

# 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>	381535
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Marian Thomas

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

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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>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	138
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	17
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bill Muir
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Dover
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	C/O Kenton College Drayton Road Kenton NE3 3RU
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Marian Thomas  
Jim Bennetts  
Bobbi Mothersdale

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 33 lessons taught by 30 teachers and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, senior leaders and members of the medical teams in each of the units. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at health and safety documentation, school improvement and curriculum policies and took into account the views of 23 parents and carers in questionnaires received during the inspection.

## Information about the school

Newcastle Bridges School comprises four units within the city of Newcastle and one unit in Northumberland. The unit for pregnant school girls, young mums and vulnerable and phobic pupils, Newcastle Bridges at Kenton, is located next to a large secondary school, and meets the needs of up to 45 pupils. A small on-site nursery cares for pupils' children while they attend lessons at the unit or in mainstream schools. The home tuition service classroom and resource base are also on this site. The school also provides education in a number of local hospitals. The Ferndene unit is based within a 44-bed, low security hospital unit and meets the needs of pupils who have a wide range of psychological or psychiatric difficulties from the age of 5 to 18, some of whom have special educational needs. The Roycroft teaching unit is based within a 25-bed, national, medium secure, forensic hospital unit for young people aged 12-19, some of whom have special educational needs. The school also delivers education for children between the ages of 2 and 19 who are patients in the Great Northern Children's Hospital and the Freeman Hospital. At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. No discrete sixth-form provision is in place at the school, but a number of post-16 pupils in the secure units accesses an appropriate curriculum.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- The Newcastle Bridges School is an outstanding school in all aspects of its work. Since the previous inspection it has maintained and continued to build upon its previously excellent standards. Senior leaders have identified, rightly, the need to provide a greater variety of vocational courses as an area for improvement.
- Pupils' attendance at the school varies from a few weeks to several years. On arrival, they often have large gaps in their learning and a significant number has special educational needs. Despite this often low level of attainment, the vast majority of pupils make excellent progress once they are well enough to engage with learning, and achievement is outstanding across the curriculum. Post-16 students in the psychiatric units also make excellent progress.
- Teaching is outstanding. It is characterised across the school by the high expectations held by staff for all pupils. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and activities are exceptionally skilfully matched to the needs of all pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent despite the difficult nature of the surroundings in which they are conducted in some parts of the school.
- Behaviour is excellent in the vast majority of lessons as pupils clearly enjoy the opportunity to learn. Despite the extreme needs of many pupils, staff have very high expectations of the behaviour of all pupils and as a result, the majority shows excellent attitudes to learning and make great strides in their personal development.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is excellent. This is demonstrated by the continuous delivery of an outstanding curriculum across a wide variety of settings, which contributes directly to the development of pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Self-evaluation is accurate and the management of teaching is clearly linked to performance management targets. Members of the governing body offer an excellent level of support and challenge to senior leaders.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide a greater variety of vocational subjects for pupils particularly in the psychiatric units.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

The majority of pupils who enter the school have levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. A minority including some of the group of pregnant school girls or those who attend teaching sessions within the hospital has levels of attainment near to or occasionally above national expectations. Despite this very wide range of attainment, once pupils are well enough to engage with learning, the vast majority make excellent progress with a large proportion reaching and exceeding targets set by their mainstream schools. When they arrive at the school, many lack the skills required for learning, for example, how to concentrate in lessons. This, often combined with many different health needs, forms a significant barrier to learning. The highly successful way that pupils overcome these barriers to go on and gain a range of qualifications and accreditations represents excellent achievement overall. An example of this successful re-engagement with learning could be seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils with a range of needs, including some who were anxious and phobic, worked happily and collaboratively together. The group made excellent progress in developing their mental arithmetic and algebraic skills and school tracking data showed that the vast majority are on track to exceed their mainstream school GCSE target.

Excellent progress is made across all areas of the curriculum and a bespoke approach is taken in each of the units to ensure that pupils make as much progress towards as many different accreditations as possible. However, pupils who attend school in the psychiatric units have few opportunities to attain accreditation in a variety of vocational subjects.

Younger pupils who attend the hospital teaching unit make excellent progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This was clearly illustrated in an excellent literacy lesson delivered in the hospital unit where Key Stage 1 pupils followed a guided reading programme which not only improved their reading skills but was also linked to other areas of the curriculum. The majority remains on the roll of their mainstream schools and teaching staff maintain close links with pupils' home schools. As a result, learning is tailored exceptionally well to the needs of individuals and gaps in learning are clearly identified. Accelerated progress ensures that pupils have not lost ground on their return to their mainstream schools. The majority of post-16 students in the psychiatric units has significant gaps in learning often due to their medical conditions. As a result, many have missed out on gaining qualifications. Once

they are well enough to engage with learning the majority makes excellent progress, gaining a wide range of accreditation.

The highly-skilled support offered in the nurturing environment of the school ensures that all groups of pupils make exceptional progress in relation to their starting points. Systems to track pupils' progress are used effectively and underachievement is identified quickly. Those pupils with special educational needs are equally well-supported across the school. The majority of parents' and carers' views agree with the inspection findings that the school supports their children's achievement exceptionally well.

## **Quality of teaching**

The outstanding levels of teaching across the school enable pupils to make excellent progress both socially and academically. All staff work exceptionally closely together to ensure excellent outcomes for pupils. Teachers in the psychiatric units work very closely with attendant nursing staff by involving them, whenever possible, in pupils' learning. Teachers' planning meets the needs of all learners exceptionally well and is consistently shared with teaching assistants. This results in learning time being maximised due to high-quality and well-directed support for pupils. The effectiveness of this collaborative multi-disciplinary approach could clearly be seen in an outstanding drama lesson. The pupils arrived at the lesson supported by two nurses after a difficult incident on the ward. They settled quickly and clearly enjoyed the warm-up sessions which the nursing staff joined in. Once the teacher felt the pupils were ready, she introduced the main activity which focused on the feelings of a child in difficult home circumstances. The pupils engaged readily and produced some highly emotional images and statements which showed empathy with the character and formed a clear link to their own feelings and experiences. In the final activity, the pupils organised staff into a set of tableaux which depicted scenes from the poem. The exceptional quality of the tableaux and the strong messages that they sent clearly showed the pupils' outstanding levels of knowledge and understanding which the highly-skilled teaching and planning for learning had facilitated. The vast majority of lessons is characterised by fast pace and high expectations of both behaviour and achievement. Across the school, the wide range of activities and practical tasks engages pupils exceptionally well. The very strong focus on improving the English and mathematical attainment of all pupils is clearly evident in the exceptionally well-planned reading and mathematical activities which are delivered across the school. Pupils' excellent spiritual awareness is displayed in the outstanding quality of their art work, which has been exhibited in a variety of different settings, including the South Bank Gallery in London.

Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and make exceptionally good use of oral praise to encourage and engage reluctant pupils.

The curriculum engages pupils well and offers a wide variety of memorable experiences despite the many and varied external constraints which are placed on pupils and teachers. Close links with mainstream schools mean that teachers build well on prior learning. For example, despite the lack of facilities, physical education (PE) is taught regularly across the school and where possible, pupils are given opportunities to visit ice rinks and other facilities to improve their levels of fitness.

Through assemblies and visits from a range of different organisations and groups, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced. Parents and carers reflect the inspection findings that teaching is excellent and their view of teaching is expressed in the parental comment: 'Teachers here are just brilliant. I don't know where my son would be without the wonderful level of concern and care shown by staff at the school.'

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The behaviour of the majority of pupils in lessons is outstanding. Many, despite the high levels of their emotional, behavioural and health needs, work hard together showing respect and exceptionally caring attitudes towards each other and staff. Their achievements are celebrated on every occasion and a relentless and successful focus across the school on supporting pupils' personal and social development has increased the self-esteem of many. As a result of this and the strength of the relationships with mainstream schools and health care professionals, the majority of pupils accesses learning effectively and where appropriate, transfers to mainstream schools or colleges.

Parents, carers and pupils agree that the school makes an excellent contribution to developing their understanding of what constitutes safe behaviour. Overall attendance is as high as it can be, taking into consideration the medical needs of the majority of pupils. Attendance increases for all pupils when they join the school and for a significant number it rises from nil to 100%. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to the school and appreciate how much staff have helped them make progress in their school work. A comment made by one expressed the views of many well: 'This school puts its pupils first in everything it does'. Pupils are aware that bullying takes place particularly in the larger environment of mainstream schools. They are clear about the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and feel that the excellent work they undertake through the personal, social and health curriculum and through information and communication technology (ICT) prepares them well to deal with this aspect of life.

### **Leadership and management**

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team has moved the school forward significantly since the previous inspection. As a result of their continuous and relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching across the school, pupils' achievement has continued to rise. The leadership team, including the governing body, has an extremely accurate view of the quality of provision across the school and as a result of excellent self-evaluation is continuing to move the school forward. Systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have been improved significantly since the previous inspection and pupils' overall achievement has been raised to an outstanding standard. Through this strong culture of self-evaluation and the clear strategies for improvement currently in place, all staff are exceptionally clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. Effective monitoring of teaching leads to a continuous and carefully-planned programme of professional development for all staff which has improved outcomes for all pupils. A successful focus on developing English and mathematics has accelerated progress and raised pupils' levels of confidence and enjoyment in learning.

Staff and individual pupils feel valued in this highly-inclusive community and systems which promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are securely in place. As a result, all groups of pupils make equal and outstanding progress. The school is highly respected by all groups of health professionals with which it works. Many of them made time to speak to the inspection team about the excellent contribution the school makes to multi-professional teams. The school clearly demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve further.

The school leadership and members of the governing body ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is at the heart of the school ethos and that all requirements are met.

The curriculum is very well matched to the needs of pupils and offers exceptional opportunities for developing pupils' moral and social skills. Through visits from members of different faith groups and the outstanding provision in personal, social and health education, the school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The continued successful engagement of the majority of parents and carers is evident in the positive responses on the school's performance received during the inspection.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



25 April 2012

Dear Pupils,

### **Inspection of Newcastle Bridges School, Kenton, NE3 3RU**

Thank you all for making the inspection team feel exceptionally welcome when we visited your school recently. A special 'thank you' goes to those of you who took time to talk to us during our visit and a particular 'thank you' goes to the two pupils who let me join their art and horticulture lessons so that I could look more closely at their excellent work. A further 'thank you' also goes to the pupils who gave their time to speak to the inspector during their break at the Ferndene unit. We all enjoyed joining you for your lessons and seeing the way in which you work in the different parts of your school. Both inspectors who visited the hospital were impressed with the work they saw you doing there and the inspector who visited the Kenton unit was very pleased with the progress many of you have made. I particularly enjoyed visiting the horticultural area in the Roycroft unit and was very impressed with the hard work all of you have put into making the garden such a welcoming place.

The inspection team agreed with those of you who told us that you felt your school was excellent. Many of you told us that your teachers were brilliant and they helped you in every way possible and we also agree with you.

Despite the many problems and frustrations that many of you face, we feel you all do your best to behave exceptionally well when you are at school.

Your school is outstanding in so many areas. However, to make it even better, we have asked that staff improve the variety of vocational courses you are able to take, particularly those of you who are in the Roycroft and Ferndene units.

Thank you once again for making our visit so pleasurable and we wish all of you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Marian Thomas  
Lead Inspector

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