

Pathways Short Stay School

Lensbury Way, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 9TA

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2013

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.

- Good leadership and management since the previous inspection have resulted in good improvements in the attainment and progress of students, in the quality of teaching, in subjects and in students' behaviour.
- Students' behaviour is good. It is managed well by staff. Their improved behaviour allows many students to return to their home school or to be transferred to other mainstream provision.
- Students' attendance often improves whilst they are at the school, although not yet to a level that is on a par with attendance generally in primary and secondary schools.
- Teachers use the excellent facilities on and off site well. Teaching is good and this is reflected in the good achievement of students. Many students make particularly good progress in literacy.
- School leaders, including the governing body, have communicated a positive vision for the school which staff and students know and respond to well. Leaders know their priorities for improvement and have good plans to turn these ambitions into reality.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers are not yet consistent in providing good quality guidance to students on what they need to do to improve and teaching assistants are not always used effectively.
- Opportunities for students with medical needs to make sustained progress across a range of subjects are limited by the current allocation of ten hours taught time per week per student.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons or part lessons, of which two were observed jointly with senior leaders. Fourteen teachers were observed teaching, including staff at the off-site provision at the Lovell Centre.
- Inspectors looked at work in the students’ books and at the quality of marking and written feedback.
- Discussions were held with students, members of the Federation’s board of governors, representatives from the local authority and a partner mainstream secondary school and staff, including senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors checked on the behaviour of students in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. They also reviewed behavioural records.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information on students’ current progress, the school’s priorities for improvement and its evaluation of progress towards its priorities, student attendance records, policies and procedures, minutes of the meetings of the board of governors and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) but the inspectors took account of the school’s own surveys of parents and carers. Questionnaires from 44 members of staff were considered.

Inspection team

Timothy Feast, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Buist

Additional Inspector

Sheila Nolan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is part of the New Horizons Federation, established since the school's last inspection.
- The school caters for primary- and secondary-aged students who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion and secondary-aged students who have medical needs.
- All three sections of the school were brought on to a single site in 2011.
- There are far more boys than girls.
- Most of the students are of White British heritage.
- Just under a half of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, well above average. Pupil premium funding is intended for the support of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or from families in the armed forces. There were no students from families in the armed forces at the time of the inspection and a very small number of students are looked after by the local authority.
- An increasing proportion of the students are those who are seen to be at risk of exclusion from their mainstream schools and are offered a short stay at the school, 'respite', to give them opportunities to modify their behaviour and consider and adapt appropriate strategies to improve. The stay is often for six weeks but may be for longer.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attendance of students by:
 - the secondary section adopting the good practice of the primary section and implementing a communal breakfast session at the start of the day with a focus on literacy and world affairs
 - involving parents more in improving their children's attendance and punctuality.
- Extend the range of curriculum opportunities for students with medical needs by:
 - improving the on-line options for students to extend their learning off site
 - exploring options with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to reduce, where appropriate, the restrictions on the students' recommended curricular time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment when they are admitted to the school is well below average, with many having particularly poor reading and writing skills. This has usually been the result of poor behaviour and attitudes to learning or because of medical difficulties.
- However, once they have settled, many students make better progress than they had done for a long time. This enables Year 11 students to achieve a range of qualifications which prepare them well for the next stage of their education. For other students who are in the school for just a brief period, this improvement often brings about their return to mainstream education.
- With the improvement in teaching and the quality of the curriculum, students gain new knowledge, understanding and skills at a good pace. Progress in lessons is good for students in all three sections of the school, and the gap between their current attainment and that expected for their age is beginning to close.
- Currently, students with medical needs are only funded for ten hours teaching. While they make good progress in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, opportunities to progress in other areas are restricted.
- There is no significant difference in the progress of students from different backgrounds or by gender. Pupil-premium funding has been used effectively to provide good quality intervention support for literacy and numeracy and to offer good rewards which help to promote better attitudes to learning. Students eligible for this funding make good progress in both English and mathematics and are closing the gap in attainment between themselves and other students, both whilst on a short respite placement or when admitted for a longer period. Pupils are often making more than double the rate of progress expected nationally.
- Throughout the school, there has been a consistent drive to improve literacy, including students' reading. This focus on reading in the primary section sees many children making rapid and sustained progress with both their reading and with writing. In the secondary and medical sections, there are clearly identified strategies to promote reading and to identify and use key subject vocabulary well, and these strategies have a positive impact. While some students initially show a reluctance to write, by Year 11 they are writing appropriately for their coursework, for example in their work-related portfolios.
- Where appropriate, students are entered early for GCSE examinations, for example in mathematics. The outcomes have been positive, with these students now striving for higher grades.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Students' learning now reflects the improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection and since the move to one site. Considerable focus has been placed on improving learning in lessons. Staff are clear as to the strategies they are expected to use and there is increasing consistency in implementing agreed approaches.
- Lessons are well planned. The planning consistently makes explicit to students what they are expected to learn, not just what they are expected to do. Teachers plan activities which both meet students' needs and often enthuse them. This was seen to good effect in a Year 11 lesson where students were challenged to discuss 'the prevention of AIDS'. They responded with some mature and thought-provoking discussions.
- Learning is encouraged by the good relationships that staff have with the students. Students singled this out as one of the school's best features. These relationships enable staff to challenge students to do better, as was seen in the fitness suite, where students were following their rigorous individual fitness regimes.
- Students' learning, at its best, is supported by some excellent guidance on what they need to do to improve, for example in the mathematics books of a Year 11 student. The student had

already gained a Grade C at GCSE, but very specific guidance was given on what was now required to gain a Grade B. However, this guidance is not yet of a consistently high quality across all staff. Students consistently knew the levels/grades they were working at but were less sure about what to do to get to the next level/grade.

- There are good working partnerships between the class teachers and other adults providing additional support. In primary classes, this was seen to particularly good effect when pupils practised working well collaboratively in pairs and trios.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Staff commented positively on how the behaviour of nearly all students improves whilst they are at the school. Students' improved attitudes to learning enable many to return to their home schools or to other mainstream provision or to progress to college at the end of Year 11.
- The school environment reflects their positive attitudes. No litter or graffiti were observed on the school site. Displays of students' work around the school are respected. In many books, improved presentation illustrates students' increasing pride in their achievements.
- The attendance of a large majority of students improves whilst at Pathways, although not to the extent that is found generally in primary and secondary schools nationally. Attendance and punctuality in the primary section is encouraged by a good communal start to the day, where the children are fed and they focus on literacy and world news.
- The staff's consistent approach helps students manage their own behaviour better. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced considerably in 2012-2013. The success of the school's respite programme has resulted in a considerable fall in the number of permanent exclusions in mainstream schools in the local authority.
- Students said they feel safe. They have a good understanding of what to do when faced with unsafe situations. School records indicate very few racist or homophobic incidents. Students say that there is little bullying and that staff deal effectively with any incidents. Opportunities are offered in lessons for students to consider moral dilemmas and issues and to help them to 'make the right choice'.

The leadership and management are good

- As part of the New Horizon Federation, school leaders share an ambitious vision for not only Pathways but also for the group of schools. Leaders and staff identify the tangible benefits of the federation, especially in relation to training and the sharing of expertise and the improved transition arrangements.
- School leaders have secured considerable improvements since the last inspection, helped by the move to a shared site. The curriculum has been extended, offering students access to in-house courses such as construction and motor mechanics and the use of work-related facilities at Bexley College. The curriculum for students with medical needs is restricted to ten hours per week. Insufficient use is made of on-line learning to extend these students' achievements. For some students, it would appear that a curriculum of more than ten hours is appropriate. School leaders have not yet managed to persuade either CAMHS or the students' home schools to bring this about.
- Senior leaders monitor teaching regularly. Assessments are accurate and their feedback gives staff a clear impression of strengths and areas for development. Appropriate training is provided individually or collectively to tackle areas requiring improvement. Almost all staff think Pathways makes appropriate provision for their professional development and all staff agree leaders do all they can to improve teaching.
- The school works effectively in partnership with mainstream schools in the local authority. Secondary schools are appreciative of the impact of the respite programme. The school works

effectively with a range of health, social and welfare agencies and these arrangements contribute positively to students' well-being. The school works well with parents individually but does not seek sufficiently their collective views, for example in securing their support in raising attendance. School managers implement strategies to encourage attendance but these are not yet having sufficient impact.

- Leaders focus on ensuring that discrimination is not tolerated and that the students are given equally good opportunities to improve their achievements and attitudes so that they can succeed once they have left Pathways. As a result, staff morale is high, and the ethos is positive, reflected in one staff comment that 'the "can do" ethos makes the school such a great place to work'.
 - The effective use of the pupil premium funding is monitored well and the outcomes of the evaluations inform the spending decisions for the next financial year.
 - Statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding are met.
 - The local authority has supported the school well, providing good targeted support, for example in respect of the teaching of the sounds that letters make.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development and the school's priorities.
 - School leaders report to the governors on students' academic and personal progress and the governors do challenge them, increasingly from their own first-hand evidence. Governors receive comprehensive information about the quality of teaching and through their personnel sub-committee determine salary progression as appropriate. They know about the targets that are set for teachers to improve teaching and what is being done to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance.
 - Governors carefully monitor the finances of the school. They carefully consider how much they charge other schools for the services that the school offers.
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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	135810
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	402739
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Corinne Botten
Headteacher	John Moore
Date of previous school inspection	30 June–1 July 2010
Telephone number	020 83122746
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