

Newbridge Learning Community

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135199
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	341626
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Adrian Simm

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 of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Clive Gardiner
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Kucharski
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with school leaders, a representative of the governing body, staff, pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents such as safeguarding policies and records, assessment information, attendance and behaviour data, curriculum plans and school development plans. The inspectors analysed 13 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- achievement of all groups of pupils in English or literacy in comparison with mathematics and science
- the cohesiveness of the school's support systems to ensure improving outcomes in pupils' personal development
- whether teaching and assessment are based firmly within an effective curriculum accessible to all pupils
- the quality of information used by school leaders and governors in ensuring that all necessary policies, procedures and systems are effective in moving the school forward.

Information about the school

The school opened in October 2008 as a result of the reorganisation of provision within the local authority for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). This is the school's first inspection. Current pupils came predominantly from two schools that are now closed. All have statements of special educational needs. Currently, 71 places are taken nearly totally by White British boys. At Newbridge 59% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, 21% are involved with child and adolescent mental health service and 26% with the youth offending team. The school has an annexe 12 miles from the main school for a small group of pupils on alternate education programmes. The school operates a flexible and extended school day.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that is improving very well. In its first 12 months leaders and managers at all levels, together with a skilful and hard-working staff, have put in place many good features. The curriculum is well designed to meet all pupils' individual needs; skilful teaching ensures lively and engaging lessons for pupils of different ability levels. Staff accommodate pupils' different learning styles so that lessons are purposeful for the vast majority. Good behaviour is evident most of the time and, overall, pupils say they feel safe. On occasions where pupils' emotional and behavioural needs surface, generally these situations are handled well by staff in agreed ways so that other pupils' learning is not disadvantaged. For those pupils who find learning in groups particularly difficult, the school operates a flexible approach; teaching and learning takes place outside of the usual school day. This is insightful and very good practice which ensures full-time education for those who might otherwise not attend. The pupil and family partnership team are very well organised and ensure effective links with parents and carers; for the families involved, support can be 'seven days a week, 52 weeks a year'. The whole 'package' of care, guidance and support, including links with other agencies, is good and improving.

While pupils' learning in lessons during the inspection was good, the school has not been open long enough for all of the elements of its good provision to take hold fully. As such, pupils' attainment, which is low on entry, remains low but it is developing strongly; their achievement and personal development, while satisfactory, are developing well. Some parents and carers expressed concerns initially as to how their children would react in a new enlarged school given that they had previously been in smaller schools. In the first instance attendance was low and, while improving well, is not yet average. Low attendance has an effect overall on restricting pupils' attainment and achievement.

Senior leaders and staff are determined to ensure that the school moves forward. They are very clear about what is effective already and upon what areas to focus next. For example, a very broad range of accredited courses at Key Stage 4 are already available for pupils to opt for depending upon their interest and ability levels. A particular focus on improving English and literacy skills is paying off, in increasing attainment and progress, which was previously not as strong in comparison with mathematics and science. The school has planned for and introduced successfully ways of promoting pupils' community cohesion but recognises that their religious and ethnic understanding of the local, regional and global context is an important area for development. As such, while the school currently offers satisfactory value for money, it has a good capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that attendance improves by 2% each year to enable more pupils to benefit from the school's good teaching and support for personal development.
- In line with the school's community cohesion plan, ensure that pupils' develop quickly a good understanding of the ethnic and religious context of their community in a local, national and global context.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils arrive frequently at lessons ready to work. They pay good attention to teachers, listen well to instructions and cooperate with adults. They know how the system of behaviour points works and, together with their individualised learning packages, this supports them in trying to improve academically and in their personal development. In an English lesson with a group of Year 10 boys, they discussed with insight how the characters in the play Macbeth must have felt following the king's murder. In the lesson, they made excellent progress in their depth of understanding and the quality of verbal response. Pupils in a Year 8 art lesson were engrossed in identifying and replicating features of Gaudi's design work and one could explain his unique style in detail. On occasions in lessons, when tasks require little effort, while some pupils retain concentration and work because they want to succeed, others are less motivated and learning and progress slows. While learning and performance in the classroom are good for those who attend, the low level of attendance and the short time the school has been open means that overall, outcomes for individuals and different groups are satisfactory but improving strongly.

The school's assessment records confirm that while attainment is low, pupils have made satisfactory progress since the school opened. Most pupils who attend meet the targets set for them; an increasing number exceed their targets. These increases are resulting in measurable improvement with more Year 9 pupils succeeding at Levels 4 and 5 of the National Curriculum in English and mathematics; to a slightly lesser extent in science, and information and communication technology. In Years 10 and 11, there is also a strongly improving picture with pupils gaining highly relevant national accreditation, for example through GCSE, NVQ and entry level qualifications.

Pupils report no major concerns about bullying and that any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly by staff. Fixed-term exclusions for instances of poor behaviour have fallen considerably in the last six months; even more so recently. Many students have a clear view about what is right and wrong, and are making good progress in day-to-day relationships with staff and each other. While developing well morally and socially, pupils' understanding of cultural and ethnic diversity in their community and beyond is not as strong. Part of lunchtimes is devoted to supervised activities linked closely to the

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school's behaviour improvement strategies. Those pupils who have worked well choose from a range of options which extends their levels of independence, confidence and recognition that attendance at school is worthwhile. Strategies in place are paying off in increasingly good attendance for more and more pupils. The large majority of pupils responding to the inspection questionnaire and in discussion say they enjoy school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good, overall, none is inadequate and some is outstanding. Effective teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge used in interesting and varied ways to ensure that pupils are motivated to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently pitch work at the right level to stretch pupils in their thinking. For example, in a practical GCSE science lesson at Year 11 pupils discussed the morality of breeding rodents for the purpose of dissection. Pupils had many sensible questions to ask that led to discussion about the purpose of the liver, liver damage, diabetes and the use of insulin. In this and other effective lessons, very good planning includes specific targets derived from accurate assessments of pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy lessons and are

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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very keen to make contributions. Staff expect pupils to be independent in their learning and generally do not step in too quickly with answers. This is equally true at the annexe; those on an alternative curriculum settle to work in positive ways that might not have been thought possible even in the recent past. On occasions when staff are not fully at ease with the subject they are teaching, lessons are not always pitched at the right level nor do they fully stimulate the pupils to learn as well as they might.

The curriculum matches pupils' needs well and is personalised appropriately. Staff have introduced a well thought out and broad curriculum quickly at Key Stage 3 and effectively implemented the options and accredited courses at Key Stage 4. The curriculum offers opportunities to interest all pupils and at all levels. Lunchtime activities are available to pupils; those who are working well choose, for example, to visit the school's arcade room or 'perform a rap' in front of others. While these activities are linked intrinsically to the school's processes for improving behaviour, they are yet to be planned, monitored and evaluated quite as fully as they might be.

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support because staff are effective in meeting the differing needs of individual pupils. Pupils get good feedback on how they are doing and what they need to do to improve further both academically and in their personal development. Regular meetings between key staff both at the main site and the annexe ensure that where problems arise, answers are found so that vulnerable pupils are supported in a timely and appropriate way.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders, managers and staff have developed the school very well in its first 12 months. The headteacher has introduced a number of strategies to include staff fully in self-evaluation so that everyone is part of the process of moving forward. This means most staff, as well as senior managers, have a very clear picture about their own and the school's strengths and areas for development. The strengths of staff are utilised to good effect and opportunities for professional development are integral to the process. The headteacher wishes to place the school at the heart of the community and this is bearing fruit already. One example is that the extremely well-equipped sports hall is fully booked during 'out of school time' by local organisations such as the local cricket club. Other community events are held regularly. The overwhelming majority of staff completing the inspection questionnaire are proud to be part of the school and feel that

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their contribution is valued. The pupil and family partnership team is integral in the effective support the school offers to pupils and their families in the evenings, at weekends and throughout 52 weeks of the year. The team's members act as a very effective catalyst for support from a broad range of agencies and are continually working to improve their effectiveness.

Governors are playing their part also in developing the new school. All statutory requirements are met and governors are looking to become more strategic in their support. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were fully in place and integrated into the curriculum so that pupils have a good and strengthening understanding of how to keep safe. The school has analysed its community and has a good understanding of itself in a local and wider context. It has plans in place to build pupils' religious and cultural understanding of the local and wider context to match their already good understanding of socio-economic cohesion. The school has a commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. For example, it analyses the growing amount of data it has on pupil achievement and takes steps to improve its work as necessary. The school buildings are exceptional and the school is very well resourced. However, because the good quality of teaching has yet to impact more fully on pupils' achievement and personal development, partly because of the low but improving attendance, currently the school offers satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A small number of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire but overall they

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were very positive about the school's provision and the outcomes for their children. Of the small number of parents and carers who attended the meeting with inspectors, most spoke of their initial concerns about whether their children would settle into a new and larger school. They express the view now that they 'wonder why [they] had worries'. Inspectors agree with the views of the high majority of parents and carers responding, for example, that many pupils enjoy school and understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle; and that most parents and carers feel that the school supports and listens to their worries and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newbridge Learning Community to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 71 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	31	8	62	1	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	31	8	62	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	85	2	15	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	38	8	62	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	54	6	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	54	5	38	1	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	54	5	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	54	5	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	69	3	23	1	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	62	5	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	54	6	46	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newbridge Learning Community, Wigan, WN2 3TL

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school with my colleague. A special thanks to those who completed the questionnaires and took part in the discussion with my colleague. We are grateful that you told us what you think about the school. We think that while Newbridge is a satisfactory school it is improving very strongly. It has already some good points, such as:

- teachers and teaching assistants who know how to make lessons interesting and at a level of work so that you can all learn
- pupil and family partnership workers who support you and your families when help is needed
- a very well-equipped new school that you need to look after so that others can enjoy the facilities available to you
- a broad range of options to choose from in your courses in Years 10 and 11
- how well you are working with adults in the school to improve your behaviour so that everyone can feel safe
- how well your headteacher, other senior staff and school governors ensure that everything that happens at Newbridge is getting better and better.

We have asked the school to do two things to help it improve. For this to happen, you will have to help also. The two things are to:

- improve the school's overall attendance by pupils by 2% each year
- ensure quickly that pupils' develop a good understanding of the ethnic and religious context of their local community and further afield.

Please give my best wishes to your headteacher and all other adults in the school and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Adrian Simm

Lead inspector

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