

New Bridge School

Roman Road, Oldham, Lancashire, OL8 3PH

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- New Bridge School is led by an exceptional headteacher who shares with his staff a vision for continual development and improvement.
- Staff have high expectations for their students, who achieve outstandingly well. A high proportion of students make more than expected progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects from their different starting points.
- An increasing proportion of students are gaining GCSEs by the time they leave school. Students of all abilities are able to gain external awards which demonstrate their excellent learning and achievements during their time in school.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding overall. Teachers plan work which is well-matched to the needs and abilities of the students. A marking policy has been introduced but is not yet fully in place.
- Care, guidance and support for students are exceptional so that they make great strides in their personal and social development. Students are prepared extremely well for life beyond school.
- Behaviour is excellent across the school. Students enjoy their lessons and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. Students feel very safe in school and enjoy excellent relationships with staff to share any concerns.
- Work with other professionals to support students' learning and well-being in school and at home is of extremely high quality. Parents know they can request help and support at any time and feel well-informed about what their children are doing in school.
- The curriculum is innovative, offering students a wide choice of learning pathways to match their needs, abilities and interests.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The excellent curriculum promotes students' workplace, life and independence skills as well as continuing to build skills in English and mathematics so that students can use their knowledge in real-life situations.
- The Bridging the Gap project enables identified students to move into the world of work with support. This sustains them extremely well for their future success.
- Governors make a strong contribution to school improvement because they have a secure knowledge of the work of the school. They work closely with senior leaders to plan and develop new projects to improve the lives of students both in school and when they leave.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a number of lessons or parts of lessons. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at students' work during lessons and also reviewed samples of work books and files separately.
- Meetings or discussions were held with a group of students, with students informally around school, with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, a group of parents and a group of therapists and medical staff. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school across the day and looked at a range of documentation. These included the school's own self-assessment and development planning, data about students' progress and achievement, safeguarding information and behaviour logs and curriculum documents.
- Inspectors took into account the 32 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 27 staff questionnaires returned.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Claire Patton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- New Bridge School converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall. The academy has retained its original name since converting.
- In 2013 the directors, who are also the governors of the school, were successful in an application to sponsor a new all-age school in the local authority for pupils with autism spectrum conditions. The New Bridge Group also manages Horizon, a 19 to 25 provision for students with severe and profound learning difficulties. As a result New Bridge is converting to multi-academy status (New Bridge Multi Academy Trust) in March 2015.
- New Bridge School caters for students who all have a statement of special educational needs or education, care and health plans for a range of complex learning difficulties. The majority of students have autism spectrum conditions and/or severe learning difficulties. Smaller proportions of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties.
- Although the majority of students join the school at Year 7 there are admissions at other times, particularly at Year 11 and into the sixth form.
- A third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. About 20% of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy school is in receipt of Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Approximately two-thirds of students are boys.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision in Key Stages 3 and 4, but extended work experience placements are provided for Year 14 students and occasionally for Year 13 students at Royal Oldham Hospital through the Bridging the Gap project, which operates from the sixth-form learning centre.
- The school operates for 48 weeks in the year, providing holiday activities.
- Since becoming an academy the school continues to work with the local authority to provide leadership and management support to other schools.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and chair of the Special Schools Academies Trust Headteachers' Steering Group.
- The school holds a number of awards including the Leading Parent Partnership Award, Arts Mark Gold and Sports Mark Gold.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - developing the marking policy to help students understand how to improve their work and to plan next steps in learning
 - giving students time to follow up on improvements suggested in marking.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership to the school. He has high aspirations for what his students and staff can achieve so that morale is very high and aspirations are shared. All staff, led by a strong senior team, have a common purpose to ensure that students make the best possible progress they can in all areas of their development.
- Information about students' progress towards their targets is collected and analysed regularly by teachers, middle and senior leaders. This ensures that any student who is failing to make expected progress is quickly identified and action taken to get them back on track.
- Leaders ensure additional funding is used highly effectively to support disadvantaged students. They know the difference it makes and can evidence the impact of the funding, which ensures there are no gaps between the performance of disadvantaged students compared to other students.
- In its search for constant improvement, the school has introduced a recent programme to enable all teaching assistants to gain an award to demonstrate their skills in supporting learning.
- Teachers are very clear that the excellent performance management system contributes highly effectively to their development as outstanding teachers. The school has recently introduced the videoing of sample lessons to analyse classroom practice. Senior and subject leaders check on the quality of teaching through regular lesson observations, reviews of students' work and teachers' planning. Teachers are set targets that are clearly linked to priorities in school development planning, student achievement and their own professional development.
- The school works closely with other schools to check assessments of students' work. Partnership with a teaching school enables senior leaders to appoint unqualified staff and progress them through to qualified teacher status with excellent support from New Bridge staff.
- Pastoral support led by the highly effective pastoral leaders is exemplary. The care offered to students and the support and guidance of multi-disciplinary and behaviour teams ensure that students' personal development is outstanding. Partnerships with therapists and medical staff are strong. Together, there is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Students are able to access a full curriculum and enjoy success in school and on trips out. Pastoral support makes sure that strong relationships are fostered between students. The strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum ensure that there is no discrimination of any kind. Students develop a very good understanding of modern British society and learn strong moral values.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school's work. It is innovative and carefully thought out to ensure rich experiences for each and every student regardless of their needs and abilities. Students are provided with a range of creative learning opportunities tailored to individual's needs to ensure their academic and personal success and well-being. At Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form, students are provided with core subjects which prepare them well for future education, training or employment. Additionally, they can choose a pathway that matches their particular interests in performing arts, information and communication technology, sports or horticulture, which they can go on to practise in their future lives.
- Careers guidance very effectively supports older students to be aware of the choices they can make for their future lives. Parents are always fully involved in decision making and are very appreciative of the high-quality information and support the school provides to them.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Procedures are rigorous and staff are very well trained to identify students at risk of harm.
- The headteacher, his senior team and governing body have been visionary in developing new provisions to match the needs, abilities and aspirations of students. Although the school is now an academy, the team works closely with the local authority to set up extended and new provisions to meet the changing needs of students at both school age and after they leave. As a result of the very high regard the local authority has for New Bridge School, it has requested the school to provide leadership and management support to other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make a very strong contribution to the quality of education and care. They are very responsive to suggestions for development and are involved in new projects such as securing work placements in the council offices or supporting the bid to establish a new school. Governors ensure that they obtain the views of parents to support improvements.
 - They have a good understanding of student progress data and question areas seen to need attention. Governors ensure pay progression is linked to consistently good and outstanding performance. They

monitor additional funding for disadvantaged students to ensure it is meeting the needs of eligible students and that monies for new projects are spent wisely.

- The governing body fulfils all its statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Attitudes to learning are exemplary so that behaviour in classrooms ensures outstanding learning can take place. Occasional behaviour difficulties associated with students' special educational needs are managed exceptionally well so that they do not disrupt the learning of others.
- The strong relationships students and staff enjoy build self-esteem so that students learn to manage their own behaviour over time.
- Behaviour management is led extremely well to ensure a consistent approach so that students are clear what is expected of them.
- Students learn to respect their school and each other. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as by becoming 'buddies' who, for example, guide a visually impaired student round people in the corridor and remind fellow students of school rules such as 'no running' in the corridors.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well throughout the curriculum, in trips out, in a vast array of after-school and holiday clubs and through projects such as the recent super-learning day when students gained in-depth knowledge about Islam. Student voice is strong and it is evident that students are consulted through the student council, in assemblies and during pastoral sessions.
- Students are clear about the reward system, which they value because it helps them to know how they are doing in their work and in their personal development.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and students say that students are very safe in school and on trips out. Work-experience placements are risk assessed carefully and students are supported effectively to ensure their safety.
- Students say bullying is rare and if it occurs staff deal with it promptly. Students display a very secure understanding of cyber-bullying and how to stay safe in different situations. They have a sound knowledge about other forms of bullying and demonstrate a very mature moral code with a clear understanding of how bullying can have harmful effects on people.
- The school's policies, record-keeping and partnerships with other services and with parents are all excellent and make a strong contribution to safeguarding students in school and out in the community.
- Attendance has improved significantly and is now better than other similar schools. Almost all absences are due to medical reasons.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good with many examples of outstanding practice. This results in the outstanding progress students make during their time in school. Teachers are very skilled in using their subject knowledge to match the wide range of learning needs and abilities of the students so that all can make exceptional progress.
- Teachers challenge the most able to try harder work and lower-ability students are encouraged to try things for themselves.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught extremely well across the school in all subjects, establishing and building skills which help students move on to higher level work in different subjects. For example, in a computing lesson, students used hand-held computers to make pie and bar charts and prepare posters to sell cars, providing reinforcement of learning in both literacy and numeracy, as well as computing.
- Praise is used highly appropriately to encourage students onto harder and more independent work and to build students' confidence in what they can achieve. Support from skilled staff for students' personal development builds self-esteem and makes a strong contribution to their learning.
- Teaching assistants are deployed extremely well in lessons. They are skilled in encouraging independent work but also provide the excellent support necessary to ensure students can access the work set.

Teaching assistants are proud to have begun a programme to lead towards their own accreditation, with support from subject leaders, to develop skills and knowledge in their own subjects, such as ensuring the correct teaching of phonics – the names of letters and the sounds they make.

- Teachers and teaching assistants establish very positive relationships with students and know them and their learning needs well. They have extremely high expectation of their students and are passionate about their subjects, which they share with their students so that their learning experiences are exceptional. The shared love of a subject sometimes results in employment opportunities or in continuing learning after school. For instance, in a performing arts lesson, students were encouraged to rehearse and refine a dance programme to present at a special educational needs conference as well as it contributing to the award at GCSE level. The building of confidence and self-belief was very apparent when students took over control of the rehearsal for themselves.
- A marking policy and training for staff in its implementation have been recently introduced. Most marking of students' work is extremely good with clear suggestions for students to improve their work, but this is not yet consistent, and students are not always given time to follow up on suggestions made. A few teachers are not yet using the marking policy consistently well to assess students' learning to plan their next steps.
- Teachers' engagement with parents is outstanding so that parents feel well informed about what their children are learning and how to help them.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Almost all students start at the school with attainment that is below expected levels and, for about half of students, it is well below due to their special educational needs.
- Students quickly settle and begin to make rapid progress in all areas of their learning. Their prior learning is accurately assessed on arrival and their individual learning needs are identified and extremely well met. As a result students gain firm foundations in reading, writing and mathematics that enable them to make rapid progress. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students showed a secure knowledge of their tables, which they were then able to use in a partitioning exercise.
- The school's data and students' work in their books and files show that the early strides students make when they first join the school are sustained and built upon so that their progress is outstanding over time. By the time they move into the sixth form, students are able to use their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics in real-life situations. Older students use budgeting and marketing skills to set up enterprise projects, for example by making and selling hanging baskets and growing and selling fruit and vegetables.
- The most able students achieve a broader range of GCSEs at higher grades year-on-year, and these demonstrate the outstanding progress they make from low starting points. All students are able to gain external awards that reflect their individual abilities and interests. These are often gained through the specialist curriculum pathways linked to performing arts, sports, computing and horticulture. These pathways can often lead to employment opportunities when students leave the school and a much higher proportion of students move into employment than is typically seen from similar schools.
- Students with more severe disabilities and special educational needs are able to achieve awards that demonstrate their progress towards leading independent lives in the future. Therapists and medical staff work with class staff as highly effective teams to ensure these students are able to access learning in different situations. Communication skills are particularly well developed through consistent use of signs, symbols and technology aids as appropriate to meet individual needs.
- All groups of students achieve outstandingly well. Disadvantaged students achieve at least as well and often better than other students in the school and nationally because additional funding has been directed very effectively to ensure that there are no gaps in their learning in comparison to other students. Similarly, minority ethnic groups, the smaller number of girls and the smaller groups of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve outstandingly well from their starting points. The school ensures equal opportunities for all to succeed by providing a curriculum very well matched to their differing needs.
- Students' personal development is exceptional as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The rich curriculum and well-targeted support provide many opportunities within school and in the wider community for students to grow in confidence and become mature and articulate young people ready to take their place in the world.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Excellent leadership ensures that the diverse curriculum meets the very different needs of students extremely well and is delivered to the highest standards. The focus in the sixth form is on progress towards the best future destinations for each student when they leave New Bridge School.
- Quality of teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students continue to develop their English and mathematical skills, with a practical application to match their future needs. For the most able, activities are often linked to enterprise projects or, for lower-ability students, to everyday routines such as preparing and cooking meals. Additionally, all students study computing and living skills, all of which lead to external accreditation at appropriate levels.
- Students who have chosen the option pathways of sports, computing, arts and horticulture continue to follow these from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form. These can often lead to employment opportunities with, for example, several students becoming actors and others setting up their own businesses in computing or printing and design projects.
- The school does not make use of alternative college placements but most students follow a range of well-planned vocational courses such as manual trades, hair and beauty and catering in school. All of these vocational options create realistic opportunities for continuing study or for employment when students leave school. In addition, the school has developed the Bridging the Gap project to create extended work placements for identified students, some of whom may have been at risk of leaving the education system. These placements are monitored and supported closely by New Bridge staff.
- Personal and social development is strongly promoted, for instance through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and volunteering projects such as clearing church grounds. Students mature into remarkably confident young people ready to move into the world of work or on to continuing education.
- Students in the sixth form say that bullying is very rare and always dealt with extremely well. Students gain a good understanding of the impact of bullying and express strong British values about the need to care for and respect each other's differences.
- Relationships between students and with staff are excellent and support increasing independence and resilience. Support for those with more severe and profound learning difficulties is well judged to ensure they continue to make small steps of progress.
- Behaviour for learning is outstanding. Students say they feel very safe and are guided and supported well when they are in school or on work placements. Checks are rigorous to ensure they attend and benefit from the placements. Students are increasingly encouraged to be independent, for instance through travelling independently to placements.

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	138697
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	448941

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Williams
Headteacher	Graham Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2011
Telephone number	0161 8832401
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@newbridgeschool.net

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