

Reach

Newcastle Road, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 6NS

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

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.

- Reach brings about a rapid and very positive transformation in students' attitude to school. The impact is profound and increases students' willingness to work hard. Their achievement is outstanding as a result.
- Teachers and all staff get on extremely well with students and this very positive relationship is decisive in changing students' minds about the value of learning. For many, it is their first experience of enjoying school.
- From low starting points and in the short time spent at the school, high proportions of students make expected progress and more than expected progress.
- Key Stage 4 students have a short time in which to begin and complete GCSE courses. They all leave typically with six or seven GCSE certificates in a broad range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Expert teaching engages and challenges students very effectively. The pace of learning is brisk. Teachers keep students very well informed about their progress and what they need to do to move their work to the next level.
- The staff manage students' behaviour exceptionally well; they are very effective at encouraging students to take responsibility and to always behave well.
- Students quickly discover they can get on with the staff and begin to like them. Respect and trust develop and students find they are able to appreciate and stick to the school's high expectations for good behaviour.
- Rates of attendance improve dramatically and students arrive each day on time prepared to get on with their schoolwork.
- Students feel very safe and contribute significantly to everyone staying safe through their outstandingly good behaviour.
- Students are very well prepared for a successful return to secondary school or for the next stage, be it further education or employment.
- The headteacher is inspirational and dynamic. She leads a substantial team with a wide range of professional experience, which works extremely effectively to tackle all of the problems students face. Partnerships with secondary schools and parents are strong.
- Excellent leadership across the school drives improvement very effectively. Leaders and governors keep close checks on students' progress and on the quality of teaching with a clear resolve to continually improve both. However, checks on teaching do not determine precisely what prevents any good teaching from becoming outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited seven lessons and observed five of the school's 12 teachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, representatives of the governing body and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to students, and students' work and records were checked.
- The school documentation scrutinised included data on students' progress, the school's development plan, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils and the school's own evaluation of its work.
- There were too few responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for the inspector to take them into account. The inspector met with some parents and also examined the school's survey of parents' views.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Reach serves all of the local authority's secondary schools by providing full- and part-time places to male and female students at Key Stage 3 and 4 who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. Reach also offers short-term placements to some Key Stage 3 students.
- At the time of the inspection, 44 students were on roll either on a full- or part-time basis. Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- No student has a statement of special educational needs. All students are supported through school action plus for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is high compared to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Staff provide an outreach service which offers a range of provision to support secondary schools in preventing exclusions. In February 2012, Reach moved to new purpose-built premises.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase leaders' capacity for securing even more outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring checks on the quality of teaching determine what prevents any good teaching from becoming outstanding
 - setting existing good teachers very clear targets to help them to improve their practice even further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- In Key Stages 3 and 4, students learn very effectively and make rapid and sustained progress in English and mathematics, as well as in the broad range of subjects studied.
- All students start with significant gaps in their learning as a result of the disruption to their education before coming to Reach. Subsequently, excellent progress narrows gaps considerably. Students known to be eligible for free school meals, supported through the pupil premium, make the same substantial progress as others and their attainment matches that of other students.
- In Key Stage 4, while standards in English and mathematics are below average by the time students leave, preparation for the future is very substantially improved and they have achieved outstandingly well during their time in Reach. Students have a clear view and a plan for the future, backed up by significant achievement.
- Key Stage 3 students return to secondary schools much better equipped than before to cope with demands. Records show many sustain their place at secondary school. All Year 11 students leave to go into sixth form, a further education course or into training or employment.
- Full-time Key Stage 4 students typically have about one year at the school before leaving and, starting from scratch, study between five and seven GCSE courses including English and mathematics or BTEC courses. Students of all abilities and interests, the most able students in particular, make progress according to their potential. Reach very effectively advances the opportunities for every student to achieve and find success.
- In 2013, all students achieved A*–G grades in their GCSE and passes in BTEC subjects. In GCSE, all students gained at least one A*–C grade. These excellent achievements have consistently been evident over time.
- Almost all students read fluently and manage all the reading required for their subjects. The few who are behind in their reading are effectively supported and they improve their skills in recognising words and understanding texts. Students discover the enjoyment of reading in the quiet time allocated each day to carry on with their chosen novels.
- Writing tasks are planned systematically by students and they produce a large amount of extended, well-presented writing on a wide variety of topics that meet examination coursework requirements.
- In mathematics, Key Stage 3 students, having very recently started attending Reach, rediscover their skills and confidently tackle problems of converting fractions to decimals and percentages. In Year 11, students apply what they understand about the properties of two-dimensional shapes to adding up the angles in regular and irregular polygons.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Invariably, students like their teachers and all of the staff of Reach. This has the instantaneous and very substantial effect of students discovering a very positive attitude to school. The high quality of students' learning and progress emanates from this.
- Students and their parents speak of this sudden transformative effect once they come in contact with Reach. There are several instances of students with deep antipathy to all schools dramatically changing their minds after having passed the front door of this school. They know teachers do not judge but value them. Students feel they are listened to and treated with respect.
- Teachers and other staff are extremely effective in managing and improving students' behaviour, with the result that learning throughout each day proceeds uninterrupted. A group of new Key Stage 3 students settled quickly in response to the effective management of their learning and enjoyed rediscovering their knowledge and skills in number.
- Very good subject knowledge in all that is taught means teaching expertly improves students'

knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching brings learning to life and students are spoken to in ways that very effectively encourage their participation and contributions. One student commented, 'The atmosphere in lessons is great.' Year 11 students thoughtfully explored Seamus Heaney's poem 'Digging' and, in the subsequent discussion, came to understand why the poet related digging with a spade to 'digging' with his pen.

- Students have frequent opportunities to explain their answers, build up their confidence and increase their involvement in learning. For example, Key Stage 3 students ably discussed their ideas for variables in their science experiment with electrolysis and learnt the need for detail and accuracy in conducting an experiment.
- Students are kept very well informed about their progress and what to do to improve the standard of their work. Coursework for GCSE is accurately graded; what students should do to reach the next highest grade is carefully explained by teachers and in the marking of students' work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Very good relationships develop trust in, and respect for, staff as well as between students. Male and female students have friendships that are mature and appropriate.
- The school's high expectations for good behaviour are kept to by all students. As a result, the school is calm, orderly and each day is passed in an atmosphere of productive endeavour. One student commented, 'I can't behave badly because I have respect for everyone and everything.'
- Parents spoken with described the positive impact at home from the improvement in their children's behaviour and how others in the family are now treated much better than before.
- The school's excellent care and support for students makes an exceptional contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's splendid new building and specialist facilities contribute significantly to students' feelings of self-worth and to their appreciation of the school's mission for them to succeed in finding a route to a good future.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students feel safe. One said, 'I like the peace and smaller groups make me feel safer.' The school's surveys of students' views show all agree or strongly agree that bullying in any form does not take place. Their views are confirmed by how well they get along with each other throughout the day.
- The wider risks to students' safety which are significant and go beyond the school day are dealt with to an outstanding extent and greatly reduced through the school's partnerships with many support agencies. Communication and joint working are of high quality, leading to well-coordinated actions providing support to students and their families whenever needs arise.

The leadership and management

are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management over many years have maintained the school's clear direction and its substantial capacity for sustaining improvement. The local authority gives light-touch support to the improvement of this outstanding school. It is nevertheless highly committed and has invested significantly to support the school's continuing success.
- The headteacher's visionary and inspirational leadership gives uniqueness to the success with which the school raises students' achievement, improves their behaviour and comprehensively meets their needs.
- The outstanding quality of leadership and management is in no small way due to the very effective contributions of all staff. They all have roles in leading the many aspects of the school's work. They manage these and drive improvement exceptionally well.
- The headteacher has developed a highly cohesive team of both senior and middle leaders who work together with a common sense of purpose. With all staff playing their part, a wide range of

work is done that very effectively meets students' complex needs.

- The views of students, parents, staff and the secondary schools Reach serves are constantly sought and used to check the school's effectiveness. Rigorous checks on teaching and students' progress are analysed closely and, together with views of the school community, determine the priorities in the school's development plan.
- However, in examining the strengths of teaching, leaders have not paid enough attention to moving more of the good teaching to outstanding, even though their checks show outstanding teaching provides students with more challenge and uses assessment more effectively than they saw in good teaching. While teachers have challenging objectives to meet in relation to the school's performance, the focus on increasing even further the proportion of outstanding teaching is not sharp enough.
- Reach works very effectively in partnerships with secondary schools and through strong links with agencies. Secondary schools greatly appreciate the support they receive from the outreach team in terms of working with individual students and developing teachers' skills in managing challenging behaviour effectively. The school actively engages with parents and is developing opportunities for parents of Key Stage 3 students to join them in some lessons.
- The school's broad curriculum provides work and activities that interest students. At Key Stage 4, students have a wide choice of courses and qualifications of relevance to their future well-being. At Key Stage 3, students do work that enables them to close gaps in their learning and be well prepared for their return to secondary school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is newly formed and its members are actively developing their roles and responsibilities. They have checked that all of their duties are performed and have organised themselves into several committees with specific oversight of key parts of the school's work. Governors' aims are clear on having a highly effective engagement with the school and work to achieve this is at an early stage. Governors are kept well informed by leaders about the quality of teaching, its improvement and the effectiveness of the school's performance management policy in contributing to this. They have a good understanding of students' progress, the success in returning students to secondary schools, preparing leavers for the next stage and the impact of the pupil premium on the progress of students this funding supports. Governors pay regular visits to check the understanding gained from leaders' reports. They have carried out surveys of students, parents and staff to gain their views of the school.

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	133178
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	431587

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	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting Chair	Stewart Bray
Headteacher	Lorna Matley
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2011
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