

The Nexus Education Centre

Lydney Road, Flixton, Manchester, M41 8RN

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

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

- Leaders and managers do not use all the information they have about the quality of teaching and about students' progress to improve these aspects of the centre's work.
- The teaching of reading and writing at both key stages and in the different subjects is not enabling all the students to make the progress they should. Some students with weak skills in reading or writing do not receive sufficient additional help.
- There is a lack of consistency in the systems to check students' knowledge, skills and progress on entry to the centre, while they are there and when they leave.
- This makes it difficult for students, their parents and schools to have a clear picture of the progress they have made while they have been at the centre.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement as it does not ensure that students make good progress over time.
- Students receive insufficient guidance as to how to improve their work and when this advice is given they do not always follow it.
- The work that students are given is sometimes too hard or too easy for them and does not always help them to fill the gaps in their knowledge.
- The centre does not always make the best possible use of the staff's time or ensure that they have the materials they need to help students to make their best progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Not all students understand the importance of regular attendance, of perseverance with their work and of being able to work with other people.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body, the interim executive headteacher and the headteacher have an accurate knowledge of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They have used this information to secure improvements since moving to the current building.
- Leaders have ensured that students and staff from different schools and centres are increasingly working together as a team.
- Students are friendly and polite to staff, to one another and to visitors. Most are keen to learn and behave well in lessons and around the centre.
- The centre ensures that students are safe and that they know how to stay safe. Most students feel safe at the centre and are happy to attend.
- The vast majority of students make good progress in mathematics, science and design and technology because these subjects are taught well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the interim executive headteacher or the headteacher. The inspector also looked at the work in students' books and files.
- The inspector held meetings with the interim executive headteacher, the headteacher, members of the centre's staff and groups of students. She also met with three representatives of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for these to be considered, but the inspector looked at evidence of parents' views provided by the centre.
- The inspector looked at a variety of documents which include minutes of the governing body meetings, information about the performance of staff, records of students' attendance and progress and information about the procedures for keeping students safe.

Inspection team

Liz Godman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The pupil referral unit began taking students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 from September 2013 when it merged with another pupil referral unit and moved to the present site of a former primary school. The headteacher took up her post at the same time.
- The centre can admit up to 32 students at any one time. There are currently no Year 7 or 8 students on roll.
- Most students are of White British heritage. There is a roughly equal mix of boys and girls.
- The number of students who are disadvantaged fluctuates considerably and at the present time is low. These are students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority who are supported by pupil premium funding.
- Some students attend for short periods of time on a 'step out' programme as a result of their behaviour and return to school after several weeks. Others have been permanently excluded from one or more schools.
- The majority of students who attend have been identified as having special educational needs in relation to social, mental and emotional health needs. A few also have difficulties with reading and writing. There are currently no students who have a statement of special educational needs.
- A number of students are taught at home or in a library and some attend the centre on a part-time basis and attend a mainstream school for the rest of the week. Currently no students are attending other external provision.
- Since September 2014, for one day a week the centre is supported by an interim executive headteacher, who is a National Leader in Education and the headteacher of an outstanding pupil referral unit, The Pendlebury Centre in Stockport. She also supports the local authority's other pupil referral unit which caters for students with medical needs.
- The current governing body was formed in September 2013 and oversees both of the local authority's pupil referral units.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - making close checks to ensure that the teaching of reading and writing at both key stages and in the different subjects helps the students to make good progress
 - making greater use of the information gathered through the checks that leaders make in order to improve teaching and to increase the rate of progress made by the students
 - ensuring that the best possible use is made of staff and resources to increase the rate of students' progress.
- Increase the rate of students' progress during their time at the centre by checking their progress and using this information to plan activities by:
 - testing and checking their skills on entry to the centre at both key stages in reading, writing and mathematics
 - using this information to plan and provide additional help, particularly with writing, to any students who need it
 - making careful and ongoing checks on the progress that students make during their time at the centre in all the subjects they study
 - when they leave the centre, checking students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics and in the other subjects, so that the centre, the students and their families, and the schools they are returning to, can be clear about what they are now able to do and the progress they have made.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that the advice given to students when their work is marked makes it clear to them how the work can be improved and by checking that students have followed this advice

- ensuring that the work given to students is neither too hard nor too easy for them and that students who need additional help to improve their skills or to fill gaps in their knowledge receive it
 - making sure that teachers have access to the resources and materials required to meet the students' needs.
- Make sure that all students are prepared for future education and employment by understanding the importance of regular attendance, of perseverance with their work and of being able to work with other people.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have yet to secure consistently good teaching and progress over time.
- Prior to the arrival of the interim executive headteacher, the headteacher successfully led improvements to the building, the move into these premises and the coming together of two staff teams.
- The interim executive headteacher has quickly identified the areas in need of improvement. She and the headteacher have a clear view as to what they expect students to achieve. They also share an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and achievement.
- The interim executive headteacher brings considerable experience of taking the steps needed to improve these aspects and with the headteacher has made an effective start to this work.
- Systems to check students' skills and progress upon arrival, during their time at the centre and when they leave, are not yet consistent in the different subjects or in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that teaching is not as good as it should be and some students do not receive the help they need to make the progress they should, particularly in writing and in developing a wide range of skills in reading.
- The contribution of middle leaders is at an early stage of development. For example, the special educational needs coordinator has made a good start in identifying the needs of students at Key Stage 3 and in helping staff to plan and provide for these needs, but this is less secure at Key Stage 4.
- Since September 2014, the management of the performance of staff is thorough. Performance targets link closely to students' achievement. Accurate checks are made on the quality of teaching, although in the past, the findings have not been used rigorously to improve teaching, but this is improving. A number of staff are eager to use the good opportunities provided for professional development through the links in place with secondary schools.
- The subjects offered provide most students with a secure grounding in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Staff adapt work to match the requirements of the different examination boards.
- However, for some students their weak literacy skills, particularly in writing, mean that they do not do as well in English as their spoken language suggests they should. As a result, full equality of opportunity is not assured for every student.
- The centre provides some good opportunities for students to learn about life in modern Britain. In personal and social education lessons, students learn about different cultures and religions in Manchester, commenting thoughtfully. English lessons enable students to think about moral issues. At lunchtime, students get along well together and take good care of one another. Students contribute their ideas for the running the centre, so gain in their understanding of democracy. This contributes to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the vast majority of students.
- Information from the last two years indicates that students have been well prepared for the next stage in education, training or employment. The majority of those who attend the centre for a short period of time make a successful return to secondary school. Of those who left at the end of Year 11 in 2013 and 2014 almost all are still in training, education or employment.
- The centre takes effective steps to involve and help parents in their children's education. Parents who give a view are very positive about the work of the centre, particularly in improving students' behaviour.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the centre's effectiveness and has acted wisely in employing the interim executive headteacher to give additional and effective support.
- Good use is made of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged students. There is no evidence that the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students differs from that of others.
- The management of resources is generally prudent. However, opportunities are missed at times when student numbers are low to ensure the best use of staff time and expertise, for example in providing focused help to the students who need it or in making closer links with mainstream schools. There is also a lack of books and materials to promote students' skills and enjoyment in reading and to meet the demands of English literature at GCSE.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body have good skills and experience, including in education and safeguarding. They have used these skills well to drive developments since the centre opened in its present premises and to help develop teaching and students' achievement in the secondary curriculum. They understand clearly what remains to be done. They have a good overview of the quality of teaching and with the headteachers have started to develop an effective system for checking the performance of staff, in order to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance. They are well informed about

how the pupil premium is used and to what effect. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet the current government requirements and have taken effective steps to improve the safety and security of the site. They recognise that staff are not always deployed as efficiently as they could be and that some resources are limited, sometimes offering their help to secure the required resources.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Most students are keen to learn and take an interest in lessons. Learning is rarely interrupted by unacceptable behaviour. However, sometimes students require considerable coaxing and ongoing support from an adult in order to persevere with their work, particularly when they believe it is too hard.
- Most students take a pride in their work, but there are examples where presentation is untidy because some students find writing difficult or they scribble over mistakes.
- Sometimes a very few students are taught at home or work by themselves in a room or location away from others, usually by choice or because of their mental health needs. Consequently, at the present time they are not developing the skills they need for the future in order to be able to work alongside others.
- However, most students get along well together and help one another in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. There are good relationships and mutual respect between staff and students.
- The centre's records show that since September 2014, the number of incidents of poor behaviour and the use of fixed term exclusions have dropped considerably, further indicating improving behaviour, both generally and for those with particular needs.
- Information kept by the centre shows that last school year the attendance of the majority of students improved markedly when they joined. However, for a small number attendance did not improve and for a very few it deteriorated. Current students do not all recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality in ensuring completion of the amount of work required for success in GCSEs and in future life.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students say that they feel safe and that staff take good care of them. Clear steps have been taken which have improved the safety and security of the premises and the site.
- Students use equipment safely in practical lessons and know how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Students say that bullying is extremely rare but that they have experienced it before joining the centre. They understand the different forms that bullying can take and know what to do should any occur.
- Staff work closely and effectively with different agencies in order to reduce the risks that students face.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not enabling students to make consistently good progress in the different subjects and classes.
- Teaching enables the majority of students to make good progress in science and mathematics because the work is designed to cover areas where their knowledge and skills are weaker and it is matched closely to GCSE requirements. This is ensuring that students, including the most able, achieve well in these subjects.
- The teaching of English is less effective because the work provided does not always challenge the students to produce work of the same good quality they have already completed in their previous schools. For other students who find writing difficult, the teaching does not enable them to develop the skills they need to be able to record their good ideas in detail and at length.
- Links made in the teaching of design and technology and mathematics give students good opportunities to use their measurement skills accurately to produce well-finished items.
- Personal and social education is taught well and broadens students' knowledge and thinking about the similarities and differences between people living in modern Britain.
- There is a variety of information available as to what students already know and can do but this is not always used well to plan the next steps in learning for all the students or to make sure that the work they are given is neither too hard nor too easy.
- However, there are examples where students are sometimes taught individually, for example in

mathematics or science, when careful checks are made as to their current knowledge and skills and this information is used to plan work which is just right for them. Teaching assistants and learning mentors make a good contribution to the checks on students' learning and in helping them to make progress.

- Suitable use has been made of pupil premium funding to provide disadvantaged students with additional help with GCSE work or reading and to engage a range of agencies to improve their attendance, involvement and behaviour. As a result, there is no marked difference in the achievement and behaviour of these students and others.
- The teaching of the different subjects is also hampered by a lack of resources, particularly high quality and varied reading materials to enable students to read for a variety of purposes and for enjoyment. Similarly there is a lack of resources suitable for students who have special educational needs and who need carefully planned teaching of reading or writing.
- Students' work is usually marked or checked during the lesson. However, teachers' comments and advice do not always make it clear to the students what they have to do to improve their work or to gain a higher grade. In some cases, no follow-up checks are made to make sure that the students have responded to advice and made the necessary improvements.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the rate of students' progress is inconsistent over time and in the different subjects.
- The centre's arrangements for checking students' progress vary from subject to subject and in the different key stages. Consequently, the centre does not have a clear view of the progress of each student from entry, while in the centre and when they leave.
- This also means that some students who find reading and writing difficult do not receive the help they need as soon as they arrive at the centre.
- However, students who have special educational needs associated with social, mental and emotional health needs make good progress in improving their behaviour, which in turns helps them to make good gains in skills and knowledge in the different subjects.
- Students arrive at the centre with a wide range of skills, but the majority have skills in reading, writing and mathematics lower than those expected.
- Results at the end of Year 11 in 2014 show that the majority of the small number of students who were on roll gained GCSEs in English and mathematics and in a number of other subjects including science.
- No students are entered for GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11.
- The centre's current students are making good progress in mathematics and science but their progress in English requires improvement. Students are able to apply their mathematical knowledge well in different contexts, for example, in science and design and technology.
- For some students their progress in English is affected by their weak skills in writing and a lack of support to help them overcome these difficulties.
- Most students are able to read fluently, but there is a lack of resources and opportunities for students to read for a wide variety of purposes and for enjoyment.
- When students join the centre, every effort is made for them to continue studying subjects they have already started. This affords students success in work-related subjects, such as qualifications in health and social care.
- It also ensures that almost all students remain in education or training when they leave school, for example by going on to gain qualifications in food or motor vehicle maintenance.
- A number of the most able students make good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- The numbers of disadvantaged students are small but there is no difference in their attainment and progress and that of others, particularly as students' special educational needs and behaviour are also a major influence on how well they do.

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	134046
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	447773

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	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dawn Farrent
Headteacher	Linda Bennion
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2012
Telephone number	0161 912 1479
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