

The Polygon School

Handel Terrace, Southampton, SO15 2FH

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- A recent complaint identified a number of issues around attendance, behaviour and safety. While school leaders have begun to address these, some areas have not yet been dealt with effectively.
- Teaching and programmes of support are not effective for all students. Students who do not attend regularly make limited progress.
- School leaders do not consistently check that teaching, support programmes and extra-curricular activities are having a positive impact on students' achievement, attendance and well-being. This is particularly so for those students who are on part-time timetables or who rarely attend.
- The behaviour of some students is not managed effectively. Too many students miss school through non-attendance or exclusion. As a result, they do not make enough progress.
- The pupil premium has not been effectively spent and school leaders have not evaluated its impact on students' progress in enough detail. Plans for allocating this year's funding are not tailored specifically to students' needs.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body, senior leaders and staff know every student well, especially those who attend regularly. They are keen for them to make progress and have put in place a number of programmes of support.
- The students study a wide range of courses, many leading to national qualifications, and participate in a huge range of extra-curricular activities.
- Students who attend school regularly benefit from good teaching. Teachers vary activities to challenge individual students and their detailed marking explains how work can be improved. As a result, these students make good progress.
- The behaviour of students around the school is usually calm and courteous. Staff and students have very positive relationships and students are keen to involve themselves in activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out in response to complaints made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an unannounced inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. The inspector sought to establish whether:
 - safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to students with challenging behaviour
 - suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to students' needs and disabilities
 - staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
 - the school's leaders and the governing body monitor and evaluate behaviour management and safeguarding policy and practice effectively.
- The inspector made short visits to a number of lessons to observe learning and spent time with students during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including those relating to the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, safeguarding and students' assessment, as well as examples of students' work.
- There were 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Questionnaires from 23 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector held discussions with representatives from the governing body, the local authority, staff, groups of students and parents and carers.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All students have a statement of special educational needs relating to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those in care and students known to be eligible for free school meals) is above the national average. In 2013, all Year 11 students were eligible for this funding.
- A large proportion of the students are eligible for the funded Year 7 catch-up programme.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language.
- A very small number of students attend courses away from the main school site for part of the week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teaching, support programmes and extra-curricular activities have a positive impact on students' attainment, progress, attendance and well-being.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there is an effective programme for students on part-time timetables and that their attendance, progress and safety are carefully monitored
 - the governing body understands how extra funding is used and the effect it has on students' progress.
- Improve the management of behaviour so that more students attend regularly, and fewer are excluded, by:
 - providing effective support programmes that engage students in decisions about their learning and are tailored to their individual needs
 - ensuring that the effectiveness of these programmes is properly monitored.
- Improve the progress made by all students by:
 - working closely with the students, their families and the local authority to improve students' attendance
 - ensuring that the work set for those on part-time timetables and those not in school effectively supports their learning.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- 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 leadership and management

require improvement

- A recent complaint raised a number of issues around attendance, behaviour and safety. While attempts have been made to address these, some areas have still not been dealt with effectively.
- School leaders do not check regularly enough that teaching, support programmes and extra-curricular activities are having a positive impact on students' achievement, attendance and well-being. As a result, some students' attendance is poor and, as a consequence, they do not make the progress they should.
- The school's self-evaluation is not robust enough and does not lead to much-needed improvements in students' support.
- School leaders do not manage the behaviour of some students effectively. Some students are asked to stay away from school for extended periods, either on fixed-term exclusions or on alternative study programmes, and as a result, miss lessons. This hinders their progress.
- While there are measures in place to improve attendance, these are not currently effective.
- The support programme for those on part-time timetables or who rarely attend school is not effectively managed. While attempts are made to visit students at home and provide appropriate work, this is not consistent practice.
- The local authority's support for the school is poor. The authority does not help school leaders to manage the behaviour of students with complex behavioural, social and emotional needs. School leaders sometimes find it difficult to get specialist, external support for those students who attend the school for short periods of time. The safeguarding arrangements for these students are not clear.
- Funding for those students eligible for the pupil premium is not used effectively. Current plans do not explain how it will be allocated in 2014/15, how it will impact on students' progress, attainment and attitudes to learning, or how it will be monitored.
- The governing body, school leaders and all staff have very high expectations of the students who attend. They expect students to behave well, engage fully in lessons and respect the school environment.
- Heads of departments work closely with senior leaders to analyse students' performance in their areas and report this back to the governing body.
- The school provides a range of courses, most leading to national qualifications. School leaders have sought some alternative courses for those students who find engaging with school difficult, such as the fisheries management course. School leaders regularly check that students are making progress on these courses and that the quality of education is maintained.
- The school has recently opened a new resource, the Morris House Engagement Centre, to support students who find regular attendance difficult or need more intense, one-to-one support. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the attendance of some students.
- The school's programme of spiritual, moral, social, cultural, health, personal, economic and citizenship education is good. The school has also recently attained an International School Award. Students are encouraged to discuss current issues, for instance by exploring the idea of becoming an 'eco school'. They undertake a large number of extra-curricular activities which encourage them out into the community and help to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Many of these activities, for example skiing trips and adventures in Iceland, rely heavily on the fund raising efforts of the staff and students.
- The school works hard to involve parents and carers in the life of the school. Weekly calls home are made with information about students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Some parents and carers feel very supported by school leaders. All students' individual education plans are monitored regularly.
- The school has fostered strong links with local colleges and gives students good advice and guidance on the next stage of their education.
- The school has a robust system for the performance management of its staff.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors do not challenge the headteacher on how the pupil premium funding has been spent or understand its potential impact on students' progress and attitudes to learning. They do not know how the pupil premium will be allocated in 2014/15.
- Governors generally know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it needs to do to improve students' attendance and progress. They understand the progress students make compared to those in mainstream schools, both locally and nationally. They take their statutory duties very seriously, involve themselves in the day-to-day running of the school, know the students well and are fully

involved in the performance management of senior leaders and other staff. They know how the headteacher rewards good teaching and are not afraid to challenge senior leaders' decisions.

- The governing body is not adequately supported by the local authority.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Attendance overall is poor and has been for a number of years. Some students rarely attend and many do not attend regularly enough. Some students miss days at school because they have been excluded for poor behaviour. Poor attending students make limited progress.
- When students behave inappropriately, they are excluded from school for a fixed number of days. This is seen as a 'last resort', and there has been a decline in these exclusions over the past year. However, the number of days during which students are prevented from attending school is still too high. The staff are trained to deal with challenging behaviour, but it is not always clear how students' complex needs are met, when they return to school following exclusion.
- Those students who attend regularly, especially those in Key Stage 4 and who have been at the school for a number of years, have good attitudes towards their learning. They have very positive relationships with staff and other students, are courteous and supportive towards each other and enjoy coming to school. Minor incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Throughout the inspection, students were keen to talk to the inspector about their positive experience of school.
- During their free time, the behaviour of students in school is very good. They enjoy playing football with the staff, playing games on the computer or talking about their morning over lunch. The atmosphere at these times is calm and purposeful.
- Students say that staff are quick to know when they are feeling unhappy or stressed. They know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling vulnerable. If a student's behaviour becomes unacceptable, other students say that he is appropriately looked after.
- Any minor instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by the staff. Students understand different types of bullying, including cyber, racist and homophobic bullying, and regularly discuss issues to do with discrimination during the breakfast club programme.
- Over time, the school's leaders have developed an extensive system for recording incidents of good and poor behaviour linked to the school's reward system. This is updated daily by all teachers, and students, who are involved in the process, know when they have gained credits. This information is regularly shared with parents and carers.
- Senior leaders check students' behaviour when they are being taught on alternative courses away from the school site, on a weekly basis. These students have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- The parents and carers who responded to Parent View all believe that the school makes sure students are well behaved and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Many students arrive and leave at different times. While they are signed in and out, it is not always clear who is responsible for their safety while they are travelling to and from the school. Some students rarely attend. School leaders have received little support from the local authority to ensure the safety of these students when they are not in school.
- When they are in school, the governing body and the school's leaders work hard to keep students secure. As a result, students say that they feel safe at school. They could explain how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, particularly on social media. All safeguarding arrangements are in place for those on site and meet current legislation.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching of students on part-time timetables is poorly organised. Although work is set for these students, it is sometimes not completed, and teachers do not always provide follow-up activities. Some students do not have access to the online resources the school provides and the school's leaders do not routinely check whether or not students are using them. As a result, part-time students make limited progress over time.
- Teachers know the students who regularly attend school extremely well. Consequently, they are able to respond quickly and effectively to each student's needs throughout the day. Teachers know the level each

student has reached and are able to challenge them appropriately. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher reminded the class how to create a stem and leaf diagram and then set them a problem to tackle. As each student completed the task, the teacher verbally set a more challenging problem. By the end of the lesson, all were confidently doing GCSE level questions.

- Class sizes are small and students get intensive support with their learning across both key stages. Teachers carefully track the progress of students and a range of extra, one-to-one support is available for those who need it. This is effectively overseen by a senior leader who carefully monitors students' attendance levels and the progress they are making.
- Every student who attends school has a weekly session to learn about the social and emotional aspects of learning. Taught by a specialist team in the new Morris House Engagement Centre, students are encouraged to think about their attitudes to learning and the social skills they need.
- All teachers consistently apply the whole-school marking policy. Students' work in books and folders includes detailed comments by teachers. These explain the strengths of the student's work and what he needs to do to improve. There is also evidence of the action taken by students as a result of this advice.
- Teachers are keen to make sure that their assessment of students' work is accurate. Regular meetings are held, both in school and with teachers from other schools, to look at the quality of students' work and check teachers' assessments.
- Students' impressive art work, which is displayed around the school and in a local exhibition, shows their ability to employ a wide range of materials creatively.
- All of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View, believe that their child is well taught at the school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The majority of students arrive at the school with large gaps in their knowledge and understanding, poor attitudes to learning, and some very low starting points relative to most students starting Year 7. Many also have very complex personal, social, emotional and behavioural needs. When they leave at the end of Year 11, very few have made the progress expected of students in mainstream schools and still fewer have attained GCSE or Level 1 qualifications. For many, this is exacerbated by their poor attendance or late enrolment; some students do not join the school until the middle of Key Stage 4. In some cases, the quality of the programmes offered to erratic attendees or those on part-time timetables does not engage them in their learning or meet their individual needs.
- Some students, notably those who join the school in Year 7 and attend regularly, make good progress and attain a good range of qualifications. Work in these students' books shows that they are doing well and responding to teachers' feedback. The students who attend regularly have pride in their work. Their books are well looked after and they work hard on their presentation. Throughout the school, well-kept wall displays celebrate students' achievements and showcase their work.
- A senior teacher has been appointed as the literacy coordinator and there is now a collective focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy. This is already beginning to have an impact on the quality of students' work. For instance, following recent staff training, a consistent, whole-school approach to writing has been implemented. Students have a checklist of things to remember when writing and are encouraged to write in most lessons. Reading for pleasure is given a high priority. There is a well-stocked library, personal reading records that students and teachers complete daily and lots of opportunities for students to read to an adult. As a result, students were keen to talk about their reading during the inspection and read their books aloud.
- Students eligible for additional funding make similar, and often better, progress than other students at the school. However, there is a very large gap between this group and other students nationally.
- School leaders used the Year 7 catch-up funding to run a number of events throughout the summer term and holidays, focused on improving students' literacy and numeracy. This has already had a very positive impact on Year 7 students' attendance.
- The tiny proportion of more able students are offered a range of GCSE qualifications and some achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- The small number of students who attend courses outside school achieve appropriate national vocational qualifications.
- Of those who responded to Parent View, all believe that their children make good 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	116624
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	451814

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	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Clark
Headteacher	Anne Hendon-John
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 September 2012
Telephone number	023 8063 6776
Fax number	
Email address	info@polygon.southampton.sch.uk

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