

Manchester Secondary PRU

The Mersey Valley Campus, Barlow Road, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 7JJ

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

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 frequently arrive with gaps in their learning, usually at times other than at the beginning of the school year. Despite this and their often low starting points, once students settle into new routines, they make good and sometimes better progress. This represents good achievement overall.
- Students who attend have been, or are in danger of being, excluded from mainstream schools. The good progress they make both academically and in improving their behaviour ensures a good proportion make a successful return to mainstream schools.
- Teaching is good because staff have a good understanding of students' needs and high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result, students make good and sometimes accelerated progress.
- Despite students' high levels of need, behaviour is most often good both inside and outside the classroom. Incidents of difficult behaviour rarely interrupt learning and the majority of students are courteous and friendly towards staff, visitors and each other.
- Students say they feel safe and that school staff help them to improve their understanding of how to stay safe, for example when using the internet.
- Since the previous inspection the headteacher and senior leadership team, supported by the effective management committee, have improved standards in teaching and students' achievement across the school. This continuous commitment shows leaders' ability to make the school even better in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is less good than in reading or mathematics because students have too little opportunity to write longer pieces of work across the curriculum.
- School leaders are not yet effectively using information on students' previous learning to set current targets.
- Strategies to improve students' attendance are not always used consistently in all centres. As a result, the attendance of a small group of students whose circumstance make them more vulnerable is slow to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 19 teachers and support staff across 16 of the 18 different units which make up the pupil referral unit and associated alternative provision. Joint lesson observations were undertaken with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. They also examined the quality of work in the books of students from across the school.
- The inspection team held meetings and had discussions with students, senior leaders, members of the school and alternative provision staff, two members of the management committee and the Chair of Manchester’s High School Heads and Principals’ Group. They also spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the views of 12 parents who made their views known to the school in a recent survey. They also had a telephone conversation with a parent of a current student. No parents made their views known on the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team studied health and safety documentation, teachers’ curriculum planning, documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the school’s system for checking students’ progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit makes provision for the needs of up to 320 students who live in Manchester local authority area. All are in danger of exclusion, or are already permanently excluded, from their mainstream schools because of their behavioural needs.
- Students attend for a varying length of time depending on their level of need.
- Students attend 18 different sites spread across the city. They comprise a mixture of sites run by the pupil referral unit and sites run by external providers including Manchester College.
- Approximately 85% of students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from armed forces families.
- The majority of students who attend come from families of White British heritage. A smaller number come from families from other ethnic groups.
- All students are supported by school action plus. While attending the unit a smaller number are assessed for and receive a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has a range of awards and accreditations, including the Artsmark award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' achievement in writing so that it matches that in reading and mathematics by increasing the number of opportunities for students to undertake longer pieces of writing in different subjects when appropriate.
- Improve the attendance of a small number of more vulnerable students by extending the successful practice already in place in other units to the newer alternative provision units.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by increasing the use of available data on students' previous achievement to set challenging targets for learning which ensure all students reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students who attend this large pupil referral unit usually start with lower than average levels of attainment because of gaps in their education, often due to their complex behavioural needs. Once they have settled and begun to address the issues which make learning difficult, they start catching up on missed learning time. School data shows that in 2013, the majority of students across the school made good and better progress. This represents good achievement overall.
- However, students overall make better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. This is because students are offered too few opportunities to write longer pieces of work in different subjects. For example, in science opportunities are sometimes missed to write up investigations more fully.
- Leaders are justifiably proud that almost 40% of students in Key Stage 3 successfully return to mainstream school. This is because they make good progress socially, emotionally and academically during their time at the provision and are able to return with levels of achievement which are closer to those expected nationally.
- Students often join the provision in Key Stage 4 late in their school careers. Others transfer from Key Stage 3. Last year some Year 11 students reached nationally expected levels and the vast majority made good progress from low starting points. This evidence of good achievement can clearly be seen in the year-on-year increase in the average numbers of points scored by students in national examinations.
- While the majority went on to gain a range of GCSE and other accreditations by the end of Year 11 last year, a small number left gaining fewer qualifications and accreditations than they should have because of low levels of attendance.
- The most able students achieve well, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is because in the majority of lessons activities offered are sufficiently challenging and enable them to make good and often better progress.
- Many students enjoy reading, often for the first time in their school career. This is because of a whole-school focus on reading, which offers students a range of exciting opportunities to read both in class and independently. As a result of this intensive approach, in 2013 many students across the provision dramatically increased their reading scores, which represents good and better progress from their individual starting points.
- Last year students known to be eligible for free school meals made very similar levels of progress to their peers in both English, mathematics and science and their achievement was good overall. This is because senior leaders have made effective use of extra funding to support the needs of this group, for example, through more intensive one-to-one support for students. A large increase in the number of students attaining GCSE science last year is also attributable to the effective use of this funding to employ a specialist science teacher and to increase resources across the provision.
- Students who attend the school have identified behavioural needs. Some also have additional learning needs, for example, being on the autistic spectrum. These students receive extra support through individual learning and behavioural plans and as a result, disabled students and those with special educational needs make equally good and sometimes better progress than their peers.
- The smaller number of students who are from other ethnic groups also make good progress because staff are committed to supporting all students, evidencing the school's clear commitment to equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Progress seen in students' books and in lessons observed in the wide range of different units during the inspection confirmed that teaching is good overall. In some lessons, it is outstanding.

Little requires improvement.

- Staff are skilled at using information about how well students are doing to plan future work. Their subject knowledge is good and they have high expectations of students' abilities and behaviour.
- Teachers provide a good level of challenge for all groups, including for the most able, and students clearly enjoy learning. An example of this was seen in a Key Stage 4 English lesson in which students were learning how to write in different genres. The teacher played atmospheric and gripping scenes from the film 'The Woman in Black' stopping at key points to check on learning. Students watched avidly, all making notes as the story unfolded and the tension and fear felt by the main character built. The quality of their diary writing afterwards clearly showed how this imaginative approach had helped all students to understand better how to build suspense and atmosphere into their work.
- Parents of students who responded to a recent school survey felt that staff are good at helping their children to overcome their problems and make a new start. Many praised the work of teachers and support staff. Students mirrored this opinion and clearly enjoy coming to the provision. As one student commented, 'Coming here makes me want to learn'.
- The majority of staff mark students' books diligently and give positive oral and written feedback, which enables students to be clear about how to improve their work and progress to the next level.
- Teachers and support staff work closely together and strong partnerships are evident across the school. These close working partnerships are evident in the vast majority of units within the provision and contribute well to students' good achievement and behaviour.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good despite their high levels of need. This is because staff understand students' needs well and the school's behaviour management plan is implemented consistently across the provision and is respected by both students and staff.
- Learning is rarely interrupted by incidents of difficult behaviour because staff and students deal with it effectively. Behaviour in the corridors is generally calm and where incidents do occur they are dealt with effectively. Break and lunchtimes particularly are seen as a social time which is enjoyed by staff and students alike.
- Students feel valued as members of the school community and their views are communicated well to senior leaders through student forums. Many clearly enjoy attending and as one student honestly evaluated, 'It's good. I enjoy it here. If I didn't, I wouldn't wake up at 7.30 each morning to get here.'
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection for all groups except for a small number of vulnerable students who are regarded by school as 'hard to engage'. While staff in most areas of the provision have worked hard and successfully to engage other groups of students, this group remains difficult to motivate to attend.
- The school recognises that current strategies aimed at improving the attendance of these students are more effective in some areas of the provision than others. For example, there is sometimes a lack of continuity in implementing the attendance policy, particularly in the newer areas of the provision. As a result students' attendance is less good.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are clear about the different forms bullying can take. They feel that incidents are rare because students are made aware through, for example, the school's internet safety policy of the effects bullying can have on others. They feel they are helped through the good quality of advice and guidance given by staff.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have brought about much improvement since the previous inspection. Their unswerving focus on school improvement and clear vision has ensured that both the quality of teaching and the achievement of students are now good. The fast pace of this change over the last 18 months demonstrates the leadership team's ability to improve the provision further.
- Despite the very complex nature of the provision in which students attend units in different areas of Manchester, leadership of teaching is good across the provision. Teachers' performance is effectively monitored in all areas and effective action is taken by the headteacher through the management of staff's performance to improve areas of weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. However, further improvement is needed in a small number of classes if teaching is to become outstanding overall.
- Leaders ensure performance targets for staff link to students' achievement and targets within the school's development plan. Checks on the performance of staff are undertaken regularly and the headteacher uses this information to make decisions on teachers' pay.
- Middle leaders coordinate the curriculum and are responsible for the quality of teaching in their area. Recently this level of responsibility has been increased to include staff working in units run by alternative providers. Although newly introduced, this has already led to an improvement in the quality of provision for students because staff have increased opportunities to share expertise and resources.
- Senior leaders are very proud of the breadth of curriculum offered to students, which includes a wide variety of different experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Outdoor activities are particularly popular with students and participating in mountain biking was described by one student as 'the best thing I have ever done'. These activities improve students' self-esteem, health and welfare and increase their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Over the last year the local authority has supported school through a series of six one day visits from a school improvement partner.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the management committee bring a very good range of skills and experience and use them effectively to support and challenge senior leaders. Working with the local authority, they set clear performance management targets for the headteacher, which are directly linked to students' achievement and have brought about significant improvement. In partnership with senior leaders, they have developed an effective system for checking the performance of all staff which rewards good teaching and addresses any underperformance. Their careful and prudent management of the school's finances shows that they are well placed to support the school in decisions on how the pupil premium funding is spent and evaluate the impact this funding has on improving the achievement of those students for whom it is intended. They have a good understanding of the importance of careful analysis of students' achievement data and offer leaders support and challenge in all areas of the school's performance. Safeguarding procedures and policies within school are undertaken to a good standard. The health and safety committee carries out regular inspections and has ensured that safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

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	136743
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	430981

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	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Interim Chair of Management Committee	Anne Jones
Headteacher	Helen McAndrew
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2012
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