

The New Bridge Academy

Craigshaw Road, Hylton Castle, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR5 3NF

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school.

- Since the school opened in 2015 as an amalgamation of two schools, leaders have faced challenges in staffing, including managing staff absence. This has had a detrimental effect on pupils' progress.
- Trustees have taken action to improve leadership. However, as many leaders are new or temporary, their leadership lacks the capacity to deliver good outcomes.
- The recently appointed acting headteacher has taken immediate action to improve the quality of pupils' behaviour. Though now improving, it remains poor. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period is above average.
- Expectations of behaviour are not consistent enough and this hampers pupils' progress. Pupils' confidence and skills, particularly in writing, are low and action to tackle this has been slow.
- Attendance is too low and is not improving.
- Pupils' achievement over time is poor in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Pupils do not make the progress they should from their different starting points.
- Systems to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding are underdeveloped. Work in this area has been slowed because of changes in leadership.
- Most teachers do not use information about pupils' prior attainment to inform their planning. Consequently, learning activities are often too difficult, or too easy for a significant majority of pupils.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress remains weak across the curriculum as planned additional targeted support is not available.

The school has the following strengths

- The trustees know what needs to improve. Their actions have ensured that safeguarding is now effective.
- Improved teaching in the sixth form is leading to stronger outcomes. Students are supported well for their next steps after school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all leaders create a shared culture of high expectations and aspirations
 - providing an engaging curriculum so that pupils' academic and personal development needs are met well
 - ensuring that leaders support staff to consistently apply the school's behaviour and attendance policies
 - ensuring that there is staffing to deliver programmes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve teaching so that progress rapidly improves for all pupils, but particularly for most able and disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - making sure that all teachers follow the school's assessment policy
 - ensuring that teachers plan tasks that provide challenge and extend pupils' learning from their different starting points
 - providing opportunities for pupils to improve their writing
 - ensuring that support assistants effectively support pupils' basic skills
 - developing teachers' use of questioning to motivate and challenge pupils' thinking.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour by:
 - decreasing persistent absenteeism further, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged
 - improving rates of attendance so that they are at least in line with the national average
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed term.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The trustees and the executive headteacher have produced detailed actions plans with identified support for school improvements. Safeguarding, for example, is now effective because policies and practices have improved. The trustees have engaged school-to-school support, but currently leaders' plans are not contributing effectively to school improvement. This has led to low morale in the school.
- The trust has provided support and training to staff. However, leaders, including the trustees, have been unable to remove the significant inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment identified through school reviews. At present, the senior leadership team does not have the capacity to deal with all the urgent matters that require their focus. Consequently, many of the key areas for improvement identified remain.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that behaviour and attendance policies are implemented consistently. The number of fixed-term exclusions is high, and pupils' attendance is low and not improving. Actions to introduce a consistently applied behaviour policy have been affected by increased staff absence and temporary staff in the school. This has slowed the drive for improvement in these key areas of the school's work.
- A recent restructure of leadership has resulted in many new subject leaders. Some have had an immediate effect on improving the quality of education in their subject, including in mathematics. However, some leaders do not provide effective leadership or hold others to account. This acts as a barrier to further improvement.
- The curriculum broadly meets pupils' needs, though activities are not always engaging or relevant. Changes introduced from the recent review ensure that pupils have more opportunities to gain vocational qualifications. However, too few pupils are gaining qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Leaders have not ensured that the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used to meet their needs. Lack of staffing has resulted in identified programmes not taking place to improve the progress for disadvantaged pupils in a wide range of subjects.
- It is recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- The chair of the trustees, chief executive and other trustees are firmly committed to the school's success. Their recent actions to secure school-to-school support and to provide temporary, experienced leadership to better meet the needs of pupils have recently begun to secure some improvements in behaviour. Discussions with trustees demonstrated that the trust has significant expertise in supporting pupils with learning difficulties but little expertise in the area of social, emotional and mental health. Therefore, trustees identified the need for re-brokerage to a new trust with relevant expertise in social, emotional and mental health to ensure that the school delivers good

provision in the future.

- The recent restructure of leadership and staffing by trustees was intended to improve the quality of leadership across the curriculum. Improvements can be seen in the delivery of mathematics; however, increased staff absence and staff leaving have led to temporary leadership in some key curriculum areas.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of safeguarding in the school has improved recently. The executive headteacher and designated safeguarding leader have introduced a number of new systems to ensure that pupils receive the care that they need. Safeguarding records are detailed and staff receive regular safeguarding updates and training. Some risk assessments for visits, when pupils are off site, are inconsistent in their quality.
- Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. Staff are aware of who to speak to if they have a concern about a pupil. Similarly, pupils say that they know who to report any issues to and that staff support them effectively.
- There are many opportunities across the curriculum for personal, social and health education lessons to help pupils understand how to stay safe. In addition, leaders regularly welcome professionals into school so that pupils can share concerns with experts. Pupils say they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is highly variable across the school.
- Increased absence of teaching staff and poorly planned learning has led to inadequate outcomes for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information they have on pupils' starting points to shape the tasks and resources they provide. This means that some classes, made up of pupils with widely different starting points, are given work which is too challenging for some pupils and not demanding enough for others.
- In some classes, support assistants are not always briefed well enough by teachers to consistently provide pupils with effective support.
- In those lessons where pupils are usually taught by the same teaching staff, relationships between teachers and pupils are warm, friendly and respectful. However, in lessons taught by less familiar adults, pupils' behaviour is poor as they disengage from learning.
- The standard of presentation of work is too variable. Few pupils take real pride in their work and develop a high standard of grammar. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length or be expected to make corrections to their spelling and punctuation.
- Some teachers ask thoughtful questions that encourage pupils to think on their feet. They ensure that learning successfully engages pupils. On other occasions, inspectors

observed learning which progressed slowly and did not challenge or motivate pupils effectively.

- Teachers do not consistently follow the school's assessment policy. Inspection evidence shows teachers are unclear about the school's expectations in relation to assessment and feedback. Consequently, the quality of assessment and information given to pupils, so they know how to improve, is variable depending on which teacher pupils have.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Inspection evidence demonstrates that bullying does occur occasionally. However, pupils, parents and carers who responded to the inspectors say that teachers deal with it effectively.
- Staff genuinely care for pupils and most work hard to nurture their confidence as learners. Some pupils say staff are kind, caring and speak to them respectfully. Nonetheless, pupils are less respectful and more confrontational to the staff they know less well.
- In lessons, most teachers do not make tasks motivating enough, so pupils are unable to develop their confidence and become self-assured learners.
- Insufficient action is taken to address smoking. Currently, the school's practice is not addressing this or actively promoting pupils' well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance rates remain below average. Absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are too high.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed term remains above average. Inspection evidence found that disruptive behaviour remains the most common reason for exclusion.
- Pupils' lack of engagement and persistent low-level disruption reduces and interrupts learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and confidence in learning are fragile. Opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their behaviour. However, some pupils do not fully engage with this approach to change their behaviour.
- The behaviour management policy is not used consistently to help pupils manage their own behaviour in class. Staff absence affects pupils as they frequently change lessons and are taught by teachers they are not familiar with.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils enter the school at different points. Some join the school at the start of Year 7; others join different year groups up to Year 11. Most pupils who join the school had broadly below average levels of attainment when they left primary school. The school staff make their own assessment of pupils' levels of ability when they arrive. These assessments indicate that many pupils had not made the progress expected of them in their former secondary schools.
- From these starting points, leaders have not been able to secure good outcomes for pupils. Rates of progress on courses offered have been variable and, in some subjects, including English, examination results have been weak. Not enough pupils are entering examinations and not enough is being done to improve the quality of teaching.
- In 2018, the school is predicting its lowest number of passes in construction and physical education and sports. No pupils are entered for GCSE mathematics.
- Over time, weaknesses in teaching and inconsistent attendance in the school have hampered pupils' progress. Current pupils continue to make poor progress because teachers do not use the information they have on pupils' prior learning to inform planning to meet pupils' needs effectively.
- Current pupils' progress in writing is extremely poor. Typically, many pupils' confidence and skills in writing are low. Opportunities to develop writing skills in subjects across the curriculum are generally underdeveloped but are beginning to be used well in computing.
- Most pupils have literacy difficulties, including those who are disadvantaged. Currently, intervention programmes are not in place to provide additional literacy lessons to accelerate progress in spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing.
- The progress of the most able pupils is poor. Too few make good progress because teaching is not challenging enough.
- School assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers in the school. Their progress and attainment by the end of key stage 4 are significantly below that of other pupils nationally.
- A small number of pupils go into the sixth form. Though other opportunities are available for pupils, too few choose to continue into education, employment and training at the end of Year 11.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. The new acting leader has rightly focused on maintaining student confidence in completing courses and to work independently.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving in the sixth form. Teachers' assessment of students' work is more focused at this key stage, so students know their strengths and weaknesses.
- There is a very small number of students in the sixth form. The work of this group is well presented and shows care and attention. Relationships between students and teachers are positive.
- All students access college and are well prepared for transition to courses that will prepare them for employment.
- Students behave well and respect others. They understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and how they can contribute to the wider society.

School details

Unique reference number	142331
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10048411

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nick Hurn
Acting headteacher	Patrick Tully
Telephone number	01919 171700
Website	www.thenewbridge.org.uk/
Email address	thenewbridge@ascenttrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The New Bridge Academy is an average-sized secondary special school. It provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The majority of pupils have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- In 2015, Springwell Dene and Castlegreen joined the Ascent Trust and amalgamated to become The New Bridge Academy. The school has not had a previous inspection.
- The school is in the process of re-brokerage to another trust. The acting headteacher is a senior leader of Trinity Academy Trust, proposed as the new trust for the school. There is a school-to-school support agreement between the two trusts.
- Most pupils join the school following a referral from the local authority. They join at times other than usual transition from Year 6. Many have started their secondary education in other schools. Many arrive at school in Years 9 and 10 and have had significant disruption in their education prior to their arrival at The New Bridge

Academy.

- A small number of pupils are on shared placements with the pupil referral unit while undergoing statutory assessment to attend the school.
- Three quarters of the pupils are known to be entitled to pupil premium funding. This is much higher than the proportion found nationally.
- Most pupils are White British. No pupils speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in classrooms each day. The majority of lessons were observed jointly with either the executive headteacher or a teacher with temporary responsibility for teaching and learning. Inspectors talked to pupils informally in lessons, in the dining hall, at breaktimes and around the school. They spoke formally to a group of pupils on day 1 of the inspection.
- On days 1 and 2 of the inspection, two thirds of the pupils were attending school. On day 1, 19 pupils were on visits out of school in the morning. The learning walk on day 2 covered the four available lessons.
- The inspectors held discussions with trustees, the school improvement partner for the trust, the executive headteacher, acting headteacher and some subject leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors analysed the 10 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. The inspectors had discussions with staff and three parents on their views of the school's provision.
- The team examined a range of documents, including the school's own systems for the tracking of pupils' progress, school evaluations, school action plans, safeguarding documentation, other key policies and records of attendance.

Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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