

Trafford High School

Lydney Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 8RN

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. She has the backing and support of a strong, skilled, knowledgeable and well-informed management committee. Her staff team support her fully. There is a genuine culture for learning in evidence. As a result, the school has improved markedly since its recent restructuring.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the new headteacher took her position. Senior leaders check that the agreed policy for these aspects is followed. Middle leadership is developing to increase the focus on how consistently teachers apply agreed policy and practice.
- Pupils arrive at the school at various times during the year. Teachers ensure that pupils are assessed in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills. From their starting points, the majority of pupils make good or better progress, especially in English. The vast majority of pupils leaving after Year 11 attain GCSE accreditation and move on to further education.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good overall. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and are polite and respectful to staff and visitors. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- There have been improvements in overall attendance and leaders maintain close checks on pupils who are persistently absent. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced dramatically. However, the range of information on behaviour and attendance is not yet analysed in sufficient depth by leaders.
- Leaders and the management committee have overseen and supported an increase in external qualifications and awards for pupils. A further extension of specialist subject teaching would increase the opportunities for pupils at the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve leadership and management and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all leaders provide robust quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment to check that teachers consistently work in line with the agreed school policy
 - ensuring that school improvement planning includes the further broadening of pupils' learning opportunities and their increased access to additional external qualifications through specialist teaching and support
 - ensuring that information about pupils' attendance and behaviour is used more effectively to inform actions for school improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Inspirational leadership from the headteacher has resulted in the setting of a clear vision for staff and for new senior and middle leaders. The school has moved forward and is now good, following a number of staff changes due to a restructuring of the service. There is good capacity for the school to improve further.
- Staff and pupils have worked in partnership to create a vibrant school where there is a clear culture of learning and regular celebration of success. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to school life, as for example when making recommendations about the change in school name or the design of the school uniform. The new deputy headteacher, along with the staff team, is successfully promoting the British values of tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law through the curriculum. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Leaders have overseen improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance over the past year. They ensure that the management committee is briefed regularly about the levels of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence. However, analysis of the information gathered about attendance and behaviour is not deep enough to inform more precise actions for school improvement.
- There is a robust policy for the performance management of teachers, which is overseen and monitored by the management committee. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on a regular basis through 'drop-in' visits or formal observations. They provide supportive but challenging feedback. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their classroom practice and to partake in training to continually develop their skills. Support staff also benefit from performance management and training opportunities.
- Leaders have developed and introduced a clear system for tracking pupils' progress in different subjects and pupils' personal and social skills. On admission to the school, pupils are assessed with regard to their levels of ability in literacy, numeracy and emotional well-being. The vast majority of teachers and support staff make good use of this information to inform their lesson planning and support individual pupils, leading to good learning outcomes. All leaders need to ensure that all teachers and support staff are consistent in their application of agreed policy and procedures.
- The school's curriculum has been developed so that pupils now partake in separate physics, chemistry and biology lessons and achieve good GCSE outcomes. They benefit from specialist English literature and mathematics teaching. Teachers promote and reinforce pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation skills through different subjects. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and research a number of topics in personal, social and health education lessons. They engage enthusiastically in kickboxing sessions, table tennis and food technology lessons. Governors recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure that pupils also receive specialist teaching, for example in humanities, music and design technology.
- The partnerships established with local mainstream schools are good and improving. For example, the quality of information provided when pupils arrive at the school is good. As a result, the vast majority of pupils in key stage 3 make successful returns back into mainstream education.

- The school nurse is a regular visitor. She provides valued support and advice about health and well-being to pupils and parents. Other professionals, such as educational psychologists or education welfare officers, attend meetings or provide assessments of pupils when considering future placements or concerns about attendance. Pupils receive regular and helpful careers guidance.
- Parents who spoke to an inspector report that staff are very approachable and encourage their children to improve their attendance in school.

Governance of the school

- The management committee provides very effective support and challenge to leaders and is a strength of the school.
- Governors are very skilled and knowledgeable, particularly about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They are regular visitors to the school and partake in 'drop-in' visits to classrooms or work with senior staff when checking pupils' workbooks.
- Governors have ensured that school development planning is robust and that planned actions and their outcomes can be precisely measured.
- Governors have conducted an audit of their knowledge, skills and understanding. They have formed committees that meet about particular aspects of the school's work. For example, they scrutinise the impact of pupil premium funding in providing additional specialist teaching in science and literacy. Some of this funding has also been put towards some measured improvements in the attendance of targeted pupils.
- Governors ensure that leaders and teachers are accountable. Minutes of past meetings show that questions are raised about attendance, behaviour and academic outcomes. Governors oversee the performance management of the headteacher and consider teachers' requests to move through the salary threshold.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure through local authority audits that provide feedback on strengths and recommendations for improvements.
- Governors receive regular updated training, for example in safer recruitment practices or the 'Prevent' duty to recognise the potential signs of radicalisation of pupils. They ensure that staff also benefit from similar training.
- Staff who spoke to inspectors state that they recognise the impact and value of such training because it increases their awareness of possible safeguarding concerns. They are able to discuss any issues at daily briefings with the deputy headteacher and they know the referral procedures when reporting their concerns.
- There are robust and secure record-keeping systems. Staff are thoroughly checked prior to being appointed to the school.
- Arrangements for checking visitors into the school are effective and the premises are secure and safe.
- Relevant policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are regularly reviewed and updated by the management committee to meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Based on the school's rigorous school improvement systems, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved over the past year and is now good. Senior leaders have successfully introduced a coherent policy for teaching, learning and assessment alongside a system for checking pupils' abilities in literacy and numeracy. Leaders regularly visit lessons and look at pupils' workbooks to check on the progress they are making as a result of the teaching and support they receive.
- Staff teams ensure that their classrooms are welcoming and conducive to learning. They expect pupils to settle quickly to learning. Pupils' attitudes to, and engagement in, lessons is a real strength of the school's work, thus contributing significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The relationships established between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors say that they value the small-group settings because they receive close teaching and support which helps them to try hard in their work. Teachers and support staff work well with pupils who may have missed lessons. They quickly bring them up to date with what they might have missed so that they can join in with lessons.
- Teachers take account of pupils' abilities in reading, writing and spelling. They pitch resources and support sensitively to meet individual needs. With the least able pupils, support staff take time to recap on what the teacher has said to the whole class, for example when explaining the properties of different shapes in a geometry lesson. Able pupils are given the opportunity to extend and develop their writing through their independent dictionary or internet research skills. As a result, their extended writing in different subjects has improved. On occasion, teaching does not take full account of the reading levels of some pupils when referring to written texts which may not fully match their needs.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use questioning and follow-up explanations to ensure that pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of taught skills and concepts as, for example, in science when studying elements and symbols. They reinforce pupils' English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in different subjects when teaching about key words and subject-specific vocabulary.
- The school's agreed policy for the marking of work and feedback to pupils is followed mostly with consistency by the majority of teachers. As a result, pupils are able to recognise how well they have achieved against the set learning intentions. For example, in a physical education lesson, teaching focused on the correct grip for completing a backhand shot. Pupils were then able to practise and improve their performance.
- Occasionally, marking and feedback provided does not meet with the requirements of the school's agreed policy because it is not specific enough to state what a pupil has learned or what the next steps are for learning to improve.
- Very occasionally, where there is as yet no specialist teaching, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve at the levels of which they are capable.
- Pupils on 'step out' placements (temporarily attending the school with a view to returning full time to mainstream schools), are accommodated well so that they can continue with set work from their mainstream school. Staff provide good support as and when required.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they receive strong teaching and support from caring staff. As a result, they feel more confident and able to attend school, engaging well in lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate strong social skills, for example holding eye contact when talking to a visitor or shaking hands with confidence. They socialise extremely well at break and lunchtimes because the headteacher and her staff are ever-present. For example, pupils are well supported when providing snacks and drinks for their peers behind the serving counter!
- The pupils talk knowledgeably about how the school ensures that they stay safe. They appreciate the reasons why doors are secured so that strangers are unable to gain access to the building or classrooms. There are CCTV cameras placed strategically around the premises. They report no current concerns about bullying in school.
- Pupils know that the school ensures that they cannot access any inappropriate sites. They say that 'access is denied!' They have user names and passwords to access computers in school and they are clear about how to stay safe on the internet.
- Assemblies are held by speakers who help motivate pupils, for example on topics such as 'What it is like to be an unwanted child'. Drugs and alcohol workshops are provided to educate pupils of the dangers of addiction.
- Pupils benefit from daily one-to-one mentoring to talk through any personal issues or concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their starting points on arrival to the school, the majority of pupils now make expected or better progress, especially in reading. Pupils demonstrate an ability to work out number problems in their heads and provide reasons for their thinking in mathematics lessons. Most pupils, including those who are able or have particular learning needs, and who leave the school at the end of Year 11, achieve at least one GCSE grade. Many achieve up to five GCSEs including English, mathematics and preparation for working life (PFWL). Up to seven GCSE courses are on offer, including psychology, information technology and art and design.
- The vast majority of pupils who come to the school in key stage 3 return successfully to mainstream education. Similarly, longer-term pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 move on successfully to further education placements and sustain their placements.
- There has been an increase in the number and types of qualifications and external awards provided for pupils. Those pupils unable to access GCSE accreditation achieve well when at entry level or in other courses, such as in functional skills. The prudent use of pupil premium funding has benefited pupils through an increase in the range of qualifications available.

- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their abilities and confidence in writing for a range of purposes. For example, pupils wrote with great imagination when talking about how happy events, like marriage, can be stressful.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit greatly from the teaching and support they receive in developing their reading. Less able readers demonstrate good skills when decoding new words. Pupils who read to inspectors say they are now more confident because of the close support they receive from staff. The most able readers read with fluency and confidence and are able to answer increasingly complex questions about what they have read. Improvements in pupils' reading outcomes have also been well supported by the effective use of pupil premium funding.
- Pupils achieve well in other areas of the curriculum. For instance, male and female pupils work collaboratively when engaging in cookery lessons or when taking turns during kickboxing sessions. They read and follow recipes and demonstrate increased independence in skills for living.

School details

Unique reference number	134046
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10019817

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Dawn Farrent
Executive headteacher	Lynda Thompson
Telephone number	0161 912 1479
Website	http://traffordalternativeeducation.co.uk/cms
Email address	lynda.thompson@trafford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. There is an equal mix of boys and girls.
- The school provides mostly for pupils who experience social, mental and emotional health needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium changes according to intake over time. The school does, however, receive pupil premium funding, but this is backdated.
- The school provides education for short-stay pupils in key stage 3 who may have been excluded from their mainstream schools within the Trafford area. Some of these pupils are on 'step out' programmes but are still on the roll of their mainstream schools. There is also longer-term provision for pupils who arrive during key stage 4. The school can admit up to 42 pupils on to its roll.

- The school provides the means by which pupils can be assessed to see whether or not a special school placement might be required. Pupils are also assessed for education, health and care plans (EHCs).
- A small number of pupils who are looked after are on the school's roll but attend lessons off-site provided by Trafford's virtual school.
- The school has undergone a restructuring process within the context of Trafford's alternative education service. There have been a number of staffing changes, including the appointment of an executive headteacher who also has responsibility for Trafford's medical pupil referral unit. The headteacher of the Trafford virtual school provides quality assurance for attendance and behaviour over both sites.
- The school has productive links within the secondary school association in Trafford and has just become a member of the Learning Alliance partnership. Staff work in partnership with mainstream school staff to meet the needs of pupils referred to the school or who are returning to mainstream education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes in the school. They observed a range of different subjects and activities.
- Inspectors met with small groups of pupils to hear their views about the school. They listened to pupils read and talk about their reading experiences.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with pupils during morning break and lunchtime as well as observing behaviour and arrangements for their safety and well-being around school. There were no responses from pupils on the online questionnaire survey for pupils.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, two members of the management committee, a local authority officer and the school nurse.
- There were insufficient responses from Parent View (the online site for parents to record their views about the school), but there was one response on the texting service provided for parents. An inspector conducted telephone calls with two parents of pupils at the school.
- Inspectors took account of responses by staff on the online questionnaire as well as a survey of staff views conducted by the headteacher earlier in the term.
- A range of documents was considered, including: the school's self-review document, the school improvement plan, a range of school policies, including for teaching, learning and assessment and performance management of staff. Inspectors also scrutinised management committee reports and recent external reports about the school. Information about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance was looked at, as well as their workbooks.

Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Hollister

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