

Bridge House Independent School

Grantham Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 7NL

Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, provides inspirational leadership. He has created an ethos of outstanding and effective teamwork across the staff.
- School leaders are extremely successful in raising the aspirations and desire to achieve of previously disaffected pupils.
- The personal development of pupils is outstanding. They recognise and appreciate the way in which the school believes in them and both supports and challenges them to improve.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding across the curriculum and has a marked positive impact on pupils' progress from their varied starting points.
- Senior leaders have a strong positive impact on the quality of teaching and assessment. They have established high expectations and supportive relationships. Staff consistently give of their best.
- Pupils make outstanding progress towards success in external examinations from mostly low, underachieving starting points. Their progress is rapid and secure.
- The school has made marked improvement since the previous inspection because of continuous self-review and a successful commitment to appropriate improvements.
- Parents and pupils express consistently positive views about the outstanding impact of the school's work on the attitudes, expectations and achievements of pupils.
- Pupils' attendance improves considerably although the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils restricts their academic progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees in order to accelerate their learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. All members of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire agree that the school is very well led and managed and that they are proud to be members of staff at the school.
- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, has established a culture of excellence throughout the school. Senior leaders and staff demonstrate an outstanding commitment to shared values and teamwork. They work very successfully to improve life chances for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. They make it crystal clear to pupils the attitudes and outlook required to achieve self-respect and the respect of others in the community; pupils respond very positively and want to succeed.
- All parents who responded to the invitation to communicate their views about the school wrote very positively about the high expectations communicated to their children and the excellent impact on their attitudes and behaviour. Parents stated, for example: 'the staff at this school are amazing at dealing with behaviours'; 'I feel the school excels at everything'; 'they really have given our son the chance to make a fresh start'; 'as parents we have only positive experiences with Bridge House School'.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress both in managing their behaviour and in achieving academic qualifications.
- Senior leaders have developed exemplary arrangements for assessing pupils' starting points on entry to the school. These arrangements provide informative details that are used highly effectively by all staff to agree targets for future progress with individual pupils.
- The headteacher leads the staff and pupils very effectively towards an ambitious target to achieve outstanding outcomes. Together, they have achieved considerable success in securing excellent improvements in pupils' behaviour and readiness to learn.
- The headteacher trusts implicitly staff to innovate and implement imaginative approaches to teaching and learning. Staff are highly motivated to enable pupils to achieve rapid and sustainable progress.
- Senior leaders evaluate the impact of individual learning programmes and ensure that pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. They provide a curriculum that enables all pupils to achieve examination success in a suitably broad range of subjects appropriate to their starting points.
- Senior staff carefully plan outstanding opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils learn very successfully to make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community through, for example, the house system, pupil council and a number of effective fundraising events.
- The school fulfils extremely well its commitment to reopening opportunities to pupils who have previously rejected formal education. As a result, pupils turn their attitudes around,

respond positively to challenge, and are prepared very well for the next stage in their education and training.

- Senior leaders have established robust procedures to intervene and improve any poor attendance. Overall attendance figures have improved significantly; however, there are still a small number of persistent absentees.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor has established strong relationships with external agencies and individual professionals, who provide robust challenge and analysis to underpin the headteacher's evaluation of the school's performance.
- Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths through continuous self-evaluation and rigorous arrangements for the management of staff performance. They ensure a continuous and highly effective impact on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- The proprietor oversees effective arrangements for staff appraisal, including setting and evaluating progress towards demanding targets. Staff achieve considerable success in implementing the school's well-chosen priorities for development. They value the excellent opportunities to develop their skills and improve their qualifications in order to achieve success.
- The proprietor maintains an excellent focus on evaluating the positive impact of planned improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy has due regard for the latest statutory guidance and is implemented consistently across the school. A copy of the policy is available to parents through the school's website.
- Pupils are very safe in the school and understand clearly how they may seek support and resolve any personal concerns. Staff rapidly identify any possible bullying or serious misbehaviour. They are very skilled at intervening to prevent potential incidents from escalating.
- Parents comment consistently and positively about the success of staff in helping pupils to settle into the school, to address anxieties, and to avoid risk-taking behaviours.
- Senior leaders are extremely rigorous and diligent in checking the suitability of staff and ensuring that staff are suitably trained in all required aspects of pupil safeguarding. They have established very strong working relationships with a range of external agencies that contribute very effectively to pupils' well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching contributes extremely effectively to the motivation and success of pupils. Teachers are imaginative, creative and flexible in adjusting their teaching to meet the diverse needs of pupils.

- Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at deepening pupils' understanding by making them think for themselves. Staff use high-quality questioning during lessons to monitor pupils' understanding and to encourage them to extend and fully develop their oral and written answers. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson, for example, identified and applied a wide range of language features in response to effective questioning and oral feedback from the teacher and teaching assistant. Pupils maintained a fast pace, enjoyed a competitive element, and achieved an excellent understanding of the lesson objectives.
- Pupils value the opportunity to prepare for examinations despite the gaps and disruptions in their previous education. While they do not always realise how much progress they are making, they recognise how their learning progresses in small steps and, in this way, gradually build the confidence they need to take on challenging examinations.
- Teachers continuously check pupils' understanding and progress, using highly imaginative activities that enable pupils to demonstrate new knowledge and their ability to apply recently learned concepts. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, pupils were keen to succeed in a competitive activity in which they demonstrated their ability to calculate the perimeters and areas of compound shapes. The teacher skilfully increased the level of challenge progressively, while ensuring that each pupil achieved success.
- Senior leaders have developed comprehensive arrangements to accurately identify pupils' starting points, including in English and mathematics, on entry to the school. This information enables all staff to provide challenging activities at just the right level for each individual pupil.
- Staff extend their knowledge of pupils' achievements by assessing pupils' progress regularly, at agreed intervals in each subject. Teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently by providing regular oral and written comments. Year 10 pupils, for example, added their own perceptive written comments to the teacher's acute analysis of their artistic expression and use of techniques in their art folders.
- The most able pupils are encouraged to keenly aspire to achieve higher-grade success in GCSE and BTEC examinations. Staff challenge them to maintain their efforts and to build on each small step of progress. Pupils access higher-level questions and past examination papers, and staff teach them to understand how to extend and develop their answers beyond their previous best standards.
- Teaching staff reinforce well-chosen aspects of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In each classroom, they display the literacy focus for the week, using colons and semi-colons, and use this effectively to challenge pupils to vary their sentence structures.
- Pupils enjoy their learning; they are interested, cooperative and determined to prove that they can succeed. They respond with enthusiasm to staff encouragement to try hard, to maintain their efforts and continuously improve their standards.
- Pupils understand how to work safely, to cooperate in teams or to take responsibility for their own learning, dependent on the demands of individual tasks and activities. Year 10 pupils worked very effectively together in setting up and conducting an experiment in science, while individual pupils managed their personal assignments effectively in a Year 11 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson.
- The school provides informative summary information to parents and places a strong emphasis on parental involvement in their children's education. Parents commented that,

'communication is second to none' and 'the parents evening was well run and very useful to us as parents'.

- Teaching and support staff manage pupils' behaviour in lessons extremely well. Any lack of concentration by an individual, or a potential incident of misbehaviour, is managed swiftly and successfully with minimal negative impact on the learning of others.
- Senior leaders and staff have created an outstanding learning ethos across the school. Previously disaffected pupils refocus their attitudes to learning and develop very positive and productive study skills that enable them to make excellent progress with their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Previously disillusioned pupils develop confidence in their ability to learn. They are proud of their school and of the improvements in their work and behaviour.
- Staff ably assist pupils with significant social and emotional needs to address these. Pupils express considerable appreciation of the understanding and support they receive from the staff.
- Pupils commented on how staff believe in them and provide them with opportunities, such as preparation for external examinations, that they did not believe possible. They demonstrate respect for the staff and for each other. This is evident, for example, in the support they provide for each other during lessons.
- Pupils are helped to recognise the importance of their education and they increasingly value it. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education or training. They develop aspirations to succeed because of individual guidance about the further education opportunities available to them. Staff ensure that each pupil prepares an appropriate application for a chosen future course and that they complete the admission procedures successfully.
- The school provides an extremely supportive environment in which pupils are not concerned or troubled by bullying. The school's incident records demonstrate that any potential issues are managed extremely well, enabling pupils to feel safe and focus on their learning.
- Pupils state that they are safe and feel safe in school. They are taught effectively to address risks to their personal safety and well-being, including those risks presented by substance abuse, unsafe internet use and inappropriate relationships.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' greatly improved attitudes to school have a strong positive impact on their behaviour in lessons. There is little evidence of low-level distractions affecting the quality of their learning.
- Once they adjust to the school's expectations, pupils demonstrate outstanding improvements in their behaviour. The school's behaviour management team makes a

continuous, exemplary contribution to pupils' changed attitudes and levels of cooperation. They manage any incidents of unacceptable behaviour extremely well without intruding on the learning of others.

- Pupils with previously poor attendance improve their attitudes to school and the majority attend regularly. Overall, recent attendance across the school is close to the national average. Staff work diligently to improve pupils' attendance and implement rigorous procedures to follow up and improve any poor attendance. A small minority of pupils are persistently absent and this has a negative impact on their progress; however, this number is declining because of effective interventions by staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from a variety of low aspirations and underachievement. They achieve academic success in a short period, including success in challenging external examinations.
- Pupils make well above average progress in English, mathematics, science and a range of additional subjects, from their different starting points. All pupils close gaps in their previous knowledge and achieve rapid improvements in their understanding and skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrate improved progress towards the standards achieved by others with similar starting points. They are increasingly able to present their ideas and understanding orally, with confidence, and to contribute to mature and considered conversations.
- Pupils demonstrate confidence with reading, including reading aloud in class. They mostly read fluently and with well-established skills to meet the demands of the challenging curriculum. Individual pupils who find reading and writing more difficult are enabled to make excellent progress because of successful literacy interventions by skilled and sensitive staff.
- Pupils make outstanding progress towards their GCSE and BTEC qualifications, from mostly low starting points, in a short period. They achieve accredited success across a suitably broad range of subjects.
- All pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2016 achieved GCSE or BTEC level 2 successes in at least five subjects. These included foundation and higher-level successes in English, mathematics, science, humanities, ICT, sport, design technology and art. The small number of most-able pupils achieved five higher-grade results.
- As a result of their academic successes and improved behaviour, all leavers secured appropriate places in further education or employment.
- Pupils' outstanding academic progress is rooted in their improved aspirations due to the quality of relationships and the supportive and challenging ethos established across the school.

School details

Unique reference number	139264
DfE registration number	925/6005
Inspection number	10020833

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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Carl Smith
Headteacher	Carl Smith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000
Telephone number	01205 369111
Website	www.bridgehouseindependentschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@bridgehouseindependentschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–13 December 2013

Information about this school

- Bridge House is an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and associated behavioural issues. The school opened in December 2012 and is registered to admit up to 80 pupils in the age range 12 to 16 years.
- There are currently 40 pupils on roll, aged between 14 and 16 years, almost all of whom have been placed at the school during key stage 4. Five pupils are dual registered with other local authority provisions and attend Bridge House part time.
- All pupils are placed at the school by the local authority; these include a small number of children looked after by out-of-county local authorities. Pupils are placed at the school due to exclusion, or risk of exclusion, from mainstream schools. In addition, some pupils arrive in the county during key stage 4, and are hard to place in mainstream schools.

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The previous standard inspection of the school was in December 2013.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has added an additional site, the Carlton Road campus, in Boston.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school, in its mission statement, aims to achieve, 'better outcomes for vulnerable pupils, inside and outside the classroom.'

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons across the full age range of the school and at both sites. He scrutinised examples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects. In addition, he attended the staff morning briefings at both sites and a house meeting at Carlton Road.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, with senior and middle leaders, and additional members of staff. He also considered responses to inspection questionnaires submitted by 24 members of staff.
- The inspector took account of 10 responses from parents to Ofsted's, Parent View, questionnaire or in separate written communications. He held meetings with six pupils, and had informal discussions with a number of others.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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