

Westbridge Pupil Referral Unit

London Road, Ipswich, IP1 2HE

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The commitment and forward thinking of senior leaders make sure the school continues to improve.
- The school is effective in helping students to take an interest in their education again, so that they make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Good and sometimes excellent teaching means all students leave school with qualifications in a range of subjects.
- Staff have created a safe, secure place where students are nurtured and are able to thrive.
- The school provides lots of interesting and useful activities beyond the classroom to help students learn to work together as a team.
- Students are full of praise for the difference the school has made to them. They enjoy their lessons, behave well and try hard to do well.
- Staff work hard at building good relationships with parents, who are very positive about the change they have seen in their children.
- The management committee are well informed about the work of the school so they can ask challenging questions to help it improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding, and teachers do not always know exactly what they have to do to improve their skills.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to read for themselves in lessons.
- Marking does not always tell students what they have done right or what they need to do next.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, one of which was seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, a member of the management committee, a representative of the local authority, the coordinator of 'Moving On' (a project funded jointly by the local authority and the National Lottery which supports students in their first year after leaving school), teachers responsible for numeracy and literacy, and several students.
- The online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, did not show enough responses to give any information. However the inspector took into consideration the school's own questionnaire to parents and spoke to three parents by telephone.
- A range of documentation was examined, including information about students' progress, behaviour and attendance. The inspector also checked the school's policies and records about teachers' performance as well as reports from the management committee.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked three additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. The information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westbridge is a 32-place pupil referral unit for Key Stage 4 students with a range of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A significant number have a statement of special educational needs. The remainder are supported at school action plus. Some also have dyslexia or attention-deficit disorders.
- Most students are boys and are admitted from the southern area of Suffolk. The vast majority join at the beginning of Year 10 and remain until the end of Key Stage 4.
- Almost all students are White British, and all speak English as their first language.
- Many students have a history of numerous fixed-term exclusions from primary through to secondary school and all transfer to Westbridge following a permanent exclusion. An increasing number have been out of mainstream education for some time.
- An above-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding for certain groups such as students known to be eligible for school meals and a very small number who are looked after by the local authority).
- In addition to attending school, students have the opportunity to take work-related courses at NACRO (the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) and The Railway Project. Students who have placements at Otley or New Suffolk College on admission are able to continue with these.
- The headteacher is a 'local leader of education' and provides effective support to other similar schools within the authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that senior leaders always tell teachers exactly what they need to do to improve their teaching
 - sharing the best ways of marking students' work, so they always know exactly how well they have done and what they need to do next in every subject
 - giving students more opportunities to practise their reading skills across the whole range of subjects and in every lesson.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school from a variety of starting points, many having missed out on a lot of their education. Some start at the school with very limited reading and writing skills but they quickly catch up because they receive very specific help, based on accurate checks to find out what stage they are at.
- The very individual approach and commitment to finding out students' likes and dislikes when they first arrive means staff can quickly find out the best way to help each student learn. Staff and students quickly build up good relationships so that students feel safe and ready to start learning again.
- This means each individual, and all groups of students, makes good and sometimes outstanding progress in English and mathematics, whatever their level of ability. They also do well in science and art. Teachers compare how they check students' progress with other schools to make sure it is accurate.
- Very focused work on students' personal, social and health education helps them make significant strides forward in boosting their confidence so they begin to believe in themselves. Everyone is given the same chances to do as well as they can.
- One-to-one teaching makes sure students who have attention deficit disorder are helped to concentrate on their work and those who are dyslexic have the extra support they need to improve their reading.
- The school places a great emphasis on enabling students gain appropriate qualifications to move on to college or other training, including GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, art and citizenship. As a consequence all students, including those who join the school in Year 11, leave school with at least one GCSE qualification. An increasing number gain at least five, with some gaining C grades and occasionally above. This means they are able to take up a range of education and training opportunities when they leave, very successfully supported by the 'Moving On' project. A few more-able students have taken up to nine GCSEs with impressive results.
- The school does not enter students for early entry GCSEs as this would be unhelpful in ensuring they do as well as they possibly can, given the previous disruption to their education.
- Students also make good progress in other subjects such as music and media studies, which helps them learn how to use information and communication technology (ICT). Separate lessons in ICT help students improve their skills so that they can apply them in other subjects.
- Art is used very effectively to help students learn to express themselves. Together with the excellent work they do in music and media, this helps students to take part in activities they never dreamed would be possible, such as performing in front of a live audience or recording a song with a famous recording artist as part of the work with a national charity.
- Students improve their reading and writing skills by practising them in different subjects. Occasionally though, teachers miss opportunities to get students to read for themselves in a bid to move too quickly on to the next part of the lesson.

- The school uses the pupil premium funding to give extra help in reading and writing to eligible students. The school's data show that these students do as well as, and sometimes better than, other students in both English and mathematics. The funding is also used to help students join in activities that they might not have otherwise had the chance to do, thereby ensuring everyone has the same opportunities.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good across all subjects and is sometimes outstanding. Students arrive at the school very reluctant to learn, but teachers are very skilled at finding the right approach for each individual. Because students quickly learn to trust their teachers, they soon start to listen to what teachers say and use what they are told to help them improve their work.
- Students apply themselves well in lessons once they become settled in school. They say they enjoy their lessons because learning is very practical and teachers help them overcome their previous difficulties. Skilled teaching and very good subject knowledge mean that teachers are adept at building up students' skills and knowledge both in lessons and over time.
- Lessons are well planned to make sure they maintain students' attention and use interesting resources to illustrate what is being taught. For example, in a science lesson students had the opportunity to explore the model of a cell made up of a balloon and liquid in a plastic bag.
- Teachers mostly ask questions well to check how much students have understood and to push them along a little further. In the best teaching observed, questions were posed that made students think about their answers so that they were able to work things out for themselves.
- In addition to the teaching that takes place in the school, students are able to take part in a range of work-related opportunities at NACRO and The Railway Project, where they learn a variety of practical skills that will help them decide what they want to do when they leave school. Work experience is readily available and organised according to students' interests.
- Staff also organise activities out of school where students can practise the skills they learn in class. For example, a group of Year 11 students used map reading and compass skills to navigate their way from rural Suffolk back into the town centre. This was backed up with further work on directions in mathematics lessons the next day to make sure they had understood.
- Out-of-school activities also give students the opportunity to work together in teams and to access additional sporting and cultural experiences, through work with theatre groups and other organisations.
- Although teachers are good at making sure students know what they need to do for their long-term success, not all of them make sure students know exactly how well they have done in their written work and what they need to do to improve it. Marking in books varies in quality and sometimes gives limited information to students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students speak very highly about Westbridge, as do their parents. They acknowledge the difference it has made to students' attitudes and behaviour, and their potential to do well in the future.
- Because such great care is taken to make sure students feel safe, they quickly settle into the

school and rediscover their interest in education. From a point of disliking school and having very negative attitudes to learning at the beginning of Year 10, students find they soon start to enjoy their lessons.

- The small number of students in the school means that staff get to know them very well and are able to quickly notice if anything is troubling them. Regular meetings mean communication between staff is very good. Staff use effective systems to make sure students are kept safe and to engage the services of other agencies if need be.
- Behaviour is managed sensitively, firmly and consistently so that students learn what is and is not acceptable behaviour. There are no permanent exclusions, and fixed-term exclusions are brief and extremely rare.
- Every student asked said there was no bullying at school. They say it is a safe haven for them, away from the pressures of the outside world. One said the school was 'homely'. They know staff will do everything they can to help them achieve their best, so they treat the school, staff and each other with respect.
- Although students are allowed to bring mobile phones into school, these are not allowed to disrupt lessons. The school actively uses students' interest in mobile technology to boost their self-esteem by enabling them to compose tunes or 'tweet' positive messages.
- Students have the opportunity to use the multigym or sports hall at break times for physical activities, although they do not always take advantage of this. They behave well in and around the school as well as at alternative placements, where procedures for ensuring their safety are well established.
- Many of the students arrive at the school with entrenched smoking habits. Despite staff's best efforts to engage students in smoking cessation courses or encouraging them to give up through a points system, this remains an ongoing issue for several students. However, because of the inclusion of the dangers of smoking in science, physical education and personal and social education, students are very well aware of the risks involved. This is further supported by involvement in drama projects, including work with a local theatre company and making a short film about stopping smoking.
- Students have access to a range of outdoor and sporting activities during the school week. Students are also helped to obtain leisure cards that allow them to access the local gym so that they can pursue an active, healthy lifestyle if they choose.
- When students arrive at Westbridge, their previous attendance has generally been extremely low and in some cases they have been out of school altogether. As a result of close work with the students and their families and the support of other agencies, attendance in most cases rises rapidly over a period of time, although overall attendance remains low in comparison with mainstream schools.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders provide strong and effective leadership to staff, who respond with committed and loyal support. The headteacher knows the direction he wants to take the school in, and already has plans for the school to become an academy in 2014.
- The well-thought-out and exciting curriculum provides very well for students' spiritual, moral,

social and cultural needs and makes sure they enjoy their learning. Art, music and media studies give students opportunities to learn about other cultures, be reflective about their own lives and gain experiences that boost their self-esteem, enabling them to move onto the next stage of their education, training or employment with greater confidence.

- Staff work very well together as a team and the headteacher has been proactive in enabling teachers to move up the career ladder through effective training. He has appointed a good selection of well-qualified and skilled staff who play a major part in the school's effectiveness.
 - The school works exceptionally well with parents and has strong links with other agencies and providers. It also benefits from working in an effective partnership with a network of other pupil referral units.
 - Teaching is regularly checked by senior leaders, who ensure that it is always of a good quality. Improvements in the way these checks are recorded have begun to give a much clearer picture of how teaching has improved over time as well as making sure all teachers know exactly what to do to make their teaching even better.
 - The local authority gives appropriately 'light touch' support to this good school, which it holds in high regard and knows well. A performance adviser has provided regular, informed and effective support with target setting, as well as help with monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The school feels able to access additional support from the local authority, as and when it requires it, although cutbacks and changes in personnel have had an impact on what is available. The management committee is kept informed of developments within the authority through regular briefing papers, and there is a wide range of governor training available.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The management committee gives good support to the school and knowledgeable, challenging support to the headteacher, who keeps its members well informed about the progress made by students, including those supported by the pupil premium. They have taken on board their new responsibilities for funding and the performance management of staff, including making a clear link between their classroom performance and pay. Procedures for the headteacher's performance management are well established. The management committee makes sure the school uses safe recruitment practices and gives the safeguarding of students a high priority.

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	124528
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	425340

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	Suffolk
Chair	Andy Solomon
Headteacher	David Siddall
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 January 2011
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