

Stag Lane Pupil Referral Unit at Library Buildings

364, Stag Lane, London, NW9 9AG

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Teaching is good overall and improving, with some outstanding practice.
- Students in all years make good progress. Those who receive additional funding make the same progress as other students because of well organised and effective support.
- Teachers and other adults know their students well. Students, including the more able, are challenged to do as well as possible through the high expectations of their teachers.
- Students are well prepared to return to mainstream education. An increasing number have successfully made the transition to mainstream schools.
- The school effectively helps students to improve their attitudes to schooling and their confidence so that they can succeed in mainstream schools.
- The students are generally positive about their learning. They behave well and attend much more frequently than at their previous schools. They feel safe and secure, and they are cared for well.
- Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed leaders have had a significant impact on raising standards of teaching and improving students' progress.
- The management committee provides consistent challenge and support to the school's leadership.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not of a consistently high enough standard to ensure that all students make rapid progress.
- There is occasional variation in the quality of the marking of students' work and the feedback given to them about how well they have done. This means that sometimes students do not know how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons in Year 7 and Year 8. These were joint observations with the headteacher. It was not possible to observe Year 9 lessons since the students were out of school during the inspection. The inspector, instead, looked at a range of books demonstrating their work in English, mathematics, science and a variety of other subjects.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, teachers, pupils and representatives of the management committee and local authority.
- There was no recent survey of parents' and carers' opinions, since they were due to be completed immediately after the inspection. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, (Parent View) for the results to be displayed. The inspector telephoned a sample of parents and carers to ascertain their views. The inspector also looked at the 11 completed staff questionnaires.
- The school's work was observed, including the students' behaviour outside the classrooms. A range of documents was looked at including the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspector checked records of students' progress, behaviour and attendance since their entry to the school as well as monitoring records of the quality of teaching and the students' activities. All records relating to the safeguarding of students were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband

Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for up to 25 students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream education. Its aim is to reintegrate the students back into mainstream education as quickly as possible. Therefore, some students spend no more than one term in the school and very few attend for longer than one year.
- Very few students have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus is below average.
- There are currently no girls attending the school.
- All the students come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A small number of the students speak English as an additional language, but none is at the early stages of speaking English.
- A much-larger-than-average proportion of students are eligible for additional government funding (the pupil premium). This is made available to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after children. All the students in Year 7 are eligible for additional government 'catch-up' funding.
- The headteacher has responsibility, in addition, for the local authority Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit. Stag Lane pupil referral unit is managed on a day-to-day basis by an additional head of unit. Both the leaders have been in post for less than one term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that students make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - making sure that marking and feedback are of consistently high quality so that students have a clear understanding of how to make their work better.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Due to a troubled school history and often poor attendance at previous schools, the attainment of students when they enter the school is generally below average. Many students enter the school at different times during the school year.
- Students in all years make good progress in the relatively short time they spend in the school. Their progress is equal to, and sometimes better, than the rates expected nationally of mainstream students.
- A small but increasing minority, especially the more-able students, make rapid progress. There are not enough students, however, who make the rapid progress which would represent outstanding achievement.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics. Their reading and writing improves significantly during their time at the school, and this gives them the confidence and the skills to make good progress in their other subjects. As a result, they are well prepared to return to mainstream education.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been consistent improvement in the rates of students' progress. This has accelerated over the last few months as a result of improved teaching. The students in all groups, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with additional special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language, make equally good progress.
- Students who are eligible for additional funding, which is virtually every student in the school, make good progress. By the time they leave, most students have almost caught up with levels of attainment expected in mainstream schools. They have successfully narrowed gaps with mainstream students. There are no differences in the rates of progress between these students and others in the school.
- Progress in literacy and numeracy is good. Activities in reading and writing are a key feature of each lesson. Students make good use of the internet to read about and research topics. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, students made good progress in analysing important facts about volcanoes and wrote about them confidently.
- They apply their reading skills to different writing activities. For instance, pupils wrote detailed and sensitive descriptions of pictures of soldiers who were wounded in the First World War as part of their history work.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They receive high levels of extra support from skilled staff and this helps them to improve quickly.
- Additional funding is used successfully to make sure that students who need help with literacy and numeracy catch up quickly with the other students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school with some outstanding practice. The quality of teaching has risen rapidly over the last few months as a result of regular checks by senior staff. This ensures that students in all groups and years, including those who receive additional funding, achieve well.
- Most teachers are specialists in their subjects. They prepare interesting lessons, to which the students respond well, and they have high expectations of the students' success. Students enjoy their learning because it is challenging and well matched to their ability and interests. For example, the students showed great interest, and answered questions thoughtfully and confidently, in a lesson about the dangers of knife crime. As a result, their learning was very good.

- Relationships are positive. Classes are small and students receive a high level of support from adults. Teaching assistants are effective in working with small groups or individuals.
- Adults are skilled in giving explanations and asking appropriate questions to stretch the students and check their understanding. They use questions well to help them to adapt activities and so enhance learning if students are losing interest or are confused.
- Regular checking of students' progress is effective and teachers carefully track each student's achievement. There are daily meetings to assess the students' progress and attitudes. As a result, any underachievement is quickly picked up and appropriate support put in place.
- The marking of students' work occasionally varies in quality. There is appropriate correction of spelling and grammatical errors to help students improve their literacy. However, teachers do not always clearly indicate to students how well they have done in a piece of work or how they can make the work better. Students are sometimes unsure of what to do next to improve further and this can slow down their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The students' behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to adults and respond with interest, and often enthusiasm, in lessons. Disruption to lessons is uncommon. The students generally settle well despite often having a history of challenging behaviour in previous schools.
- Students value good behaviour because, as one student said, 'Here you can learn if you want.' These attitudes have a significant impact on the students' good progress.
- Their behaviour outside the classroom is equally good due to high levels of supervision and the positive relationships the students have with adults and other students. Behaviour in the dining room is mature and sensible. Students play football and basketball happily and cooperatively with other students and teaching assistants when outside.
- Students gain a good understanding of how their behaviour contributes to school life and quickly learn to take responsibility for their own conduct. Parents and carers are very satisfied with the positive changes they see in their children's behaviour while at the unit.
- There is very little bullying and students are confident that any occurrence is dealt with swiftly and effectively. For instance, mobile phones are not allowed in school. The students have a good understanding of different forms of bullying through regular tutorial meetings and personal, health and social education lessons.
- Behaviour is managed well. Students are made clearly aware of the school's rules and possible sanctions. Parents and carers are regularly informed about any good or unacceptable behaviour. Incidents of challenging behaviour have decreased consistently over the last year.
- The behaviour of a very small minority is still causing concern, although the school deals with these students well, making determined efforts to help them improve their behaviour through extra support and counselling.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parents and carers, and students, are satisfied with arrangements. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Students receive effective information, for instance, about knife crime, internet dangers and drug abuse.
- The attendance of most students has significantly improved since joining the unit and, for most students, is above average for the type of school. The school makes determined and generally successful efforts to improve attendance still further.

The leadership and management are good

- The two senior leaders have quickly established a culture of high expectations for both staff and

students. Together, they have made determined and successful efforts to raise the quality of teaching and the students' progress. Staff are positive about the newly constituted leadership and morale is high.

- At present, there are no staff with middle leadership roles, although plans are well advanced to appoint middle leaders to continue the work of checking and improving standards.
- Students' progress is checked effectively. This helps to ensure that all students, irrespective of their special educational needs or ethnic groups, or whether they receive additional funding, make equally good progress. There is no discrimination and all students have an equal opportunity to do as well as they can.
- The work of teachers is regularly and rigorously checked. There has been increasing effective management of teachers' performance since the arrival of the two leaders. As a result, there is clear evidence with which to judge the work of each teacher and procedures are in place to reward good performance, linked to salary increases. All staff receive a good level of further training and professional development to enhance their performance.
- As a result of detailed checks, the school's evaluation of its own success is accurate. There are ambitious plans for development linked securely to improvements in teaching and the students' achievement. Senior staff are, for example, well aware of occasional weaknesses in marking and feedback to students, and have plans to tackle this.
- The management committee and the local authority provide a strong level of challenge and support to the school. There is a good capacity to maintain and build on improvements.
- There is an appropriate range of subjects linked to those found in mainstream schools. This is effective in preparing students to return to mainstream education. Additional funding has been well used to provide extra support for the majority of eligible students.
- Some of the accommodation is poor. For instance, there are very limited facilities for teaching science and food technology. Teachers make up for the deficiencies by adapting activities accordingly and by good teaching.
- There are developing relationships with local secondary schools to facilitate the students' return to mainstream education. Outside professionals such as police liaison officers play a valuable part in helping the students develop awareness and respect for the community.
- Students take part in visits to London landmarks and have interesting trips to places such as a safari park and museums. They are valued visitors to the local retirement home where they help residents.
- The curriculum has a positive impact on the students' academic progress, behaviour and well-being, and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents and carers praised the informative communication they receive from school. They are pleased with the way their children's' achievement and behaviour has improved since joining the school.
- Increasing numbers of students make a successful transition into mainstream education.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The management committee, which includes several local secondary headteachers and a child protection officer, is well informed about the students' progress, including the achievement of those eligible for additional funding, and how it compares with similar schools. The committee examines all aspects of pupils' achievement and teaching, and provides positive challenge to the school's leadership. Its members have a clear role in overseeing performance management. Members are very well informed about, for instance, interpretation of data and child protection. They are up to date with regard to regulations regarding the safeguarding of children.

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	133660
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	439475

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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Hoad
Headteacher	Vivien Dean
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2011
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