

Bridge Short Stay School

Wissage Road, Lichfield, WS13 6SW

Inspection dates 8–9 October 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.

- Students of all ages and backgrounds make good progress. Many return successfully to their mainstream schools.
- Students make particularly good progress in their social and emotional development. This prepares them well for the next step in their lives.
- From low starting points, students' progress in English and mathematics accelerates.
- Teaching is generally good, with some outstanding examples. Students benefit from personalised lessons that engage and challenge them. In outstanding lessons activities are highly enjoyable and promote rapid progress.
- Systems to track students' progress are very effective and the findings are used well by teachers to plan challenging activities for students.
- Students' behaviour is good and this is seen in their lessons and activities around the school. They value and care about their excellent relationships with staff. They say that they are very safe and happy in this friendly school.
- The leadership of the headteacher and her leadership team have improved many aspects of the school's performance since its last inspection. Together with the experienced and effective contributions of the management committee, there is strong capacity for continued improvement.
- The management of teaching is very effective. This has led to improved teaching, resulting in achievement improving year on year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, students are given written instructions which are too difficult for their reading skills.
- In some lessons teachers do not always make it clear as to exactly what new skills and knowledge they are teaching the students.
- Although the range of academic subjects taught is increasing there are a limited number of alternative opportunities to engage students further in learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, in seven of which the inspector was joined by the headteacher. The observations covered a variety of subjects.
- Meetings were held with students, with the chairman of the management committee, and with a representative from the local authority and staff.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, but the inspector took account of the 10 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised examples of students' work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school occupies a refurbished building that is equipped to a high standard.
- It provides education for both short-term and permanently excluded students in the Lichfield and Burntwood areas, covering five high schools and two special schools.
- Students are referred either because they are permanently excluded from mainstream school or because they are at risk of this happening. The majority of students are dual-registered, remaining on the roll of their mainstream school.
- The school works closely with its high schools to try to prevent permanent exclusions through the work of the Pupil Placement Coordinator team.
- The school caters for students with complex social, emotional, behavioural and medical needs, and manages the district's home tuition service. This provision is in partnership with the students' mainstream school and the amount and length of teaching support depends on the individual students' needs.
- Most students have a history of persistent absence and non-attendance.
- All students are currently of White British origin and most of the students are boys.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The centre receives only a small amount of the pupil premium additional funding for eligible students. Most of this funding is retained by the mainstream schools. The school does not receive any money from the government's Year 7 catch-up funding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by making sure that all teachers:
 - provide written instructions which students can read
 - clearly indicate what new skills and knowledge they are teaching in lessons.
- Raise achievement by improving the already good range of subjects taught to include more opportunities for students to be engaged in learning through a wider range of alternative subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of students enter the school with skills and experience well below those expected for their age. Good teaching, a personal induction to the school and the highly effective arrangements to make sure that each individual's needs are met and supported in lessons, make sure that students achieve well across all the subjects taught. For almost all students, there is substantial improvement in their attitudes, aspirations, motivation to learn and attendance.
- Even though many have below average levels of attainment when they join the school, many of those that stay for a significant period of time successfully catch up and leave with levels of attainment close to national expectations. Students, including boys and girls, and those looked after by the local authority, make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Students who are at risk of exclusion from their mainstream school who arrive between Years 7-11 receive nurturing, high quality care and are skilfully managed and most settle well, despite their often complex needs and circumstances. This supporting and caring approach from staff makes sure that all students with anxiety and attendance problems settle happily and gain confidence.
- A significant minority of students make excellent progress in English and mathematics. For the vast majority of students, gaps in their knowledge and skills are narrowed quickly. This includes those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Teachers set the students highly challenging targets and monitor their achievement well and in return students respond positively and enjoy learning.
- The most able students, through accurate assessment of their abilities, rapidly progress and catch up, leaving with levels of attainment close to national expectations.
- Staff consistently develop mathematical and English skills across all subjects taught and this in turn allows students to practise and enhance their skills.
- Some staff provide enjoyable activities to develop reading skills in the classroom, which supports students re-engaging with reading and leads to good progress in improving their reading skills, often in a short period of time. However, this is not widespread across the school and as a result teachers occasionally give students written instructions which are more difficult than their reading abilities, which in turn slows progress in some lessons.
- Students feel they make good progress in the school and achieve well. This was summed up by one student who stated, 'In my high school I would not have gained any GCSE examination results. Here I am on course to gain several at a good grade.'
- What little pupil premium funding the school receives is used well to support developments in literacy and behaviour in particular. The improved outcomes mean that gaps in performance in comparison with that of mainstream students are being closed at a good rate and for some completely closed.

The quality of teaching is good

- The school's monitoring of the quality of teaching shows that it has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
- The majority of lessons are individually planned and offer a varied range of activities that engage students well. Students show positive attitudes in lessons because they are enjoying their learning. Staff make sure that students are treated as individuals when it comes to learning, which gives them good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently. This develops the students' confidence and self-esteem. However, in a small number of lessons teachers do not always make it clear to the students what skills and subject knowledge they are learning.
- A broad range of interesting subjects captures the students' interests well and stimulates thought-provoking comments, for example, in a moral ethics class discussing society's right to information, one student stated, 'We have a right to know if it affects us all, but we should not be nosy into other peoples' lives.' In an art lesson students discussed the moral aspects portrayed by a number of artists. These activities underpin students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Although on some occasions written material presented by staff is too difficult for some students, the teaching of reading and writing is generally well planned and resourced, allowing at least good progress for the majority of students.
- The majority of teaching has high expectations for students' academic progress and behaviour. In some lessons teaching is inspiring and very enjoyable. This is because teachers and support staff are skilled at meeting the very diverse needs of their students.
- This approach was clearly seen in an animal husbandry lesson where students began with a high quality debate and discussion on the merits and pitfalls of both battery and free-range chicken keeping. Following on from this the students, supported by specialist staff, then carefully and humanely examined a number of rescued battery hens. Careful note was taken of their condition and detailed plans put into place to bring them back to full health.
- Students feel the teachers challenge them to work hard. One student summed this up when he told the inspector, 'The teachers do challenge us to work hard but do so in a nice way, they care that we do our best and so we try to do the best we can and so we are all doing much better than we would in our high schools.'
- A key strength of the teaching is the staffs' skill in generating a friendly and happy classroom atmosphere. Teaching assistants are highly skilled in encouraging and guiding the students, especially if they begin to have issues and/or concerns. This reduces time lost to learning and helps students re-engage with their lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school successfully meets its core aims of motivating its students and re-engaging them with education. The vast majority of students markedly change their attitudes and commitment to education. Conduct improves and this is shown in the fewer incidents of unacceptable behaviour and a significant rise in attendance.
- Although attendance is low, many students now have attendance records that are at least in line with the national average, and all students have better attendance records than they had when in mainstream education.

- Behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Where teaching is especially engaging, behaviour can be outstanding. Staff place considerable emphasis on encouraging students to behave well, to be polite, to show respect and to take pride in their achievements. These qualities are constantly reinforced in lessons and in social activities, such as at the daily morning breakfast time, lunchtime and tutor periods.
- Staff place a strong emphasis on acknowledging and rewarding success, especially when this is brought about by the students themselves. For many, being congratulated on an achievement, or being praised for doing something well, is a new experience. The successful nurturing programme boosts self-esteem and contributes well to an individual's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students are encouraged to lead safe and healthy lives. Staff make sure they are kept safe. This involves eating healthily and adopting safe practices, especially in relation to the use of the internet and mobile phones. All students are provided with clear guidance on the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse and information on personal relationships.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying such as cyber bullying, racist or homophobic name-calling and other forms of anti-social behaviour. They know how to respond to unpleasant incidents. They have faith in their staff to deal with unsavoury incidents. As one student commented, 'Bullying is not tolerated by the staff or us, so it just doesn't happen.'
- Students stated they feel very safe, valued and respected when attending the school. They clearly enjoy learning and attending school. This was totally summed up by one student who described the school as, 'One big happy dysfunctional family who all care for each other and want each other to achieve well.'
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because when lessons are not as interesting some students lose concentration and occasionally their behaviour slips.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher has made sure that everyone who works and attends the school has the same vision that everyone will reach their full potential. Her sensitive and caring approach is well supported by the management committee and staff at all levels.
- The school and leadership team have had a period of reorganisation and change, which has led to the development of an effective leadership team and a creative curriculum. There is a happy atmosphere and a unified desire to improve the life chances of students whose prior experiences of education have often been extremely negative.
- The school offers a calm and relaxed environment where students learn and socialise safely. Though no parental responses were received via Parent View, the staff questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction. The school plays a key role in re-engaging students with education, helping to boost self-esteem and confidence. As one stated, 'When I was in high school I didn't care, here I want to learn, want to get qualifications and get a good job.'
- Partnership work is strong both with the high schools from which the school draws students and with the wider range of professional partners it works alongside to make sure all students' needs are met. Together they identify key strengths in helping students who have often had negative

experiences of school to change their lives and successfully re-engage in education.

- The school is an essential resource in the local community, and a place where professionals and parents turn to for advice and guidance, especially when dealing with challenging, difficult or disillusioned students.
- A keen commitment to equality makes sure that all students, including those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, make good progress. Relationships are good, with no evidence of discrimination.
- Achievement and the quality of teaching have improved well since the last inspection because of improved checking of the school's work, tracking and target setting, as well as improvements in staff training.
- A good range of enrichment activities, including visits, visitors and sports activities, adds richness and enjoyment to learning. Appropriate plans are in place to make sure that the range of academic subjects is increased, but alternative forms of learning are at present limited and so opportunities are missed to engage students further. Subjects such as cooking and animal husbandry have a positive effect on the students' emotional well-being and contribute effectively to the quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's view of itself is accurate and contributes well to a good development plan that drives forward improvement, as does the helpful support offered by the local authority.
- Risk assessments, including those for occasions when students might be working off-site or working with the animals, are detailed and fit for purpose.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee makes a good contribution to leadership through its support and challenge. The committee has been instrumental and purposeful in working with the leadership team and the local authority in developing the building to a high standard. It knows what the data is saying about students' performance. Managers check the quality of teaching and understand the essential links between the quality of learning and attendance for all groups of students. They know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and tackle any underperformance. They manage finances efficiently, although with only a little funding for pupil premium, the committee has made sure it is spent wisely to provide individual support for eligible students. They make sure that all safeguarding procedures are strong and manage the performance of teachers effectively to improve teaching and the outcomes for students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals.

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	132131
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	426911

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	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Albutt
Headteacher	Susan Kulas
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2010
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