

New Horizons

Fallowfield Grove, Padgate, Warrington, WA2 0QQ

Inspection dates 11–12 September 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 make good progress overall. The most-able students achieve well above national averages.
- Older students gain a number of qualifications at GCSE or equivalent. Most move on successfully to further education, training or employment.
- Effective teachers use interesting topics and competitive activities in their lessons so students listen carefully and want to succeed.
- Teachers plan lesson activities carefully at the correct level so students complete tasks that are not too easy or too difficult.
- Individual students who are not skilled readers make good progress as a result of additional teaching arranged for them.
- There is an excellent range of well-planned support for students who have personal needs and they make exceptional progress as a result.
- Students feel safe. Behaviour is good overall and has improved over time as a result of a carefully planned system of rewards and clear consequences.
- The headteacher, senior staff, teaching and non teaching staff fully share ambitions for each student to succeed. As a result, teaching and achievement are better than at the last inspection.
- Governors have a good range of expertise and understand the challenges in the school. They support leaders in striving to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always offer regular opportunities for students to practise and improve literacy skills in all subjects and this limits some students' progress.
- Students' mathematical understanding is not always secure as there are few activities for students to apply mathematical skills in all lessons.
- Students' written work is marked regularly but students have few opportunities to assess their own learning or to talk to teachers about their work. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and reflect upon their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 teaching sessions across two sites.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher and senior leaders about teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspector also talked to the acting deputy headteacher about assessment and students' progress, two groups of students and the headteachers of two local mainstream schools who work closely with New Horizons. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor for curriculum and pastoral matters, a representative from the local authority, the school's external adviser, a group of five parents and an ex-pupil from the school.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of written work, data from assessments and school records to measure improvement in behaviour, teaching and the curriculum. Safeguarding documents were reviewed and the inspector looked closely at the school's evaluation of its work and plans for further improvement.
- The inspector visited the Orford Hub, observed three lessons, met with a music therapist to discuss her support for students in the school and with a group of older students, including two who attended courses at an alternative provider.
- The responses of 17 staff to the questionnaire were considered and the inspector took into account the school's records of parent and pupil views. There was insufficient response to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- New Horizons is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which provides alternative schooling on two sites for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school education. Intervention and support is provided for those students at risk of exclusion because of their behaviour, or who have poor attendance records or who have missed significant parts of their education.
- The PRU took a high number of students in 2013, particularly at Key Stage 4. Students join the PRU at any age from 11 to 16 and at any time during the school year. At the time of the inspection, there were six students attending the PRU full time and 30 students attending the PRU and their mainstream school for part of the week.
- It delivers some education on the Orford Hub site, opened in September 2012, for students who cannot attend mainstream schools on a full-time basis and who need a quiet environment in order to make progress.
- Students come from a range of social and cultural backgrounds: the vast majority are White British.
- The majority of students are supported at school action or school action plus because they have a special educational need. Two students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (additional funding from the government introduced in 2011 for those students known to be eligible for free school meals and for students who have been looked after continuously for more than six months and for the children of service families) is higher than average. However, New Horizons receives pupil premium direct funding only in respect of the students who are single-registered with it.
- In the last year, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team, with three new senior leaders appointed, one currently in an acting capacity.
- A number of students spend some of their time in alternative provision settings following courses in construction at Cornerstones and hair and beauty and child development courses at UExpand.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan literacy activities regularly in all subjects so all students make at least good progress in their reading and writing
 - extending students' mathematical skills by making sure that in all lessons they have opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- Improve teaching further by:
 - planning more explicit activities and encouraging students to reflect on what they have learned
 - discussing the written marking and feedback given to students further with them so they understand clearly what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A large proportion of students arrive at the school with standards well below those expected for their age. Nevertheless, they make up lost time rapidly and achieve well at GCSE or equivalent, and in vocational subjects.
- A proportion of students attend the school's second site, the Orford Hub, having missed some time in mainstream school. They catch up rapidly because the school provides the right environment to ensure that they settle to work and achieve high standards. A small number achieve well above national standards expected for their age.
- A large proportion of students at Key Stage 3 who are at risk of exclusion from their mainstream school continue to attend their main school but spend some of each week at New Horizons's first site. This is especially beneficial for the most able, who take part in their main school's lessons and so make good progress and do not get left behind.
- For Years 10 and 11 students, the wide range of choices available means they can follow their interests and talents and pursue vocational and academic subjects. The vast majority of students gain at least one qualification in Year 10 so they enter Year 11 having already gained confidence.
- Most groups of students, including boys and girls, those with English as an additional language, those registered at a mainstream school as well as at New Horizons and those with a statement of special educational need, make good progress.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieved levels in 2012-13 at GCSE or equivalent which were lower than the main group of students in English and in mathematics, but above the levels of similar students nationally. School monitoring of this group of students indicates they are set to narrow the remaining gap. This is evidence that the school strongly promotes equality of opportunity to achieve well.
- Students who need individual help to improve their reading from a low level make good progress. Progress in improving literacy for all students could be greater if all teachers planned activities in all subject lessons to give students extra practice. This was done effectively in a science lesson when the key words 'environment', 'habitat' and 'adaptation' were repeatedly displayed and students were questioned to make sure they understood what these terms meant and could remember them in the future.
- Students make slower progress in improving their mathematical skills. Too few activities in different lessons help them to apply these skills with confidence and understanding.
- Students following additional vocational courses away from the school make good progress. Exceptional monitoring by the school ensures that they are safe and make very good progress which prepares them well for future employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students make good progress as a result of well-planned lessons. School monitoring of teaching demonstrates that there has been a steady improvement in the last two years.
- In the vast majority of lessons, students are engaged and keep their interest throughout the lesson because interesting materials are carefully chosen and presented with enthusiasm. Good subject knowledge introduced into the lesson often intrigues students and develops their interest further. In a horticulture lesson, students quickly searched for and identified leaves to match the illustrated examples they had been given, and as a result developed their observation skills.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers question students continuously so they have to think for themselves. They plan work that is matched accurately to ability so students are challenged to achieve their best work. Although many tasks are short and require brief answers that enable students to be successful they also complete extended writing tasks and develop their skills in

writing sentences and paragraphs.

- Students learn exceptionally well in the main teaching room on the second site because teachers have the facility to project moving images and sound effects on the full expanse of the walls around the classroom. In a history lesson, students' imagination was captured by seeing and hearing soldiers running into battle in World War 1 and by listening to a song and a series of camera shots which captured the dying dreams of a soldier. This supported their spiritual development well.
- Teachers mark daily class work regularly but briefly. Extended pieces of writing are marked in detail. Some teachers ask questions and make requests to students, for example, to complete work, but there is not yet an expectation that students will respond. As a result students do not have an opportunity to assess and discuss what they have mastered and what they need to do next to improve.
- Teachers do not always make it explicit to students what they are expected to learn and at the end of a lesson students do not have the chance to reflect and identify their understanding of new learning. As a result, teachers do not always have an accurate view of students' learning when planning the next lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around both school sites. Teachers quietly correct any students who begin to misbehave and students respond well. They appreciate the recognition through the school's rewards system for managing themselves well.
- Very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour were observed during the inspection and it is rare for learning to be disrupted. Relationships between students and staff are very good. Students help each other and are polite to visitors. The school's records show there has been a steady reduction of exclusion of students over time.
- Staff support good moral and social development in lessons and in all their interactions with students in school. The curriculum and general conversations around school supports students well in understanding how others may live differently or have different beliefs. Opportunities abound to experience food and customs in other countries and in the wider UK. A recent visit to London gave students the chance to compare a different UK community with their own.
- Students said they feel safe at all times. Students on the school's second site who have personal and individual needs spoke in glowing terms of their confidence and trust in staff to support them whatever the issue. One student said 'Coming here feels like it's been my saviour.'
- Parents spoken to describe the school's support in extremely positive terms. All agreed that their son or daughter had made exceptional progress following their arrival in the school. They also agreed that their child was safe and exceedingly well cared for.
- Students understand all types of bullying. The school's records indicate that bullying is rare and promptly dealt with if it occurs.
- Students understand very clearly as a result of lessons and discussions with staff, what constitutes risk and know how to ensure they are safe when using social networking sites and mobile phones.
- Attendance rates vary because of the changing needs of the intake and are somewhat lower than last year, lower than the attendance of students nationally but higher than similar schools nationally. The school is well-supported by the local authority and access additional external resources and take all available steps, including prosecution, to make sure students arrive in school as often as possible. Several students who had not attended their mainstream school at all, or who persistently refused to attend are now spending increasing time in school and beginning to increase their progress.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school with determination and imagination. She is thorough in searching out any activity, training or resource that will improve the progress of students. She and the governors have recruited very able senior leaders and staff who are challenging students effectively. Staff are proud to be members of the staff and are unanimous that the school does all it can to support pupils both personally and academically.
- Teaching is closely monitored and support provided so only a few aspects remain needing attention. Recognition and reward of staff who support student progress is built into the school's performance management processes. These are rigorously applied so staff recognise that students' progress is paramount.
- Managers have improved the accuracy of assessment and the school's assessment leader has worked with a partner secondary school to improve the analysis of assessment measures so students' progress can be followed closely. Students are given additional help to improve if they fall behind and school leaders check that they catch up with their learning.
- Leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately and have acted decisively and successfully to improve areas that have not supported students' learning effectively in the past, such as behaviour and attitudes to learning. Actions in the school's plans for further improvement suggest that this pattern of improvement is set to continue. The targets for improvement help leaders to check the school's work is successful and ensure that they continue to improve weaker aspects including application of literacy and mathematical skills.
- Leadership of the school's second site has resulted in exceptional progress for the students who had difficulties attending school prior to arriving at New Horizons.
- The local authority understands the school's context well and provides good support to the school's actions to improve. In addition, the partnership arrangements with local secondary schools have provided exceptional opportunities that have been used well by New Horizons to support better transition for students and productive professional development opportunities for staff from all the partnership schools. The partners work very effectively together in using resources to support the progress of those students who attend both New Horizons and a main school.
- Arrangements to ensure the safety of students and staff meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a range of valuable experience and skills to the school. They do not always take advantage of opportunities to ensure that they are fully up to date with changes including the use of the pupil premium funding. However, leaders ensure that governors are informed about pupils' progress and they understand the school's use of the funding and know that it has supported improved progress overall. The governing body supports the headteacher well and governors are very much aware of her drive to keep them informed of how the school is moving forward. They are aware that teaching has improved over time and what steps have been taken to do this. They have supported the review of performance management arrangements and have taken the necessary steps to ensure that staff who support students' progress effectively have been, and will continue to be, rewarded. Governors challenge the headteacher and identify they could do this even more effectively if they were more aware of recent changes.

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	133572
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	426056

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Dodd
Headteacher	Karen Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2012
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