

# Cumberland School

Church Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6EP

**Inspection dates** 16–18 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding school

- Students who have previously been disaffected with education attend school regularly and enjoy their education.
- Students enter the school with standards which are mostly well below those expected for their age. They make rapid progress towards nationally expected standards.
- The quality of teaching is often inspirational and highly motivating for students.
- Students' reading, communication and numeracy skills improve strongly as a result of a shared emphasis in all subject areas. However, there is not a consistent focus on the improvement of handwriting.
- Students make outstanding progress in the management of their behaviour, overcoming any barriers to achievement.
- The school provides a safe environment for learning because leaders and managers implement rigorous arrangements for safeguarding students.
- All staff are fully informed about students' individual strengths and learning needs due to exemplary tutor group arrangements. As a result, the cooperative work of teachers, teaching assistants and therapists has a strong impact on students' achievement.
- The proprietor's representatives provide an excellent balance between support and challenge for school leaders and staff. They ensure that the quality of teaching promotes outstanding achievement.
- Senior leaders' ambitions for students' achievement are shared by all staff, who motivate students to have high expectations of themselves.
- Arrangements for the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment are exemplary. The school provides extensive opportunities for continuous staff training.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met securely.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed students' learning and looked at samples of their work in each subject area and age group. The observation of learning was undertaken jointly with the headteacher. These observations included a visit to the school's off-site vocational centre.
- Students' responses to a recent questionnaire were considered together with informal conversations with a number of students. Consideration was also given to 29 questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into account. The inspector took account of parents' responses to a recent school questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Conversations were held with members of the proprietor's management board, senior leaders and staff with a variety of management responsibilities.

## Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cumberland School is located in the premises of a former primary school in Bamber Bridge on the outskirts of Preston in Lancashire.
- The school provides full-time education for up to 70 students in the age range 11 to 18 years. Currently, there are 60 boys and girls on roll, aged between 11 and 16 years. There are no post-16 students on the roll of the school at present.
- Students are admitted to the school as a result of their emotional, social and mental health difficulties. A small number have autistic spectrum conditions. All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Approximately one third of current students are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school uses the services of seven alternative centres to provide vocational education for individuals or small groups of students. Students currently attend vocational training courses at BDS Hair and Beauty, CWP Creative Works Preston, CAST North-west and The Princes Trust.
- All students in Key Stage 4 have the option to study accredited training courses in motor mechanics or construction at the school's vocational centre in Skelmersdale.
- The school was last inspected in March 2012 when it was judged to be good for the quality of education overall.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement effective arrangements to improve the quality of students' handwriting consistently across all subject areas.
- Ensure that the exemplary practice in assessment and improvement of students' work is shared widely across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Senior leaders and staff share an ambitious vision for what students who were previously alienated can achieve. They continuously promote the belief that disadvantaged or disaffected students can close the gaps in their learning and achieve well.
- Senior leaders and staff demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity for all students. Consistent implementation of school policies ensures there is no discrimination and that all students have a sense of belonging to the school community.
- Senior and middle leaders work very effectively together to identify areas for improvement. The school's plans for improvement focus on raising students' achievement and are implemented rigorously. Middle leaders contribute strongly to the development and implementation of policies in subject areas and pastoral teams.
- Members of the proprietor's management board work closely with school leaders to identify priorities and to ensure that agreed targets are met.
- Senior leaders have ensured that all students have access to a suitable range of learning experiences, including academic qualifications and vocational training in a number of routes to employment. All students who left the school in 2014 were provided with suitable careers guidance to support them successfully through the transition to courses in further education. Similar arrangements, including appropriate liaison with students' placing authorities, are in place for all current Year 11 leavers.
- The attendance and achievement of students placed with alternative providers are monitored and reported regularly. The school has established strong working relationships which ensure that senior staff are continuously aware of the quality of contribution made by these providers.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted throughout the curriculum and in the outstanding relationships that exist in tutor groups for students in each year group. Staff act as exemplary role models, combining respect, humour and patience in their consistent implementation of the school's expectations.
- Students are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain, for example through the citizenship curriculum, including their awareness and understanding of diversity in the local and wider communities.
- The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. The safeguarding policy has been checked on the school's website for compliance with paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(c) of the independent school standards.
- Senior leaders make sure that all aspects of health and safety are checked regularly and diligently, including the assessment of risk and excellent routines to ensure fire safety.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The management board has an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching, and how this contributes to students' outstanding achievement.
  - Governors understand the nature of students' barriers to learning and support school leaders in promoting high expectations of students' achievement.
  - Governors have achieved an outstanding balance between their support for school improvement and the need to hold leaders and staff to account for the quality of their work.
  - They have put in place exemplary arrangements for continuous checks on the school's work.
  - Appropriate targets are agreed for the performance of each member of staff and outstanding contributions are rewarded appropriately. Staff have access to a wide range of training, including opportunities to improve their professional qualifications.

- Senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school regulations continue to be met. They demonstrate excellent capacity for continued improvement.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding and makes a strong, positive contribution to the quality of their learning.
- Students are placed at the school because they have previously experienced difficulties with their behaviour, attendance or attitudes to school. The majority have been excluded from previous schools or were at risk of exclusion.
- Students adjust to the expectations of the school, making rapid improvements in their behaviour and attitudes. They engage positively in the learning activities and tasks provided for them; cooperation and interest are the norm in classrooms and practical learning areas. This results largely from the high expectations set by staff.
- Students demonstrate respect for staff and follow instructions appropriately. There are very few disruptive incidents which interfere with the learning of others. Staff are skilled at managing any potential incidents; they are extremely well-informed about students' anxieties and any day-to-day concerns which may influence their behaviour.
- Parents, carers and staff recognise that students are placed at the school because of their social and emotional difficulties. Most state that any incidents are managed well and that the behaviour of students improves strongly over time.
- Students behave extremely well and demonstrate high levels of self-discipline around the school at breaks and lunchtimes. Students' behaviour in the dining room is civilised and responsible, characterised by respectful conversations between students and adults.
- School records demonstrate excellent improvements over time in students' behaviour and attitudes to school. Similarly, reports from alternative providers confirm students' excellent behaviour and cooperation.
- Students' attendance shows strong improvement over their time in the school; the attendance of the great majority is in line with the national average. Staff work very effectively with parents, carers and external agencies to address the attendance of a small minority of persistent absentees.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is embedded strongly across each area of learning. Students develop their self-esteem and confidence and demonstrate this, for example, in their openness with visitors to the school.
- Students benefit from a number of opportunities to develop their understanding and appreciation of services and institutions in the local and wider areas. For example, they have visited museums, football clubs, and unfamiliar towns and cities. They welcome visitors who contribute effectively to their awareness of the dangers of risk-taking behaviour and unsafe lifestyles. Students have benefited enormously from carefully chosen individual projects such as a placement with The Princes Trust.
- Students contribute effectively to the local community, for example through making and distributing hanging baskets, organising charitable coffee mornings, and taking part in local sports competitions.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards related to students' welfare, health and safety are met.

- Students have an excellent understanding of the different forms of bullying from their work in a variety of subject areas. The school gives excellent attention to students' emotional well-being and any incidents are dealt with robustly and appropriately.
- Students are safe in school and when attending alternative provision. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe through, for example, work about substance abuse, child exploitation and on-line protection.
- Senior leaders ensure that arrangements for staff recruitment and training, risk assessment, first aid and premises safety are implemented rigorously and continuously.
- The staff ensure excellent and appropriate levels of supervision at all times.

### **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress with their learning as a result of exceptional teaching. Staff provide a wide range of stimulating and demanding experiences which enable students to achieve more than they previously thought possible.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' achievement and this is evident in the level of challenge in the work set. Students are also expected to sustain their concentration and complete tasks thoroughly. They respond positively and make outstanding progress, illustrated for example, by their pride in extracting DNA from peas in a science experiment.
- Teachers make sure that the learning activities provided for students build effectively on their previous knowledge. They are skilled at ensuring that each student's work extends their learning and increases the depth of their understanding. Students, for example, chose previous examinations questions at individually appropriate levels to extend their understanding of quadrilaterals.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' skills in questioning are outstanding. Students are challenged to deepen their understanding, extend their skills and justify their answers. For example, students responded with enthusiasm and sensitivity when discussing the features of a mosque in preparation for a visit; and in exploring the characters during a drama session based on the story of the *Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Aesthetic and creative activities are used very effectively to engage students' imagination and deepen their self-awareness.
- Outdoor and off-site locations are used very effectively to extend the range and variety of learning activities. Students enjoy activities such as indoor rock climbing and a number of appropriate visits are planned to provide first-hand learning experiences. The school's dedicated vocational centre provides outstanding opportunities for students to study accredited courses in motor mechanics and construction.
- Teaching assistants work very effectively alongside teachers. Responsibilities are shared appropriately and teaching assistants are skilled at extending students' learning through well-judged questioning and encouragement to think more deeply. For example, students in an information technology lesson were individually challenged to create and edit a formal letter through careful questioning and encouragement.
- Students experience a wide variety of tasks and activities, including practical tasks such as dry brushing techniques in art, making soup from a recipe or designing and making a wooden box. They are motivated by the activities and demonstrate the ability to explain what they have achieved as a result.
- Staff continuously monitor students' work and adjust learning tasks to ensure that understanding is deepened and students are challenged to consider all possibilities in answering questions. For example, students in a Year 7 nurture group demonstrated excellent independence in constructing an individual pictogram in mathematics; as their confidence developed, individuals were challenged to extend their interpretation, for example by analysing the range of data presented.
- There is a strong emphasis on the development of reading, the use of language, speaking and listening

across a wide range of subjects. The use and application of number is also built effectively into learning, for example when measuring heart rate in physical education or weighing ingredients when preparing a soup. There is no such whole-school approach to improving the quality and presentation of letter formation, legibility and accuracy.

- The school has developed exemplary arrangements for identifying students who are at risk of not making sufficient progress in the development of skills in literacy and numeracy. Planned interventions are put in place, including intensive one-to-one teaching, to accelerate their progress.
- The school's arrangements for assessing students' learning are exemplary. Judgements about students' achievements are based on secure and accurate baseline assessment and regular updating of information about progress over time. Students are increasingly supported in making secure judgements about the quality of their own work.
- A number of staff have developed imaginative and successful methods for informing students about the quality of their work and how they may improve further. Opportunities to share this outstanding practice are not sufficiently systematic to ensure that all staff benefit from the creative and imaginative approaches being used.

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Students' starting points are below, or well below, the national average for their age when they enter the school. Their previous learning has been negatively affected by poor attendance and behaviour, unwillingness to cooperate, or complex social and emotional difficulties.
- As a result of the high expectations created by the school, students rapidly learn to overcome their barriers to successful learning and make outstanding progress.
- Students make sustained progress over time and achieve external awards and qualifications. There has been strong improvement in recent years in the number of students achieving externally accredited awards in a number of subjects.
- The proportions of students making or exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics is high compared with national figures. Students who enter the school with no expectation of examination success achieve a range of qualifications which enable them to continue with courses in further education at the age of 16.
- Almost all students achieve success at foundation level GCSE in a number of subjects. The proportion achieving grade D and above in English, mathematics and science is increasing.
- Students in Key Stage 4 have access to individually tailored timetables that are flexible enough to include a wide range of interests, including vocational pathways with alternative providers. As a result, they achieve a number of external awards and qualifications in practical and vocational subjects, including food technology, motor vehicle studies, construction, agriculture and fisheries management.
- Disadvantaged students make outstanding progress in closing the gap in their learning compared with their peers. The great majority progress at a rate that exceeds national expectations from their starting points.
- Students with statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans make outstanding progress in the development of literacy and numeracy skills, together with success in a wide range of academic and practical subjects.
- All students develop confidence in reading. They are willing to read aloud in class and they develop excellent skills in understanding and interpreting deeper meanings in written texts.

- Students are helped to overcome the barriers to learning that have previously held them back and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education. All students leaving the school at the end of Year 11 progress to further studies at college.



## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135541
<b>Inspection number</b>	463013
<b>DfE registration number</b>	888/6104

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	60
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Witherslack Group
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Davey
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Gilfillan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£29,360– £77,667
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772284435
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