

Bridge House Independent School

Grantham Road, Boston, PE21 7NL

Inspection dates	11–13 December 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good.

- Students make good progress in English and mathematics because they are taught well. Year 11 students gain good qualifications in these subjects.
- Teaching is good in all subjects and challenges students to realise their full potential.
- Behaviour is good. Students know how to keep themselves safe. Most students overcome their emotional difficulties and become confident learners.
- All Year 11 students start suitable college courses or gain meaningful employment upon leaving school.
- In a short space of time, the proprietor and senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and raise students' achievement so that both are now good.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Occasionally, teachers take too long explaining to students what they need to do. This slows their learning.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of what students already know and can do to plan new work that challenges them to progress even more quickly.
- Students are not always clear about what they are expected to learn, when working in groups or independently.
- Teachers do not always match the challenge of the work so effectively for the few students with more complex learning needs because the assessment system for identifying smaller steps of progress is not yet fully in place.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was given a day's notice of inspection.
- Six lessons were observed, taught by six different teachers. All observations were undertaken jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings took place regularly during the inspection with the proprietor and members of the senior leadership team, as well as discussions with other staff members and students.
- Twelve Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff were examined.
- There were 11 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by the inspector.
- A range of school policies, records and students' work was examined, including those related to students' attendance, students' behaviour, how the school monitors and reports on student progress and its policies and procedures for keeping students safe.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bridge House is an independent school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It opened in December 2012 and is registered for up to 40 students aged 14 to 16 years. At the time of the inspection there were 35 students on roll. This is the school's first inspection since its registration.
- All places are purchased by the local authority to make provision for hard-to-place students and students permanently excluded from mainstream schools or at risk of being so. These hard-to-place students are those who move into the county during Key Stage 4 for whom the local authority cannot find a mainstream school placement. Sometimes these arrive very late in Year 11. All students except for a few hard-to-place students are dually registered with the local authority. Some students travel lengthy distances by taxi to get to school.
- There are seven students with a statement of special educational needs, a few of whom have more complex learning difficulties in addition to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All other students are identified as having their special educational needs supported at school action plus.
- There are seven students looked after by the local authority.
- Most students are White British. A few are from families who speak English as an additional language but none of these are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school receives additional funding for a very few of those students who would be eligible for pupil premium funding in mainstream schools. This funding is specifically for students eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority or those from military families.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make effective use of what students already know and can do to plan work at the correct level of challenge to move them on more rapidly with new learning
 - teachers do not take too long to explain to students what they are expected to do in lessons and so sustain a good pace of learning at all times
 - students are clear about what they are expected to learn when the teacher sets them work to do in small groups or individual assignments in lessons.
- Improve the assessment of students with the most complex learning needs and ensure that teachers always use this knowledge of these students' smaller-step learning gains and targets to plan to raise their achievement lesson-by-lesson.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good. They make good progress as the result of good teaching and a carefully tailored curriculum that successfully meets their needs. Attainment on entry is different for each student. Typically, it is below average because students have gaps in their previous learning and many have not attended regularly prior to arriving at the school. Most students settle quickly and make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. In 2013 the most-able Year 11 students achieved good GCSE passes in English and mathematics, including at grades B to C. Lower ability students gained other nationally recognised qualifications in these subjects or lower grades at GCSE. These students made similarly good progress from their lower starting points as their classmates. In addition, in 2013 students achieved well at GCSE in science and humanities and in BTEC courses in sport and food technology. Every Year 11 leaver in 2013 entered college, secured a sixth form place in a mainstream school or gained meaningful employment. Students are also making good progress in the additional GCSE courses introduced this year in geography, history, information and communication technology and expressive arts.

Hard-to-place students are among the highest achieving students. Children looked after by the local authority and the few minority ethnic students achieve equally as well as their peers. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress of boys and girls. The school uses the small amount of pupil premium funding passed on to it very effectively in supporting eligible students with their reading and writing. These students make rapid gains in speaking, listening and reading as a result of this extra support.

Assessments on entry in reading, writing and mathematics are used well to identify any gaps in students' knowledge and to plan programmes of support. 'Gaps' are identified and programmes tailored fill these. As a result students make rapid progress and the gap between them and their mainstream peers narrows significantly. Students make good progress in applying their literacy and numeracy skills in different real-life situations. For example, in a food technology lesson students' reading skills were developed effectively as was their application of mathematical skills as they cut portions to the size required accurately.

The few students with additional learning difficulties do well on Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses and as a result of very specific literacy programmes. Occasionally, though progress for these students is slowed when assessment is not used sufficiently sharply to set work at the correct level of challenge for them.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development is good. Most students arrive at school having experienced difficulties in managing their behaviour in their previous schools. Often lacking confidence, they feel failures and their self-esteem is low. Teachers skilfully support students in working through their negative feelings about themselves and school. Consequently, most students successfully re-engage with learning and are eager to do well. On occasions when students slip backwards with managing their behaviour, the school supports them effectively.

Behaviour is good. Classrooms are calm and orderly. Students value the displays of their own work and that of their peers and take great care of the school premises. They show respect towards staff, visitors and other students. Occasional, spontaneous disruptions are managed speedily and effectively, as are rare instances of bullying. Students respond well to the school's system of behavioural rewards and sanctions and there have been no fixed term exclusions since the school opened. Students are awarded points for good behaviour and can save them up towards paying for treats. Recently, the school council decided that students could use these points to buy

resources to help with their study. This demonstrates the positive attitude and commitment to learning that most students develop whilst being at the school.

Students feel safe. They have immediate access to an adult they can trust, if they have any concerns. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and say, 'We have our tiffs but we look out for each other.' They know how to keep safe when using a social network site on a computer at home, and about safe sexual practice and the harmful effects of substance misuse. A few who find it difficult to modify more risky behaviours have very specific programmes of support.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They reflect carefully on their feelings of anger and how they might respond more positively to tough situations in their lives. They understand the difference between right and wrong. Most who said that they used to 'keep bad company' are turning their lives around as they develop a respect for civil and criminal law. Aspects of students' cultural development, such as their awareness of their own culture are good. However, their awareness of cultural diversity lags marginally behind other aspects of their development. The school have already identified this and strengthened provision, for example through the new geography and history curriculum. This all means that students have many opportunities to express their views and reflect on the challenges and advantages of living within British society.

Students travel to school by taxi, but still play a part in the local community. They are involved in local forest work (planting trees), for example, and take turns in supporting senior citizens with packing their shopping at a local supermarket. Attendance for most students has increased significantly since being at this school and is broadly in line with the national average. The school works ceaselessly to improve the attendance of a few pupils who do not attend as regularly as they ought.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good. Typically, lessons are taught at a brisk pace, students know what they are expected to learn and are given good feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers plan well and provide interesting activities. Expectations are high and when students ask questions teachers use their expert subject knowledge to deepen students' knowledge and understanding further. There are pockets of outstanding teaching, particularly in mathematics and the expressive arts.

Behaviour management in lessons is exceptional because every teacher is so tuned into students' individual 'quirks', knowing what makes them 'tick'. This enables teachers to get the very best out of students in lessons. The most-able are challenged well in lessons to notch their work up a gear so as to achieve the highest possible GCSE grades in English and mathematics. In the best lessons teachers use their knowledge of what pupils need to learn to plan work at the correct level of challenge to move them on quickly with new learning. For example, in an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson each student made excellent progress because activities set challenged them. A few exceeded expectations in graph work and functions; some could explain the meaning of a radius and diameter. Others managed to construct a diameter, which for them represented an outstanding achievement. In a few lessons the pace of learning slows because teachers take too long explaining to students what they are meant to learn. Occasionally, students are not clear about what they are expected to do when the teacher moves from whole-class teaching to setting students' group or individual work tasks. On rare occasions, teachers do not use what is known about students' prior learning to set tasks that challenge them to progress quickly enough in lessons.

Assessment is good. Mainly, it is determined by the requirements of the public examinations. Teachers know the assessment requirements of the courses they teach extremely well and are

clear about where students are in relation to this. They use this information to plan interventions and challenge for students. On entry, detailed assessment is used to identify where students have fallen behind where they ought to be in English and mathematics. This information is used well to plug their gaps so that they catch up speedily.

The few students with additional and more complex learning difficulties are supported effectively in their withdrawal one-to-one support sessions. Assessment in this context is used well, particularly for example to move them forward with their spelling and reading. However, the school has not yet implemented a very small-stepped assessment tool. As a result, not all teachers have detailed information on the very small steps of progress these few students make so that they can plan to move them on to the next steps lesson-by-lesson.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. It reflects the National Curriculum and provides students with experience in all the required areas of learning. There is a strong focus on developing students' skills in English and mathematics. The range of examination courses has increased recently to include GCSE courses in expressive arts, geography, history and information and communication technology. There are BTEC courses in sport and food technology. For almost all students the curriculum is suitable and challenging. Specific and tailored individual programmes help students on the border of a D/C grade in GCSE in English and mathematics to make good progress. Staff also adapt the curriculum well to successfully extend the highest achievers. A few students coming through the school have more complex additional learning difficulties. Although the tailored literacy programmes and ASDAN accreditation meet their needs well, the school has rightly identified further courses to extend its curriculum provision and choices for these students further.

The personal, social, health and citizenship programme is excellent and prepares students well for adult life. It enables individual students to overcome or manage their emotional difficulties as well as making core provision for all students in important areas such as sex education and money management. Opportunities for work experience are included in the school's careers programme. The curriculum is enriched by visits to museums, field trips and outdoor activities such as rock climbing that develop students' team building skills and further motivate them. There are many sporting opportunities including football fixtures with other schools.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All the regulations are met. All safeguarding policies, including those for child protection, health and safety and for behaviour management and anti-bullying meet requirements. They provide good guidance for staff and are implemented consistently. Designated child protection officers and all staff are trained regularly and at the required level. There are sufficient qualified first aiders and a suitable first aid policy. Students are supervised effectively and records of serious incidents are kept meticulously. Rigorous checks are carried out on the recruitment of staff and recorded as required on a single central register.

Risk assessments, especially of students' behaviours, are thorough and detailed. Planned visits away from the school, for example the recent geography fieldtrip, are similarly risk assessed rigorously. Good attention is given to routine health and safety checks, including the relevant fire risk assessments and checks. Attendance and admission registers are appropriately maintained. Students learn about the importance of healthy eating in food technology lessons. Meals cooked on the premises are wholesome and nutritious. Sport is high profile and students are clear about the importance of regular exercise and looking after themselves. The programme aimed at helping students to quit smoking has had a number of successes in the short time the school has been operating.

Leadership and management**Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good. The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school regulations are met. In a short space of time, all staff have embraced the proprietor's vision to support each student in overcoming the emotional barriers that impede their learning and so achieve their potential. The ceaseless drive to improve teaching has paid dividends. Lesson observations by senior leaders lead to training and coaching packages for each teacher to help them improve further. For example, this has led to a consistent and effective use of starter activities in all lessons. All teachers are keen to improve and are well supported in this goal by the school's leaders. The school analyses its work diligently and takes decisive action to improve. Students are involved in this self-evaluation. The proprietor is clear about what works well and where improvements are required.

Leaders work hard to provide equal chances for all students to succeed, including those who arrive late. Students appreciate the opportunities they are given to make a fresh start in this school and the ways in which it tailors the learning for them. Teachers and teaching assistants support students in improving their behaviour and developing the skills required to function as sensitive and well-informed adults. The accommodation and the complaints procedure meet the regulations. The school makes all of the required information available to parents through its school handbook. The school's website is developing rapidly but remains a work in progress. Parents and carers receive regular reports on their children's progress and greatly appreciate the detailed information about the good progress their children make.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	139264
Inspection number	422858
DfE registration number	925/6005

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Carl Smith
Headteacher	Carl Smith
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800
Telephone number	01205 369111
Email address	carl@bridgehouseindependentschool.co.uk

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