

# Newcastle Bridges School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133714
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	328729
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mel Blackband

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	158
Sixth form	0
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bill Muir
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Dover
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Royal Victoria Infirmary c/o Ward 10 Queen Victoria Road Newcastle Upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE1 4LP

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<b>Age group</b>	2–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Newcastle Bridges is a community special school (based in a hospital) spread over nine different sites. Most pupils are dual registered and the mainstream school retains responsibility for the pupils' education. The pupils have a wide range of illnesses, disabilities or other medical needs. Some of the pupils are long stay patients in the hospital or psychiatric units; others are recovering from illness in their own homes. A number of the pupils are girls who are pregnant or already mothers and some pupils are school phobic. The pupils receive their schooling at one of the units for varying amounts of time, varying from a few days to several years. The number of boys and girls is about equal. Although the school accepts pupils between 2 and 19 years, there is no formal organisation for a sixth form provision or for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. During the inspection there were no students in the Sixth Form and no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Newcastle Bridges is an outstanding school which has improved in all areas since the previous inspection. All the pupils do very well in their studies and many make outstanding progress, especially in the basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The few Early Years Foundation Stage pupils make excellent progress. These pupils quickly settle into school life through excellent teaching and care. Students, who are post 16 years, achieve equally well.

Because of their emotional, social and associated learning difficulties the overall standards reached by pupils are broadly average. Many pupils work at nationally expected levels but some pupils, because of their physical and mental health problems, or learning disabilities, make progress in small steps.

The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers plan learning activities exceptionally well and they accompany this with equally effective assessment of the pupils' progress. The well-qualified learning assistants provide excellent support for individuals and small groups. Teachers make sure that the pupils clearly understand how well they have worked and made progress and what they need to do to improve further. This is a strength of the teaching in every unit. As a result, the pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The curriculum is outstanding. There are real strengths in the way teachers tailor learning activities so well to each pupil's learning needs and in the effectiveness of vocational and work related programmes. The school's monitoring and tracking of pupils' overall achievement is thorough and accurate and this enables the school's leaders to maintain a clear focus on each pupil's progress. The senior team are aware that there is scope to refine the way results are presented to enable them to demonstrate the school's effectiveness more clearly.

The pupils make excellent gains in their personal development because of the high level of support and attention they are given and because of the outstanding teaching and curriculum provision in personal, health and social education (PHSE). They learn how to keep healthy, to stay safe and to behave well. The pupils love their school and really look forward to their lessons. This is evident through the excellent relationships they have with staff and other pupils and their outstandingly good attendance at lessons, even when in some cases they are undergoing treatment. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. One parent stated that, 'We have stayed on the ward twice now and the first thing she asks is "When are the teachers coming?"'. Parents expressed extremely positive views. They strongly agree that their children will be well looked after and that the school has high expectations of their progress. One parent's comment was typical, 'The school has been excellent in helping our daughter to maintain her education while unable to attend mainstream school.'

The headteacher's work has been outstanding in maintaining and improving the already high standards. A very able senior team supports her and this team has been extremely effective in leading staff in the drive to improve pupils' achievements further. The governing body is supportive and provides a good standard of oversight and challenge which is much improved since the previous inspection. The school's leaders monitor and evaluate each aspect of provision exceptionally well and this has played a vital part in maintaining the pace of progress. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

At the time of the inspection there were no students in the sixth form, however, the school's records show that previous cohorts made excellent progress. Students are supported exceptionally well, either in full time courses at the local college or in part-time links with local mainstream schools. Some high dependency students at the Prudhoe site, continue with individual programmes to alleviate their learning and emotional difficulties. This provision ensures stability for the young people involved. At all sites the students make great strides in their personal development. They develop the self-confidence to make their own choices about their future directions and to make the transition to college or further training and employment. The students are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning through carefully supported work and college placements.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage however, the school's records show that previous cohorts made outstanding progress. Children achieved well because they received excellent teaching which was based on very effective assessment of their attainment and learning needs. Leadership and management are excellent and the care provided for children is exemplary. All of the staff involved with a child attend weekly progress review meetings and staff keep parents well informed about their child's achievement. As a result, the parents can continue to use the successful strategies developed in school. The very good liaison with the children's mainstream teachers ensures that there is continuity in teaching approaches. Children make excellent progress in their personal development and they remain happy and confident within a very safe and caring environment.

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

- Refine the format in which the pupils' achievements are presented so that teachers and senior staff are able to demonstrate the school's effectiveness more easily.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Standards overall are broadly average and range from pupils who are only able to communicate in very basic ways to those who perform at mainstream levels. Many pupils face recurring health problems which inhibit their learning and some pupils have had long periods of absence before joining the school. The attainment of some pupils is affected by factors relating to life limiting conditions or traumatic events including psychosis, entrenched anorexia or the birth of a baby at a critical point in preparing for examinations. However, nearly all the pupils, in all parts of the school, make outstanding progress. This prepares the short-stay pupils very well for their return to their mainstream school. Pupils who enter the provision with low self-esteem and low attainment, make significant gains in their self-confidence and achievement. Longer-stay pupils who often arrive with low levels of attainment achieve exceptionally well and all the pupils entered, last year, gained at least one GCSE. A quarter of these pupils achieved five A\* to C grades. All the pupils make excellent progress in meeting challenging personal learning targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They thrive within the protection of the school's exemplary care and support procedures. Pupils feel safe because, as they say, 'Teachers and nurses look after you.' The pupils' attendance is excellent. Pupils on the wards rarely miss lessons and pupils who were previously school phobic and those who are pregnant or nursing mothers attend regularly. One young mother commented, 'It's great to be able to carry on education and look after my baby.' All the pupils gain a very good understanding of keeping themselves as healthy as they can and of keeping themselves safe. Their behaviour is generally outstanding. There are hardly any incidents of bullying or disruptive behaviour. When in some units the pupils' behaviour becomes challenging, staff deal with it sensitively and with support for the pupil involved. The pupils develop a very good understanding of their rights and responsibilities through their learning in citizenship. There are flourishing school councils, pupils across the school have contributed to the well-being of their community, for instance in creating anti-bullying publicity through poems and posters. As a result, the social and moral development of the pupils is very good. They learn about other countries, customs and beliefs in well planned curriculum activities. They have a good awareness of diversity amongst races and cultures and they develop understanding of the cohesiveness of the local and wider community. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. Learners are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. They make excellent progress in literacy and numeracy and in their use of ICT. They achieve well in vocational courses and in their learning about the world of work. As a result, almost all of the long stay pupils return to mainstream education or go into college, training or employment when they leave school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teaching standards are exceptionally good throughout the school and this has a very substantial impact on the pupils' achievement. Teachers capture each small step in pupils' progress and this leads to very well focused targets for each pupil's further improvement. Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well-paced activities, which motivate the pupils to do their best. There are excellent relationships between adults and learners. Teachers work in very effective teams, often working alongside colleagues to gain or to impart extra expertise in some part of the curriculum. The generally small teaching groups and generous levels of support from classroom assistants mean that each pupil receives a substantial degree of personal tuition. The high quality of this support gives the pupils confidence to try new things and motivates them to work with a high level of concentration and enjoyment. For example, one girl in Year 3 undergoing treatment at the Royal Victoria Infirmary worked happily with her teacher in investigating changes in the conditions required for a plant to grow. In the same group, a Year 6 boy awaiting treatment talked excitedly about his work in composing a news report on the computer.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum which is extremely well adapted to their needs. Teachers rigorously monitor its effectiveness. Learning activities are very interesting and relevant, such as the young mothers learning about human physiology and health with the clear implications for their own and their baby's well-being. Carefully planned programmes in PHSE underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the pupils' achievement in personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. The school's excellent provision for the development of the older pupils' experience of work related learning and vocational courses are extremely effective in promoting their confidence and their enterprise and financial skills. There are many activities to enhance the pupils' learning, such as visits from a wide range of musicians, artists and drama groups. This adds substantially to their social and creative skills and their interest in learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides a very high standard of care for all of its pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet national expectations. Pupils are very well supported in each stage of their learning and respond with very good attendance and an obvious enjoyment in their school activities. As one boy said, 'Teachers care and you can feel a bond with them. This is a really good place to come.' The pupils are proud of their successes and they like the way that staff always discuss with them how well they are doing in both their work and their personal development. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to make their work better and this has a very positive impact on their achievement. Parents receive accurate and comprehensive progress reports for review meetings and report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Pupils receive very good advice and support as they are about to leave school. This helps them effectively to manage the challenges they face as they make the transition to college or training.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The school's leaders have continued to drive up standards of teaching and the pupils' achievements since the previous inspection. A strength of the school lies in the rigorous and effective way managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the school's performance. There are very effective procedures, for instance, to measure pupils' progress, although this information is not presented in a way that makes it easy to access information. Communication within the school is excellent. Staff on every site, some of which are at relatively long distances from the administrative centre at Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary, feel fully consulted, involved and valued. The quality of professional training is excellent. This makes a significant contribution to sustaining pupils' outstanding achievement. Governors provide good support to the school. Since the previous report, they have substantially improved the procedures they use to monitor the school's strengths and areas for development.



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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<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>	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	1	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1	

**Achievement and standards**

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

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newcastle Bridges School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4LP

Not long ago my colleague and I came to inspect your school. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting you in the classrooms at all your different sites. Thank you and well done!

We were with you for two days. That was long enough for us to realise that Newcastle Bridges is an outstandingly good school. We could see that you all enjoy school very much. Here are a few of the things we especially liked.

- You work hard and make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development.
- The many different people at the school look after you very well.
- There is an excellent range of activities including those that help you become independent, make choices and prepare for when you leave school.
- You receive excellent teaching and your teachers and other staff are very good at recording all the progress you make. This helps them to prepare interesting work for each of you.
- The senior staff run your school extremely effectively, and everyone else, including your parents, supports them very well.

The school could improve even further if teachers were able to show your parents and visitors, such as myself, even more clearly, just how well you are doing.

You can help too, just by working as hard as you have been doing! Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes and good luck.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband Patricial Ramshaw

Lead Inspector Additional Inspector