

# The Bridge School

Chadwick Road, Astmoor, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1PW

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher has established a clear vision and sense of direction so that this is now a good school. He has been supported ably by strong leadership and staff teams. The school has good capacity to improve even further and with reduced local authority support.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good because leaders are skilled in conducting checks and providing feedback to teachers. Occasionally, teachers do not always comply with agreed school policies for teaching and assessment, for example in mathematics.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make expected or better progress from their starting points in all subjects, particularly in English and science. There is sometimes a lack of challenge in mathematics lessons, which sometimes prevents pupils achieving even higher levels.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is good. They engage well in lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because they are knowledgeable about other cultures and beliefs. They are respectful to staff and visitors to the school.
- Some pupils with additional emotional or mental health needs become anxious and then disengage from learning. One or two staff state that they would benefit from additional professional development to develop strategies when planning their lessons for these pupils.
- Following a review of governance, the management committee is well informed and holds leaders to account through regular monitoring visits and follow-up reports.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils even further, by:
  - ensuring that all teachers comply fully with the school’s agreed policy on teaching, learning and assessment
  - ensuring that all pupils receive appropriately challenging work, especially in mathematics
  - providing professional development for some staff on how to develop and apply strategies to meet the complex emotional and mental health needs of some pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and management committee, with strong support from the local authority, have recruited and built a strong, cohesive staff team. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction which has resulted in this becoming a good school.
- There is a strong culture and climate for learning. All staff, including a team of key workers (assigned to meet the personal, social and emotional needs of pupils), combine with great effect to ensure that pupils improve their learning, behaviour and attendance, often from very negative beginnings. Many pupils who arrive at the school in key stage 3 make successful returns to a mainstream setting due to the provision they receive at the school.
- The school's action plan to effect school improvement is precise, focused and has resulted in measured steps of progress. Senior leaders ensure that whole-school systems and policies are in place, agreed and reviewed. There are also development plans for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN and disabilities), which are monitored for impact by senior leaders and the management committee.
- Leaders ensure that they conduct regular checks of lessons and pupils' work. They have been well supported by the local authority link officer in this process. There is recognition from the local authority on the capacity the school now has to become increasingly independent of this support.
- Leaders and governors have established effective performance management systems and procedures. Senior leaders are skilled in their observation of lessons and related activities. They provide invaluable feedback to teachers, who are keen to develop and improve their work. Teachers think deeply about their subjects and how they can use their planning and assessment skills to fully engage pupils in lessons. Continuing professional development opportunities are made available for staff, both in-house and externally provided. Some staff are keen to develop their skills in planning more effectively to meet the needs of pupils who experience complex emotional or mental health needs.
- There is further work to be done to ensure that all staff comply with agreed school policies regarding teaching, learning and assessment. Occasionally, assessment information about individual pupils is not always used to the best effect to inform planning in some mathematics lessons. As a result, the work provided is not sufficiently challenging. One or two pupils could achieve at even higher levels in mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, taking good account of the range of pupils' individual needs. It extends beyond the school to a range of alternative providers, where such courses as hair and beauty, motor mechanics, and sport and leisure are provided. All pupils have access to good-quality teaching in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils make good progress in their literacy skills because subject leaders provide opportunities for pupils to extend their writing, for example in science and personal, social and health education. Leaders

make best use of the school's accommodation and staff skills to provide an enriching curriculum. Outdoor education is a strength of the school, leading to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for some pupils. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, including British values, is promoted well through educational visits, for example to a local mosque in Liverpool. Pupils are also encouraged to write about current events, for example about the plight of the inhabitants of Aleppo when covering aspects of warfare.

- Partnership working between the school and local secondary mainstream schools is a positive feature of the school's work. Secondary headteachers spoken to state that they value the role The Bridge plays in meeting the needs of the local authority's excluded pupils. The majority of pupils in key stage 3 return to a mainstream school following a period of time at The Bridge, or they move into a special education setting with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
- Parents spoken to 'cannot speak highly enough' of the school's support for their children and their families, particularly through the school's pastoral team of key workers.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is a strength.
- The management committee has benefited from a review of governance following the school's previous report. There are skilled and knowledgeable governors on the management committee, for example, who are from educational leadership backgrounds. They provide additional expertise and support when checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- There is focused monitoring and checking of agreed school actions through visits and follow-up reports. Senior leaders are tasked to provide presentations to the management committee about any follow-up actions and improvements made, for example in how the school monitors behaviour incidents.
- Governors benefit from local authority training, for example regarding safer recruitment, 'Prevent' duty training and safeguarding arrangements.
- Governors' use of pupil premium funding is effective. Governors know the impact of spending has resulted in improved attendance rates, reading scores and improved numeracy outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The school does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding and related policies are kept up to date and reviewed by the management committee on an annual basis.
- Staff and governors receive updated training annually in safeguarding. Staff spoken to say that their awareness levels are greater as a result of training received, for example around the radicalisation of young people. Staff say that they share information at daily briefings and also report concerns through agreed referral routes.

- The school monitors behaviour and attendance daily, and follows up and records any concerns or outcomes.
- There are robust arrangements to quality assure off-site provision offered by alternative providers.
- Leaders ensure that parents' views are sought about all aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding. A recent survey confirmed that parents were satisfied about the effectiveness of safeguarding. Parents spoken to were extremely complimentary about the level of care that staff provide towards keeping pupils safe in and around school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been at the forefront of planned actions for school improvement. As a result, the quality of these aspects is good.
- Teachers and all support staff, including the key workers, combine well to ensure that there is a sensitive balance made between meeting pupils' learning and their social, emotional and mental health needs. The school's policy for using pupil passports (individual learning and behaviour plans) ensures that teachers and support staff plan for occasional disruptions in learning. For example, some pupils require brief periods of supported time-out from lessons.
- Classrooms are welcoming and nurturing because staff have reinforced high expectations successfully for pupils about the importance of good manners, preparedness for work and the importance of learning.
- Teachers at the school have strong subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively and explain new concepts with patience and clarity. For example, pupils in a GCSE English lesson were encouraged to persevere in making a distinction between 'explicit' and 'implicit' descriptions about a character from literature. In a science lesson, pupils responded enthusiastically when studying how and why animals evolve. Teachers work hard to encourage pupils with additional complex needs to develop their independence in learning so that they do not disengage from their work too readily.
- Teachers' knowledge and insight into the special educational needs and disabilities of pupils leads to a creative use of different resources and levels of staff support, to then match activities to the individual needs of pupils. For example, pupils with anxiety responded well to a checklist of the activities they were expected to complete in a given lesson. Some pupils receiving teaching and support from off-site alternative providers engage well in learning when they receive one-to-one teaching, for example in functional literacy.
- Teachers are skilled at promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through different subjects, for example in personal, social and health education (PSHE), history and art. Pupils observed at key stage 3 were encouraged to reflect on their personal values and beliefs before thinking about wider British values about respecting different faiths and cultures. Pupils were encouraged to develop their art, writing and number skills through studying the mummification process and the Egyptian numeric system.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils spoken to say, 'This is an amazing school!' When asked why, they say that 'staff are there for them' and that they spend time listening to any issues or concerns the pupils might have.
- Pupils state that they understand and accept school rules. They are able to bring mobile phones into school but cannot use them during the day. Pupils know that they cannot and must not access social networking sites, either using their mobile phone or via the school's computers.
- They are encouraged to read regularly and to take responsibility for their learning when in lessons. They have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils attending alternative provision say that they enjoy the courses on offer and that regular checks are made to ensure that they engage well in lessons or practical sessions. They demonstrate growing independence and realise that what they are learning is likely to lead to a placement in further education, employment or training.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that any bullying is dealt with quickly and fairly.
- The school council is a decision-making body that enabled pupils to benefit from a new pool table and table tennis table.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in and around school is good. They are polite and take care of their school surroundings. They interact well together and respond quickly to staff instructions, for example when they have to finish playing table tennis and return to class.
- Regular attendance is a problem for some pupils. However, the school's records and individual case studies demonstrate that there have been successes in improving overall attendance and the levels of persistent absence.
- The number of recorded incidents in school and fixed-term exclusions has reduced, even though the number of admissions to the school has doubled over the past term.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is consistently good for those in school and those attending alternative provision. Any misdemeanours are managed swiftly and calmly by experienced and skilled staff. Pupils are respectful of adults who teach and support them.
- Parents spoken to state that staff manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well. Staff ensure that any concerns about incidents are shared immediately with parents, who appreciate this support immensely.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, the most able and the most able disadvantaged, make expected or better progress from their starting points across all subjects, particularly in English and science. Even pupils who are persistently absent or who struggle to engage in school life make small steps of progress in their work and behaviour.
- The majority of pupils who arrive in key stage 3 move back successfully to a mainstream setting. Some receive education, health and care plans that enable them to move into a special school. The great majority of pupils who leave the school at the end of key stage 4 move on to sustained further education, employment or training.
- Most leavers achieve a wide range of accreditation that includes English, mathematics, science and ICT. The most able pupils achieve at GCSE level, while less-able pupils gain qualifications at entry level. Some pupils achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in outdoor education.
- Pupils are able to access a wide range of subjects, including cookery, psychology, hair and beauty, and motor mechanics. They also benefit from strong careers advice and guidance that leads to work experience placements. Pupils spoken to were aspirational in terms of their future in further education, training or the world of work.
- The school matches pupils' needs, interests and abilities successfully to particular pathways of learning. For example, some pupils achieve better when able to complete their English and mathematics work in school, in combination with following a specific vocational path at alternative provision.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have developed strong literacy skills, so that they read independently without the need for additional resources or support. They develop writing skills across different subjects and for different purposes, for example in science when writing up their experiments. Less-able pupils have improved their reading skills because they practise each day through an online reading programme.
- Pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 practise their mental arithmetic skills at the start of most lessons and make improvements. Nearly all leavers achieve a qualification in mathematics when they leave school. Some pupils should achieve at higher levels with greater challenge.
- It is not possible to compare the overall progress made by pupils at the school against national figures because of variations in pupil numbers and their ability levels throughout any given year.

## School details

Unique reference number	134321
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10024102

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Mark Dennett
Headteacher	Nigel Hunt
Telephone number	01928 581 301
Website	<a href="http://www.thebridge.halton.sch.uk">www.thebridge.halton.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head.thebridgeschool@halton.gov.uk">head.thebridgeschool@halton.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	27–28 January 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school has undergone a number of staffing changes since it was last inspected and now has a team of permanent teachers and support staff. A new senior leadership team is now in place that includes a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and head of student welfare.
- There has been a review of governance since the last inspection.
- There are currently 56 pupils on the school's roll. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. Most pupils experience social, emotional or mental health needs. A number of pupils have been excluded from their mainstream settings or are awaiting a place in a mainstream school. Some pupils are being assessed for an education, health and care plan prior to their referral to a special school setting.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is



above the national average.

- The school makes use of the following alternative providers: Core Assets, National Advisory and Teaching service, Education Network, Diversity in Training and Learning, Cornerstone, Positive Futures, Widnes Vikings, Building Futures, Positive Progressions, Employability Solutions, CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance).
- The school works closely in partnership with Halton's seven secondary high schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all teachers and classes in the school. They observed a range of different subjects and activities. An inspector visited two of the alternative providers.
- Inspectors met with a small group of pupils to hear their views about the school; inspectors listened to pupils read and talked about their reading experiences.
- Inspectors chatted with pupils during morning break and lunchtime as well as observing behaviour and arrangements for their safety and well-being around school. There were two responses to the online questionnaire survey for pupils.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, two members of the management committee and two local authority officers. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner.
- There were no responses from Parent View (the online site for parents to record their views about the school). An inspector met with three parents in school to speak about their views on the school. Inspectors took account of a recent school survey of parents' views following a parents' evening.
- Inspectors took account of responses by staff to the online questionnaire.
- A range of documents was considered, including: the school's self-review document; the school improvement plan; a number of school policies, including for teaching, learning and assessment, and performance management of staff; management committee reports and recent external reports about the school. Information about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance were looked at as well as their workbooks.

## Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

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