resources so there is little opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- In the better lessons, tasks and activities are more closely matched to the needs and interests of the students and there are productive relationships between staff and students that support

learning. This enables those students who remain in lessons to make satisfactory progress. In a music lesson, the teacher had high expectations of what students could achieve, and involved them well in discussions about how they could improve. As a result, students made good progress as they prepared for their next musical performance.

- Despite the intervention of support staff, lessons are often interrupted by students shouting, throwing things and disrupting others. When students leave the class, teachers and support staff have limited success in re-engaging them in the lesson if they return.
- Senior leaders have taken some steps to improve the quality of teaching. A recent programme of monitoring of lessons has enabled senior leaders to provide some staff with helpful feedback about their practice and offer information about how they can improve. However, judgements made about the quality of teaching by senior leaders were in almost all cases more positive than those made by inspectors.
- The educational psychologist and the special educational needs co-ordinator provide staff with detailed information about students' personal circumstances and how they can be helped. To an extent this helps teachers to promote and support some aspects of the social, moral and spiritual development of certain students. However, in general, staff lack the specialist skills and knowledge to effectively meet the different needs of this vulnerable and often challenging group of students.

#### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate**

- While some students are clear that attendance at this school has helped them to improve their behaviour, overall there is a worrying level of name-calling, low-level physical aggression and more serious incidents.
- Steps taken to improve the consistency of response to disruptive or violent behaviour, including any physical intervention, have yet to have full impact. Most doors are kept locked and, while not impeding exit in an emergency, this does not promote an atmosphere of learning or trust.
- Attendance is low in comparison with secondary schools, although some students have significantly improved their attendance.
- Poor attendance to lessons and disruptive behaviour are common. Lessons are frequently interrupted by shouting, swearing and by students entering or leaving the classroom and this is poorly managed by teaching staff. As a result, although some students show a positive attitude to learning in some lessons, there is no clear pattern of improved behaviour across the school.
- Students are often very tolerant of the behaviour of others but inspectors observed many occasions where students showed a lack of respect for staff and each other and this was not adequately addressed by staff.

#### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- The leadership and management of the school have been significantly affected by issues which have resulted in the absence of key members of the leadership team. The parent organisation has taken some positive action to address these and has appropriate plans in place to support the school's future development. The Interim Principal has begun to restore the confidence of the staff in how the school is run, but it is clear that staff morale has been very low. Leaders and managers at all levels have not been effective in putting in place precise, achievable actions that

will significantly improve teaching, students' experiences and personal development.

- Since opening, the school has admitted students with a range of needs which are seen to affect their behaviour. All staff spoken to felt that this range is now too wide and that they are not able to meet the needs of every student. The school works hard to build and maintain good relationships with students' families and has evidence to show that parents and carers appreciate the difference the school has made to their children's lives. Parents, carers and external agencies are involved fully in supporting students' admission to the school. Nevertheless staff expressed the view that some students have been inappropriately placed and they lack confidence in their ability to meet those students' needs effectively.
- Processes to manage the performance of teachers have not focused on ensuring they are accountable for the progress students make. A few teachers have moved into the upper pay spine for salaries. Amongst these, there was significant variation in the amount of responsibility taken for students' progress, achievement and safety. Although training and opportunities for further professional development have been made available to staff, this has not noticeably improved the progress and well-being of all of the students
- The school has a curriculum with an appropriate balance of academic and work-related experiences. Students enjoy opportunities to pursue their interest in music or in practical activities such as on the school farm. Due to staffing difficulties, subjects are not always taught by teaching staff with the right subject knowledge to ensure students make good progress. Some good initiatives, such as the introduction of a nurture group, have begun, but their impact has not been evaluated well enough to justify decisions to extend them.
- Arrangements and processes for ensuring the safeguarding of students are inadequate. Staff have received appropriate training on child protection and evident care is taken to protect students if an allegation is made. However, students and staff are often at risk from dangerous behaviour or unsecured access to and from different parts of the site.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring, evaluating or driving forward the performance of the school. They are not clear about the quality of teaching or the achievement of students. Senior leaders of the school have not always been held accountable for their decisions or actions and the performance of teachers has not been managed effectively. Governors do not know how underperformance has been tackled. They are not clear about their responsibilities in relation to the trustees of the charity. As a result, decisions about the education or welfare of the students are not taken decisively enough at a school level. This has had negative consequences for the progress, safety and well-being of the 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123341
<b>Local authority</b>	Action for Children
<b>Inspection number</b>	421228

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	26
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	1
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local governing group
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Harvey
<b>Principal</b>	Raymond Wilson
<b>Acting Principal</b>	Sean Sweeney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5–6 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 396436
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