

Alt Bridge Secondary Support Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104498
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308618
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Gannon
Headteacher	Mr B Kerwin
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Wellcroft Road Huyton Liverpool Merseyside L36 7TA
Telephone number	0151 4778310
Fax number	0151 4778313

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Alt Bridge caters for pupils who have moderate, severe and specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some pupils have complicated learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these include a few pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The school is the only secondary provision in the area for pupils with this type of need. The number of pupils with complicated learning difficulties and/or disabilities and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is increasing. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around 70% of pupils have free school meals. The school has recently gained the national Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Representative views from parents included, 'The school is in the premier league of schools, my son has made great improvements in his work and his behaviour since he started at Alt Bridge.' Though standards are low, achievement is good given the severity of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning is good. By the time pupils leave school many have gained external awards and accreditations. Excellent links include the local network of colleges (the collegiate) where older pupils attend once a week and gain skills and qualifications in gardening, building trades and hairdressing. Personal development is strong. Every chance is taken to raise pupils' self esteem, including giving praise for effort and rewarding good achievement and behaviour; consequently, behaviour is good. Although attendance has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory, there are a small minority of pupils with poor attendance. The curriculum is good. Pupils enjoy learning and take pride in their achievements. They develop excellent attitudes towards health matters through work with the school nurse and a series of activities within the healthy schools initiative. Pupils adopt safe practices well through the curriculum and opportunities such training in safe cycling and basic first aid. Pupils also make a good contribution to the community through taking responsibilities such as being prefects and fundraising for charities or good causes. Pupils are concerned about their environment and are keen on issues such as conservation and recycling. Pupils develop useful skills for the future because basic skills are taught exceptionally well. There are excellent chances to gain vocational qualifications and enterprise skills.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. A major review of educational provision in Knowsley is currently taking place. As such, the school is waiting for details about plans for its future role. Governors and the senior management team are leading the school effectively through this period of uncertainty. Effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching have resulted in consistently good teaching across the school. However, although leaders and managers have a clear picture of achievement, the setting of challenging targets for all pupils is underdeveloped. The school has addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and made remarkable improvement to care, support and guidance, which are now outstanding. These factors demonstrate a good capacity for improvement. In view of pupils' good achievements and personal development, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the attendance of the small minority of pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory.
- Ensure that leaders and managers use challenging targets more effectively to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Though standards of attainment are low, achievement is good. Parental comments included 'We believe the school has brought our son on in more ways than we could have hoped for.' Pupils make good progress because the school successfully raises self-confidence and develops pupils' basic skills very effectively. Pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 enjoy outdoor activities and many receive skills certificates through the Mayor of Knowsley's award. By the time pupils leave, many have gained external accreditations. Collegiate accreditations include basic National Vocational Qualifications in hairdressing and several construction skills. Many pupils gain entry level certificates in catering and 'skills for working life'. Older pupils benefit positively from a

good range of vocational and work experiences. A few gain accreditations in gardening and car mechanics. The school began providing GCSE mathematics and science courses in September 2006. Records show that pupils on these courses are making good progress as they approach their examinations this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strong. Social development stands out. Pupils develop excellent relationships with others. Cultural development is enhanced through many trips to museums, art galleries and other places of interest. Pupils also develop a high level of awareness about different cultures. For instance, a religious education lesson about Buddhism included many chances to learn about the lifestyles of monks. The attendance overall is satisfactory and for most pupils it is good. However, despite the school's efforts, the attendance of a significant minority of pupils remains unsatisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Consequently, pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work. Excellent management of pupils ensures that they stay focussed on their work. Teachers engage pupils well through practical activities. For instance, in an enterprise skills lesson, all pupils were very keen to make attractive birthday cards to sell to friends and relatives. Assessment is accurate. Teachers know pupils well and understand their learning needs. Pupils are learning to evaluate their own work well through good chances to discuss their achievements in the last part of lessons. Teaching and support assistants make a strong contribution to the success of lessons. Classroom resources are well used to support learning. Lesson planning is good on the whole although there is room for improvement to ensure that the small number of more-able pupils have clearer learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy a good curriculum which meets their needs well. A book week is held regularly. Close working between staff, visiting authors and other speakers effectively promotes a love of reading. Other regular events include science week and industry days. Good personal, social, health and citizenship education is effective in developing pupils' awareness of health and safety matters and leads to strong personal development. Pupils enjoy many extra-curricular activities, including sport, conservation and outdoor pursuits. The school holds a circus club weekly where pupils develop skills such as juggling. Visitors include a group who teach circus skills and this is skilfully combined with developing understanding in science. For instance, pupils consider how it is that a plate can spin on a stick without falling. Other visitors include football and boxing clubs who frequently provide skills coaching in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. All pupils are treated as individuals. Typical comments from parents included, 'if my son is feeling down, a teacher will make time to sit and

talk with him' and 'We have never seen our daughter so happy going to school. She always tells you what she has been up to that day and that has not really happened before.' Staff are highly committed to encouraging enjoyment and achievement. The excellent pastoral care offered by the school ensures that pupils feel safe, secure and confident as they learn. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place and regularly reviewed. Excellent links are in place to support pupils including one with the school nurse who attends the school regularly. In addition, speech and language therapists and other specialists are heavily involved in supporting specific needs. Pupils are well informed about their targets, achievements and how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. This ensures that pupils make good progress in a caring environment, which is highly valued by pupils and parents. Inclusion is good. Despite uncertainty about the school's future, staff morale is high and everyone remains focussed on pupils' needs. Managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through effective self-evaluation. Inspection judgements agree with the school's self-evaluation with the exception of personal development. In judging personal development as outstanding, the school had not attached enough importance to the low levels of attendance of a minority of pupils. Governors hold the school to account well, for instance they carry out a curriculum audit each year to ensure that pupils' needs are met. The school realises that improvements can be made to the curriculum to increase provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Resources are well used to improve outcomes, especially the spacious accommodation. Financial management is good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Alt Bridge Secondary Support Centre, Huyton, L36 7TA

I would like to thank you for all the help you gave me in the inspection of your school. Your school is good because you are happy and you make good progress. I know that your parents or carers are very pleased because you achieve well and they have noticed many improvements in you.

The curriculum is good and the school provides outstanding care, support and guidance for you. Attitudes towards learning and behaviour are good. Although many of you attend well, a small number of you let yourselves down and miss valuable learning chances by not attending as much as you should. Your attitudes towards healthy living are excellent and I was impressed by your sports skills and healthy eating choices. The contribution you make to the community is good. Prefects are helpful to others and all of you are thoughtful about the environment and issues such as pollution, littering and recycling. Your personal development is good. This includes very good social development and it was good to see how much you respect other people. Relationships across the school are excellent. I was pleased to see that teaching is good and all adults help you to learn well. I can see that the school is preparing you exceptionally well for the future by helping you to develop your self-confidence and basic skills.

Leadership and management of your school are good because governors and senior staff make sure that teaching is good and you obtain qualifications wherever possible.

To make your school even better it is necessary to:

- raise the attendance of the small minority of pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory
- ensure that leaders and managers use challenging targets better to raise standards.

If you are one of the pupils whose attendance could be better, you would be helping yourself and the school by improving your attendance.

Best wishes for the future.