



# New Bridge School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 134517  
**LEA** Oldham  
**Inspection number** 282590  
**Inspection dates** 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Eric Craven HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Roman Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		0
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		0, Oldham OL8 3PT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 222 6999
<b>Number on roll</b>	284	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 688 8223
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr Steven Williams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Graham Quinn

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	282590

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

New Bridge is a new and purpose built special school, sharing a site with a secondary school. It opened in September 2005 following the closure of three smaller special schools. It provides for 284 students from 11-19 years, including 112 in the sixth form, which is called the Learning Centre, located two miles from the main school site. The students have a range of special educational needs including profound, severe and moderate learning difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders and physical disabilities. Around 80% of the students are of white British heritage with approximately 15% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. A little over 40% are entitled to free school meals. The school has been successful in its application to become a Specialist Performing Arts School and is due to receive this status in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The challenges in creating one new school from three established and very different schools should not be underestimated and this has been generally well managed by the headteacher and senior colleagues. For a school that is only eight months old it has made good progress in establishing a vision and a set of priorities which are shared by the majority of stakeholders. It is performing satisfactorily overall and in some areas it is performing well. Senior managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and clear roles and responsibilities have been established. However, the impact of some middle leaders in influencing the work of their colleagues and in promoting school improvement is uneven and in some cases it is at a very early stage of development. The progress being made by the students is satisfactory but erratic across subjects. Equally, the quality of teaching is variable and there is little that is outstanding. The curriculum is good and suitably matched to the needs of most of the students and there is an excellent array of extra-curricular opportunities. The vast majority of the students have settled very well and their personal development is good; they have positive attitudes and behave very well. Relationships between the staff and students and between the students themselves are very positive. Students are well cared for by staff and are safe and secure. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Based on the good progress made in many areas of the school since it opened, the quality of its self-evaluation and development planning arrangements, the school's capacity to improve is good.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The post 16 provision is good and students achieve well, making good progress in skills that will prepare them for the future. The curriculum is good because of the wide range of suitable vocational courses available to the students, alongside a key skills and leisure curriculum. Students are given good guidance and support in developing the skills that are necessary in finding future college places and training opportunities. Teaching is good where expectations are high and tasks are challenging. However, it is too variable because of the limitations of some of the planning leading to undemanding work. Relationships between adults and students are very good and these are very influential in promoting a mature and ambitious response from students who behave extremely well and grow in confidence as a result. Leadership and management are good and this means that students are generally achieving well in their courses and in their personal development.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

Improve the rate of progress by:

- raising the quality of teaching so that the great majority is good and better
- improving planning so that work is better matched to the needs of students and the work of learning support assistants is clearly specified

- ensuring that all middle leaders are influential in contributing to school improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The standards reached by the students are generally reflective of their special educational needs and very few reach standards expected of students of a similar age in mainstream schools. However, the progress made by the students is satisfactory overall and in some subjects and for some groups it is good. Nevertheless, it is too variable. The school's data shows that students with autism make good progress in speaking and listening, food technology and design technology and they make generally satisfactory progress in other areas of the curriculum. For other students, their progress is also uneven across subjects. Teachers' assessments show they perform better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing and students make least progress in art where there have been staffing difficulties. In the Learning Centre, the majority of the post-16 students make good progress. The progress of the students in the lessons observed reflected the picture gained from analyses of the data. This mixed picture of students' achievements is partly because the school has only been open for eight months. Nevertheless, there are three other reasons for the lack of uniformity. There is too much variability in the quality of teaching; the influence of middle managers on school improvement is patchy and in some cases embryonic; and the school is at an early stage in ensuring its assessments of the students are accurate and is not putting these to good use in matching work appropriately to the needs of the students.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school successfully supports the students' personal development and well-being. Attitudes and behaviour in and around school are very good because there are very good relationships and staff have high expectations of the students. Attendance is a little under 90% and there are signs that this is improving, although it is adrift from its target. The vast majority of students have settled well and say that they enjoy coming to school and they are particularly appreciative of the range of lunchtime and after school activities available to them. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good and they are very tolerant, respectful and caring of each other and adults. Cultural development is reinforced, for example, through the use of a multi-cultural reading scheme, and links with and visits to Germany. Spiritual development is lagging behind and this has been prioritised in the school development plan. Physical activity is promoted well and the students are learning what they need to do to be as healthy as they can be. In the short time that the school has been open it has sought ways to involve students in the local community. For example, older students from the Learning Centre provide sports coaching in the local community.

The school council, and surveys of their views, help students to contribute to school developments. The 'consequences' scheme has been shaped with input from students and the purchase of additional leisure resources have been initiated by them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. About half of the lessons observed were good, although some of these had features which lessened their impact. There is little inadequate teaching but there is little that is outstanding; few lessons are exciting and vibrant. Where teaching is good or better it is characterised by an appropriately brisk pace; good management of the learning environment; high expectations from staff; good subject knowledge and activities that have a clear purpose and relevance to the students. Relationships are good or better in most lessons and agreeable humour contributes to the students' enjoyment and motivation; they have positive attitudes to their learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in some lessons but in others the opportunities to use this are missed. Speaking and listening skills are promoted to good effect in the best lessons. Planning is a general weakness and in most cases it is scant and does not make clear how the specific needs of individuals or groups will be met; in some classes everyone was given too much of the same things to learn. Equally, it often fails to specify the work of learning support assistants and as a consequence opportunities are missed to capitalise on this valuable resource. Curriculum and personal and social targets are being set for students but these are not incorporated into short-term planning. A professed strength of the school is performing arts but these lessons could not be observed as they were not timetabled on the inspection days.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and is generally suitable to the needs of the students. The school has already made judicious changes including the introduction of setting for numeracy and literacy and the introduction of a third base for students with autistic spectrum disorders. A review of schemes of work is planned for later in the term now that the staff have nearly a year's experience with the students. Staff are conscious of the need to ensure the requirements of the most able and least able students are accommodated in schemes of work and other plans during this review. In the Learning Centre, the students enjoy predominantly vocational courses complemented by a key skills and leisure curriculum. These are made particularly relevant through personalised timetables. College placements and work experience are good features of the provision. Staff are commendably exploring ways of accrediting the achievements of the least able students and examining how key skills and vocational studies can be combined. The range of enrichment activities is impressive. Lunchtime and after-school clubs

and off-site and residential experiences make a valuable contribution to the students' experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff work well together to provide a good level of care, guidance and support to students. There are well documented procedures for matters of health and safety. Risk assessments are carried out carefully to ensure students are safe in school and during off-site activities. Arrangements are in place for child protection and children who are looked after by the local authority. Well considered transition arrangements have been developed to support students as they move into the school and then move to the Learning Centre and beyond. Helpful arrangements have been made to encourage students to support each other, for example, through a 'buddies' scheme; the students appreciate and value these. A multi-disciplinary 'family support team' works effectively to ensure that students with particular needs are provided with appropriate support and good links are being forged with other associated professionals working in school; the headteacher reports that their work is becoming more co-ordinated.

This is an inclusive school and wherever possible students are included in all aspects of the school's life. It has, with its partner mainstream secondary school, developed a shared vision for inclusion across both communities. A small number of students from New Bridge now attend mathematics lessons in the mainstream school and students from there access aspects of the curriculum at New Bridge.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and some aspects are good. The headteacher is leading the school well and receives good support from senior managers. He and his senior colleagues are facing up to the challenge of developing a fully inclusive special school by having mixed ability classes in the main. The great majority of students are benefiting from this arrangement, although it is not without its strains. Some staff are inexperienced in providing for this range of needs and a small number of parents have anxieties about this model of provision. Senior leaders are beginning to support and challenge staff in developing their skills to meet a more diverse range of needs, but there is still some way to go. They also recognise that a small number of parents have anxieties and they are beginning to respond to these. However, for some parents this is not yet fully apparent, although others recognise the school is taking action to address their concerns. The Learning Centre is well managed.

There is a more mixed picture with regard to middle leaders where there is uneven effectiveness; some are at a very early stage in monitoring, evaluating and influencing the performance of staff and students in their areas of responsibility. The middle leaders interviewed report themselves as being on a steep learning curve.

The school has quickly developed a comprehensive electronic database which readily captures a range of information on all aspects of the students' performance. However, this information is not used well enough to promote school improvements and most importantly to increase the progress made by the students. A cycle of school self-evaluation is embedded in practice; all stakeholders are regularly asked their views. The school recognises that it is not fully effective in ascertaining the views of the less able students. Lessons are monitored by senior staff and some peer monitoring is underway. There is insufficient information available yet to be able to judge the impact of these monitoring practices. However, the written feedback to some teachers is too brief to make a solid and valuable contribution to staff development.

The governors have quickly taken to their roles and are fully committed to the school. They suitably support and challenge the senior staff. However, there is a need for firm links to be made between middle leaders and the governing body.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I know that some of you have difficulties in reading so I am asking Mr Quinn and your teachers to read this letter to you if you are not able to read it all yourself.

First of all, thank you very much for welcoming myself, Mrs Farrow and Mr Atkinson to your school for the inspection early in May. Thank you also for talking to us so freely when we were in your lessons and at other times as well. We gained a good deal of helpful information from you.

The main things we found out about the school are as follows.

- You are enthusiastic in your learning and you behave well in lessons and around the school. You are also very polite and respectful and are very willing to lend a hand when someone needs help. We particularly like the 'buddies' system.
- The staff are doing a good job in keeping you safe and you also tell us that you can easily talk to staff if you have any worries or concerns.
- We found that your lessons were okay, or what we call satisfactory, but we felt that there weren't enough of them that were really exciting for you.
- We liked what you were being taught, especially in the Learning Centre where there are lots of interesting courses on offer. We did think that in some classes everyone was given too much of the same things to learn. We were really impressed with the lunchtime and after school clubs you have and also the opportunities you are given to go out of school, sometimes even abroad.
- We think that Mr Quinn and the staff have done well to get your new school up and running in such a short period of time. We also think that lots of things are working well but also that some things aren't working quite as well as they could do. For example, we know that teachers have targets for each of you in your subjects but we don't think these are used enough to help plan work for you.

We have asked Mr Quinn and the staff to do the following things which we think will make the school better and help you learn more quickly:

- make the teaching even better than it is so that lessons are more exciting
- improve the lesson plans teachers make so that they can set you work that really does meet your needs
- for the staff who are responsible for subjects and year groups to take more part in the management of the school.

We enjoyed our short time with you and we wish you well for the future in your new school.