

Inspection of a good school: The Bridge Short Stay School

Appleton Drive, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7EP

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2024

Outcome

The Bridge Short Stay School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at The Bridge Short Stay School. The school takes the time to understand the challenges and turbulence that pupils have faced in the past. The majority of pupils have had a long period out of mainstream school before being referred to this school. They have missed a significant amount of learning and social time with their friends. Staff listen to pupils' views and care about their well-being. Staff provide pupils with encouragement and effective support. Pupils develop strong and positive relationships with staff and learn to trust the adults around them. This helps pupils to feel safe, secure and happy in school. As a result, pupils look forward to a brighter future.

The school has high expectations for pupils' learning. Pupils gain in confidence and put the past behind them. They are proud of their school and their many achievements. Some pupils return successfully to a mainstream school. Pupils in key stage 4 achieve a range of nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSEs. The school ensures that pupils are ready for their next stage in education, employment or training.

Pupils can explain the difference that the school has made to their behaviour and attitudes. Over time, pupils' behaviour improves. Pupils work with staff to design their own personal profile. This identifies what will help pupils to learn well and the strategies to manage any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils develop the skills to reflect on their behaviour and to make positive choices.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is adept at identifying the specific challenges that pupils have in their learning. This includes identifying the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately.

The curriculum is designed to meet pupils' needs effectively. It takes into account that pupils can join the school at any point in the year and often have significant gaps in their

knowledge. The key knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it is clearly identified.

The school has made some recent refinements to some curriculums which means that some subjects are further on in their development than others. In the subjects where the curriculum is more established, teachers use assessment information well to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed swiftly. Staff give pupils the time that they need to practise and apply learning before they move on to new content. The choice of activities and resources is carefully considered to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum and achieve well. However, the implementation of the curriculum is more variable in those subjects that have recently been revised. At times, this means that pupils' learning is not secure.

The school has prioritised reading. It uses assessment strategies well to identify the specific difficulties that a pupil may have with their reading, comprehension or writing knowledge. Pupils have targeted support in class and one-to-one help to ensure that they catch up with their peers.

For many pupils, the long wait to join this school has had a negative effect on their attendance. They have disengaged from education and have not had the routine of going to school. Despite this challenge, the school is tenacious in its approach to improving attendance. It works well with pupils and their families to identify any barriers to pupils' attendance. This determined approach is a success. Over time the vast majority of pupils attend school more regularly.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom. This helps to deepen pupils' knowledge. For example, learning about pond life is brought to life through visits to community ponds and creating a pond in the school garden. Visits to places of worship help pupils to understand the rituals and beliefs of different religions.

Pupils debate and discuss some challenging topics with staff who have the expertise and knowledge to ensure that they receive a balanced view. Pupils learn about puberty and the importance of respectful relationships. They can discuss aspects of life in modern Britain and fundamental British values including respect and tolerance.

The school has a strong and productive management committee. The committee takes an active part in setting the strategic direction of the school. Its members ensure that the school's values are upheld.

Staff are proud of their school and the difference that it makes to pupils' lives. They feel well supported by the school. Staff particularly appreciate the debrief time which allows them to discuss any concerns. This helps staff to move on to a fresh start the following day. The school listens to staff. This ensures that staff feel included and valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum is variable in those subjects that have been renewed recently. This means that, at time, pupils do not learn all that they should. The school should ensure that teachers are suitably trained to deliver the new curriculums so that pupils know and remember more over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138450
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10290209
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	59
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	
Headteacher	Andy Stewart
Website	www.thebridge.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of this inspection there were no primary-aged pupils attending the school.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior school leaders, subject leaders and members of the management committee, including the chair of the management committee. An inspector also spoke with two representatives of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including policies and analyses of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils and staff about the school. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lunch and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey to consider.
- Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with some parents.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gil Bourgade

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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