

Launchpad Centre

College Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 1UH

Inspection dates

1–2 March 2017

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and leadership team have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. This is now a good school with the capacity to improve further. Staff team members are positive and mutually supportive.
- Despite facing barriers to their learning, most pupils make expected or better progress from their starting points. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve high grades in their GCSE courses before moving on to sixth-form college to complete A-level courses.
- Many pupils in key stage 3 improve their literacy skills and emotional well-being to ensure a successful return to mainstream education.
- Leaders have conducted effective monitoring procedures so the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across each of the centres, and at the alternative providers.
- Further work is needed to ensure that all teachers adhere to the agreed school policy for checking pupils' work and providing feedback. The most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, particularly in mathematics lessons in the key stage 3 and 4 centres.
- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and conduct themselves well around each of the centres and when attending alternative provision. Occasionally, one or two pupils disengage from lessons, thus slowing the pace at which they learn. Pupils surveyed said that they feel safe in school. Staff supervise pupils well across the centres.
- The management committee includes experienced and knowledgeable members. They hold leaders to account and provide good support to ensure school improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further so that pupils achieve their full potential, by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan with greater effect to meet the needs of the most able pupils, especially in mathematics
 - ensuring that teaching and support staff plan with greater effect to meet the needs of the few pupils who absent themselves from lessons without permission
 - ensuring that all teachers adhere to the agreed school policy for marking and feedback when checking pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- As a result of the headteacher's drive, persistence and strong organisational and staff management skills, the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed sufficiently well for the school to become good. There is high staff morale and good capacity for the school to improve further.
- The headteacher has established strong systems, policies and procedures across each of the centres and in the coordination of alternative provision. There is now a consistency in the way heads of centres and of alternative provision address school improvement planning and then follow up agreed actions to achieve positive outcomes. The local authority is supporting the management committee to now formalise the roles and responsibilities of this leadership team.
- Across each of the centres and in two of the alternative provider settings an inspector visited, a calm atmosphere prevails because staff expect pupils to focus on learning. Pupils respond positively to these expectations. There are occasions, especially if one of the centres has recently taken in new referrals, when pupils occasionally disengage from learning and absent themselves from lessons.
- Teachers are held to account by leaders and the management committee through good appraisal and capability procedures. Leaders conduct lesson observations and check pupils' workbooks to ensure that teachers use assessment information appropriately to plan their lessons. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection, leading to positive learning outcomes. The pupil premium funding is used well to enable staff to accurately assess disadvantaged pupils who require additional support or challenge in literacy, including those disadvantaged pupils who are the most able. Additional special educational needs funding has been used to improve outcomes in reading and writing for less-able pupils. There is still work to be done to ensure that all teachers consistently follow the school's agreed policy for marking and feedback. Occasionally, the most able pupils do not receive work that is sufficiently challenging, for example in mathematics in the key stage 3 and key stage 4 centres.
- School leaders ensure that improvement planning enables teaching and support staff to access appropriate professional development to enhance the work they do in lessons. Heads of each centre keep records of any training completed when they report to the management committee about the impact of continuing professional development on school improvement. Teachers have recently benefited professionally from involvement in developing the school's procedures for assessing pupils on entry to the school, through a piloting exercise in one of the centres.
- The curriculum across all of the centres is broad, balanced and enriching. Pupils benefit from lessons in a range of subjects, many of which lead to external accreditation. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) enables pupils to discuss issues relating to sex and relationships or drugs and alcohol issues. Out-of-school activities provide enrichment, for example, when pupils attend residential trips or themed events, such as a Macmillan's Cancer Support coffee morning. Such events

contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of the British values of democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and respect.

- Partnerships established with the local authority's secondary mainstream headteachers are a strength of the school's work. There are panel meetings held on an agreed basis to enable admissions of pupils to the Launchpad Centre or, indeed, to enable a return for pupils to a mainstream setting.
- Partnership working with parents is good. They value the work of the school and its impact on their children's learning and emotional well-being.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good because:
 - The management committee is well informed about the school's work through detailed and evaluative reports from the headteacher and heads of centre and alternative provision.
 - Governors have overseen the action plan that arose from the previous inspection with good effect.
 - The management committee has representation from local primary and, in particular, secondary mainstream school headteachers and deputy headteachers, so that it is well informed about place funding for the school. The committee manages the school's funds, including those for special educational needs to support school improvement actions and the effective use of pupil premium funding in support of disadvantaged pupils. Governors know that these pupils are making progress that is similar to, and sometimes better than, that of their peers from their starting points.
 - Governors hold teachers and the headteacher to account. They back leaders if there is a need to support teachers through capability procedures or further professional development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good across each of the centres and in the alternative provider settings. Leaders ensure that there is close monitoring of pupils' attendance, behaviour, safety and learning. Alternative providers ensure that there is daily feedback, for example on attendance, to learning mentors who are deployed well to follow up any concerns.
- Governors and staff have received updated training, including in safeguarding, safer recruitment, the 'Prevent' duty and Channel training (to address any concerns that pupils might be in danger of radicalisation). There is a named governor for safeguarding.
- There is a range of risk assessments, for example, when pupils go off site or when they attend alternative provision.
- Pupils take responsibility for their own safety and that of others across each of the centres and when attending alternative provision.

- The single central record meets requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, due to the consistent approaches taken by leaders to monitor the work of teachers and support staff in lessons. Information is used to inform further professional development or resultant staff meetings.
- Classrooms, including those in alternative provision, are warm, welcoming and contain displays of pupils' work, which is clearly valued. Teachers, alternative providers and support staff work collaboratively to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. Assessment information acquired about pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy, and about their emotional well-being, when pupils first enter the school, is used well to inform plans for teaching and support. These strengths ensure that new arrivals are given suitable work, which encourages them to have good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to develop confidence in their reading, writing and mathematical skills across different subjects, for example in science and personal, health and social education. Good interventions are provided by support staff to encourage pupils to practise and improve their reading and comprehension skills. Consequently, they become more confident learning in other lessons.
- Most teachers make good use of the school's agreed marking and feedback policy so that pupils know what they have achieved and what next steps are needed for them to improve. Pupils are encouraged to provide written responses about their work. There is still some inconsistency in terms of staff's use and application of the agreed policy in the key stage 3 and 4 centres.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge when using explanations and follow-up questioning to engage pupils in their learning. Teachers often challenge the most able pupils to achieve at higher levels, for example when studying biomass and the food chain in science or when analysing and discussing pieces of text from set books. Occasionally, this level of challenge for the most able is not evident in the key stage 3 and 4 centres, for example when pupils are asked to complete similar tasks to their peers without having the chance to extend their problem-solving or reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Most-able pupils have opportunities to access additional lessons, for example in science. They can opt to study additional courses or units of work. Less-able pupils receive strong support so that they develop their skills in reading and mathematics.
- Older pupils engage with interest in motor mechanics or food technology sessions because alternative providers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their areas of expertise. Pupils value the chance to complete units of work which enable them to keep track of their progress.
- Teachers and support staff promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well through the curriculum and additional activities, such as music or boxing. Sex education is sensitively and skilfully taught so that pupils contribute well to lessons and demonstrate a good insight into related issues.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils surveyed said that they value the support they receive from staff as soon as they arrive at the school. Pupils' attitudes in lessons and their engagement in work are good because they appreciate the small classes and attention they receive. They said that they begin to attempt new work with greater confidence.
- Pupils' personal, social and behavioural needs are assessed on entry to the school. As a result, staff develop profiles which enable them to set personal targets for pupils. Pupils surveyed stated that they benefit from their time in school in terms of their emotional well-being.
- Staff are sensitive to the physical and health needs of pupils and ensure that they can learn about how to keep themselves safe via lessons on sex and relationships, drugs and alcohol abuse and internet safety. Lessons in physical education and outdoor pursuits experiences enhance pupils' physical well-being.
- The vast majority of pupils surveyed stated that there is little or no bullying and that they feel safe in school and when attending alternative provision. They stated that they know how to keep safe on the internet. Pupils showed great sensitivity when discussing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in and out of class is good. They take responsibility for their actions and care for their surroundings. This applies in each of the centres and when pupils attend alternative provision. Occasionally, new pupils take a little time in settling to learning because they absent themselves from lessons. As a result, for a while they do not make the same progress from their starting points as their peers.
- Pupils' attendance has often been very low in their predecessor schools. Most pupils improve their attendance dramatically following admission to the school. There have been slight improvements in overall attendance since the previous inspection, due to the positive impact of interventions by learning mentors in partnership with the education welfare service and parents.
- School and alternative provision records indicate that fixed-term exclusions have reduced since the previous inspection and that incidents in school and alternative provision have also reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils who arrive at each of the centres have attainment that is lower than expected for their age in English, mathematics and other subjects. However, most pupils who come into the key stage 3 centre improve their reading and comprehension scores and develop sufficient confidence to make a successful return to a mainstream

school.

- Most pupils across the centres, including those who are disadvantaged, make expected or better than expected progress from their starting points in English and mathematics, particularly in English. The same applies to pupils' progress in science, information communication technology (ICT) and other subjects in which there is accreditation, for example in vocational subjects, such as food technology or motor mechanics. The standard of pupils' art work is exceptional, especially in the Tuition Centre and in the key stage 4 centre.
- Most pupils leaving at the end of Year 11 go on to further education, employment or training, many to sixth-form college. They receive strong careers education, guidance and support from an external adviser, as well as through careers education lessons. All pupils who have been attending alternative provision leave with at least one recognised external qualification. Pupils attending alternative provision have the opportunity, through sensitive guidance and support, to access successfully a very wide range of accreditation, which reflects well upon the school's equal opportunities policy. One or two pupils overcome immense barriers to their learning and attendance to serve successful apprenticeships.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics.
- Less-able pupils respond well to support provided to achieve Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) units in mathematics or to improve their reading accuracy and comprehension scores. Some pupils who arrive as non-readers develop their reading fluency and self-confidence, due to the good quality of support they receive.
- Pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, especially in science, mathematics and PSHCE lessons. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and to develop their confidence to read aloud and take turns in lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils often make better than expected progress from their starting points. The disadvantaged most-able pupils do not always have the opportunity to extend their reasoning skills in mathematics to achieve at even higher levels. Their mathematics learning targets are not as challenging as they could be.
- It is not possible to compare the overall progress made by pupils at the school against national figures because of variations in pupil numbers and their ability levels throughout any given year.

School details

Unique reference number	132033
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	10024119

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	128
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Councillor Jeanette Banks
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Clayton
Telephone number	01744 673351
Website	paceandlaunchpad.sthelens.gov.uk/governance/
Email address	deniseclayton@sthelens.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Launchpad Centre is part of St Helens local authority's alternative provision service.
- The school operates from three sites, the key stage 3 pupil referral unit (PRU), the key stage 4 PRU and the Tuition Centre, which relocated to the Beacon Building after the previous inspection.
- The pupils who attend the PRU centres are at risk of permanent exclusion and have a range of learning and behavioural needs, including attendance difficulties.
- The school directly commissions five alternative providers, these being: Aspire, Building Futures, Instant Training (construction), Instant Training (hair and beauty) and MPH Training.

- The key stage 3 and 4 centres are linked with the local authority's nine secondary high schools. At key stage 3, pupils attend some or all of the time and are on the roll of the centre and that of their mainstream school. Many return to mainstream education following time at the centre.
- A number of key stage 4 pupils follow courses with alternative providers for some or all of the time.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Approximately half the pupils attending the Launchpad Centre are disadvantaged and in receipt of pupil premium funding.
- Some pupils are being assessed for education, health and care plans.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited most teachers and classes in each of the centres. They observed a range of different subjects and activities. An inspector visited two of the alternative providers.
- Inspectors met informally with pupils to hear their views about the school; inspectors listened to pupils read during one-to-one sessions or when in lessons.
- Inspectors took account of a number of responses from pupils on the online questionnaire survey for pupils. These were analysed to find their views about the school.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the management committee and a local authority officer. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents to record their views about the school, to obtain information. An inspector took account of parents' texts, cards sent into school and letters when considering parental views.
- Inspectors took account of a number of responses by staff to the online questionnaire.
- A range of documents was considered, including the school's and heads of centres' self-review documents; the school improvement plan; a number of school policies, including for the appraisal of staff; 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

Michael Platt

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017