

The Bridge School

28 Carleton Road, London, N7 0EQ

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school is highly inclusive. It has excellent provision for all groups of students, whatever their starting points and particular learning, communication or behavioural needs.
- All groups of students achieve exceptionally well throughout the school because staff know them all extremely well and tailor activities to meet their widely differing needs.
- Teaching is excellent. Students have a very wide range of activities and lessons and staff have high expectations for them all.
- Behaviour and safety are excellent. There are marked improvements in the behaviour of all students, including those who are the most challenging. Staff are extremely patient, calm and positive and provide an excellent role model for all.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. All aspects of the school's work are checked extremely effectively and leaders at all levels use their exceedingly accurate understanding of the school to drive improvements.
- Leaders' accurate understanding of the school has led to a wide range of plans to improve information to, and engagement of, parents and carers. These plans are well focused to extend existing information to parents and carers and increase the numbers who are already highly involved and engaged in the school and their children's learning.
- Governors are effective and reflect very carefully on the quality of their own work. They have very recently reorganised the way they work so that they are even more effective in supporting leaders and driving improvement.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have an excellent start to their schooling because staff have high expectations of what they can achieve and their needs are met extremely well.
- The sixth form is excellent. Students have extensive opportunities to experience life outside school. These successfully help prepare them for their next steps in later life and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 38 lessons taught by 20 teachers. All of these observations were joint visits with the headteacher, heads of the primary and secondary departments, or other senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with parents, carers, students, governors, two officers from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to generate results. Inspectors received the views of parents and carers from responses to school questionnaires, as well as informal discussion with just over 20 parents and carers.
- The inspectors gathered the views of staff through 85 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions. They gathered the views of students through prearranged and informal discussions, in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on students' current and recent progress, students' work, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents and documents relating to safeguarding, as well as records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The report will use the term 'students' to refer generically to children, pupils and students of all ages throughout the school.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roy Blatchford	Additional Inspector
Michael Buist	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All the students have statements of special educational needs for learning difficulties. In the vast majority of cases these learning difficulties are severe. A high proportion of students also have autistic spectrum disorders, communication difficulties, challenging behaviour and complex needs. There are about four times more boys than girls.
- At over 60%, the proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of students, in this case, those who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- At over 80%, the proportion of students from over 32 different minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than in most other schools. Just over half of these students speak English as an additional language; this proportion is higher than in most other schools.
- The school manages and employs staff in inclusion classes in Hungerford Primary School and St Mary Magdalene Academy in Islington.
- The school is a National Teaching School with a Training Centre. The headteacher is a national leader for education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement plans to increase information supplied to parents and carers, as well as raise the number who are fully engaged in partnership with the school in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Learning of all groups is consistently good or better because teaching is outstanding. There is no significant difference in achievement of different groups over time. The promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding because staff have an excellent knowledge of all groups of students and provide well for all their needs.
- From a wide range of starting points, the proportions of students of all groups making and exceeding expected levels of progress are extremely high. Excellent behaviour management and exceedingly good partnerships with other professionals enable all groups of students to attend school, remain in lessons and maximise their learning throughout the day.
- The pupil premium is used highly effectively to fund additional staff. This includes a counsellor and resources such as tablet computers to reduce barriers to learning and enable these students to achieve extremely well. Their progress is on par with others. At the end of Year 11 in 2013 the progress of these students was slightly faster and attainment was slightly higher than that of their peers.
- Students of all groups have excellent opportunities for physical education and development through using the school's high quality resources and by receiving support from highly trained physiotherapists. These opportunities are now being developed and extended even further through the effective use of the additional government primary sports funding, for example through lessons from experienced dance and swimming teachers.
- Additional funding for Year 7 students, whose attainment is behind the national average, is used well on additional resources for English and mathematics, helping the achievement of all.
- Students successfully develop a growing awareness and use of symbols, pictures and print. They 'read' widely and often. During the inspection, children in the Reception class followed directions to play instruments loudly or quietly from symbol cards showing pictures and words. Older students eagerly looked at and showed each other pictures and stories from newspaper articles.
- Students develop the basic skills of communication, English and mathematics through a very wide range of activities and lessons. The highly effective and consistent use of symbols helps all groups of students, including those with autistic spectrum conditions and other highly complex needs, to make and communicate preferences, needs and choices.
- Students who learn more quickly or easily achieve extremely well. This is because staff have high expectations and are always eager to challenge them to extend their experiences, skills and knowledge. Because of this, some students attain very well in English and mathematics given their starting points and extensive additional needs.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve on par with others. Effective communication, both understanding and expression, is central and promoted extremely effectively for all.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress because they have such a wide range of opportunities for learning. Those who are able are encouraged to choose their own activities. They are all taught extremely well by staff.
- Students in the sixth form achieve outstandingly well because so much of their learning takes place in environments and activities outside the school, preparing them extremely well for life.
- Students taught with their peers in the mainstream schools make good progress because the classes are small. Relationships and praise are very positive and teaching effectively meets students' needs and styles of learning.
- At the end of Year 11, almost all students stay on to the school sixth form. At the end of Year 14, most students go on to local or residential colleges. Most students attain at least one national accreditation by the time they leave.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching throughout the school is consistently good and the majority is outstanding.

- Most staff are very experienced and well trained. New staff rapidly gain confidence and skills because induction and support are very frequent and highly effective.
- Teamwork is outstanding. Teachers, teaching assistants and a range of other professionals, including nurses, speech therapists, physiotherapist and occupational therapists, work seamlessly together to meet individual social, medical and learning needs exceedingly well.
- Students develop very positive attitudes to life and learning because lessons and activities are interesting and relevant. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage loved choosing from a range of activities, including collage, music, work with sand and trying new foods, which successfully spurred their learning and development extremely well. Older students with profound and multiple physical and learning disabilities developed physical skills, language and counting as they moved to and listened to songs in the hydrotherapy pool.
- Teaching in the sixth form is extremely effective because it is so well rooted in real-life outside school. Students spend about half their time out of school and develop their language, mathematical and communication knowledge and skills highly successfully, through trips such as bowling or to the shop to buy snacks and lunch.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. It includes highly effective activities inside and outside, some of which are directed by adults and others chosen by children. During the inspection, children made extremely good progress playing together outside, using concepts of number, size and shape in cooking and listening avidly to stories and songs.
- Teaching is adapted to individual needs exceedingly well. Some older students with extremely challenging communication and behavioural needs are taught in individual rooms, enabling them to remain calm and focused on their learning, while reducing any potential disruption to others.
- Staff are always very calm, consistent and patient. Challenging behaviour is managed exceedingly well, enabling time to be used very successfully for learning. Staff use a range of communication techniques extremely well to overcome barriers to learning and help all students to maximise their achievement.
- The effectiveness of homework and engagement of parents and carers vary. Very detailed termly reports tell parents and carers what students have achieved and what they are working on next. Daily diaries, which go between home and school most days, provide some information about students' learning and well-being. However, some parents and carers would like more frequent and detailed information, so that they can further increase their involvement and support. Leaders acknowledge this and have already made firm plans to improve this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Despite high levels of challenging behaviour and complex needs, most classes are calm and highly conducive to learning. This is because challenging behaviour is managed very well and individual needs are met exceedingly well. Students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff use a range of communication techniques extremely well, very successfully helping students remain or become calm, understand events and express their needs and preferences.
- There are marked improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of the most challenging students. Staff are extremely calm and consistent, adjusting activities and expectations to support and include students. Despite some very challenging behaviour, there are no exclusions. Students and staff are extremely positive about safety. One student said, 'I feel safe because students and teachers are kind and helpful.' The vast majority of parents' and carers' views were also positive about safety and well-being at the school. A small minority of parents and carers are concerned that they are not always given enough information about incidents that occur. Inspectors have asked that information to parents and carers is increased, so that they all know about the positive steps that the school takes in managing behaviour and safety.
- Students are taught about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour as well as different forms of bullying. Students' understanding of this varies with their starting point and level of need. Those who are able to, know that they must always tell a friend or member of staff if anyone does or says anything they do not like.
- The majority of students attend well. Their attendance is in line with mainstream secondary

schools and is above most other special schools. Most absence is linked with ill health and the emotional and physical needs of students.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders at all levels work concertedly to improve the achievement and well-being of all groups of students. They have an excellent understanding of the school and know exactly where to focus future development. They have already identified a need to improve the engagement of parents and carers and have made, but not yet fully implemented, innovative plans to achieve this.
- Leaders' very high levels of effectiveness are very apparent in the way they lead and manage teaching. They monitor lessons very frequently and rapidly identify and address any areas of relative weakness, for example through frequent and highly effective training.
- Assessments of students' achievement are rigorous, highly detailed, very frequent and finely analysed. Leaders use these extremely well to identify and address any areas where achievement dips, making any necessary adjustments to teaching, support or resources. This ensures that the promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding and the achievement of all groups of students is excellent.
- Teamwork and relationships are outstanding. Communication between different members of staff, as well as with other professionals, is detailed and transparent. Leadership is delegated and shared extremely well and all the skills and ideas of all staff are welcomed, valued and utilised to the benefit of all.
- Leaders are highly proactive, always wanting to deepen and extend what they do. Any member of staff can suggest topics for research and implementation across the school. These are carefully considered and where appropriate are explored, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This has led to many significant improvements, including augmented communication and approaches to teaching students with autism. This is just one way in which the school fulfils its aim to 'innovate, evaluate and share best practice'.
- Staff are very positive. A high proportion of staff returned their inspection questionnaires. The vast majority of staff, at all levels, were highly positive about all aspects investigated. Two examples of many positive comments were from a teaching assistant who said, 'every day at The Bridge School brings more understanding for all', and a middle leader who said, 'this is a remarkable school and I feel honoured to be a part of it'.
- Local authority officers have an accurate view of the school. They often visit the school, provide light-touch support and use it as an example of outstanding practice to help and challenge others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Some governors are highly experienced, but others are relatively new to the governing body or to their particular roles and therefore have more limited knowledge and skill. Overall, governors' understanding of the school, the quality of teaching and students' achievement in comparison with other schools is good. They have had some training and are rapidly increasing their understanding through input from senior leaders and specialists who visit their meetings. All statutory duties including those related to safeguarding are met. Systems for managing and rewarding the performance of staff including both teachers and teaching assistants are robust. Governors manage school finances extremely well, because several have this particular expertise. They are well aware of how additional funding, including that for Year 7 'catch-up' and primary sports, as well as pupil premium funding, are used, and the positive impact it has on students' achievement and well-being. They are supportive and challenging and increasingly helpful in identifying and addressing any areas of relative weakness, including the levels of information to, and engagement of, parents and carers.

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	134030
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	425589
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Crowther
Headteacher	Penny Barratt
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2008
Telephone number	020 77150320
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