

Highfields Inclusion Partnership

Highfields, Essex Road, Brinnington, Stockport, Cheshire, SK5 8DR

Inspection dates 22–23 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 achieve well. Their prospects are improved by attending this school. They leave either with qualifications or with successful transfer back to an appropriate school.
- Many of the most important achievements of students have little to do with academic progress and a lot to do with sorting out the problems that resulted in their admission.
- Teaching is good. Most teachers get on well with students. They understand how to help them.
- Some teaching is inspirational because it captures students' attention, holds it and capitalises on it to promote faster learning and a thirst to attend future lessons.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe. Students do not usually mess about in lessons. They are delightfully inquisitive about the purpose of visitors and are fiercely loyal in wanting to tell them how much the school is helping them.
- Leadership and management are good. The school is improving and looks well set to be able to continue this improvement. There is a constant drive to make teaching better.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few teachers do not tempt or inspire students to attend more of their lessons.
- Small parts of the school day are not used as effectively as they could be.
- The targets staff are set for improvement do not make it clear enough how reaching them is going to help raise standards.

Information about this inspection

- Nine lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. Three of the observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior management team.
- There were no responses to Ofsted’s on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took account of parents’ views as expressed in the school’s own questionnaire based on the same questions.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were many discussions with senior leaders and managers.
- Inspectors talked informally with many students throughout the inspection and looked at examples of their work.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a pupil referral unit, almost exclusively for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools.
- Behaviour, not special educational needs or disability, is the reason pupils attend Highfields Inclusion Partnership. Many have additional special needs, sometimes educational, and sometimes related to mental health issues. By definition, all students are at school action plus and increasing numbers of them have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students attract the pupil premium (extra funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families). This is well above average.
- There are slightly more boys than girls but the difference has been narrowing quickly in recent years.
- Nearly all students are White British.
- Most students are in Years 10 and 11.
- Two strands of the provision are housed on a separate site. There is no contact between the two strands or with the main site at Highfields.
 1. Alternative Curriculum Experience (ACE) provides for very high dependency Year 11 students. Drug and alcohol abuse are prevalent reasons. Most are young offenders but there are others who cannot be educated alongside others because of mental health, court orders or emotional reasons.
 2. Day 6 is provision for students after their sixth day of exclusion from mainstream school. These are usually short stay, pending transfer to another mainstream school, Highfields, ACE or other provision including special schools.
- A few students attend settings that make alternative provision for the education and training of young people. At the moment, this is almost exclusively Stockport College.
- In the past, schools such as this had a management committee rather than a governing body. In line with current guidance, the school now has a governing body. It met for the first time barely two months before this inspection. The school now has a fixed, devolved budget and is responsible for managing it and living within its means.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, to encourage more students to come to more lessons and learn more by:
 - making better use of relevant and stimulating resources to enliven teaching and learning
 - making better use of pupil premium funding to enrich the lives and experiences of students so as to give them a better understanding of what and why they are being asked to learn
 - making better use of tutorial time to make it a valued, celebratory end to the morning and an exciting and tempting introduction to the afternoon programme.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that targets for improvement for all staff include specific reference to how they contribute to raising standards and improving attendance
 - making sure that achievement of these targets can be fairly judged.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- For many students, achievement has little to do with the classroom. This school is particularly good at helping the individual. Landmark signs of progress, even during the two days of inspection, included students showing the first signs of overcoming image problems or social inadequacy were very clear. Discussions with many students confirmed that 'Here at last is a place that understands me'. Good achievement outside the realms of academic progress is particularly relevant for students within ACE.
- Students achieve much more successfully than their recent educational histories would hint at. Most are in a downward spiral of failure when they are admitted. Most are in an upward spiral of optimism when they leave.
- When students attend well, they quickly understand that the school has a lot to offer to help each of them overcome their difficulties and to set them on the path to brighter futures. Many at Highfields are helped to get examination results that they would not have, had the provision not existed.
- Most students who attend regularly make good progress in learning how to read and write better and improve their mathematical skills.
- Too many students resist the school's overtures and do not attend frequently enough to benefit from the help they are being offered. Improving these students' attendance is the key to moving the school closer towards being outstanding.
- For students in Years 7, 8 and 9 the best sign of achievement is a successful return to mainstream school or a transfer to more appropriate provision such as a special school. The school has a good record of achieving this.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 are offered two, good, alternative routes to success. Those who choose to try to get conventional qualifications, such as GCSE in subjects including English, mathematics and information and communication technology, should be encouraged by the fact that results in this school have doubled for the better over the last three years. Those who are not suited to what the mainstream experience has to offer are increasingly being given the opportunity to shine in more work-based activities. There are good systems in place to recognise that just because in Year 10 students want to follow this path they might change their mind in Year 11.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium fare no better or worse than others. Results in GCSE examinations are no different and attendance varies little. This is because everyone is treated as an individual, irrespective of circumstances. The same applies to students with special educational needs, or different gender.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students frequently arrive with a history of not liking teachers or of being taught. Here they are taught by teachers who, in the main teach them well and help them to confront their difficulties.
- Some teaching is inspirational, for instance, when a group of Year 11 students were stunningly well taught about what makes poetry great. Wonderful use was made of resources that cost nothing (a piece of string to represent an umbilical cord); a student with reading difficulties was helped to avoid embarrassment by subtle recognition of her special educational need. All students involved were helped equally. In a less inspiring lesson, a teacher did not make use of the full range of inspiring resources that were available, with the result that the students gradually became disinterested and learning slowed.
- In most cases, students get on very well with adults in the classroom. They respect those teachers they know who are trying to help them to learn. They are also very obvious in the way they choose to attend some teachers' lessons and not others.
- Most teachers take a lot of care to prepare work for students that recognises what each of them

responds to best and what encourages them to attend their next lesson.

- Teachers often create an atmosphere around them that celebrates achievement and this is reflected prominently in displays on classroom walls. However, this does not sufficiently extend to more communal spaces. This misses a good opportunity to share achievement more widely.
- A few teachers do not make enough of opportunities, provided in tutorial sessions for 15 minutes before lunchtime each day. These could be better used to encourage students to attend afternoon sessions and broaden their horizons, especially those supported by the pupil premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. It helps them to understand possible risks to their physical and emotional well-being. Nothing can be certain but chances of risk are minimised.
- Those who attend regularly enough to benefit from the school's work learn to know how their habits and images can make them vulnerable and how they can take actions to protect themselves.
- Students who attend are delightful. They are hugely supportive of the help they are receiving to overcome their difficulties and talk about it to visitors very sensibly. Nearly all the students spoken with during the inspection said how much the school was helping them to overcome their difficulties. A few showed this in the way they overcame social shyness or awareness of personal image problems during the short window of the inspection; instances too personal to report publicly but highly representative of the progress they were making.
- Students' behaviour is good. Lessons are rarely interrupted by misbehaviour. Students tend to want to learn and behave well but do not always find this easy. They are well supported to do so.
- A lot of effort goes into understanding the often extreme needs of students at ACE. They are helped and encouraged to get on better with people of their own age and circumstance and to understand what they need to do to fit in with others in society.
- Overshadowing all the good news is the fact that some students choose not to attend frequently enough. Some have never attended so do not know what they are missing, but of more concern are those who attend to their choice. They vote with their feet. This is where more could be made of tutorial periods at the end of each morning to encourage students to stay for the afternoon.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is improving and has good ideas to maintain this.
- There are barriers in the way, such as having to exist within a limited budget and the reorganisation of the responsibilities and remuneration of a few staff who are resistant to change.
- Leaders and managers show a very good understanding of how they are going to manage this. They are perceptively and accurately monitoring the effectiveness of teachers and are aware of those who are under-performing and those who thirst for and deserve promotion. There can be no doubt that teaching is improving and underperformance is under scrutiny and beginning to be eliminated.
- Undermining this is the fact that formal procedures do not make expectations clear enough. The targets teachers are set for improvement are sometimes vague and do not make it clear enough how they will help raise standards or improve attendance. Nor are they sufficiently precisely drafted to judge whether they have been met or not. 'Improve standards in my subject' is a job, not a target.
- There is some teaching that is still not good enough but there is a strong ongoing resolve to address this issue. Weaker teachers are becoming increasingly identified and suitable support

packages put in place to help them get better or realise their limitations.

- A few staff, mainly classroom support staff, feel that leaders and managers neglect their training needs. Inspectors feel that their needs are well provided for, but that other factors prevent them from benefiting from what is on offer.
- The local authority maintains an interest in this school. It is of use to it for the purpose of fulfilling statutory requirements for meeting the needs of permanently excluded pupils. Help is offered if it is requested.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- This is a time of change for schools such as this. They have never in the past had governing bodies or control of a fixed budget. The governing body met for the first time in November 2013.
- The governing body shows a very good awareness of its responsibilities and a strong desire to fulfil them to the best of its abilities. It is well informed about the school's effectiveness through informative reports from the headteacher. It is aware of some very pressing issues relating to the balancing of its budget. The governing body is not burying its head in the sand to deny that there is likely to be a pressing need for reorganisation and restructuring in the very near future.
- There are a lot of good reasons for having faith in the new governing body to take pressure off the headteacher in her desire and unquestionable ability to drive forward improvements.

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	134623
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	430994

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	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Metcalfe
Headteacher	Lesley Persico
Date of previous school inspection	24 April 2012
Telephone number	0161 406 7922
Fax number	0161 406 0612
Email address	headteacher@hip.stockport.sch.uk

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