

# The Bridge Short Stay School

Appleton Drive, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7AR

## Inspection dates

10–11 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' judgements about how well the school is performing are not underpinned by a robust evidence base. As a result, they identify general issues but do not have an accurate view of weaknesses such as variations in attendance of different groups of pupils.
- The school's plans for improvement are not informed by a deep and accurate understanding of the school's performance. This means that leaders cannot be sure that pupils are doing as well as they should and that staff are meeting pupils' needs well enough.
- Leaders have not set performance indicators by which they can measure the effectiveness of their actions. Consequently, some key aspects are not improving as quickly as they should.
- Pupils do not make as much progress as they should, as leaders and managers do not focus sufficiently on improving academic outcomes for pupils.
- The current assessment of pupils and system for keeping track of pupils' progress are not fit for purpose. Consequently, leaders cannot be sure how well current pupils are doing and the rate at which they are progressing.
- The management committee has not ensured that it provides comprehensive information for parents on the school website about the school's arrangements for governance.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as others.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have created a calm and caring learning environment. Pupils facing personal challenges are well supported to reduce the impact of these on their learning. Most pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The school is highly successful in helping pupils at risk of exclusion to moderate their behaviour so that they can remain in their mainstream schools.
- The excellent relationships staff foster with pupils help most settle into the school quickly and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is very thorough and highly effective.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are strengths of the school. Pupils are polite and respectful towards adults and each other.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Staff are successful in nurturing pupils' enjoyment and fascination in learning about the world around them.

## Full report

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

- Develop a progress-tracking and assessment tool which allows leaders and teachers to analyse performance across the school.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by making sure that assessment data provided by teachers gives reliable information about pupils' learning across the school's curriculum so that leaders can:
  - systematically analyse pupils' achievement to establish a comprehensive view of how well different groups are getting on across the school
  - identify and address any academic underperformance by individuals or groups, particularly the disadvantaged pupils, and swiftly put in place necessary interventions so that pupils do not fall behind
  - set ambitious targets for pupils which ensure that from their different starting points they catch up quickly with their peers.
- Strengthen leadership and governance by:
  - ensuring that self-evaluation is based on a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and informed by reliable performance data
  - improving the school's action plan so that it is sharply focused and sets out agreed performance indicators by which leaders can assess the impact of their actions
  - ensuring that the school's website meets statutory requirements by providing information about the arrangements for governance.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders and the management committee do not have a sufficiently accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their self-evaluation lacks rigour and is not informed by detailed analysis of the school's own performance data. As a result, leaders cannot be certain that planning for school improvement is addressing those areas most in need of improvement.
- The management committee do not provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. They are overly reliant on the information provided by the headteacher and have no agreed performance indicators against which they can measure the effectiveness of leaders' actions to secure improvements.
- Leaders have focused on securing high-quality provision for pupils to meet their social, emotional and mental health needs. However, insufficient attention has been paid to securing better academic outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have not collected the data to enable them to compare the performance of current cohorts and groups with those in previous years. Consequently, it is not possible to identify patterns and trends for groups such as pupils with special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils so that timely action can be taken to address any underperformance.
- Staff have identified a number of pupils joining the school this year as having undiagnosed special educational needs. Some of these pupils now have education, health and care plans and are moving on to specialist provision. Those pupils with special educational needs or disability are now receiving good support and this is helping them to catch up with others of their age.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make the same rates of progress as their peers. This is because leaders' lack of rigour in tracking and analysing the performance of groups of pupils over time has prevented them from spotting such underperformance and then doing something about it. This means that they do not have an in-depth understanding of whether outcomes for this group are improving. However, disadvantaged pupils have particularly benefited from the intervention programme focused on improving reading.
- Currently, too few pupils are able to gain workplace experience. This is because school leaders have not made the necessary links with local industries in order to do so. A review of provision has been undertaken to identify gaps in the availability of suitable work placements and a working party established to put together an action plan. However, current pupils are not as well prepared as they might be for their future.
- Senior leaders have used performance management processes well to secure improvements in the quality of teaching. Training is more sharply focused and has had a positive impact on some areas of the school's life such as behaviour management, marking and safeguarding.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. For example, pupils produced high-quality artwork and poetry in response to their learning about the lives of children caught up in conflicts around the world. Pupils have considered the impact of the Holocaust on people living in Poland and explored the moral issues around the slave trade. Pupils have also learned about hate crime and the law relating to this behaviour.
- Senior leaders have ensured a broad and balanced curriculum which helps prepare pupils for their next steps in life. Pupils have access to a wealth of qualifications including GCSEs and vocational qualifications. Recently, leaders have increased this offer by providing the opportunity for pupils to gain qualifications in personal and social education, computing and physical education. Leaders quite rightly ensure that within this curriculum pupils are well supported to address their individual needs which often limited their success in mainstream schools.
- The curriculum offer is extended through the Friday 'Learning Outside the Classroom' programme, which involves pupils in a range of enrichment activities including mountain biking, graffiti workshops and a visit to the Remembrance Day 'Weeping Windows' poppy artwork in Liverpool.
- Leaders have put in place an online system for recording and monitoring child protection, safeguarding and behaviour. This comprehensive information enables leaders to identify patterns and trends of behaviour, including racist incidents, and monitor the impact of the remedial actions they have taken.
- Teachers within departments work well together and use their half-termly meetings to moderate pupils' work, share ideas and develop a more consistent approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers find that the opportunities to attend training are making a positive difference to their practice.

They are now sharing what is working well in their classrooms so that their practice is improving.

- Leaders have established daily briefing sessions and weekly training for all staff, including those teachers who work with pupils in their homes. As a result, staff work collaboratively, there is consistency of practice and a good team spirit. Staff who responded to the online survey enjoy coming to work and are proud of their school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The management committee has not met its statutory duty to comply with the 'School Information Regulations 2012' and publish information about governance arrangements on the school's website.
  - The management committee has focused on resolving pressing issues related to management of the school since the last inspection. However, it has not kept a close enough eye on pupils' achievement. It has not ensured that it has the information needed to fully understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement and provide the right focus for its challenge and support to leaders.
  - The management committee is not using the wealth of skills, experience and expertise of its members to best effect. It is not setting clear expectations against which it is able to assess the impact of actions to improve key aspects of the school's work, particularly pupils' outcomes, and hold school leaders to account.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has rigorous and robust systems which leaders ensure are consistently applied across the school sites. Senior leaders ensure that adults' suitability to work with children is checked prior to appointment. All staff take their responsibilities for safeguarding children seriously and keep up-to-date with their training. The teacher in charge of alternative provision makes frequent quality checks. Staff work in partnership with other agencies to support children and their families, maintaining good lines of communication to ensure all concerns are followed up. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe both in school and elsewhere with particular regard for pupils' different vulnerabilities. For example, in work on relationships pupils were helped to understand what is meant by 'consent'. Pupils and their parents are confident that pupils are safe and well cared for.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The school's assessment systems are not fit for purpose. Senior leaders require teachers to report pupils' attainment and progress using measures which do not assess pupils' learning for the subjects they are currently studying. As a result, the information provided by teachers to senior leaders does not accurately reflect the actual attainment and progress of the pupils in their classes.
- The expectations set for minimum rates of progress for pupils do not correlate with the targets set by teachers with pupils. The school's own tracking data shows that, while a number of pupils fall short of the expected rate of progress, a number of pupils exceed it. However, leaders do not adjust expectations for individual pupils accordingly. As a result, pupils are often set targets that are not sufficiently challenging and therefore do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders and teachers in the science department have worked well together to develop an effective tool to assess pupils' learning linked to what they are teaching. This information is useful because it helps them plan pupils' next steps in learning. Teachers of other subjects, such as physical education, have now adopted a similar approach, but as this is at the early stage of development, it is too soon to see the impact of this initiative.
- Teachers' sound subject knowledge, together with high-quality training, ensures that they have a good understanding of the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils need to be successful across a range of qualifications including GCSE and vocational subjects. Teachers carefully assess individual pupils and identify their learning needs when they join the school. They plan lessons which engage and enthuse pupils because they are well pitched to suit their needs. Teachers skilfully use questioning to assess pupils' learning, swiftly addressing any misconceptions. Their lesson planning takes account of pupils' individual preferred learning styles so that good use is made of lesson time.
- Teachers set clear learning objectives for each pupil in every lesson. Pupils find it helpful knowing what is expected of them and successfully evaluate their own learning at the end of each lesson. Pupils were able to clearly articulate what they needed to do next when talking to inspectors.
- Teachers make sure that pupils' learning is supported through a wealth of well-considered resources. Classroom walls are filled with hints and tips. For example, in a mathematics lesson, when a pupil was struggling to recall the meaning of the term 'range', the teacher reminded him of a fun rhyme she had taught the class. As a result, he was able to complete the task set.

- Pupils are proud of their achievements and take pride in their work. They set their work out neatly and take good care of books and folders. Teachers thoughtfully display pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. For example, the art teacher started a miniature art project in response to the limited space available to display 3D work. Pupils have been inspired by this theme, producing high-quality work using a range of media including paper and clay.
- The school has identified that many pupils arrive with reading skills well below those expected for their age. These pupils now take part in an intervention programme, quickly acquiring the skills they need to read with fluency and understanding. The focus across the curriculum on teaching pupils to understand what they are reading is helping pupils catch up quickly.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors feel very well informed about how well their children are getting on at school. Every day, following the staff meeting in which each pupil's performance is discussed, parents receive a text message, phone call or meet face to face with a member of school staff so that they are kept up to date about their child's learning and behaviour.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read widely and often. For example, during the inspection, in a morning tutorial session, pupils were reading newspapers and picking out items which caught their interest. Teachers talked with pupils about the different articles, increasing pupils' general knowledge about current affairs including the upcoming European Union referendum and the Russian military intervention in the Ukraine. A pupil talked enthusiastically to an inspector about how his passion for cooking motivated him to read Gordon Ramsay's autobiography. However, the school has not done enough to provide high-quality texts for pupils to read for pleasure as well as promoting information about authors and genres which would capture the interest of pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff are skilled at developing positive relationships with pupils, many of whom have faced and continue to face great personal challenges. Despite many of the pupils having presented with very challenging behaviour in their previous schools, staff help them to settle in to the school quickly. Most new pupils respond positively to the calm and orderly learning environment.
- Senior leaders from local schools speak highly of the school's success in supporting their pupils. As a result of the work of the school, a number of Year 11 pupils who were at risk of being permanently excluded are now attending their mainstream school full time and preparing to sit their GCSE examinations.
- The school is commissioned by the local authority to provide tuition for pupils with medical needs who are not currently attending school. Staff have developed a creative offer of learning outside the home, teaching pupils in small groups, as a stepping stone towards these pupils reintegrating into their mainstream schools.
- Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff at the start of each day. Teachers and support staff use the morning tutorial session well to ensure that pupils are ready to learn so that lessons get off to a good start.
- Pupils treat staff and each other with respect. Pupils explained to inspectors how they had often been 'put down' by peers in their previous schools but now they are confident to share their ideas. Pupils who had been bullied in their previous schools spoke about how safe they feel now. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said they were unaware of any bullying at the school. School records show that the small number of reported incidents have been dealt with effectively.
- Staff build pupils' empathy, change their attitudes and encourage them to be more mindful of their behaviour through programmes such as 'Life in my Shoes'. As a result, pupils are kind and considerate towards each other and adults in school.
- Staff tailor support to each pupil to help them become more successful learners. They prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education whether that be returning to mainstream school, moving on to college or starting work. For example, staff delivered a travel training programme for a group of pupils who had not previously used public transport; as a result, pupils were able to confidently travel by themselves around the local area.
- Many pupils arrive at the school with high rates of absence. Almost all improve their attendance and punctuality as they enjoy coming to school. Staff are vigilant in following up all unexplained absence as part of their comprehensive safeguarding procedures. Staff work in partnerships with parents and carers

as well as external agencies to overcome barriers to pupils' regular school attendance.

- Nevertheless, a small proportion of pupils still do not attend school sufficiently regularly. The management committee and senior leaders do not use the information they have about pupils' attendance to identify patterns and trends in attendance for different groups of pupils and therefore they have not set effective targets for further improvement.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Many of the pupils were either permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion from their previous school. Staff are highly skilled at supporting pupils in their earliest days at the school to learn to manage their own behaviour. The excellent relationships that staff build with pupils mean that pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to please their teachers. Consequently, lessons proceed without interruption.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and supported to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to high standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support they receive from staff and appreciate the calm, quiet and caring approach taken by staff.
- Pupils who attend the alternative provision at Trafford Mill behave well. Their behaviour and attendance are closely monitored. Close partnerships between the teacher in charge of alternative provision, staff from the school who accompany pupils to the provision and staff from Trafford Mill mean that pupils benefit from the sessions they take part in and the success they achieve.
- On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping pupils to calm down quickly. However, pupils are left in no doubt of behaviours which are unacceptable in the school. A very small minority of pupils whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves as well as others are supported through bespoke programmes to better prepare them for learning. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions.

### Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- The school's information on pupils' attainment and progress is unreliable. Leaders have not devised an assessment system which is effective in measuring pupils' progress. Moreover, the system used by leaders does not support teaching staff in their planning, teaching and assessment practices. Teachers in each department have devised their own approach to day-to-day assessment, using different measures. As a result, the school's approach to assessment is too inconsistent and does not support pupils' achievement.
- The school does not have a system that keeps track of pupils' progress and that enables it to easily compare the performance of different groups of pupils. In addition, the school is unable to provide information on patterns and trends in performance as it does not hold data for previous cohorts to enable comparison. This limits leaders' ability to put in place timely actions to halt any decline.
- From inspection evidence, disadvantaged pupils do not make the same rates of progress as their peers. Although seniors leaders make sure that teachers know who these pupils are, leaders are not tracking this group closely enough to make sure interventions are helping these pupils to make better rates of progress.
- Most pupils joining the school are working below age-related expectations as a result of a disrupted education. Many of the pupils in both key stage 3 and key stage 4 have made no progress or regressed from the standards they achieved at the end of key stage 2 in their previous schools. The majority of pupils join the school in key stage 4 and many of those join in Year 11.
- When they join the school almost all the pupils have reading skills well below those expected for their age. Well-planned interventions addressing pupils' weaknesses have helped many pupils catch up quickly and have the literacy skills necessary to help them to be more successful in their work across the curriculum.
- During this academic year, the overwhelming majority of pupils at risk of permanent exclusion have improved their behaviour. As a result, these pupils have returned full time to their mainstream school. For those pupils who are in Year 11, this has meant they are able to complete their courses and sit examinations, including GCSEs.
- Over half of the pupils who are unable to attend school due to their medical needs are now educated out of the home in preparation for their return to their mainstream school. Teachers liaise closely with pupils' mainstream schools so that they make sure, wherever possible, that the pupils are able to keep up with their peers. As a result, many of these pupils successfully reintegrate into their mainstream schools.

- Many of the key stage 3 pupils currently attending the school full time are making more than expected progress from their different starting points so that they are catching up to their peers. It is noticeable how quickly these pupils settle in and start making strides with their learning. More pupils from this key stage successfully make the move back into mainstream schools or on to specialist provision.
- Key stage 4 pupils who attend the school full time make expected progress from their starting points. However, those pupils joining in Year 11 do not start to make progress in their learning as quickly as in other year groups. For this group, their more entrenched negative attitudes to learning and poor school attendance hamper their learning.
- The proportions of pupils gaining GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics increased in 2015 and the school's current predictions suggest that there will be a further increase this year. However, the school's predictions are not fully based on reliable evidence.
- The school provides careers guidance which helps pupils make informed choices about what they want to do when they leave the school. Over half the pupils in Year 11 already have a firm destination planned for next year, including college courses, apprenticeships and employment.
- There are only a small number of girls attending the school full time at the moment but there is no discernible difference in their progress compared to boys.
- As seen on inspection, the most-able pupils are currently making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Teachers provide them with opportunities to prepare for early entry to appropriate examinations to maintain their enthusiasm and engagement. These pupils have received high levels of support to help them move on to secure permanent school places.
- Teachers make good plans to meet the needs of the pupils who are looked after. Staff work hard to help pupils overcome barriers such as gaps in coursework so that these pupils have a better chance to secure recognised qualifications.
- The school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs or disability well so that these pupils make progress at least in line with their peers. A number of pupils had previously unidentified special educational needs or disability which the school was quick to pick up on, putting in place appropriate support promptly.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138450
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012210

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	51
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The management committee
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Shirley Plews
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sian Thomas
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 275866
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thebridge.cheshire.sch.uk">www.thebridge.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4–5 June 2014

## Information about this school

- The school has two main sites which are 25 miles apart. In addition, pupils are taught in a range of community facilities including church halls and libraries.
- The school caters for boys and girls who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. In addition, the local authority commissions teaching for pupils with medical needs who are not attending school as well as places for pupils who are not on the roll of a mainstream school. The majority of pupils arrive during key stage 4.
- A very small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan. A number of pupils are in the process of assessment for a plan.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium is above the national average. A very small number are looked after by the local authority. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A small number of alternative providers are used to complement the education provided by the school: Total People and The Conservation Volunteers at Trafford Mill.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about governance arrangements on its website.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors observed a selection of lessons across the school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during visits to classrooms; scrutinised samples of pupils' work displayed on walls around the school; and talked with pupils about their work.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school, including observing pupils as they arrived at school, during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including self-evaluation by leaders, the school's improvement plan, information on attendance, documents used to record behaviour and safeguarding concerns, information relating to pupils' progress, case studies of pupils and minutes of meetings of the management committee.
- An inspector visited one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors visited the two school sites as well as a library and church hall used by the school to teach individual pupils and small groups.
- Inspectors met with members of the management committee and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with a group of staff, a group of pupils, spoke to three parents by telephone and took account of responses by 18 staff to the Ofsted questionnaire. There were no responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

## Inspection team

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