

# Bridge House

Highlea, Astbury Lane, Bridgnorth, WV16 6AX

## Inspection dates

4–6 June 2014

## Overall effectiveness

**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

### This is a good school.

- From their varied starting points, and particularly in English, mathematics and personal development, students make good progress. This is because staff form such strong relationships with them and successfully help them to reengage in education.
- Students are given good support for managing their emotions and conduct. They improve their attitudes to work, their behaviour and attendance at school significantly, as a result. In addition, the excellent cooperation between the school, care staff and therapeutic staff make a significant impact on helping students monitor and manage their difficulties.
- Students in post-16 have good support to help them strengthen their basic skills in English and mathematics and prepare them effectively for college or work. Individual tailoring of courses ensures that they make rapid progress from their starting points.
- The company's leadership board know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They are hugely committed to students' well being but also that students have every opportunity possible in the future. They check carefully on whether the teaching and activities provided are bringing about improvements they want to secure.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Links with local colleges and schools are still developing in this new school. Until recently there has been a limited range of options and courses available to students, particularly at post-16 and for the more able.
- Individual education plans are not precise enough. Staff do not always plan activities that take sufficient account of what students have already achieved at previous settings.
- Teachers do not always share with students why they are doing the things set for them or how these will help them to improve their grades or reach their goals. Consequently, although students complete the work and are compliant, they are not always enthused by it and sometimes say they have done it before.

### 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

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed eight lessons. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the assistant director of education, the regional manager (quality assurance) and students.
- Account was taken of three questionnaires completed by staff and an examination of students' work was undertaken.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents. These included students' work and records, information about their progress, and the procedures and policies showing how the school keeps pupils safe. The examination of the records and documents also included the ways in which the school works with care staff, the school's schemes of work, teachers' planning and proprietorial board's checks on the quality of the school's work.

## Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bridge House is located near to Bridgnorth, Shropshire. It was registered in September 2013 and at that time was owned by Advanced Education. This is the school's first inspection. The company has recently merged with The Cambian Group which has numerous schools, care and further education provisions across the United Kingdom.
- The site was originally a day independent special school and has been extensively refurbished. It includes a children's home and therapeutic facilities. All students attending the school are resident at the children's home, which specialises in providing accommodation for young people who have experienced trauma and abuse and have related behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- The school can admit up to six students aged 11 to 18 years and is registered for students with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. It currently has five students, all girls and all aged between 15 and 17 years. Two of these have been admitted very recently. All but one are in the post-16 provision. Students will usually attend for at least a year and they have a range of backgrounds and heritages including, occasionally, students who do not have English as their first language. None has a statement of special educational needs, but all have varied identified needs, including reading or learning difficulties.
- Students have often missed considerable schooling because of the trauma they have suffered as well as poor attendance. Their starting points on entry are generally lower than their previously recorded results at schools prior to their placement at Bridge House. They attend therapeutic sessions at the end of the school day and on Friday afternoons. The school day ends at lunchtime on a Friday to enable this.
- Students usually are restricted to the school and children's home environment for a set period of time to support their emotional wellbeing and safety. They are then gradually supported to a broader range of contacts and off-site experiences. Alternative provision is used by the school to help students decide what they want to do in the future, for example through work at the Meerkat Centre and also with The Prince's Trust.
- The school has a headteacher and teaching assistant. A permanent part-time teacher also started at the school during the week of the inspection. Regional staff support the school staff both in teaching specific subjects such as physical education and in quality assuring its work.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement so that more is outstanding by making sure:
  - teachers always take greater account of students' past goals and achievements when planning activities so that work are neither too easy or too hard
  - individual education plan and other learning targets are precise, regularly reviewed and adapted and agreed fully with students so that progress is accelerated even more rapidly.
- Develop further the links with local schools, colleges and businesses so that
  - post-16 students, in particular, know and understand their proposed pathways and how

- these align with their aspirations
- more able students, in particular, have as quickly as possible the fullest range of subjects and qualifications available to them.

## Inspection judgements

### Achievement of pupils

### Good

- The achievement of Key Stage 4 and post-16 students is good because they are quickly reengaged with education, despite many of them having been disaffected previously and having had severely disrupted education. This is because care and school staff work well together and give consistent messages about the importance of gaining qualifications and skills and about managing their behaviour.
- Students of all ages settle quickly into the school and the volume of work covered is impressive. Students show a real determination to rise above what has happened to them in the past. For example, they frequently ask for additional mathematics homework or volunteer to do extra reading, a skill they have previously found very difficult.
- Systematic, good quality support for mathematics and English skills, including a wide range of writing experiences, mean that students make good progress in these subjects. They make up lost ground, gaining confidence in their own abilities. A few individuals who have struggled with literacy or language skills make remarkable progress and their self esteem and their progress in other subjects improve rapidly as a result.
- Students mostly work on entry level qualifications moving then towards the highest level of these awards; the school uses its agreements well with other company schools so that students are able to take the higher level award such as at GCSE. No students are scheduled to do so this year. A few students who have achieved lower level GCSE awards in a previous placement do not always feel challenged by the work and wish they had quicker access to higher level courses.
- More able students make good progress overall and produce extremely insightful and thoughtful responses, for example in English. Others produce high quality work in art and design which they are encouraged to think about marketing and developing further. The school is rightly exploring how local school links might enable them to provide for more able Key Stage 4 students more effectively, particularly in areas such as science and modern foreign languages.
- Daily challenges (where students are asked to solve problems), creative art and design work, enterprise and business projects and regular food technology courses all contribute well to students' motivation and preparation for next steps. Individual students benefit greatly from their work experience, placements with alternative providers and voluntary work opportunities. These prepare them very well for their college courses. However, students say they would like more opportunities for college taster programmes and school work to be more obviously aligned to their individual career aspirations.
- The school uses a commercial package to track the progress of students, alongside a new system for assessing attainment and skills on entry. This is in conjunction with the company's assessment centre. This is relatively new, however, and not all information gained, including that about past achievements, is taken fully into account by staff when planning students' next steps and programmes.

**Quality of teaching****Good**

- Teaching is good because staff make sure that students have personalised programmes that build steadily on their interests and needs and almost no time for learning is wasted.
- The daily challenges and discussion of national and international news ensure students are encouraged to reflect on what is happening in the world, solve problems and find solutions. Students who have been reluctant to read or write in the past settle down to work quickly because they say they know that their teachers want the best for them and that these skills are important.
- Occasionally, a few students are unclear about the purpose of the work they are doing, what their targets are and how they relate to their aspirations. Teachers do not always make sure that students understand fully the targets in their individual education plans and that these are seen as relevant by students. Where they are in place, the targets do not always link to the work that students do.
- The work mostly challenges students well. Occasionally, what students are able to achieve is at a higher level than the qualification they are taking. This is often because the school has been so successful in helping them to make up lost ground so quickly. The school is urgently exploring local links to enable, in particular, higher achieving students at Key Stage 4 and post-16 to have access to more challenging courses as soon as they are stabilised and able to leave the site.
- Staff are skilled at enabling students to share any concerns they have and at extending their vocabulary and language. Students who do not have English as first language benefit from this considerably and all students make at least good progress in their speaking and listening skills and in the ways in which they listen to each other.
- Students make good progress in their art and food technology work and this is used as a good basis for applying other skills such as money management or literacy skills. For example, a mini-enterprise project was developed from designing and applying transfers to (tote) bags and a business plan developed, as a result.
- Occasionally students arrive who have particular skills and talents in subjects that the school recognises it cannot support or offer. It uses e-learning approaches (internet-based learning) to support these students. However, it also identifies the need to develop further its links with local schools and colleges and other schools within the company to ensure that students do not lose ground further in these courses and subjects.
- Teachers have a good understanding of what students can do and this is now more formally tracked and checked to ensure that everyone is making enough progress. Not all staff are as good at using this information when they are working with students or at helping students themselves to understand the levels that they are working at and should aspire to.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils****Good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because school and care staff have high expectations of students and consistently apply the behaviour policies. This helps students to feel safe and to manage their own behaviour effectively. Students begin to work effectively together and learn to listen and respond to other's ideas.

- Students understand the school rules well and staff are quick to signal when students violate this, such as using inappropriate language. Students are quick to apologise, however, when this occurs. They behave highly respectfully to staff. Serious behavioural incidents are very rare, despite students' previous difficulties and most improve their attendance quickly so that it is very high indeed. There are no exclusions, either fixed or short term.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good, although they say that sometimes they 'get on with it' rather than enjoy their learning because they know that they have to. In these instances it is because the work they do is not so well matched to their interests or abilities or because they feel they are repeating work they have done at a previous placement.
- Students' understanding of the values and traditions of British life and society are explored well so that students have a good understanding of the responsibilities that come with democracy and the importance of having a view or reflecting upon issue including those that do not directly affect themselves, such as poverty.
- Students enjoy and learn effectively in their off-site provision because this is very closely aligned to their interests and aspirations and post-16 students feel that they are being treated exactly the same as others of their age.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All welfare, health and safety regulations are met and staff are meticulous in recording that the required safety and employment checks have been made. Students are mature in their recognition that their past experiences mean that their safety has to be prioritised. They have a keen sense of fairness and demonstrate empathy for others, for example, as they explore the news.
- They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying including those related to sexual identity, gender, disability and race. Their citizenship and personal social and health education programmes develop their understanding of different values and beliefs well. Students are keen to have more enrichment opportunities such as outings and visits to develop their cultural awareness in more practical ways, but understand that this depends on how well they are doing within their broader therapeutic programmes.
- All the appropriate risk assessments and policies are in place for premises, for activities and for individual students. These are followed carefully by staff and students. The school's curriculum, safe recruitment procedures and staff vigilance, alongside the citizenship programmes all ensure that students are not exposed to partisan or extremist views. They are encouraged to celebrate each other's diversity and say 'we all come from different backgrounds but we also have had similar experiences. We are just us'.

## Leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher and the staff team are equally determined that students will make as much progress as possible, whatever the length of time they spend in the school. They have done well to establish a climate for learning in which almost all time is used effectively and students' attitudes to learning and ambitions are transformed.
- The proprietorial board has ensured that the school meets all the regulations and that it has the resources it needs to do this. Through the monitoring of the school, and reports they receive from staff, the board govern the school effectively. The school development plan rightly reflects the proprietors' and staff team's aspirations that students will achieve even more and have greater choices available to them.

- The headteacher and regional managers have put into place effective systems for monitoring students' progress. They work productively to gather information about students' achievement on entry and at previous schools, although they know, that not all staff use this to best effect when planning work or courses are always chosen to challenge the most able students.
- The regional support team are very clear as to the school's strengths and weaknesses and know exactly what needs to be done. Self evaluation is accurate and rightly celebrates what has been put in place since the school has opened.
- Senior leaders are clear as to the strengths of teaching and new staff have been selected carefully to add to the school's expertise, for example to enable such courses as hair and beauty to be provided in house, if necessary. Teaching by all staff is monitored carefully by regional managers and they are held to account well for students' progress through observations and weekly reports.
- The school works very well with care staff, therapeutic staff and other agencies, such as social care, to secure students' wellbeing and to plan for their next steps. The school is meticulous in keeping students' safe and meets all safeguarding requirements.
- The new teaching arrangements are now enabling the headteacher to have more time to attend case conferences and to visit alternative provisions and colleges. This is strengthening links between school, other agencies and local provision.



## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140227
<b>Inspection number</b>	443036
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6032

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Cambian Group
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ann Spowart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 367 5966
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