

New Leaf Centre

Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Walsall, WS4 1NG

Inspection dates 29–30 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In this school, students make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are thoroughly planned. Activities are related to students' everyday life where possible so that their interest is captured. Staff set good examples of courtesy and respect.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Behaviour improves over time as students develop trust in staff. Students feel safe and say that any concerns they may have are dealt with sensitively.
- Leaders and managers, including the management committee, are effective in ensuring that staff focus on students' achievement and teaching so that these are improving.
- Staff ensure programmes of study are relevant and meet students' needs well. Consequently, learning and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are supported effectively.
- The management committee, with local authority support, understands the school well, holding it to account effectively. Consequently, the school is improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Regarding attendance, the school does not fully evaluate the effectiveness of interventions on different groups of students in order to target strategies more precisely.
- Teachers do not always fully deploy other adults in lessons well enough. Marking in Key Stage 4 mathematics does not consistently show students how to improve. Both inhibit progress from being outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.
- They observed nine lessons: seven taught by five different teachers on the main site, and two lessons on two different off-site settings. Break and lunchtime arrangements were observed on the main site.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and staff, including senior staff and subject leaders. Discussions were held with a manager at each of the two off-site venues visited.
- A meeting was held with members of the management committee and a telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) to show results. However, the inspectors spoke to two parents at their request in school, heard the views of a parent member of the management committee, and looked at the results of a school questionnaire for parents.
- One inspector had a meeting with a group of students on the main site. The other inspector had discussions with students in an off-site setting.
- Thirteen staff questionnaires were analysed representing the views of senior staff, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents including policies and records concerning safeguarding, assessments of students' progress, records of attendance, and evidence of the school's monitoring of teaching and its management of staff performance.

Inspection team

Michael Farrell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector

Full report

Inspectors were aware that at the time of the inspection, investigations were taking place by the local authority into an alleged safeguarding incident.

Information about this school

- The New Leaf Centre educates students with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties but who do not have a statement or Education, Health and Care Plan. All students have been permanently excluded from other schools.
- Of the 84 students on roll at the time of the inspection, 54 are taught at nine sites either full time or part time. Where students are taught part time at any of the venues, the remainder of their week is spent at the main site.
- Many students start at different times of the year to the regular term starting dates and they stay for differing lengths of time.
- The off-site provision and the number of students at each provided for at the time of the inspection was as follows: the Electric Palace, Walsall where seven students are taught full time; Nova Training, Walsall which educates four students part time; Walsall College of Further Education which educates 13 students full time; Peak Pursuits, Nantwich, Staffordshire, which provides for 10 students for varying amounts of time ranging from one day a week to full time; Bloomfield College a specialist school in Tipton, West Midlands which educates one pupil full time; Brown Hills School, Walsall where two students attend full time; Shelfield Community Academy, Walsall educating four students full time; Multi-Media Arts Performance, Walsall educating five students part time and Elite Training, Derby where eight students are educated part time.
- The school does not receive any Year 7 'catch-up' funding.
- Approximately 80% of students receive pupil premium funding which is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority. This proportion is well above average. This year the school has a small number of students looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a breakfast club attended by a small number of students.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher retired and there have been several interim headteachers. The current acting headteacher has been in post since September 2014. In 2013/14 there were staff changes, for example because of illness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by precisely defining the range of strategies and interventions used to encourage attendance, evaluating the impact of these on different groups, and targeting specific interventions more effectively using this information.
- Improve students' progress and achievement by ensuring:
 - teachers always fully deploy other adults working in the classroom
 - marking of students' work in Key Stage 4 mathematics consistently shows students how to improve their mathematics skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers, supported by staff, have created a culture in which good teaching and behaviour are encouraged. Effective leadership of teaching ensures it is good and improving.
- Subject leaders effectively promote progress in their area, closely involving other subjects. English planning ensures that other subject lessons include opportunities to read.
- Through a period of change, the school has maintained the good student achievement and rectified a dip in behaviour last year.
- The school closely monitors off-site provision, including students' progress, behaviour and attendance, holding providers to account well.
- Accurate school self-evaluation links with future plans and identifies the right priorities.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are clear and are fairly applied so that staff speak of, 'really effective appraisal'. Targeted training ensures staff are effective in their roles.
- Advice and careers guidance focuses closely on students' needs helping them to make suitable choices for training, education and work.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Procedures to keep students safe are effective. Staff are trained to identify students at risk of harm and to take necessary action.
- Effective local authority support including regular evaluation visits has helped sustain standards.
- Carefully chosen programmes of study challenge and interest students, promoting academic achievement well. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain through activities such as discussing news issues and learning about respect and equality. Activities such as African inspired art and Jamaican cooking effectively promote cultural development.
- The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity. It monitors academic progress, taking effective steps if any student is at risk of falling behind. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- A good majority of parents express positive views of the school and are kept properly informed of developments, for example through the school web site.
- Strong links with other schools, colleges and partners enhance provision. The wide range of off-site venues provide motivating experiences for students. This provision is carefully monitored and supported to ensure good value for money.
- Pupil premium funding is effectively used, providing individual tuition and extra classes to boost achievement. The impact is carefully monitored.
- The school monitors attendance and has a range of strategies to improve it but does not analyse this attendance data rigorously enough. It does not know which strategies work for particular groups, such as boys and girls and students in different key stages, so missing opportunities to target its interventions more effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the management committee, supported well by the local authority, hold the school to account effectively, having a clear overview of the provision and its finances. Through receiving reports and school visits, members know that achievement and teaching are good. They are aware that behaviour is good through receiving a range of information, but recognise that attendance is too low. The appraisal of the present, newly appointed headteacher is underway. Maintaining oversight of the management of the performance of other staff members ensures that good work is rewarded and underperformance addressed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The calm breakfast club provides a settled start to the day.
- In the school's positive atmosphere, students behave well in lessons and at other times.
- Behaviour at the off-site venues is good because the activities and courses capture students' interest.
- Responding to last years' dip in students' behaviour, the school identified triggers such as long lunchtimes and shortening these led to improvements.
- Students say that the small groupings help their good behaviour. A good majority of parents express positive views about students' behaviour. Staff too say behaviour is good.
- Students arrive at lessons on time and ready to work because this is what staff expect. Low-level disruption is uncommon.

- Recognising the importance of good attitudes to learning and behaviour, students show pride in their work and in its presentation, and keep the school tidy.
- Attendance is improving but still low. The school monitors attendance carefully but does not identify which interventions are most effective with different groups so is unable to focus its efforts precisely.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- In lessons, safety procedures are scrupulously followed such as the use of goggles, gloves and aprons in a Year 9 science lesson using chemicals.
- Students at the main site and at one of the off-site venues say that they feel safe and trust staff knowing that they can speak to them about any concerns. The majority of parents are confident about their child's safety. Staff know the systems to help ensure safety and are confident students are safe.
- Students know about different types of bullying including through social media. They say it is rare and that they would speak to a member of staff if any occurred and know that something would be done. This is helped because, as a student at an offsite setting said, 'students get on well with staff'.
- Students know about keeping safe in different situations and are especially aware of the risks posed by aspects of the internet. They are not as confident in explaining how to keep safe on roads and by water.
- Particularly vulnerable students are well cared for and make improvements, for example in attendance.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Staff create a positive climate for learning through building trusting relationships with students.
- Teaching in literacy and reading is related closely to students' experiences and they make good progress. In mathematics activities are well structured and relevant and progress is good.
- Teaching is good both on-site and at off-site venues. At one off-site venue students in Years 9 to 11 achieved well examining vocational 'taster' opportunities. Small assessment steps reassured students that they were progressing well.
- Teachers convey high expectations of academic progress, for example by posing challenging questions in lessons so that students try their best.
- Teachers set high expectations of behaviour, setting good examples of courtesy and respect.
- Staff plan lessons with care and ensure lessons are interesting so that students' knowledge is extended and their skills developed well. In a food preparation lesson, Years 8 and 9 students were eager to start the practical cooking. The teacher captured their interest with a well-planned introduction using photographic slides to highlight differences between English and Caribbean daily life. Consequently, students made good progress in developing their understanding of this.
- Teachers use effective ways to meet students' needs, such as planning individually to build on students' interests and skills so that students learn well. In a mathematics lesson for Year 11 students, the notion of a 'formula' was effectively introduced through first discussing formula 1 racing and milk formula.
- Teachers assess students' learning regularly and accurately so students can see how well they are doing. This helps students understand where to focus their efforts to develop their learning further.
- Teachers and other adults in the classroom work closely together and teaching assistants contribute to students' progress, helping students to focus on their work, and questioning them to check understanding. Sometimes, teachers do not deploy other adults fully so that students' progress is inhibited from being outstanding.
- The best marking of students' work shows them how they can improve. The marking in Key Stage 4 mathematics does not always do this, inhibiting progress from being outstanding where this occurs.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with low levels of attainment. Students entering in Year 10 are on average over four and a half years behind average levels in reading and students entering in Year 11 nearly five and a half years behind. Although students make good progress and achieve well, attainment, including that of disadvantaged students, remains below average when they leave school.
- Compared with other students in the school, disadvantaged students, including those eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, attain at similar levels in English and mathematics in both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- From their different starting points, students make good progress in English and mathematics and a range

of other subjects, as indicated by school assessment information, students' books and progress in lessons.

- Students develop skills in literacy, numeracy and communication well. In a GCSE English lesson, Year 11 students made good progress in analysing newspaper headlines and advertisements, being absorbed by the topic and trying their best.
- Students read often and with increasing confidence and understanding because the school provides many opportunities and students recognise the importance of improving their reading.
- The school meets the individual needs of students effectively. Students' learning is good and helped by individualised approaches. In an art lesson, Year 9 students made good progress in producing chalk drawings and other work in a range of styles and colours stimulated by examples of Tanzanian art. Individual planning helped ensure each student was challenged well.
- Students achieve well whether they are educated on-site or at the off-site venues. In a lesson for Years 10 and 11 students in an off-site venue, learners made good progress in researching opportunities to start businesses and general entrepreneurship. Encouraged by the teacher, students were enthusiastic in their discussions.
- No students in the school reach high levels at the end of Key Stage 2. Comparatively more-able students in the school achieve well because they are challenged to aim for suitable levels and examinations. The school does not enter any students early for GCSEs.
- Students' achievement is not outstanding because teaching is good rather than outstanding, and the weaknesses in teaching and marking inhibit progress from being outstanding.

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	134523
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	447986

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Alan Poole
Headteacher	David Wadkin MBE
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 May 2012
Telephone number	01922686330
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