

Nene Gate School

Park Lane, Peterborough, PE1 5GZ

Inspection dates 11–12 July 2013

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.

- Students achieve well from low starting points and a number make exceptionally good progress.
- Students who have difficulties with learning and those who receive pupil-premium funding make outstanding progress in developing their literacy skills.
- Teaching is nearly always good and some is outstanding. Teachers make lessons interesting and varied so that students want to learn.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe in school. Improvements in the way staff manage students' behaviour mean that the school is calm and orderly.
- Subjects and topics are matched well to students' interests and learning needs. There are good opportunities for older students to gain qualifications.
- Leaders, managers and governors are doing a good job and working well together in raising students' achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- The consultant who has been working with the school, following a short spell where it experienced leadership difficulties, has provided excellent support. This has resulted in rapid improvement in recent months and the school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. In these lessons, teachers do not always match work closely enough to the next steps in learning for different students.
- At times, staff provide too much support for students instead of pushing them to think for themselves and to develop their independent learning skills.
- Although there has been good improvement in most students' attendance, a small minority do not attend school as regularly as they should.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 17 lessons, and 16 were observed jointly with either the acting headteacher or the acting deputy headteacher. An anger-management session and breakfast time were also observed, and the inspector looked at students' work.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders and the consultant who is working with the school, who also represented the local authority, and with the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions took place with students.
- The inspector looked at information about students' attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness and plans for development, leaders' records of checks on teachers' work, behaviour logs and safeguarding information.
- There were too few responses to the online survey (Parent View) for these to be taken into account but 24 questionnaires completed by staff were considered.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many students also have additional learning difficulties and all have a statement of special educational needs.
- Nearly all students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high. This is additional government funding, in this case for students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are cared for by the local authority.
- Some students at Key Stage 4 attend courses at Peterborough City College for part of their time and a few students in Year 10 spend some of their time at Peterborough Alternative Curriculum Education (ACE) Centre.
- The headteacher, who joined the school in April 2012, has been on long-term absence leave since October 2012. The school was led by a consultant headteacher, who is headteacher of an outstanding school in a neighbouring authority, from October 2012 until April 2013. In April, the deputy headteacher took over as acting headteacher and the senior teacher took on the role of acting deputy headteacher. The consultant has continued to work with the school in an advisory role since then, currently for one day each week.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no Year 11 students because they had already left school.
- Students begin the school day with breakfast.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding and raise students' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers always match work to the needs of different students so that it is not too easy and not too difficult
 - teachers and teaching assistants push students to think for themselves more in lessons and to develop their independent learning skills.
- Tackle the persistent absence of a small minority of students by:
 - making parents and carers aware of the full range of methods used to tackle persistent absence and rigorously putting these into practice
 - increasing the way the school works with other agencies to reinforce its expectations for regular attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is low compared with expectations for their age and with a history of disrupted education through past exclusions from mainstream schools. Students typically have gaps in their learning and negative attitudes to education.
- Students settle in well and make good progress. Although attainment is below average by the end of Year 11, nearly all students make at least the nationally expected amount of progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, and some make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. Progress in communication is good throughout the school.
- Students make good progress in lessons and their books show that they produce a large amount of work. All groups of students make good progress, including boys and girls, students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the few who speak English as an additional language. Records show that students who spend part of their time learning outside the school make good progress in courses matched to their needs.
- There were not enough students known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. However, the school makes excellent use of its pupil premium funding to target support in English and mathematics for those students who are eligible for extra help. They make exceptionally good progress, rapidly filling gaps in their learning so that they are able to achieve as well as their classmates.
- Many of the students for whom the school receives the pupil premium also have additional learning needs. The school is quick to identify students who need support so that no time is lost, and they make outstanding progress in response to intensive support programmes. Progress is particularly good in reading, where students make on average two and a half years' progress in six months. This enables them to meet with a higher level of success in other subjects and has been key to improvements in achievement since the previous inspection.
- Most students leave school at the end of Year 11 having gained GCSE at A* to G grades in at least English, mathematics and science together with a number of other qualifications, including accreditation in work-related skills. Recently, two students at Key Stage 4 gained the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. Nearly all students move on to college, training or employment when they leave school.
- Just occasionally, some students make less progress than they could in lessons when work is not matched well enough to the next steps in their learning, and the small minority of students who do not attend regularly make less progress than their classmates.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Inspection findings and the school's own checks on the quality of teaching show that it is nearly always at least good, with some outstanding teaching and a small amount that requires improvement.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. They make lessons interesting and varied so that students want to learn. Lessons move at a good pace and classrooms have a purposeful atmosphere. Displays of students' work help to celebrate their achievement and inspire them to work hard.

- Teachers provide students with good information about what they need to do to succeed with the tasks they set, and there are some examples of good marking where students have opportunities to put their mistakes right. Classroom displays often include valuable information about what students need to do to reach different National Curriculum levels and teachers remind students about what is expected in order to gain particular grades in examinations.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning in lessons, with some examples of outstanding practice. The learning-support programme and anger-management sessions are both led very effectively by senior teaching assistants.
- In the best teaching, students have plenty of opportunity to think for themselves and to contribute their ideas. In an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 9 where students were plotting co-ordinates, the teacher fired them with enthusiasm so that they talked excitedly about the task and two students readily came up to the board to explain their workings.
- In an outstanding personal and social development lesson in Year 7, a student presented and talked about a film that the class had made on moral dilemmas. This showed that the teacher had provided excellent opportunities for students to work independently, developing a range of new skills and solving problems for themselves.
- In contrast, where teaching requires improvement and occasionally in otherwise good teaching, staff tend to provide too much direction rather than getting students to think for themselves. When this happens, students do not develop their independent learning skills as well as they should or take responsibility for their own learning.
- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in the way teachers use information about what students can already do when planning their lessons. This means that work is usually matched well to the next steps in individual students' learning. Just occasionally, students are all given the same work to do and then some make slower progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and breakfast and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions. The school does much to transform students' attitudes so they are motivated to learn. Students show interest in the activities teachers provide and concentrate well in class. They are willing to work hard, respond well to challenge and there was no disruption in any of the lessons observed.
- Following a period in 2012 when behaviour declined as a result of leadership difficulties, it has improved rapidly and the school is again calm and orderly. Staff are now better trained in dealing with any inappropriate behaviour and this has led to a reduction in behavioural incidents. Skilled management of students' behaviour was seen consistently during the inspection and teachers have good relationships with students.
- The school now has one overarching school rule: 'working together to respect yourself, others and the environment'. This has helped to make expectations clearer to students and they have responded well to new systems for managing their behaviour. Students show a pride in their school and have enjoyed being involved recently in rebranding its image.
- Students value the rewards system which allows them to build up points towards activities of their choice. This helps them to see the consequence of their actions, and anger-management sessions provide an excellent opportunity for students to increase their awareness of how to manage their own behaviour.

- Records show that there is a small amount of bullying, usually in the form of name calling, but incidents have been reduced and the school has effective procedures for dealing with any incidents. A recent 'anti-bullying challenge' means that students are now clearer about different types of bullying. They feel safe in school, show a good awareness of how to stay safe and usually get on well together.
- Although attendance is below average, there has been an improvement each year since the previous inspection and most students attend regularly. The school has recently updated its attendance policy and has employed a family support assistant who has begun to work more closely with parents and other agencies to try to make sure that all students come to school regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have high expectations and provide clear direction to the school's work. Despite leadership difficulties for a time in 2012, the school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and it is well placed to improve further. Students' achievement has risen, the quality of teaching has improved and teamwork amongst a committed staff is strong.
- The consultant headteacher who led the school from October 2012 to April 2013 transformed some key aspects of the school's work, in particular tightening up systems for managing students' behaviour and making sure staff received training and guidance to increase their skills. This has brought about rapid improvement, and the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are providing good leadership to develop the school further.
- Senior leaders regularly check teachers' work, and teachers and teaching assistants are benefiting from opportunities to observe each other to spread best practice. Teachers are now held to account more closely for their students' progress and leaders have successfully focused on developing the role of teaching assistants.
- The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well. There is a good match of learning opportunities to individual needs and regular checks on students' progress by senior leaders and teachers mean any who need extra help are quickly identified. High quality support programmes have done much to raise students' achievement throughout the school.
- Subjects, topics and courses reflect students' learning needs and interests increasingly well. Work-related courses provide options that appeal to both girls and boys. Students have opportunities to take part in this kind of learning from Year 7 onwards, take part in work experience and attend college for part of their time at Key Stage 4.
- The introduction of outdoor learning and music is proving popular with students and making a good contribution to their personal development as well as extending their skills. The development of students' literacy skills is supported effectively in a range of subjects.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff help students to develop belief in themselves and a greater awareness of others' feelings. They have plenty of opportunities to develop their social skills, the chance to explore moral issues and learn about other cultures.
- The local authority has provided excellent support to the school and responded immediately when it began to experience leadership difficulties for a time. After closely reviewing the

situation, the authority rightly identified the need to provide a consultant headteacher from an outstanding school to get the school quickly back on track. This solution has proved most effective.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has worked well with the local authority to strengthen the leadership of the school and is now closely involved with staff in driving improvement. As a result, governors have a clear view of the school's effectiveness and of students' achievement. The Chair of the Governing Body attends meetings of the senior leadership team and individual governors have conducted learning walks to gather information for themselves. This has provided the governing body with a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching and enabled them to help identify areas for improvement. Governors receive regular information on students' performance and are clear that pupil-premium funding is helping to raise students' achievement. Governors are well informed about teachers' performance, and are knowledgeable about how any underperformance is tackled and the fact that pay increases are linked to the progress students' make. They make sure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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	135386
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	400162

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	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maggie Short
Headteacher	Ruth O'Sullivan (Acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
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