

Action for Children Parklands Campus

Bessels Leigh, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX13 5QB

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While the school has made striking progress over the past year, students are not yet achieving their full potential due to inconsistencies in teaching and gaps in the range of subjects offered.
- Not all teachers set sharp enough learning targets to help students build effectively on what they already know, especially in writing.
- Marking is not used consistently in all subjects to help students improve their work.
- The sixth form requires improvement because only recently have students studied a suitable programme of courses.
- The planning of some subjects is not complete. Senior leaders have not drawn up plans for using the pupil premium and not enough time in the school day is given to teaching.
- Although students often display positive attitudes to learning, they do not complete work by themselves often enough to help prepare them for leaving.

The school has the following strengths

- The drive and commitment of the Principal has had a marked impact on improving teaching, achievement and behaviour.
- Staff establish trusting relationships with students which helps many who have failed previously to re-engage with learning.
- Teaching is good for students on the autistic spectrum who have more complex needs.
- The school works in close partnership with parents and carers to support students.
- Links with the community are used well to meet the individual learning needs of students.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons and visited an alternative education provider used by the school. The lead inspector observed lessons jointly with senior staff on previous monitoring inspections.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, a group of staff and groups of students.
- The views of parents and carers were gained by holding telephone conversations with a small number of parents and carers. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the inspector considered the results of the school's own questionnaires it gave out to seek the views of parents and carers.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's plans for improvement, information on students' progress, lesson plans, work in students' books and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Information gathered from previous monitoring visits made since the last full inspection was also considered.

Inspection team

Andrew Redpath, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Action for Children Parklands Campus provides education for secondary-aged students who have behavioural, emotional and learning difficulties. Some students have additional needs associated with an autistic spectrum condition. All students have a statement of special educational needs and almost all are boys.
- The school is owned by the charity, Action for Children, which also runs a children's home on the site which provides residential accommodation for a small number of children who attend the school.
- The school admits students from outside the local area. Currently four local authorities send students to the school.
- Just over half of the students are supported by additional government funding, known as the pupil premium.
- Several students attend part-time at local colleges and at an alternative provider 'Trax', where they complete a range of work-related courses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching and learning by:
 - setting more precise learning targets for students which help them to make progress in small steps
 - teaching writing skills consistently in subjects across the school
 - marking students' work regularly and including more detailed suggestions on how students might improve their work
 - building in opportunities for students to complete tasks on their own in order to develop better learning habits that will prepare them for future placements in college or work
 - sharing the features of good teaching and learning found in some classes more widely.
- Extend opportunities for students to achieve by:
 - ensuring that students receive their full entitlement to 25 hours of education each week
 - checking that all subjects are covered systematically, including personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- Develop further the roles of senior leaders and subject leaders so that they plan and monitor all subjects and areas effectively.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students have made rapid progress over the past year since the last full inspection. Achievement is not yet good because students, particularly the most able, do not reach the expected levels of attainment given their abilities. This is mainly due to previous underperformance and the restricted range of subjects offered by the school.
- Students in Year 11 and in the sixth form gain a mixture of GCSE and Entry Level qualifications in English, mathematics, science, art, information and communication technology and land-based studies. This school programme is complemented well through the vocational qualifications gained at local colleges and at an alternative provider, for example in catering, motor vehicle maintenance and hairdressing. Additionally, several students study musical instruments and gain certificates in musical performance.
- Students are not able to take examination courses in design and technology. Opportunities to study information and communication technology are limited.
- Almost all students enter the school having had interruptions to their education which have resulted in underachievement and lower than expected levels of reading and writing. While students develop their mathematical skills appropriately, their writing is not improving fast enough because it not taught consistently in all subjects. The new leader for English has drawn up good plans for tackling this weaker area.
- Students with complex needs associated with an autistic spectrum condition make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics due to the carefully structured individual learning programmes. Close work with parents and carers ensures agreed approaches are shared and applied consistently.
- The school has recently introduced an appropriate system for checking students' progress and early information shows that all groups are achieving equally. Students who receive the pupil premium are not identified as a specific group for additional support.
- Students who leave at the end of Year 11 are found suitable places either on college courses or in the school sixth form. Students who return to the sixth form follow courses which include the study of English and mathematics, helping them to correct previous underachievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There has been a marked improvement in teaching since the last full inspection. Expectations are higher and there is generally a purposeful climate for learning in lessons. Teaching is not yet good because the best features are not shared across all subjects.
- Teaching is most effective in lessons for students with complex needs. Learning is broken into small steps and students understand clearly what they are learning. Lessons are planned to include a good balance of activities, such as discussion, writing and the use of computer programs. In these lessons, students demonstrate considerable perseverance and stay on task for extended periods of time.
- Students also achieve well in lessons which take account of their interests and where they can learn in a practical way. Good examples were seen in the farm-based learning, the music lessons

and work-related courses at the alternative educational provider.

- Teachers have recently introduced learning targets for students in English, mathematics and behaviour which is helping to improve learning. Targets are sometimes too broad and do not set out in enough detail how students might improve, particularly in their writing.
- The use of marking varies between classes. In the best lessons, work is marked regularly and students are given supportive comments to help them improve their work. In a few lessons, work is not presented well and marking is too brief. The school has recently drafted a marking policy to tackle this weaker area.
- Teaching assistants know students' needs well and often work effectively with students on individual programmes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. It has improved markedly since the last full inspection due in large part to the Principal's 'fair yet firm' approach to dealing with challenging incidents.
- Incidents requiring physical intervention have dropped significantly to a low level and exclusions are now rare. This improvement has been underpinned by such initiatives as weekly 'reflective meetings' which enable students to discuss their progress and behaviour and the popular 'points' system which enables students to earn rewards for effort and achievement.
- Opportunities for students to take responsibility and to share and celebrate each other's successes are underdeveloped. Student representatives report regularly to the governing body and students play an active part in helping to run the school farm. A school council has been established although to date it has met infrequently. While students meet in their form groups, there are few occasions when students share and celebrate successes in a larger group.
- Students generally display positive attitudes to learning in lessons. In some lessons, adults give help too quickly to students rather than expecting them to try and complete tasks on their own. This limits students' ability to develop the resilience and independence they will need in order to succeed when they leave school.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Students report that they feel safe and that any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well by staff.
- The school gives students appropriate guidance and support, particularly for when they leave. A 'well-being' programme covers such issues as cyber-bullying and positive relationships. However, this work is not included in a comprehensive personal, social, and health education programme. The school has suitable plans to improve this area of its work.
- The school works closely with families to follow up any absence. Attendance is slightly below average but shows a trend of improvement.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The calm and determined leadership of the Principal has raised staff morale and established a culture of learning in the school. Students speak highly of the Principal, and say that he 'listens to everybody' and how since his arrival 'the school has settled down.' This view is echoed by parents and carers.
- Leadership is not yet good because while great strides have been made in improving behaviour and teaching, the leadership of subjects is less secure. There are gaps in the provision of some subjects, for example in design and technology, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education.
- The Principal and senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have worked hard since the last inspection to update policies and improve systems across the school. Students' progress in English and mathematics is checked regularly and suitable plans have been drawn up to strengthen the teaching of reading and writing.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and there is an established link between the quality of teaching and salary progression. Staff have received appropriate training in behaviour management, incidents of challenging behaviour are recorded in detail and information is analysed by senior staff to check trends.
- The school has established good links with local colleges and an alternative educational provider to tailor a range of work-related courses to the individual needs and interests of students. These providers are checked to make sure that they offer suitable courses and safe environments.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through music, art and the popular Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which boosts self-confidence and develops teamwork. However, the school does not have in place a systematic programme to teach students about different cultures and faiths and about the role of a citizen in modern Britain.
- Parents and carers recognise how much the school has improved recently. One commented that their child had 'come on in leaps and bounds.' Parents and carers also appreciate how well the school keeps in touch with them about their child's education through telephone contact and home visits.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has established a clear vision for taking the school forward which has been shared with staff. It has been reorganised since the last full inspection and new members have been recruited who bring a broad range of skills and experience. The governing body keeps well informed about the school's work; it receives detailed reports from the Principal, briefings from staff and makes regular visits to the school. It holds monthly meetings to review the school's progress and effectively scrutinises behaviour records and challenges information on students' attainment. Governors receive training in safeguarding and safer recruitment through the Action for Children Charity. They have a good knowledge of financial management and close oversight of the budget. The governing body has ensured that the link between teachers' performance and salary progression is appropriate. However, it does not have a clear understanding of how the pupil premium is being used to accelerate students' progress.

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	123341
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	441666

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Dugmore
Principal	Dr Sean Sweeney
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 March 2013
Telephone number	01865 390436
Email address	parklandscampus@actionforchildren.org.uk

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