

Pathways Special School

Tennyson Avenue, Grangetown, Middlesbrough TS6 7NP

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the last inspection, the school's performance has declined. Significant turbulence in leadership, teaching and support staff over the last two years has had a detrimental impact on pupils' behaviour and learning.
- Teaching over time is inconsistent and too often is poorly planned because not enough account is taken of pupils' needs. An extremely high turnover of temporary teachers has resulted in a failure to establish good relationships with pupils and provide the consistency and security needed for learning to flourish. In these conditions, teaching does not build on prior learning, or successfully set clear expectations of behaviour.
- Assessments are insufficiently sharp in identifying what pupils have learned. Opportunities to develop and embed literacy or numeracy skills lack focus and are inconsistent.
- Pupils make slow progress over time. Many pupils make no progress and they are poorly supported to be effective learners.
- A significant number of pupils are not engaged and disrupt learning for themselves and others. This severely inhibits pupils' learning and makes some pupils fearful initially. Specific strategies to support behaviour have been inconsistent and poorly implemented.
- Poor attendance of a large number of pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, significantly impedes them in building the resilience and skills to learn.
- The impact of work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is weak. Values of respect and tolerance are not embedded securely.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and interim executive board (IEB) are providing clear direction and helpful support in challenging circumstances.
- Systems and procedures to ensure pupils' safety are established and pupils are safe in school.
- School structures and practices provide increasing accountability and assurance about the quality of the school's work. Attendance is monitored accurately.
- Year 10 and 11 pupils are receiving the careers advice and guidance they are entitled to.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good and leads to improved outcomes in pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills by:
 - ensuring that information about pupils' attainment and prior learning on entry to the school, and as they transfer to new classes, is provided to teachers
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to plan for pupils' different starting points and pupils' targets are sharply focused on their next steps to secure and deepen their learning.
- Rapidly improve the behaviour and personal development and welfare of pupils by ensuring that:
 - there is a rapid improvement in pupils' attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - clear expectations of behaviour are established in classrooms and around the school and pupils and staff understand their respective responsibilities under the school's behaviour policy
 - pupils are supported effectively to learn how to recognise the triggers to becoming anxious or angry and learn strategies to help them stay in control.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and governors so that they can secure rapid and sustained improvement to teaching and outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers receive information about pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs and receive timely and effective training in strategies to support individuals
 - developing a strategic approach to ensure that staff vacancies are filled as soon as possible and taking action more effectively to support staff in working with families to reduce pupils' absence rates
 - monitoring the quality of the school's work, thoroughly evaluating the difference it is making to pupils' learning and progress and developing sharply focused plans and strategies to guide its improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The high rates of absence and turnover of staff over the last two years have been to the detriment of pupils and their learning. Strategic planning and support in these circumstances have not been timely enough to maintain a consistently good standard of education.
- Support for pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs has not focused sharply enough on enabling pupils to learn strategies to help them control their emotions. The recent increase in staffing is helping to manage disruptions safely when they occur, but not all pupils are able to access the specialist support needed, and on the scale it is required, to enable them to make headway in their learning and development.
- Staff and pupils are responding to the headteacher's energetic leadership. Her commitment to improving the school is beginning to change the culture. The flux in staffing has slowed and expectations of staff are starting to rise. Staff who responded to the inspection survey acknowledge that things are beginning to improve. Pupils know the headteacher cares for them and has their interests at heart. Spaces and rooms for pupils to go to when they need to vent their anger and frustration, together with increased staff to talk to, are helping pupils to feel safe.
- The headteacher and IEB accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses in the school and plans prioritise what is needed to improve. Despite this, they have not routinely evaluated the impact of their work and the difference it is making to pupils' learning and progress. Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is slow.
- Leaders acknowledge that their monitoring of teaching and learning shows that staff are not using assessment information well enough to challenge and support pupils' learning. The recent introduction of an assessment scheme is welcome, but has had too little time to take effect.
- A senior leadership team has been recently re-established. Senior leaders are beginning to develop a thorough knowledge of their areas of responsibility, particularly in the primary phase. Evidence of other leaders supporting new teachers and those new to management responsibilities and access to professional development for staff demonstrate a determination to support the school's improvement. As a result, new teachers are confident about their work and feel well supported.
- Systems and structures to record attendance accurately are in place. The school knows where pupils are. Resources are deployed in a highly focused way to tackle long-standing and intractable absence. Individual examples of success were noted during the inspection.
- The school curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to study a broad range of subjects and to learn about values of respect, tolerance and law. As a result, some pupils are finding it easier to be a friend and to make friends at school. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are beginning to develop aspirations and see a way forward to achieving them as a result of the opportunities they have to learn about careers and the world of work. Leaders and governors recognise that the curriculum is not implemented effectively. Their plan to review it to focus on how it can be strengthened

to develop pupils' reading and literacy skills more prominently is well advised.

Governance of the school

- Members of the IEB have a clear understanding of their governance roles and responsibilities. They have established a strong partnership with the headteacher and are measured in their challenge and support.
- The board have a more realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not currently have enough information about the progress of pupils. In particular, their checks on the impact of pupil premium funding on the learning and progress of pupils who are eligible for this support are not sharp enough.
- The board have acted quickly in response to detailed health and safety audits from the local authority. As a result, their changes to the buildings and fabric of the school have made the interior welcoming, bright and safe.
- Members of the board have worked effectively in partnership with the local authority to secure the immediate and longer-term plan for the school. They have ensured that the school's finances are in order.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A stronger safeguarding culture is beginning to develop among staff and is emerging for pupils.
- Pupils are more aware of risks to their health and safety. For example, support programmes are helping pupils to quit smoking and the numbers of smokers have reduced significantly over 12 months. In food rooms, pupils wear aprons and follow instructions and hygiene measures so that the things they make are safe to eat.
- Leaders and governors have strengthened support to pupils by establishing a team of five designated safeguarding leads. They are well trained and know how to support children in need and to work with statutory agencies. When required, they challenge these agencies to secure support for pupils and their families.
- Leaders have implemented an effective electronic system for recording and monitoring staff concerns about the safety and well-being of pupils. Checks on a sample of records showed that concerns about individuals are logged and followed up appropriately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching over time does not meet the needs of pupils and, as a result, they make poor progress. The information provided to teachers about pupils' prior learning and what they already know, understand and can do is limited.
- Gaps in primary pupils' knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics are slow to narrow. Targets for individuals are often focused around behaviour rather than learning needs. Lessons are not always pitched sharply enough to challenge and support pupils' learning. Pupils are sometimes frustrated because of this. A pupil explained, 'You are trying to do your best but it doesn't work out.'

- Irregular attendance by pupils and frequent changes of teachers in some classes, especially in key stage 4, have hindered pupils' learning and progress.
- Inspectors' checks of pupils' work found that pupils' learning is inconsistent and poorly supported, particularly as they move through the school and into key stage 4. Consequently, pupils do not embed and deepen their basic skills in mathematics or English well enough. Too few teachers have a sufficiently detailed understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do in order to build upon it. The recent development of a school assessment system is a positive move by leaders to tackle this issue but is not embedded.
- Teaching in key stage 4 classes follows a course structure that is much less adapted to pupils' learning needs in English than in other parts of the school. As a result, progress is poor. However, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are enjoying the practical nature of vocational courses that they are studying with alternative providers and completing their work quickly and to the quality required.
- Learning is frequently interrupted by disruptive behaviour and frequent absence as pupils leave classrooms, or do not choose to attend school. Strategies to support pupils and promote good behaviour and discipline are often poorly implemented.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are used to minimise disruption and often take pupils out of classes. Typically, classes are small and this means that some pupils who remain in lessons receive strong individual tuition. In lessons observed, learning was productive in the short term as pupils responded to the individual teaching they received. However, this was frequently not sustained as pupils reached a 'saturation point' and reacted aggressively.
- Pupils are achieving well where teaching is consistent in its quality and stability. Pupils feel they are learning more in physical education and science. They enjoy the practical nature of the work and the different strategies that the teachers employ to develop their interest and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Leaders' work in this area is starting to have a positive impact on pupils but there are many who lack the self-discipline to follow school rules. The school's work to cultivate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at a very early stage and is not planned well enough throughout the school.
- In response to pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs, considerable numbers of staff have been brought into school to calm pupils by distracting them with other activities, or encouraging them to talk and regain control of their feelings, before returning them to classes. However, these more positive social and emotional behaviours are not sustained by pupils on a longer-term basis. Teaching staff are not always aware of pupils' individual social and emotional needs and how best to support them.

- Some pupils are beginning to recognise the triggers to them becoming anxious or angry and self-refer to calm areas to 'chill out'. A pupil explained how things are improving for him and how he is now engaged.
- The introduction of a points scheme that rewards pupils, for example, for being safe, being in the right place at the right time and completing work is beginning to show pupils that there are consequences to their actions. Pupils are keen to gain rewards and awards such as star of the day.
- The introduction of careers guidance and information is helping to inform some pupils about their next steps in training, further education or employment. A pupil explained that as a result of his interview, he learned what it was possible to do.
- School records show incidents of bullying and exclusions are reducing. A few pupils told inspectors that previously they found it difficult to make friends at school but are now beginning to do so.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Many pupils do not learn how to control their emotions and they express their anger and aggression in very poor behaviour that is sometimes directed at other pupils, staff or visitors. Typically, pupils do not listen to teachers, they leave classes at will, kick doors, break equipment and swear.
- Some pupils are upset and fearful of this behaviour; other pupils find it annoying but also react to it and join in. For example, a pupil explained, 'It's distracting when in lessons they get sticks and bash windows.' Others spoke about feeling frightened initially but now they are used to it.
- A key issue for many pupils has been the high turnover of teaching staff. Pupils explained to inspectors the frustrations they felt about this. They reported building strong relationships with teachers who were 'kind', but then left them.
- In some classes, individual teachers set out consequences for pupils and manage behaviour well but this is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils' conduct at other times of the day is better than in lessons, despite the uninviting building and poor play facilities. Pupils mix together with other pupils at break to play football, and staff and pupils sit at tables and eat lunch together.
- Attendance is significantly below the national average. The latest school attendance is 70.8%. High rates of persistent absence are a significant factor in limiting pupils' learning and progress. Although attendance continues to be irregular for many pupils, and especially low for key stage 4 pupils, for those who are disadvantaged and those who receive outreach support, there are signs of improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Most pupils enter school with low levels of prior attainment, especially in reading and writing. A small number of pupils arrive having met the expected standards for their age at the end of key stage 1 or 2 and are also disengaged from learning. They leave with some qualifications but these are at a low level and pupils' progress is poor.

- School performance information shows that primary pupils are not making enough progress from their initial end of key stage assessments. The school does not routinely track pupils' progress from key stage 2 to key stage 4. Information about the progress of key stage 4 pupils is not collated or reported to inform decisions taken by school leaders.
- School systems to accurately identify and monitor pupils' progress are at an early stage of development. For example, individual assessments of pupils' literacy skills, undertaken by external agencies, are provided for some pupils. However, this work, and systems for tracking pupils' progress, are not embedded throughout the school.
- A new assessment tool has recently been implemented in key stages 2 and 3. School assessments show that 80% of pupils in these key stages are making no or slow progress in literacy and 50% are making slow progress in numeracy.
- In 2017, leaders could not evidence that Year 11 pupils made progress from their key stage 2 starting points. Just over half of pupils left school with a qualification of functional skills or GCSE in English, but only around one fifth achieved a similar level in mathematics. The proportion of pupils who continue in education, employment or training is too low.
- All of the current key stage 4 pupils are studying English, mathematics and science. However, not all courses, especially in English, are adapted to their needs. In science, pupils are on courses which are not challenging and do not enable them to make strong progress.
- Pupils who are studying at alternative provision away from the school site say they enjoy the courses. A few Year 11 pupils have already made strong progress to achieve a certificate in motorcycle mechanics and are working towards a diploma. Reports in individual pupils' files show that information is shared between providers and the school. However, in discussions with an inspector, pupils were unsure what qualification they were studying.
- Approximately one third of pupils receive support through outreach provision. However, the learning and progress that these pupils make are not currently tracked.
- Leaders report that pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding are currently working below expectations for their age. The school does not adequately monitor or report the progress of pupils who are receiving additional support.

School details

Unique reference number	128190
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10049027

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	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Andrew Brown
Headteacher	Rachel Glover
Telephone number	01642 779292
Website	www.pathwaysschool.org
Email address	admin@pathways.rac.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school works with children who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of the pupils are White British boys. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is significantly above average.
- In January 2017, an IEB was put in place by the local authority to provide leadership and governance.
- The school has had significant changes in senior leadership prior to the headteacher's appointment in April 2017, and a new senior leadership team from September 2017. Although staffing is now more stable, there has been a very high turnover of supply

teachers and much staff absence in the last two years.

- A number of pupils, receiving home tuition or who are on part-time timetables, are supported with tuition at one or more of the following alternative providers: Right Trax, NACRO, Educ8, Redcar and Cleveland College and Middlesbrough College.
- Plans for the school to relocate to new buildings have recently been agreed by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a number of lessons in primary and secondary classrooms, including several jointly with senior leaders. They reviewed pupils' work in lessons and also undertook a scrutiny of a sample of work. An inspector also visited two alternative providers to observe learning and spoke with staff and pupils there.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. Inspectors met with representatives of the IEB and held a telephone interview with the chair of the board. Inspectors also met a representative from the local authority's school improvement service.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school and met with a group of pupils over the two days of the inspection. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school including during break and lunchtimes and as they left the school premises at the end of the day.
- Inspectors took account of the written text comments expressed by two parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They took account of the views of 16 staff who completed the staff questionnaire. None of the pupils responded to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspection team studied a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, information about the progress and attainment of pupils, safeguarding information and the checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Gina White, lead inspector

David Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted 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.

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