

Alt Bridge Secondary Support Centre

Wellcroft Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 7TA

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Truly inspirational leadership, management and governance and the strong determination of staff to improve their practice have moved teaching and learning on from good at the time of the last inspection, to that which is now outstanding.
- All groups of students are achieving exceptionally well; last year nearly a half made the progress expected of students in mainstream schools, albeit from much lower starting points.
- Provision for physical education and sport is stunning. All students participate, teaching is outstanding and the curriculum includes a wonderful range of outdoor and adventure activities.
- Pupils feel extremely safe and well looked after; they work and play with enthusiasm, their attitudes to learning are excellent, and their behaviour is nearly always good.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is exceptional; this helps to create a wonderful atmosphere of calm, fulfilment and enjoyment across the school day.
- Outstanding teaching is characterised by teachers making every effort to include and engage all students, whatever their ability or type of need. Computers and other forms of technology are expertly used to help promote learning. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and effective.
- Governors are highly supportive and very effective in holding senior staff to account, checking on the progress and the safety of students and managing finances with great expertise.
- The school offers extensive and much appreciated support to other providers within the borough; staff are acutely aware of the fact that students' lives are very complicated and they do everything they can to make sure that all are well cared for and supported around the clock and not just in school.
- The post-16 provision is proving popular and effective; all who joined last year remain and speak with enthusiasm about how it is helping them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed substantial parts of 13 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Two were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked informally with many students at lunch and break times.
- Inspectors looked at many examples of students' past work.
- Regular meetings were held with the headteacher and inspectors talked to other senior teachers.
- Telephone conversations were held with a governor and a representative of the local authority.
- Insufficient responses were submitted to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be made available. Inspectors took into account the views of parents who had completed the school's own questionnaire last year and to views of parents who had written to the school about their own and their children's experiences of school.
- Staff views were collected during conversations with them.
- Inspectors looked at a large amount of information including that relating to self-evaluation, student progress, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour and school development.
- Extra attention was given to the scrutiny of minutes of the governing body to compensate for not being able to meet any governors during the inspection.
- The inspection took place at the start of the second week of the new school year, meaning that Year 7 students had been in their new school for only five days.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a school for students with complex learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs. The main groups of students are those with moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions and those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many students have additional difficulties.
- Well over three-quarters of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. A small number of students are looked after children. All of these students attract additional government funding, known as the pupil premium.
- Nearly all students are White British. There are many more boys than girls.
- Since the last inspection the school has worked in partnership with the existing Greenbank College to enable students to be retained in the school beyond the age of 16. This provision has been operating for a year. There were nine students in the first cohort and they have been joined this year by another eight.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Pursue its vision for the development of post-16 provision by:
 - extending its 'bank' of suitable training providers and finding a greater range of sympathetic and suitable potential employees so as to ensure security of placements when students finally leave
 - taking steps to allow students more opportunities to develop their suite in school to reflect their interests and promote increasing independence.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment on entry is always low but from this starting point, students are making outstanding progress. Detailed records show that many are making better than expected progress, a few are making the progress expected of them and very few are standing still. This is down to outstanding teaching and an excellent curriculum that is constantly being reviewed to make sure that it includes suitable opportunities for all groups of students to be able to achieve equally.
- In English, students make better progress in reading, speaking and listening than they do in writing. Nevertheless, teachers are effectively encouraging students to write more extensively, accurately and imaginatively by building up their confidence in using computers to express their creativity and record their learning.
- Students are encouraged to read as often as possible, often reading aloud to their classmates from their own writing but also in special events such as 'World Book Week'.
- Achievement is particularly strong in the development of communication and social skills. This is particularly evident in special classes for students with autism or with more complex emotional issues. In these classes there is an exceptionally good nurturing atmosphere which never oversteps the mark to become 'nannying'. This fosters increasing independence rather than dependence.
- Students in the post-16 provision achieve well because they are given many opportunities to apply what they have learned when they were younger to real life experiences now that they are approaching adulthood. Number skills, in particular, are being developed well as they learn how to shop sensibly and budget for meals and living expenses.
- Pupil premium funding is being used well to provide extra support in classrooms and to allow flexibility in class sizes. The students who attract this extra funding are making very similar progress to those who do not; this is better than the national picture.
- The school keeps many letters from parents who testify to the achievement of their children while attending the school, not only in their learning but also in their personal development.
- A very close check is kept on the progress different groups of students make. There is very little variance and where there is, it is nearly always due to the performance of an individual in a very small cohort.
- Achievement in sport and physical education merits special mention. The school fields several teams in many sports and achieves huge success. There is tremendous competitiveness to match or exceed school records in athletics and wall displays in communal areas show a great sense of celebration of effort and success. A notable aspect of this is that girls are just as enthusiastic as boys and achieve just as well as them.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and the rest is consistently good. Teachers are dedicated to promoting the learning of all students equally and constantly strive for improvement. Even when inspectors told teachers that their teaching in lessons was outstanding they still wanted to know what they could have done to improve it.
- Teachers take great care to include all students and to give them equal opportunities to learn. This is achieved by making sure that the work they are set matches their ability to do it and that, when necessary, they receive the skilled support of excellent teaching assistants.
- Teachers question pupils frequently and well to establish what they have remembered from previous lessons and how this is going to help them to meet their targets for the current lesson.
- Expectations are clearly displayed at the start of each lesson. Students know what they have to do to meet these. Teachers are very perceptive in recognising when a student is struggling to meet expectations and often direct extra support or attention towards them. Higher-attaining

students are often given more freedom to work together, share ideas and bounce ideas off each other to speed up their progress.

- Many students find recording and writing difficult but perceptive questioning and the promotion of constructive discussion helps teachers to establish what students are learning, what they understand and what more they want to know to make better progress.
- The high quality of teaching ensures that students are keen to learn. Lessons are characterised by an industrious enthusiasm for learning and exemplary behaviour. Students pay attention, work well together in pairs or small groups and are extremely respectful of their teachers and other staff in the room.
- The teaching of physical education is a joy to behold. Large groups are well managed and girls and boys, regardless of their degree of fitness, are equally enthused to excel.
- Teaching extends well beyond the classroom. Many extra hours are offered to support a huge range of clubs and enrichment activities that significantly enhance students' lives.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students like their school, they wear their uniform with pride, are exceedingly friendly and polite to visitors and nearly all of them behave in an exemplary fashion.
- Students feel safe because they like the fact that there are always sympathetic adults around who they can turn to if anything is worrying them.
- Records show that whenever serious incidents occur they are managed with exceptional skill and expertise to ensure that there is no escalation. On the very few instances of bullying, racism or gender-taunting, resolution is very quickly achieved and peace prevails.
- Behaviour and attitudes in classrooms are exemplary. Students are highly attentive and keen to do their best. It was wonderful in a post-16 lesson when the teacher had to leave the room that students were so keen to talk about their experiences and the school with the inspector rather than to take advantage of the situation.
- Nearly all misbehaviour follows patterns that have been previously identified and resulted in students being assessed as having significant behavioural issues. A tiny minority of students account for nearly all serious incidents and the need for exclusion, which is much lower than average.
- Outstanding attention to social and moral values is rewarded by a clearly harmonious atmosphere around the school. Girls and boys get on well with each other and there is no discrimination between groups. Older students often offer support to younger ones.
- Attendance is broadly average. Were it not for a very small minority of students who are persistent absentees and were recognised as such before their referral to the school it would be close to the national average for all secondary schools and above that for similar schools.
- Students are constantly encouraged to aspire to more independence. They are proud when they are able to come to school on public transport or make their own way rather than to rely on school transport. Nearly a third of all students have achieved this landmark.
- Post-16 provision is in its infancy and outcomes appear to be very positive but there is still a gap to be filled between the end of school and the start of adulthood. Students have not been given enough responsibility for developing this new provision within the school. It does not have the atmosphere of older adolescence and consequently more independence that sets it apart from the rest of the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior managers relentlessly seek improvement. There has not been a shred of complacency since the school was last judged outstanding three years ago. Minor areas for improvement have been comprehensively addressed. Attention to detail, clarity of vision, relentless drive and the pride that has been engendered in all staff gives this school an

exceptional capacity to keep on improving.

- Attention to school improvement is detailed and perceptive. Leaders and managers know that their school is outstanding but are also keen to help other providers to achieve this status. They are not precious and are outgoing in their efforts to help improve the lives of their students and help others to remain in their mainstream schools.
- Leaders and managers are continually pursuing avenues through which students can progress to rewarding and successful futures by finding a greater range of training providers and potential employers. The new 16 plus initiative has been a lifesaver for students who could otherwise have been lost to education, employment or training.
- The local authority recognises this as a school that can give more than it takes. It is greatly appreciative of the support that it offers to other schools in the borough. This was clearly evident during the feedback for this inspection when the local authority representative commented on a neighbouring school's difficulty with sporting provision and the headteacher spontaneously offered the school's excellence, facilities and expertise to support them.
- Teachers' performance is regularly checked. Weaknesses are subtly addressed. Many of the best teachers are suitably rewarded and there is open mindedness when less experienced teachers can make a suitable case for being paid more.
- There is a very unique curriculum. This extends well beyond the National Curriculum and strongly promotes the inclusion of all pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a very high awareness of the hurdles students face in transferring to life after school. Older students are given exceptionally good guidance to help them understand and use what they have learned when they were younger. Every student is treated equally and has equal opportunities to succeed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There is a very active governing body. It is highly supportive while being very questioning of everything the school does and to what effect. The achievement and well-being of students is top of the agenda in every meeting. The school's policies, especially those relating to the safeguarding of students are frequently and rigorously reviewed. Finance is very carefully monitored and there is a keen interest in the effectiveness of how leaders and managers spend extra funding such as that provided through the pupil premium. Governors regularly check up on the quality of sporting achievement and whether enough is being done to encourage healthy lifestyles. They make sure that all statutory requirements are being met.

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	104498
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	426272

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Gannon
Headteacher	Barry Kerwin
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2010
Telephone number	0151 477 8310
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