

# Newcastle Bridges School

Cherrywood, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 4NW

## Inspection dates

1–2 November 2016

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| 16 to 19 study programmes                    | <b>Good</b>        |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Governors, leaders and staff share an absolute determination to enable pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. As a result, highly effective teaching and support lead almost all pupils to make excellent progress.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They feel respected and many feel safe for the first time in a school setting. Parents confirm the positive impact the school has on their children's lives.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning when staying in hospital. Highly effective communication between this school and pupils' home schools ensures their learning does not stall when they return to their home schools.
- Health professionals across the specialist mental health settings rightly acknowledge the significant role that school staff have in achieving the best health outcomes for pupils.
- The community education programme is exceptionally successful in getting pupils back into learning. Individualised work leads to pupils, including the most able pupils, making very strong progress.
- The school's partnership work with healthcare, social care and voluntary-sector professionals results in innovative developments. Together their quest to find the right solutions for individual pupils and their families is exemplary.
- Leaders' continuous development of the range of subjects taught and different qualification options ensures that pupils' needs and interests are well met. Most pupils make rapid gains in learning in a range of subjects and across different sites because teaching is effective and learning programmes are closely matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have education, health and care plans benefit equally from outstanding teaching. Teachers are exceptionally effective in challenging the most able, particularly in art.
- Overall, pupils' attendance remains low when compared with that of pupils in other schools. However, many pupils make significant improvements in their attendance, often following long periods of non-attendance in their previous school.
- The necessary focus on keeping pupils safe is very effective. Staff are exceptionally alert to pupils' emotional well-being. Leaders work closely with other agencies and are not afraid to challenge those who do not share their level of concern.
- Post-16 provision is good rather than outstanding because leaders are not incisive in their evaluation of the effectiveness of the study programmes for this group of students.

## Full report

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

- To sustain and improve further the outstanding outcomes for all pupils, and to secure outstanding outcomes for post-16 students, across all sites, leaders and managers should:
  - consolidate recently developed systems for collecting information about all aspects of the school's work
  - probe and analyse the information they collect even more deeply, at an individual pupil level and for different groups of pupils
  - use their analysis to find an even wider range of solutions to pupils' barriers to learning
  - provide clear and consistent information to governors in order to inform their strategic decision-making.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, new leaders and governors have taken the school forward with utter determination to find solutions to the enormous difficulties that pupils face, in both their learning and emotional well-being. High expectations for all pupils are embedded across the different sites the school uses.
- In the last 12 months, leaders have ensured that all middle leaders and staff are clear about their roles and how they will be held to account for improving pupils' progress and well-being. This increased accountability has contributed to further improvement in teaching and outcomes.
- Staff are positive about the support they receive to develop as professionals. Opportunities to work in different settings and take part in research and development programmes with universities expand staff skills and knowledge. This has a direct impact on pupils' experience of learning.
- Parents and pupils are exceptionally appreciative of the difference leaders' work makes to their lives. Pupils say that they feel respected and safe, often for the first time. Parents respect the balance given to their children's emotional well-being and educational progress.
- Healthcare professionals working alongside staff in the five different hospital settings were unanimous in their praise for the work of the school. This is because they see the link between the successful outcomes of high-quality teaching and pupils' improving self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- Leaders ensure that the range of subjects offered to pupils meets both their statutory entitlement and their individual needs and interests. Leaders have increased the number and range of subject-specialist teachers. This ensures that teaching is based on sound subject knowledge, leading to highly effective teaching, particularly in art, science and design technology.
- Leaders are diligent in ensuring the safety and effectiveness of the small number of alternative providers that are used on a part-time basis by a few pupils.
- The opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are very effective. They develop pupils' skills as young citizens, and pupils make positive choices and suggestions that will help to improve the school.
- The local authority holds the school in high regard and is confident in the provision made for the most vulnerable of its young people. Local authority officers have worked with leaders to develop a 'team around the school' approach, facilitating much-improved joined-up working between different agencies and organisations. As a result, pupils receive much-needed and effective support in all areas of their lives.
- New leaders have introduced many new ways of working over the last 12 months. Some of the information they collect about the impact of their work is not meticulously analysed to ensure that they have the deepest understanding of why different approaches work well for some but not other pupils or some post-16 students.

## Governance of the school

- Most members of the governing body are new to the school since the last inspection. However, they are not new to governance and bring a very wide range of high-level skills and knowledge to the strategic leadership of the school.
- Governors are diligent in checking first hand the impact of their decisions about the use of funding, including the pupil premium grant and physical education and sport grant, during visits to the different sites. They ensure that the provision is equally effective across the different sites and for different groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those with education, health and care plans.
- Since the previous inspection, the governors' strategy to ensure continuity of strong leadership has been successful. They skilfully manage complex funding arrangements and have developed a new leadership structure with clear roles and responsibilities. Their oversight of the performance management of staff, including the use of appropriate pay awards, contributes to maintaining the outstanding effectiveness of teaching.
- The governors' decision for the school to become a foundation school as part of the Compass Trust has brought many benefits. Opportunities provided through the trust for staff development and checks on the accuracy of teachers' assessments contribute well to the outcomes pupils achieve.
- Some information that governors receive from leaders about the effectiveness of the school is not always clear or analysed precisely. However, through discussions and visits, governors and leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and identify appropriate priorities for development. They have a shared determination to reduce further the few inconsistencies within some aspects of the school's work.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make sure that staff are trained to understand the early signs that pupils may not be making safe choices or are at risk of harm, including sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Staff are diligent in reporting their concerns and leaders follow up concerns with the right agencies. In keeping with the culture of determination to get the best possible outcomes for the pupils, leaders persist in their work with other services until pupils and their families get the support they need.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Teachers skilfully assess pupils' academic abilities alongside their social and emotional development. They wisely use the information they collect to plan lessons that closely match pupils' needs and enable them to move on in their learning. As a result, pupils make good or better progress over time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in quickly establishing positive relationships with pupils. These relationships enable teachers to challenge pupils to think hard and overcome their emotional barriers to learning. Teachers did not hold back when asking challenging questions, even when pupils appeared ready to give up.

- Teachers are very flexible and quickly adapt lessons when pupils are either stuck or finding work too easy. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how the different approaches that teachers use help them all to make progress.
- Teachers are equally effective in ensuring that they challenge the most able pupils working towards A levels and those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example, inspectors observed skilled staff enabling pupils who have complex needs to develop how they communicate their choices.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress. They work in close partnership with teachers and so understand their role in lessons. The high level of support does not smother pupils' independence.
- Teachers ensure that an appropriate range of books and reading materials is available across the sites. Symbol- and picture-based systems are used effectively with those pupils who need them. Pupils were willing to read their work to inspectors and confidently used a range of skills to work out complex or unfamiliar words.
- Leaders know where teaching, including how feedback is given to pupils, is not always as effective as the best. They have good support and development systems in place, which ensure that variations in quality are quickly addressed.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff, working closely with healthcare teams on the different sites, ensure that pupils are safe and, importantly, that they learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils described effective lessons about personal safety as well as how to keep safe online.
- Crucially important across the different sites is the adults' level of diligence in recognising and responding to pupils' emotional well-being. This does not become an opt-out for pupils, as they are encouraged to develop the essential resilience they need to manage their health conditions.
- Pupils are confident that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly. Pupils talk about the importance of respecting people who are different from themselves.
- Leaders ensure that risk assessments are in place for enrichment activities, alternative providers and for the different sites used for community-based learning. Individual risk assessments for pupils at greatest risk of harming themselves or others are carefully considered when planning activities. Staff use their creativity and subject skills to ensure that risk is managed safely. This allows pupils to participate and learn in a range of engaging practical and vocational activities.
- Parents of children who experience life-limiting conditions particularly appreciate the school's approach to ensuring that learning takes place for as long as possible. They find reassurance in the value placed on their child, as a child, even in the most difficult circumstances.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is because, for many pupils who have experienced great difficulties in life, this school gives them hope and aspirations for their futures.
- Highly effective teaching engages pupils and many are enthusiastic about learning. Pupils conducted themselves around the different sites calmly and were courteous to each other, staff and visitors.
- Some pupils, especially those placed in the secure sites, face some extreme challenges to their behaviour, because of their complex mental health conditions. Close working relationships between healthcare and school staff result in these pupils getting the best possible educational outcomes, including A-level qualifications.
- Attendance is well below that found in other schools. Attendance at the sessions provided for some pupils in the secure units is also low. However, for the majority, the support provided leads to improved and in some cases rapidly improved attendance and levels of engagement.
- Leaders are aware that they need to be diagnostic in their approach to attendance information, so they can understand what more they can do improve attendance even further.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Owing to the very complex and highly mobile groups of pupils admitted to the school, leaders measure outcomes at an individual pupil level and from a baseline assessment undertaken when pupils arrive at the school. For a significant proportion of pupils, previous assessments are unreliable due to long absences from education, pervasive mental health conditions or traumatic life events.
- The school's information shows that over the last few years, an increasing proportion of pupils make good and better progress to achieve a wide range of qualifications. Pupils' books and visits to lessons confirm leaders' view that current outcomes for pupils are outstanding.
- Across all the sites, there is no discernible difference in the outcomes, from their starting points, for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs. Most pupils with education, health and care plans make at least good progress towards the personal outcomes in their plans.
- Pupils on short stays or recurring visits to hospital (Freeman Hospital and Great North Children's Hospital) make at least good progress, and this enables them to achieve well when they return to their home schools.
- Pupils who have disengaged from education due to their health needs also make at least good progress in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. Equally important is the progress they make towards engaging with full-time education and/or spending increasing amounts of time working away from home at community sites or at the Benfield School site. Some of the most able pupils make exceptional progress due to the support they receive.

- Pupils at the Benfield School site achieved a good range of GCSE and other qualifications in 2016. The year-on-year increase in the number of GCSEs achieved at A\* to C grades, especially in science, is considerable. These pupils also make at least good progress in their personal and social development, alongside significant gains in their attendance.
- In the spring term of 2016, leaders anticipated that attainment in mathematics in 2016 was likely to dip. Their immediate action improved the results of some pupils. Their new approach, based on identifying gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, is having a very positive impact and more pupils are on track to reach their aspirational GCSE targets this year.
- Pupils who require assessment periods at the Ferndene or Walkergate sites, as either inpatients or outpatients, get the support they need to keep on track with their education. As a result, they are able to continue with their education when they return home or move to a specialist setting.
- Pupils who have longer treatment stays at Ferndene or Alnwood are supported to make progress across a range of subjects. Some achieve well, particularly in art, up to and including A level.
- Effective advice and guidance from the transition support workers ensure that the vast majority of pupils move on to destinations that allow them to continue their education or move into employment, including apprenticeships.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Post-16 study programmes are provided at five of the school's sites, and consequently the provision is very different at each of the sites. Across the sites, some students improve their English and mathematics qualifications, and keenly engage with study courses that provide appropriate progression from previous study in other subjects.
- Teaching for post-16 students is as effective as it is elsewhere in school. The highly individualised programmes and engaging strategies ensure that students make at least good progress.
- The personal development needs of students are met through a wide range of activities. These enable students to develop greater self-esteem. At Ferndene and Alnwood, the health elements of the structured day are included in study programmes, reciprocating the contribution made by the educational elements to students' emotional health.
- Carefully thought-through risk assessments ensure that all students have realistic choices of vocational and/or work-related learning. Crucially, this encourages students to have hope and aspire to a career later in life. There is additional effective support for disadvantaged students to achieve work-related qualifications.
- Since September 2016, a very small provision linked to Benfield School Sixth Form has opened. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this option for students. However, it demonstrates leaders' determination to make sure that students stay in education by filling a gap in the options for those students who are not confident enough to move to a college of further education.

- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes lacks the focus and creativity needed to ensure that the quality of the provision leads to outstanding outcomes for the students.

## School details

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique reference number | 133714              |
| Local authority         | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number       | 10012575            |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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|---|--|
| Type of school  | Special  |
| School category                                       | Foundation special   |
| Age range of pupils                                   | 2 to 19  |
| Gender of pupils                                      | Mixed  |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes         | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll                   | 153  |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 28   |
| Appropriate authority                                 | The governing body   |
| Chair   | Joanne Clifford Swan   |
| Headteacher   | Mark Jones   |
| Telephone number                                      | 0191 275 5111  |
| Website   | <a href="http://www.bridges.newcastle.sch.uk">www.bridges.newcastle.sch.uk</a>     |
| Email address   | <a href="mailto:admin@bridges.newcastle.sch.uk">admin@bridges.newcastle.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection                           | 23–24 April 2012   |

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium grant or Year 7 catch-up grant on its website. However, the short-term placements of a majority of pupils and high mobility mean that allocation of these grants is often delayed and variable year on year.
- The school is a special school, making provision for pupils with a wide range of health needs across six sites. These are:
  - Benfield for pupils who are anxious and vulnerable pupils, including pregnant teenagers and young mothers

- Great North Children’s Hospital (GNCH) and Freeman Hospital (heart and lung ward) for pupils with acute and chronic health conditions, some of whom have frequent or recurring stays in hospital
  - Ferndene, which is an inpatient assessment unit run by Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, for children and young people with a range of complex mental health needs, some of whom have additional learning difficulties
  - Complex Neuro Developmental Service (CNDS) at Walkergate Park Hospital, which provides initial assessments of children with pervasive developmental delay
  - Alnwood Unit, which is a national medium-secure unit for teenagers who have complex mental health conditions; some pupils have learning disabilities in addition to their mental health difficulties
  - Community Teaching, which caters for pupils referred by healthcare professionals as they are unable to attend their mainstream school due to illness, including mental health conditions; teaching takes place either in the pupil’s home, community settings, including public libraries, or in small groups at the Benfield site.
- The vast majority of pupils are dual registered and remain on the roll of their home school. The number of pupils on roll varies from day to day. During the inspection, 153 pupils received education from the school. Over an academic year, the school provides education to over 600 pupils for varying amounts of time.
  - The proportions of pupils who are disadvantaged and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies over time. At the time of the inspection, just under a third of pupils had education, health and care plans.
  - The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. However, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from different ethnic backgrounds varies from day to day.
  - The school currently uses Stepney Bank Stables and Kirkley Hall as alternative provision for a small number of pupils on a part-time basis.
  - The governing body is the proprietor of two nurseries for children from birth to four years old: Newcastle Bridges Nursery and Newcastle Bridges Nursery East. The nurseries are inspected separately and so were not part of this inspection.
  - The school is part of the Compass Trust, which is made up of the four special schools in Newcastle and Newcastle City Council.
  - The school makes provision for early years children when they are admitted to Freeman and GNCH or being assessed at Walkergate. However, during the inspection the number of early years children was too small to report on separately.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every site at least once during the inspection, including a teaching session in a public library. At each site, they talked with staff and pupils during visits to lessons. A few pupils read their work to inspectors during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils at the Benfield site, and senior and middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. A telephone conversation was held with the school improvement partner representing the local authority. A telephone conversation was also held with the manager of Stepney Bank Stables.
- Discussions were held with the healthcare professionals on all the hospital sites, including ward managers and consultants.
- Samples of pupils' work books and other records relating to their attendance and progress from the time they joined the schools were reviewed in detail.
- Four parents' written responses to Parent View were considered, alongside discussions with parents during site visits. The 20 responses to the pupil online survey and 55 responses to the staff online survey were considered.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation relating to all aspects of the school's work, including the minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' safeguarding records and records relating to the safer recruitment of staff.

## Inspection team

|                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Susan Hayter, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Ann Muxworthy                | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Tracy Millard                | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Marian Thomas                | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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