

The Bridge School

Heath Road, Ipswich, IP4 5SN

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership and management, including effective support from governors, have provided well-targeted training for teachers that benefits pupils. Consequently, pupils experience a wide range of subjects and therapies matched to their individual stage of development.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe by interpreting symbols of danger.
- Teaching is good. Therapists plan specific strategies to support pupils in calming down when they become anxious in lessons. Relevant activities and a focus on promoting communication typify teaching.
- Pupils make good progress in English (communication) and mathematics. Assessments are used successfully to improve individual achievement.
- Pupils experience tolerance of other faiths and cultures as they participate in multi-cultural days.
- Children in the early years make good gains, particularly in communicating their needs and personal development. Many return to mainstream settings.
- By Year 11, pupils are well prepared for their next stage. They develop good life skills within their capability.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Challenge in the use of questions is sometimes inconsistent in teaching.
- On occasions, teaching assistants move in too quickly to support pupils rather than giving them space to complete an activity themselves.
- In the early years, it is not always clear that the recorded evidence, usually photographs, refers to a skill that children have mastered or one that still needs developing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited twelve lessons taught by twelve different teachers across both sites. Eight of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work across the school in lessons jointly with senior leaders. They also listened to pupils read in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders and other members of staff. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and the governor who leads on safeguarding children. Informal discussions were held with pupils. In addition, a meeting was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents, including those relating to pupils' academic and social progress, school self-evaluation, curriculum and assessment and keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors took account of 16 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View) and also looked at the school's recent parental survey. Inspectors also looked at 72 Ofsted questionnaires returned from staff.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Bridge School provides for pupils aged 2 to 16 with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorder. A number of pupils also have additional medical conditions, including epilepsy and mental health difficulties.
- There is an assessment Nursery where children are placed by the local authority and attend two days a week. It therefore caters for different children throughout the week. These children will be the first to receive educational, health and care plans this term.
- All statutory school aged pupils have statements of special educational need.
- The school is on two sites nine miles apart, the primary school site and the secondary school site. There is one headteacher.
- Pupils are a mix of dual registered (meaning that they are mainly registered on the roll of this school as well as being on the roll of the mainstream school) and solely on the roll of this school.
- Some pupils spend between one and three days in a mainstream school each week and the school successfully re-integrates many early years children and a few primary-aged pupils back into mainstream schools.
- There are significantly more boys on roll than girls.
- Most pupils are in the primary school; it is an expanding school. The secondary school is smaller and the needs of the pupils are more complex.
- An above average proportion of pupils receive the pupil premium, the additional government funding for those eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by their local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the number of pupils from homes where families speak English as an additional language.
- The school serves a large geographical area and some pupils have long journeys to and from school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- A new purpose built primary school is due to open on the same site as the current secondary school in September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects, so as to raise achievement, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use challenging questions in lessons and give pupils the opportunity to communicate a response by gesture, signing or speaking a word
 - teaching assistants do not move in too quickly to support pupils but give them space to complete the work themselves.
- Improve the evidence of what children in the early years achieve by:
 - making it clear through annotations the skills that children are beginning to develop
 - sharing with parents and carers how they can develop these skills with their children at home
 - celebrating the skills mastered by children by including a statement to that effect under the photographs.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Governors and senior leaders have created a nurturing learning culture where each pupil has an equal chance to develop personally and achieve good communication skills.
- Senior leaders monitor the impact of teaching effectively. Based on these checks, teachers receive training and most respond enthusiastically and improve their practice. In a few instances training has not yet had the impact required.
- Leaders understand their school. Analysis is well used to set targets for improvement. For example, following investigation of resources available to facilitate communication, an investment was made in new equipment. This benefited pupils because they became less frustrated when they made their needs known and behaved better.
- Assessment of learning is used effectively to set pupils individual learning outcomes, thus enabling them to succeed.
- Subject leadership has improved since the last inspection. Subject leaders have taken recent changes to the national curriculum and modified them to support pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Flexibly planned and highly personalised, it moves pupils on to new learning from a wide range of starting points.
- Leadership of the early years, in partnership with speech therapists, enables a significant number of children to be successfully re-integrated to mainstream school, equipped with communication and behaviour management skills to succeed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' awareness of spirituality is achieved by teaching pupils to distinguish between a sad and happy face and through experiencing calmness. Many strategies are used to promote calmness and remove anxiety, such as clothing that is comfortable through to the security of sitting on specialist cushions. Through experience of tasting foods from different cultures, pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is developed.
- British values of tolerance and liberty are explored through pupils learning to come out of themselves and participate in team activities. For many, getting on together in an activity is a milestone of tolerance. Celebrations in school show that pupils are responsive to rewards for doing the right thing. When they do the wrong thing, staff successfully deploy a range of strategies to help pupils come round to making the right choice next time.
- Leaders are aware of pupils' vulnerability, particularly in terms of sexual exploitation and extremism. They provide specific support for individual pupils. Therapists support educational staff in preparing specific educational programmes based on what individuals require to keep safe.
- Partnership with parents is good. Parents say that they are well supported in helping their children communicate. They are pleased with the training the school gives them in managing their children's behaviour.
- The local authority supports the senior leadership in planning the new school build. It challenges the senior leaders about pupils' performance. A recent glitch in the provision of a teacher to work off-site with pupils who have mental health difficulties has been resolved. Support from human resources in helping the governors manage staffing issues, when required, is effective.

The governance of the school:

- Governors support senior leaders with the preparation for moving into a new primary build. They keep a close eye on the budget. Governors contribute to checking the school's accuracy about how well it is doing. They help the school to improve further, asking tough questions about how teaching and pupils'

progress can be better. Governors review the impact of their work.

- Governors think creatively about how national curriculum changes can be further modified for the pupils. They understand that only effective teachers can be rewarded. There is an agreed approach to checking how well the headteacher performs, and with support from the local authority, governors set targets aimed at improving students' achievement.
- The governing body ensures that legal requirements for safeguarding are met. Child protection procedures are robust. Their risk assessments of specialist resources and of pupils' behaviour are good.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the spending of pupil premium funding, Year 7 catch-up funding and primary sport funding. They are working on a policy of how to best promote British values in the context of working with pupils with complex needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have challenging behaviours, reflecting their difficulties. However, their behaviour is managed effectively and so they mostly concentrate in lessons and usually show positive attitudes to learning.
- Rigorous behaviour plans impact on pupils' good learning. When pupils wander off task, they are quickly brought back and re-engage with learning.
- Special attention is paid to helping pupils overcome obsessions that can be an obstacle to learning. Classrooms are organised to sit pupils away from distractions. Therapists advise staff on what to do to help pupils overcome anxiety and focus on learning.
- Specially adapted furniture enables pupils with physical difficulties to sit comfortably and reach equipment required to learn.
- There are no racist or other bullying incidents recorded. There are no exclusions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Risk assessments are thorough. For example, the safety of slings and hoists are checked regularly. Visitors to the school are carefully vetted to keep pupils safe. Trips out of school are checked for safety. Parents say that their children are safe. Through smiles and gesture pupils indicate they feel safe.
- Pupils are greeted off buses in the morning and escorted into school to keep them safe. As they are driven away at the end of school, they have seat belts on.
- Much work is done to encourage pupils to keep themselves safe. They begin to learn the symbols for road safety. Supported by adults, they travel on public transport, paying careful attention to safety through learning sight vocabulary. Through outdoor pursuits they learn about using safety harnesses and helmets when rock climbing.
- Attendance is average. Most pupils attend regularly and this contributes to their good achievement. Most absence is linked to stays in hospital.

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Samples of pupils' work, photographic evidence, the school's progress data and visits to observe learning in lessons contribute to this judgement.
- Throughout the school, the teaching of English (mainly communication) and mathematics is good, as is teaching in the early years.
- Assessment based on pupils' prior learning is used to set pupils' specific learning outcomes to help them

make good progress. Pupils engage with different activities in the same class according to their next step of development.

- Teaching focuses on developing pupils' communication and life skills. For example, in cooking lessons pupils learn how long a cake needs to bake, read instructions using symbols and words, and measure ingredients. Teaching makes a valuable contribution to pupils' basic skills. Literacy, primarily communication, and numeracy pervade the teaching of topics and subjects.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and planning are good, as is their understanding of a wide range of special educational needs within their classes. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and contribute to magical moments of learning such as a pupil expressing 'I want' for the first time or sounding out the name of a teacher accurately.
- Overall, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Occasionally, they do not always give pupils sufficient time to complete a task, moving in too quickly to offer support. This slows pupils' learning.
- Sometimes teachers do not use challenging enough questions to move pupils forward in their learning. On such occasions, teachers do not ask questions to allow pupils to respond by gesture, pointing or speaking a word.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children in the Nursery make good progress from low starting points and some make such rapid progress that they move to permanent places in mainstream schools.
- Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Attainment is different for each pupil because of their different needs but each individual makes good progress in relation to their complex needs and disabilities.
- Progress in reading is good. For some this means recognising signs, while for others, it means reading letters of the alphabet. Progress in writing is good, but attainment is variable. Some make a mark, others can write the letters of their name and the more able can sequence a sentence using wooden letter shapes. Mathematics progress, also good, ranges from pupils being able to follow a straight line with their eyes to those who can do simple addition sums.
- Progress is good for the most-able pupils. These pupils can read text in front of an audience with confidence, expressing words with clarity and can write a shopping list with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The most-able children in the Nursery can do aspects of mathematics close to their peers in mainstream and use their tablet computers to communicate well.
- By Year 11, pupils gain life skills and are well equipped for their next step. They gain nationally recognised qualifications in physical education, science and art alongside ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Transition Challenge. For these students, this demonstrates good progress from their starting points.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding and minority ethnic pupils. Year 7 pupils supported by catch-up funding make the same good progress in communication as their peers.
- Supported by the primary school physical education and sport funding, some pupils make the same good progress in physical education as their peers in mainstream schools. This funding also enables pupils with physical disabilities to make good progress because it funds specialist equipment, like modified bicycles for them, and so enhances their physical development.
- The school's therapist programmes make a positive contribution to pupils' good achievement. For

example, pupils are supported in eating and sleeping better. Pupils progress from pureed foods through to solid foods with a range of textures and develop bedtime routines that calm them for a good night's rest. This means they are ready to learn when they arrive at school.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Most children being assessed in the Nursery have autistic spectrum disorder and a few have global delay. On entry, their skills and abilities are below those expected for children of their age.
- Supported by a speech therapist, children make good progress in communication. From having few or no boundaries on entry, they make good progress in their behaviour. Although they make good progress, children gain less ground in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world due to their autistic spectrum disorder compared with their mathematical and physical development. Many make rapid gains and become ready to learn in a mainstream school. Those who progress to Reception in this school are likely to be below expected levels when they start in Year 1.
- Teaching and assessment are good. Suitably structured sessions support children's speaking and recognition of number and counting. Through organised play they discover the world and develop personal and social skills.
- Staff work well with parents. However, the learning journals used to share children's progress with parents do not always make sufficiently clear whether the skill being shown is an emergent skill or one fully mastered. The annotations of children's work and/or photographs of their achievements do not always help parents in developing that skill with their children further at home.

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	124909
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	447966

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Illott
Headteacher	Odran Doran
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2012
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