

The Bridge Short Stay School

Appleton Drive, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7EP

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The management committee has been the driving force behind the school's improvement since it was last inspected. The new headteacher has inspired his staff team to make this a good and improving school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is good. Teachers know their subjects well. They combine this with an in-depth understanding of the academic and emotional needs of the pupils they teach. As a result, pupils develop the confidence needed to attempt new work and to make good progress.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make expected or better progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 gain accreditations which help them to access further education, employment or training. An increasing number of younger pupils have returned to a mainstream setting or to appropriate special school provision.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare continue to be a strength of the school's work. Staff go the extra mile to support pupils in improving their attendance and behaviour. This is demonstrated by slow but significant reduced trends in fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is effective across the school, in and out of lessons. Pupils are valued and encouraged to give their thoughts and opinions. The curriculum provides a strong focus upon developing the independent living skills of pupils.
- The management committee and headteacher have ensured that the school development plan is focused upon even more improvements. They are intent upon providing opportunities for subject teachers to take up supportive leadership and management roles. They want greater consistency from all teachers in implementing agreed policies for teaching, learning and assessment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop and extend leadership and management opportunities to teaching staff by:
 - ensuring that teachers maintain partnership working with local schools to share best practices and to moderate pupils' work in the school's two sites
 - ensuring consistency with subject teachers in their implementation of agreed school policies and procedures for assessment, planning, marking and feedback, and homework
 - teachers gaining skills in monitoring teaching and sharing feedback with each other.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher and governors have worked relentlessly to establish clear priorities for school improvement and to follow them up with an agreed action plan. As a result, leaders have secured improvements on both sites since the last inspection. This is now a good school with good capacity to improve further.
- A key focus for leadership is to overcome the barriers that pupils have experienced in their previous education. Pivotal to this is the establishment of a calm atmosphere conducive to learning. You ensure that pupils are welcomed every day. The ethos encourages respect and tolerance towards each other and to staff. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning and begin to make good progress towards challenging academic and behavioural targets.
- With the invaluable support of the local authority adviser, leaders have produced a coherent school development plan that enables governors to check and measure improvements. Good assessment systems track and check pupils' progress against their academic targets in English, mathematics and science. Teachers use assessments well in their planning so that work meets individual and group needs. Leaders have moved on to developing teachers' use of information about pupils' progress in other subjects through the sharing of best practices.
- Teachers have benefited from support and advice provided by local specialist leaders of education (SLEs). There is good, productive partnership-working with the local secondary schools.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school's work. On entry to the school, new pupils receive an induction programme. They are introduced to the school's 'this is how we do it here' code which reflects the British values of tolerance and respect. Class teachers reinforce this approach during morning tutorial sessions. The 'pupil voice' policy enables every pupil to engage in decision-making, for example, when voting to have fruit or toast at breaktimes.
- Leaders know the limitations they face when planning for a broad and balanced curriculum with a small staff team. The rationale for the school's curriculum is centred upon the importance of developing pupils' functional skills in literacy, numeracy and independent living. Staff ensure that the focus is upon individual needs and abilities. Pupils have the opportunity to study GCSE courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is targeted careers advice, for example where pupils can explore 'taster days' at Cheshire College in such activities as welding, construction or hair and beauty. Pupils also have the opportunity to take GCSEs in art, physical education or history. Less-able pupils can study for accreditations at entry level 2 or above in such subjects as food technology or personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities, such as outdoor pursuits, museum and art gallery visits. This enables pupils to use and apply their independent living skills in different contexts, thereby developing greater self-confidence.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Leaders have agreed broad areas of need

which help to define the barriers that pupils face in terms of their learning and progress. The headteacher provided good evidence to show the positive impact of how funding has been used to improve attendance, behaviour and academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, a number of disadvantaged pupils have made successful returns to mainstream education and one or two have achieved five GCSEs.

- The school has fostered positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents say that they benefit from regular communication with staff about their children, for example about any ongoing concerns or progress being made in learning and behaviour.

Governance of the school

- Following two reviews of governance, the second one arranged by the management committee to review the progress that had been made from the first, governance is now a strength of the school. Governors have followed a rigorous process with the local authority in redefining the school's role to focus exclusively on the needs of excluded pupils. They have successfully overseen the appointment of a new headteacher and reviewed the roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Since the last inspection, three new governors have been appointed. They and the new chair, already an existing governor, have had a significant impact. The management committee comprises a range of skilled and able professional people, including serving headteachers and deputy headteachers. They have provided a sharper focus to school action-planning so that improvements can be measured.
- Governors are well informed about the work of the school. Subject teachers say that they are asked to make presentations to governors, for example about the quality of art work and pupils' progress. The headteacher's reports to governors are evaluative and informative.
- The headteacher confirms that governors pose challenging questions, in line with evidence from the minutes of governors' meetings. They request evidence of school improvement, including the destinations of school leavers and whether they sustain their placements.
- On behalf of the local authority, the management committee manages pupil premium and special educational needs funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities benefit from good assessment and teaching so that they make good progress. Some receive an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which enables them to transfer to an appropriate special school setting.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The named designated safeguarding staff on both of the school's sites and the named safeguarding governor ensure that all staff and governors follow agreed policies and procedures. They ensure that there is an updated single central record (SCR) which ensures safe recruitment of staff.
- The school's safeguarding policy and related policies are reviewed and updated annually by governors. As a result, staff and governors are up to date with national and

local guidance in regard to the day-to-day management of safeguarding issues or concerns.

- Safeguarding update training was provided last September on both sites. Staff say that as a result of such training, they are increasingly aware of possible safeguarding concerns, especially when observing changes in pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Briefing and debriefing sessions each day enable staff to share any concerns; senior leaders update staff on any follow-up actions. Risk assessments are completed and followed when pupils go off site, including when attending alternative provision. Good records are maintained to check on pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare both in school and off site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good. On rare occasions, senior leaders provide support and challenge where the quality is less than good. The new headteacher requires all subject teachers to work in small support groups and with SLEs to reflect on and share best classroom practices, especially in regard to consistency in the implementation of the school's agreed policies on assessment and planning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers are skilled at explaining difficult concepts to pupils and following up any misunderstandings.
- Teachers' relationships with pupils are a strength. They are sensitive to individual needs and use verbal and written feedback well, in line with the school's agreed policies, to encourage engagement in lessons. Teachers are successful in their promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Opportunities are provided for pupils to think and talk in greater depth about their work and the progress they are making.
- In most subjects, teachers make good use of assessment information on each pupil to inform their planning. This leads to pupils' full involvement in work set at appropriate levels of challenge and support available if needed. For example, teachers of English focus upon developing the reading and comprehension skills of less-able pupils by selecting appropriate resources and techniques so that they can access the text and make progress.
- Mathematics teachers have kept up to date with current thinking and practices in the teaching of mathematics. As a result, pupils are encouraged to use their reasoning skills when problem-solving. For example, they develop their understanding of the links between division and multiplication when studying equations due to skilled questioning and explanation from the teacher.
- Teachers ensure that they promote the skills of reading, writing and mathematics through other subjects. For example, in science workbooks there are good examples of pupils' written evaluations of experiments they have conducted. They also use and apply their measurement skills to tabulate their results.
- Teachers' classroom displays emphasise and celebrate pupils' achievements. Teachers ensure that they follow agreed policies so that displays help to reinforce pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects they are studying.

- Teachers ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the core of their work. They encourage pupils to reflect on their own and others' learning. Pupils can identify what they have done well and what they need to improve. Teachers enable pupils to see mistakes in work as a stepping stone to success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils follow The Bridge mantra: 'This is how we do it here,' showing tolerance and respect to each other, adults and visitors. They maintain these values during lessons and show good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils gain target awards when they meet their behaviour targets in line with the school's agreed policies on behaviour linked to the rewards system. They value the 'community stars' they receive for their efforts in work and behaviour. This leads towards pupils acting or behaving in ways that benefit the whole school community.
- Each morning, there is a planned and structured tutorial session to discuss the previous day and progress made by pupils. These sessions have a calming effect on pupils.
- Learning mentors are skilled in picking up any concerns when pupils arrive in school. They have very strong counselling and pastoral skills to help pupils address their emotional needs.
- 'Pupil voice' (as staff and pupils call it) is promoted across the two sites and through pastoral time. Pupils make decisions, for example about school dinner preferences. Pupils are also involved when interviewing for new staff. The headteacher, staff and governors were very complimentary about pupils' contributions during a recent teacher appointment.
- Pupils engage in restorative meetings if they have been involved in an incident in school. For example, if they have damaged property or caused offence, they are encouraged to provide some form of recompense after talking things through with a staff member.
- Pupils are accepting and tolerant of differences because they are taught to respect each other. They understand different types of bullying and there are fewer cases of bullying in school than there used to be.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe online and make use of personal passwords when working on a computer in school.
- They have partaken in 'Prevent' duty training and explore the dangers of radicalisation and gang membership through personal, social, health and citizenship lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils hand in their mobile phones without fuss at the start of day and collect them at home time. Pupils are keen to show staff their target scores at the end of each day, showing pride in their achievements.

- Behaviour in and around school sites is consistently good, with very little inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. There are only rare occasions when pupils engage in low-level misbehaviour or use inappropriate language. Staff manage these occasions calmly and effectively. Pupils usually take good responsibility for their behaviour, for example when organising a football skills game at breaktimes between themselves.
- There are occasional fixed-term exclusions. However, these have reduced significantly since the last inspection. Also, they are well below other pupil referral units nationally. The daily review of pupils' behaviour folders and tutorial sessions in line with agreed school procedures has led to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions over the past year.
- Despite leaders' efforts, overall attendance remains a focus for leaders. This is because most pupils who arrive at the school have been permanently excluded or have had a history of poor attendance in their mainstream schools.
- Actions include staff working well to target and follow up persistent absence. They work closely with families and other agencies. The management committee ensures that leaders provide conclusive evidence to indicate the positive impact of these efforts. There have been reduced trends in persistent absence since the last inspection. As a result, overall attendance is gradually moving upwards. The behaviour and attendance of pupils attending alternative provision are monitored closely so that they are in line with their peers in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils who attend the school have previously had negative experiences of education. Many have been permanently excluded and have often had poor attendance. As a result, they have not achieved to their full potential and have gaps in their learning. All pupils are assessed in reading, writing and mathematics on entry to the school. This information is used to set challenging individual targets. The majority of groups on both sites, including those who are disadvantaged, the less and the most able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make expected or better progress from their starting points. The evidence seen in pupils' workbooks and leaders' analysis of the progress made by all groups and individual pupils testify to this judgement.
- All pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 gain at least one GCSE. A number of pupils achieve GCSE grades in other subjects as well, such as physical education, history, art and computing. Due to the small numbers of pupils, it is not possible to provide any precise information about improvements in any given subject year-on-year.
- The most able pupils have gained up to five GCSEs, including English, mathematics and science. The less able pupils achieve entry level awards in a range of subjects from level 2 upwards, including in personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- An increasing number of pupils have made a successful return to a mainstream school, and then gaining a wider range of accreditation more closely matched to their potential. Pupils attending alternative provision have gained accreditation in specific areas such as catering. Last year, they went on to sustained further education, employment or training.

- Pupils are encouraged to read on a regular basis. They respond well when given opportunities to read out loud in different subjects, for example during a science lesson about Charles Darwin. Inspectors heard pupils read in other lessons and on a one-to-one basis. It is evident that teaching and support is pitched towards need, so that less-able pupils can access reading and comprehension activities that match their abilities.
- Staff work with pupils to raise aspirations. As a result, pupils' attendance and attitudes to learning have been seen to improve as a result of 'taster days' at Cheshire College, because pupils can see the attraction of learning new work-related skills.
- There is good careers education and guidance. All leavers from last year's cohort went on successfully to sustained further education, employment and training. Some pupils gained permanent employment.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 138450 |
| Local authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 10046563 |

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 | 7 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 42 |
| Appropriate authority | Local authority |
| Chair | Rachel Hudson |
| Headteacher | Andrew Stewart |
| Telephone number | 01606 275866 |
| Website | www.thebridge.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Email address | andy.stewart@thebridge.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10–11 May 2016 |

Information about this school

- The Bridge Short Stay School is a pupil referral unit based on two sites in Ellesmere Port and Chester. There are 40 places available for key stage 2 to key stage 4 provision. As yet, the school caters only for key stages 3 and 4.
- Since the last inspection, the school no longer provides for pupils with medical needs.
- The management committee has recently confirmed the appointment of a permanent headteacher following the resignation of the previous executive headteacher. The newly appointed headteacher had spent a period of time in an acting role.
- There has been an ongoing review of staff deployment and their roles and responsibilities following the removal of provision for pupils with medical needs.
- There is a higher than average proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- Pupils are able to attend alternative provision at The Utopia Project and Roseheath College when appropriate.
- The school has links with Archer's Brook special school and with Cheshire College in order to develop plans for the transition of pupils into the world of work.
- The school is a member of the Cheshire Vale Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons in all classes at each site. Some of these observations were completed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke informally with pupils to assist in making judgements about their progress. They carried out an analysis of the workbooks and folders of different groups of pupils throughout the two sites.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils about their views of the school, provision for their safety and well-being, and the teaching and support they receive. Observations were made in different contexts of the school sites, including on the corridors, the playground and at lunchtime. An inspector attended some of the early morning class tutorial sessions.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders on both sites, subject teachers, three governors including the chair of the management committee, and one local authority representative, who provides external support to the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and review of its strengths and weaknesses. Other documentation seen related to the school's assessment and target-tracking system, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, staff appraisal and checks made on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire to take into account. There were no responses on the free-text comments for parents. An inspector spoke with one parent at the school and took account of a recent survey of parental views conducted by the school.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the staff online questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dawn Farrent

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018