

# Bridge Academy

Crosslands, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, MK14 6AX

**Inspection dates** 1–2 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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.

- Teaching is consistently good. There has been steady improvement in the quality of teaching since the academy opened.
- The students achieve well, often from starting points which are lower than those typical for their age. A growing minority of students in Key Stage 3 successfully return to mainstream schools.
- The most able students make good progress because of teachers' high expectations of their achievement.
- Teachers know their students well and provide activities which are at the right level. Students enjoy school and what they are expected to learn. They have generally positive attitudes to their learning.
- Students' behaviour is good. Individual students make good progress in learning to regulate their own conduct. Students' behaviour is managed effectively by adults.
- Students feel safe and secure. Their attendance is generally higher than that found in similar schools. This is a significant improvement on the students' attendance in their mainstream schools.
- The executive headteacher has very successfully managed the integration of four different pupil referral units into a coherent whole. He has established an effective leadership team.
- Senior staff and the academy's middle leaders rigorously check on the quality of teaching. They maintain a clear overview of the students' achievement in both academic and personal development.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching and the students' progress. They effectively challenge the academy's leaders to maintain and improve on standards.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give students sufficient time to reflect on and correct their written work in order to learn from their mistakes.
- Students do not always have clear short term targets. This can make them unsure of how to improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 14 lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, students, two parents, staff members and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with students to establish their attitudes towards the academy.
- Inspectors took into account the academy's surveys of parents' opinions. There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, to be included. The 47 returned staff questionnaires were also taken into account, as well as recent student questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the work of the different centres and looked at a range of documents including the academy's review of its own progress and forward planning. Records of students' progress and achievement, both academic and in personal development, behaviour and well-being were analysed, as well as monitoring reports on the quality of teaching, the management of the performance of staff and curriculum documents.
- The students' attendance records were looked at, as well as all aspects of the procedures for safeguarding students.

## Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Mary Adossides

Additional inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Bridge Academy is made up of four separate centres. There are two centres for students aged 14 to 16 and one for students aged 11 to 14. The students in these centres are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools, or may already have been permanently excluded. One other centre provides for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 with emotional and medical needs.
- The Bridge Academy is part of the Stephenson Trust. The Bridge Academy came into being in October 2013, having previously been four separate pupil referral units under local authority control.
- The executive Principal of the Stephenson Academy is also executive Principal of the Bridge Academy.
- About one fifth of students are from minority ethnic heritages, which is average. There is a very small number of students for whom English is an additional language. They are all in Year 11. The number of boys and girls is broadly equal.
- All the pupils have special educational needs which are because of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A very small proportion has statements of special educational needs.
- An above average proportion of students is eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those entitled to free school meals or who are looked after.
- There is a separate governing body for the Bridge Academy.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring students are given time to reflect on teachers' comments of their written work so they gain a clearer understanding of how to improve it
  - establishing short term targets for students in their academic work so that they have a clear understanding of what they must do to progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The experience and expertise of the executive headteacher have enabled him to build an effective senior team. Together, under his direction, leaders have established a consistent management framework in each of the centres. Leaders in each centre have successfully communicated the executive headteacher's drive for the highest standards. As a result, the quality of teaching and the levels of students' attainment continue to rise throughout the academy.
- In each centre, leaders rigorously check on the progress of students. This information is further monitored by senior leaders of the academy to ensure consistency in standards between the centres. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science work effectively to raise levels of students' achievement in each centre. They play a significant part in driving the academy's work to improve the quality of teaching and the levels of students' progress.
- The academy receives effective support, particularly in training and resources from the Stephenson Trust
- There are realistic, but ambitious, expectations of each student's success. Rapid provision of extra guidance gives good support for any student who may start to fall behind. There is no discrimination and the students have equal encouragement to do as well as possible.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged students is used well to provide extra support in reading, writing and mathematics and to provide, on occasion, therapeutic emotional support. The academy also provides students with learning and behaviour mentors to support their academic and personal development. As a result, disadvantaged students make similar progress to other students.
- Leaders robustly check on the performance of teachers and other adults. Teachers are very aware that there are clear criteria for their performance and that pay awards are dependent on their success in meeting these. Teachers and other adults are well supported by high levels of regular further training.
- Leaders regularly and accurately self-evaluate the academy's work and this leads to relevant, but ambitious, plans for future development. Leaders are aware, for example, of occasional inconsistencies in the marking of students' work and there are plans to improve on these. Governors play a significant part in checking on all aspects of the academy's work and have established an effective partnership with the executive headteacher in the drive for school improvement. There is consequently a good capacity to maintain the academy's success in raising the levels of students' attainment and the quality of teaching.
- Students study subjects which are matched closely to their ability and interests. They make good progress in English and mathematics and most students achieve GCSE qualifications in these subjects. In each centre, teachers plan activities to ensure students practise literacy and numeracy skills in almost every lesson. This has a positive impact on their confidence and developing skills.
- The students in Key Stage 4 are able to follow a range of option subjects, leading to work-related qualifications in such subjects as motor vehicle maintenance, hair and beauty or construction. Almost all students achieve success in these subjects and are thus well prepared to go on to appropriate further education courses. The academy staff provide effective advice and careers guidance for students which encourage and guide them well into suitable college courses. In addition, students experience a good range of enrichment activities, some of which are sporting such as golf, horse riding or fishing, and others such as the film club, electronics or word games. These opportunities add to the students' enjoyment and motivation to attend school.
- All the students are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain. There are regular lessons in personal, social and health education which teach them about diversity and respect for others. Older students follow a course in philosophy which ensures they reflect on topics of democracy, responsibility as a citizen and awareness of different cultures, traditions and opinions. The curriculum contributes well to students' academic and personal development, their physical well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the academy's work. The parents spoken to greatly appreciated the support their families had been given and were sure that the good teaching and encouragement given to their children had 'given them a second chance' to achieve their potential.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and well organised. Students and their families are confident that there are good levels of care.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body are well informed and have a good understanding of information on students' progress, how it compares with similar schools, and the management of teachers' performance. They are knowledgeable about how good performance is rewarded and any underachievement tackled. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching. As a result, they

contribute well to the academy's development. They effectively oversee the salary arrangements for teaching. They maintain close supervision of additional government funding and regularly check the impact on the students' progress and well-being. Governors strongly and effectively challenge the academy leaders, since there is a high proportion of senior education professionals on the governing body. They are very well informed about aspects of child protection and safeguarding and in the use of performance information on students' progress. They ensure that all current statutory requirements are met.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. In each centre, students have positive attitudes to their learning. There is little disruption to lessons. This reflects a significant improvement in the students' previously negative attitudes to education in former schools and has a substantial impact on their good progress.
- There are good relationships between students and with adults in each centre. Students enjoy being there. This is demonstrated by their rapidly improving attendance when they join the academy. The students socialise happily with other students and staff at lunchtimes and breaks. They behave well on the many trips into the community and more widely across the country. Some students are looking forward to their trip to Verona, linked to their study of Shakespeare's plays.
- In each centre, the students' behaviour is managed effectively. Adults are well trained in calming the students where necessary. The students are invariably well supervised and there are effective procedures to record any incidents of challenging behaviour. This leads, where appropriate, to individual behaviour support for some students, sometimes involving a range of outside professionals such as psychologists and therapists.
- The academy records clearly show a declining number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour and a decrease in exclusions since the academy opened in 2013.
- Over time, the students learn to regulate their own conduct through the academy's emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own behaviour. This prepares younger students well for a return to mainstream schools and older students to take advantage of college courses when they move on at the end of Year 11.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements are organised efficiently and all adults are trained regularly in how to keep students safe and secure.
- Students and their parents are confident in the quality of care. As a result, the students are relaxed and confident in each centre and their attendance significantly improves, often from very low levels at previous schools.
- Students report very little bullying and that it is effectively dealt with by adults should it occur. This is confirmed by parents and the academy's records. Students gain a good understanding of how to keep safe out of school, through the many trips and visits. They learn effectively how to avoid potential internet dangers, for instance when using social media. Effective personal development activities are used to emphasise the safe use of access to computers.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is good in all centres. Rigorous checks by senior staff have ensured consistent improvement since the academy opened. As a result, the students enjoy their lessons and this supports the good progress of all groups.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students. Activities build effectively on what the students already know and understand. The students' learning targets are ambitious; however, some of the students' short term targets are not precise enough. Sometimes students do not have clear direction about how to raise the level of their work, because learning targets are not always focused enough to give them sufficient direction about how to improve their work in the short term. This can leave them unsure how to make their work better.
- Teachers quickly intervene should a student start to fall behind and students are well supported through the work of learning mentors who give individual tuition until the student catches up with others.
- Reading and writing are taught effectively. Good teaching in English ensures that most students make good progress. Individual support is given in reading development where necessary. All students write

frequently and in a variety of styles. Adults consistently correct spelling and punctuation. Students practise their skills as they regularly read for information, write factual accounts or write imaginatively in every subject. Work in students' books and in displays confirms the students' growing confidence in their ability to write to an increasingly high standard.

- Mathematics is taught well. Students further practise and extend their skills in a variety of lessons, such as measuring and weighing in science or cookery and in describing shape and space in art. The students make good progress in applying their mathematical skills.
- Adults give students a high level of individual attention and support in lessons. They are skilled in adapting questions and explanations to take account of each student's ability and to enable students to learn more rapidly.
- Teachers mark the students work regularly and thoroughly. They consistently add detailed comments about how the students could improve their work. On some occasions, however, they do not give the students sufficient time to review their mistakes and to practise what has been recommended. This can lead to students repeating mistakes and can slow down improvements in their written work.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The attainment of most students, in English and mathematics, remains generally below that expected nationally. Students enter the academy, usually with starting points which are significantly lower than those typically found for their age because of disrupted periods of education in previous schools.
- Almost all students however, make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This enables them to acquire knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects by applying their literacy and numeracy skills successfully.
- Most students make progress at similar rates to mainstream students and the most able students make rapid progress. As a result, a growing proportion of Key Stage 3 students successfully return to mainstream schools because they have made good progress. Their behaviour has also improved significantly.
- There is no early entry for GCSE examinations. Students in Year 11 achieve success in a range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, and more work-oriented vocational qualifications, such as BTEC. This represents considerable success and achievement since the students were almost all expected to make little progress while they remained in mainstream schools. The students are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Almost all students go on to further education colleges. There are extremely few students who do not go on to further education, employment or training.
- The most able students achieve relatively highly. Some students gain five GCSEs at A\* to C, including in English and mathematics. Teachers have high expectations of their success and the students are given challenging work which enables them to reach their potential. Students with additional learning needs, or those for whom English is an additional language, are supported well by learning mentors to make good progress.
- The disadvantaged students who form a large majority of the student population and who are eligible for additional funding make similar progress and achieve as well as other students in the academy.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140252
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	450381

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Handyside
<b>Headteacher</b>	Executive Headteacher: Neil Barrett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908889400
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