

# New Bridge School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 134517                |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Oldham                |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 381686                |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 28–29 November 2011   |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Pauline Hilling-Smith |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                            | Special                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                           | Community special                             |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                       | 11–19   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                          | Mixed   |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>        | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>       | 304   |
| <b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 116   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                     | The governing body                            |
| <b>Chair</b>                                     | Councillor Steven Williams                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                               | Graham Quinn                                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>        | 24 June 2009                                  |
| <b>School address</b>                            | Roman Road<br>Hollinwood<br>Oldham<br>OL8 3PH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                          | 0161 7706999                                  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                                | 0161 6888223                                  |
| <b>Email address</b>                             | gquinn@newbridgeschool.net                    |

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons taught by 31 teachers. Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, students, representatives of the governing body and external partners. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's evaluation of its performance, the current development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body and safeguarding documentation. The 60 questionnaires returned from parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress of all groups of students towards their targets, especially in mathematics and in the sixth form.
- How well the curriculum and teaching promote the learning and personal development needs of students.
- How effectively leaders are bringing about school improvement and how effectively the school engages with external partners.

## Information about the school

New Bridge School is a much larger than average size special school, which has specialist arts status. Students have a wide range of learning needs including behavioural, physical, sensory and communication difficulties. All of the students have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of students are boys and the number of students from ethnic minority groups is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status, Artsmark Gold and the Sportsmark. It is an approved centre for the National College of Further Education, Oxford Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR), City and Guilds and Sports Leaders Assessment. In April 2010, a new deputy headteacher was appointed. Forty six percent of the current teachers have followed, or are following, the professional route to qualified teacher status based in the school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Staff and students show a deep understanding and respect for individual differences. Meeting individual needs and promoting equality of opportunity for all are at the heart of the school. Arrangements for care, guidance and support are outstanding, as is the curriculum and the sixth form. These, coupled with very well developed engagement with parents and carers and excellent partnerships, contribute to a student body that is aspirational and very socially aware.

Central to the school's ambition is the ongoing drive to ensure that all students live a fulfilled adult life. Students make outstanding progress in their wider personal development and, for example, understand the importance of emotional well-being for living a healthy life. Some students make outstanding progress in other subjects, such as art. Progress in basic skills is good overall, with strengths in reading in Key Stage 3 and in speaking and listening in Key Stage 4. Progress in mathematics is less strong, especially at Key Stage 4. Students mature into caring young adults who develop the essential attitudes, skills and self-reliance that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education and for later life. Students say that they feel completely safe and enjoy school. They respond to the school's high expectations and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer. The students' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning underpin their impressive achievement in gaining positions in further training or employment when they leave school.

Good teaching overall, combined with a highly tailored, rich curriculum and excellent support and guidance, underpin the students' good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Some teaching is inspirational. In other lessons, students wait too long for their turn and activities do not sufficiently challenge or engage them. Despite this variability, the students' keenness and commitment to succeed ensures that they make at least good progress even when teaching is less effective. Systematic tracking, alongside careful assessment, ensures that any students in danger of underachieving are identified and suitably supported.

The school's sustained and impressive improvement since the last inspection is securely founded on high ambition, rigorous monitoring and effective development planning. School development is informed by rigorous self-evaluation and is guided by the strong, strategic leadership of the senior team, ably supported by the well-

informed and very effective governing body. Steps to strengthen sixth form provision, for example, have further improved teaching and raised achievement. The whole demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve the percentage of good and better lessons by replicating more widely exemplary practice so that:
  - all teachers share the same high expectations of students' learning in their lesson planning and teaching
  - activities engage and challenge all students in every lesson.
- Improve attainment in mathematics by putting a comprehensive programme of staff training in mathematics in place.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

|   |
|---|
| 1 |
|---|

All groups of students make good progress overall. Progress in their moral and social development is often outstanding because it is given a high priority at all times. Most students arrive with low or very low skills. Although students make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress across subjects, the steps they take in their learning are very small and their attainment is not judged against the national average, but against benchmarks appropriate to their needs. Behaviour is outstanding because very clear systems and good relationships enable students to adhere closely to high expectations. Individual targets, which provide details about what each student needs to do to improve, are very effective and to which students are frequently referred. This means that students have an excellent attitude to learning and sustain their concentration well in lessons. For example, in an outstanding English lesson, students wasted no time in each selecting a word, actively placing themselves in alphabetical order after discussion and constructing complex sentences that included the words. During their time at New Bridge, students make good progress in core subjects because staff track students' progress carefully and set new targets regularly. Students with additional or more complex learning needs also make good progress towards the targets set for them.

Students feel extremely safe and secure. They know they are listened to because they can see their views, and put forward through their council, being put into practice. Students develop the skills to be independent and lead a healthy lifestyle very well. For example, they learn how to travel independently. This, together with their above average attendance, makes a very strong contribution to the outstanding development of skills to promote their future well-being. Students develop their understanding of different cultures through art, drama and dance.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  | *        |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  |          |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>1</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>1</b> |

**How effective is the provision?**

Although there is some variability in the quality of teaching, the large majority is good or better. In the best lessons, teaching promotes engagement and excitement because the level of challenge is just right for every individual student. As a result, work produced by the students is of high quality. In these lessons, the teaching assistants are focused on extending the learning of small groups as well as individuals. Learning proceeds at a fast pace and meets the students' learning needs well. In a minority of lessons, learning slows because students spend too much time in large groups and waiting too long for their turn. Teachers' planning does not clearly specify what each student will learn in the lesson and how success will be measured. Teachers usually have good subject knowledge. Students are clear about what they need to do to improve because all staff give good clear information.

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and captures the interest of the students very well. For example, the theme weeks planned by subject departments are much enjoyed. Students on the arts course, entitled Lumenus, have formed a travelling theatre company which performs in local venues and beyond, including Finland. Productions are often designed to promote social cohesion, such as by focusing on anti-bullying. The curriculum builds carefully and systematically on students' prior experience and looks forward to the next stage. At Key Stage 4, dance, drama and the arts play an increasingly important part, and there are accredited pathways which dovetail into the sixth form curriculum. The curriculum is full of memorable experiences, not just visits but in everyday lessons, a recent example being the making of Christmas cakes.

The school is an exceptionally caring organisation where staff know students and students know each other very well. The buddy system encourages students to take responsibility for each other and some are charged with specific responsibilities, such as ensuring that the news of those with communication difficulties is heard by the school leadership. Staff are highly committed to meeting individual needs both in

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

school and through working in a coordinated way with a wide range of agencies. The support system works very well through year leaders and pastoral managers and through the provision of special nurture groups. Students feel, and are, cared for very well. The school develops students' confidence and independence extremely well through well-established transition procedures. The work of the Parent Pupil Liaison Manager ensures that students receive the specific information they need, for example, on personal relationships. A range of after-school and holiday clubs and activities promote care, guidance and support beyond the school day and term.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning  | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>1</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is an exceptional leader. He is very effective in building leadership teams in response to the school's needs. Over a long period of time, this has meant that provision always meets the changing needs of the school's students very well. Governance is outstanding and the governing body ensures that provision is of the highest quality as well as wide ranging. For example, it has played a part in establishing a centre that students with the most complex needs can attend when they leave school and have full-time supported employment in the local hospital or university. The academic and pastoral boards, which include members of the governing body as well as senior and middle leaders, have a highly effective impact on school development. Under the expert leadership of the deputy headteacher over the last twelve months, the academic board has had access to high quality data upon which to base its decisions. The computer-based tracking system developed in school by the operations director is highly effective and has generated interest from other schools in the region. The detail provided about the levels and progress of individuals and groups has been used to shape the curriculum, but has not informed fully what teachers plan for students in classrooms.

The school's commitment to on-site teacher training is considerable and monitoring arrangements are thorough. Observations of teaching lead to detailed evaluations that celebrate strengths and point out areas for further development. However, there are inconsistencies between subject leaders' evaluation of lessons. Procedures for identifying what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve are robust and accurate. Leaders have identified a need for further training for staff in the teaching of mathematics. Procedures for safeguarding and health and safety are good and arrangements for child protection are a strength. All staff are trained to a high level in the management of students' behaviour.

Partnerships with parents and carers are strong and very well coordinated. Partnerships with other external organisations, including the local college, play a very effective part in improving learning for all students and contribute substantially to their aspirations and well-being. The school's actions to promote community

cohesion are based on a detailed analysis of its context and are conspicuously successful in promoting cohesion and tackling discrimination.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 2        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>1</b> |

## Sixth form

Students' behaviour is excellent and attitudes are strongly positive throughout the Sixth Form Learning Centre. Students say they feel very safe and valued. They can give examples of ways in which their views have been considered and acted upon. There is a strong focus on students' personal development and this is productive in cultivating independence and a positive ethos in the centre. Students learn to be tolerant and are increasingly self-reliant.

Students make particularly strong progress in art and horticulture and achieve accreditation at GCSE and equivalent levels. There is also good progress in subjects, such as English, where work is well tailored to students' different abilities and interests. Sometimes progress is limited because the very wide range of needs in fully mixed-ability groups are not managed effectively so all students do the same work and individuals are not always engaged fully. Students' progress is monitored closely and leaders are aware of differences between individuals. The curriculum appeals to students and provides well for their needs. There is well-defined key worker support when appropriate. The provision is exceptionally well managed to secure high outcomes in students' development. This means that all students secure a place either in employment or on a further training course.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b> | <b>1</b> |
| Taking into account:                           | 1        |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form        | 1        |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form     | 1        |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form    | 1        |

## Views of parents and carers



The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires outlining their views of the school were extremely positive and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the school. Their positive views match the inspection findings.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at New Bridge School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 304 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |   | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | % | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 42             | 70 | 16    | 27 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 46             | 77 | 13    | 22 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 40             | 67 | 17    | 28 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 37             | 62 | 20    | 33 | 2        | 3 | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 40             | 67 | 18    | 30 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 38             | 63 | 20    | 33 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 35             | 58 | 22    | 37 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 38             | 63 | 19    | 32 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 43             | 72 | 16    | 27 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 42             | 70 | 17    | 28 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 40             | 67 | 18    | 30 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 41             | 68 | 18    | 30 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 45             | 75 | 14    | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 43  | 47   | 10           | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 6   | 46   | 42           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 36   | 41           | 9          |
| Sixth forms          | 15  | 42   | 41           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 30  | 48   | 19           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 14  | 50   | 31           | 5          |
| All schools          | 10  | 44   | 39           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.  |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.   |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of New Bridge School, Oldham – OL8 3PH**

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming to us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking with you and visiting lessons. We were impressed by your behaviour and how proud you are of your school. It was clear how much you value your community. Thank you for taking the time to give us your views of the school. It was clear from talking together and the questionnaire replies we received from you and your parents and carers that you feel very safe and supported all the time.

We found that New Bridge is an outstanding school. This is because of the fantastic way it cares for you and prepares you for the time when you will be an adult. You are making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in learning and in your personal development because the staff are very skillful in finding the right courses and placements for you and ensuring that you are successful.

We have asked the school to do two things to make New Bridge even better. Leaders are to make sure that activities in lessons involve you doing work in small groups for more of the time and at just the right level of difficulty, and to make sure that you learn as much as you can in mathematics.

You can all help the staff by continuing to be such positive students, trying hard and encouraging each other to do well. We wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely,

Pauline Hilling-Smith  
Lead Inspector

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