

Pathways Special School

Tennyson Ave, Grangetown, Middlesbrough, TS6 7NP

Inspection dates

3-4 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well across all years in a range of subjects, including reading, writing, communication and mathematics. This ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Pupils grow in maturity and acknowledge that changes in their behaviour benefit their learning. This, then, enables them to become good role models for younger pupils. Pupils' behaviour is good and they say that they feel safe within the school.
- Staff are respectful of the pupils in their care, develop positive relationships and focus on their individual needs. Pupils appreciate all that staff do for them, and they give them '10/10' for their support.
- The driven and dedicated senior leadership team, including governors, focuses effectively on securing good teaching and learning, and positive outcomes for pupils.
- Staff have worked diligently together to commit wholeheartedly to school improvements since the last inspection. This is an improved school which is well placed to improve further.
- The cohesive and strong staff team exemplifies the school's motto of the importance to 'go that extra mile'.
- Parents are equally positive and supportive of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is inconsistency in the quality of support for pupils' learning.
- There is inconsistency in the promotion of pupils' independent learning skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons, seeing eight different teachers.
- She held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, staff and pupils.
- She observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, assessment and achievement.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and a recent parental survey completed by the school.

Inspection team

Michele Crichton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Currently, 46 pupils attend Pathways Special School, which can cater for pupils with an age range between five and 16 years.
- All pupils are supported with a statement of special educational needs related to emotional, behavioural or social difficulties.
- All pupils are White British.
- Most pupils are male.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- A quarter of pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school has entered a soft federation arrangement with the local authority to include the provision for the education of children otherwise than at school (EOTAS). The headteacher of Pathways Special School took up the post of executive headteacher of both Pathways and EOTAS in November 2010.
- The school regularly, directly commissions the services of alternative providers including: Redcar and Cleveland Vocational training, East Coast training, EOTAS and Nisai. This latter organisation provides bespoke support for pupils in information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring there is consistent, high quality support for all pupils' learning
 - ensuring that all members of staff actively promote pupils' independent learning skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school at different stages of their education and at different times of the year.
- Pupils frequently have very low academic starting points on entry to Pathways, largely because of their behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Pupils consistently have a history of poor attendance, and very negative attitudes to learning. The school's work enables its pupils to achieve well, successfully promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Most pupils, including those for whom the pupil premium provides support, make good progress and achieve well across the school. In general, the longer pupils attend the school, the more accelerated their progress. More pupils now regularly achieve GCSE grades and at the end of the most recent academic year all pupils who left the school went on to further education, training or employment.
- Reading is developed well across the school with opportunities taken to develop reading, communication, writing and mathematics by teachers across all subject areas.
- Pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in their personal development, including their own skills of self-management. This is achieved by staff approaching behaviour management in a consistent way, suitably tailoring strategies for each individual and providing time to allow the pupils to make choices and face consequences for themselves.

The quality of teaching is good

- There are consistently more pupils who attend the school during the later stages of their education. At the moment there are no Key Stage 1 pupils and few at Key Stage 2. Every lesson observed demonstrated nothing less than good teaching. In the very best lessons, materials are interesting, activities and teachers' questioning are pitched to challenge learning, the pace is appropriate to the pupils' age and high-calibre support staff encourage pupils to use a range of strategies to support and extend their own learning.
- Staff regularly remind pupils of their learning targets and what pupils need to do themselves to meet them. The use of 'stretch' targets also encourages pupils to push their learning further, enabling some to catch up well and others to make accelerated progress.
- However, there are a few occasions when support staff overly help pupils by completing activities to help them finish in time. Sometimes, teachers pose questions to pupils but then provide the answers, or too readily give information rather than encouraging pupils to find things out for themselves. At these times learning is more passive, the rate of progress slows and so, too, does the rate at which pupils develop their independent learning skills.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are developed well individually and across different subject areas to effectively support pupils' learning across the curriculum. Pupils were observed making connections with other lessons they had recently experienced and relating how this lesson or information added to what they had learnt earlier.
- Pupils' books are regularly marked with extensive comments about the quality of pupils' work. They show a variety of learning activities but, sometimes, also show too many worksheets. Additionally, books record teachers' comments that direct the pupil's future learning by adding suggestions of how their work could be 'even better if'. These suggestions help pupils to achieve their 'stretch' targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils, many of whom find extreme difficulty in coping with different and changing situations, successfully learn strategies to cope and manage their own behaviour. For example, one pupil was observed removing himself from class, with staff acknowledgement, but returning quickly to recommence his learning. No disruption was made to others and the lesson continued without event.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their own self-esteem develop positively over time. From the analysis of pupils' progress, a pattern emerges showing that, regardless of the age when a pupil commences at Pathways, the longer they attend the more positive is their behaviour and this then influences their learning outcomes. However, there are occasions when pupils are more passive in their learning because staff over-support rather than developing pupils' independent learning strategies.
- Pupils learn safety skills through consistent routines and embedded practice. For example, in a craft, design and technology lesson pupils independently picked up goggles and protective gloves to commence their work.
- A survey completed by the parents in the summer term 2012 shows the positive views parents have about the school. They feel that the school is well led and behaviour is positively managed, that their children are making good progress, and importantly, that their children actually like attending school.
- These aspects are confirmed by the dramatic rise in attendance over two years and the equally dramatic decline in fixed-term exclusions. There is a prevailing calm atmosphere in school where pupils are trying, and mostly succeeding, to learn and behave to the best of their current abilities.

The leadership and management are good

- A strong and cohesive senior leadership team with a clear sense of direction is successfully focused on making the whole school the best it can be.
- Since the last inspection the drive to secure good teaching has resulted in changes to staff, much additional professional training and sharper systems to review the progress pupils make. This has resulted in pupils' achievement improving. Additionally, the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching over time, also demonstrates well how Pathways has moved from a previously satisfactory to now a good school.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements are developed well throughout the school. This is achieved, for example, by the use of topics and themes in the curriculum. Sensitive use of group work nurtures and develops pupils' positive emotional, social and personal responses and attitudes.
- Good arrangements with a range of partners, including those who offer alternative provision, widen pupils' skill-base, extend their range of accreditation and support their transition into adulthood. The soft federation, for example, allows for peer review across both leadership teams to confirm the quality of lesson observations.
- Safeguarding procedures are of robust quality and meet current statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Provides good support for Pathways.
 - Is clear about the priorities for the school and how they are realistically achieved.
 - Challenges senior leaders to promote the best achievements of all pupils.
 - Is firmly bonded with senior leaders in the systematic and continuous drive for school improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	128190
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	406372

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Halton
Headteacher	Steve O’Gara
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
Telephone number	01642 779292
Fax number	01642 779299
Email address	admin_pathwaysschool@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

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