

Break Through

121 Nuxley Road, Belverdere, Bexley, DA17 5JX

Inspection dates

18–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness

Achievement of pupils

Quality of teaching

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Require improvement

3

3

3

2

3

Summary of key findings

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is not consistently good. The more able students, in particular, do not always produce work at the standard of which they are capable.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to study science and information and communication technology (ICT) to the required level.
- A small number of students do not make the progress of which they are capable because of persistent absence.
- The tasks and activities provided for students do not always provide a sufficient level of challenge to extend their learning.
- The proprietors' evaluation of how well the school is doing fails to make good links between actions taken and the outcomes for students.
- The proprietors' and leaders' actions have not had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and the achievement of some students.

The school has the following strengths

- Students are safe in school and the staff have a good understanding of their individual strengths and needs.
- Students enjoy school; their behaviour and attitudes to learning improve rapidly.
- Students have good opportunities to achieve recognised qualifications in English and mathematics and in a range of life skills. A number have achieved Level 1 functional skills awards during their first year in the school.
- The quality of relationships and respect between students and staff are good. As a result, students respond positively to the learning activities provided for them.
- The proprietors, centre manager and staff have a shared vision and high expectations of how students can be motivated to improve their life chances.
- The proprietors are actively involved in the daily life of the school and support the staff well with the management of students' behaviour.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by five members of staff. He also observed parts of a number of one-to-one tuition sessions.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, the centre manager and with individual members of staff. Individual meetings were also held with three students and telephone conversations were held with the parents and carers of four students.
- A number of school policies, procedures and records were scrutinised, together with samples of students' work across a range of subjects.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Break Through is a day special school located in the Belvedere area of the London Borough of Bexley.
- It is registered to provide education for up to 15 boys and girls aged from 11 to 17 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Students have typically been permanently excluded from placing schools or have refused to attend school. A number have been out of school for significant periods before placement at Break Through.
- There are currently 13 students on roll, four of whom attend part-time. Eight students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Part-time students remain on the roll of their placing school or the local authority Pathways Short Stay School.
- The school aims to ensure that 'every young person should experience a broad, coherent curriculum that is focused on their individual needs and is designed to develop skills for learning, life and work'.
- The school arranges work-experience placements for individual students with selected local employers through the local education business partnership.
- This is the school's first inspection since its registration as an independent school in August 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so there is a sufficient level of challenge in activities:
 - for each student in each teaching group across all subjects
 - in particular, for more-able students preparing for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- Provide further training to ensure that all staff know how to:
 - assess accurately the standard which each student is achieving in work completed
 - plan tasks and activities that build on each student's current level of knowledge and understanding.
- Improve arrangements for the teaching of science and ICT for all students by:
 - providing specialist lessons in both subjects
 - employing specialist staff to lead the development of teaching and learning in both subjects.
- Improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Improve the impact of the school's review of how well it is doing by assessing the extent to which planned actions result in improved outcomes for students, across all areas of learning and personal development.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because not all students are consistently making the progress of which they are capable. A small number do not make sufficient progress because of their persistent absence and external factors which affect their emotional well-being.
- Arrangements for the grouping of students, limited access to specialist staff and subjects, and activities which are not always sufficiently challenging, prevent the more able students from making the rates of progress of which they are capable.
- The quality of students' achievements is restricted by the limited range of subjects which they study. Students do not study science and ICT to GCSE level because of recent difficulties with the recruitment of specialist staff.
- Before entering the school, all students have experienced disruption and gaps in their education. As a result, they are achieving at levels below those expected for their age. Once they settle into the expectations of the school, many students make more rapid progress and so begin to make up lost ground.
- Students' achievement in English and mathematics is mostly good. A number of them have gained Level 1 accreditations in functional skills English and mathematics. Some are now working successfully towards Level 2 awards.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 have entered for GCSE examinations in mathematics and, in Year 11, GCSE English. Evidence from their previous work indicates that they are on track to achieve foundation level passes.
- Individual students have achieved bronze and silver awards through the ASDAN award scheme (Award Scheme Development and Assessment Network), which demonstrates their ability to create presentations to a good standard. As the school has only been registered as an independent school for one year, there is no evidence of trends in students' progress over time.
- Students with a statement of special educational needs mostly make good progress in English and mathematics, and work successfully towards the targets set for them.
- Group reading sessions have a positive impact on students' willingness to read aloud and to follow the plot of a story. As a result, students are beginning to apply their reading and writing skills across a range of subjects. One student recently had a poem published in an anthology of young people's writing.

Quality of teaching

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because the tasks and activities provided for students to complete do not challenge them consistently to give of their best and to build successfully on their previous achievement. Too often, students of different ages and abilities are occupied with learning activities which are not at the right level, even though some can complete them easily.
- The staff do not have a sufficient understanding of how to assess the precise levels of students' previous work or how to match the tasks they set to these levels. As a result, more-able students are not given the chance to achieve the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Writing tasks are variable in the demands they make on students. Too often, the written answers required are brief and tasks do not challenge students to write in detail and accurately.
- Some aspects of students' work in English and mathematics are assessed using effective online tests which help to identify the next stage in learning required by each student. This is followed up appropriately with one-to-one tutor sessions in which individual students work on their areas of identified weakness. However, regular classwork is not assessed with the same precision and in the knowledge of national standards; as a result, students' responses do not build accurately on their previous work.

- Students arrive at the school having lost their motivation and their willingness to fully engage in learning. Staff quickly build positive relationships, working with patience and persistence, so improving students' attitudes to school and learning.
- Students take an active part in learning. Teachers' questioning is mostly well focused on the objectives set for the lesson. Students' oral responses are often brief and underdeveloped, but they respond with respect and make a clear effort to demonstrate their understanding. For example, in a music lesson, all students contributed to the writing of the lyrics for a song, maintaining their good behaviour and attention for a sustained period. The planned sequence of activities allowed the students to develop their ideas systematically and creatively.
- The staff use a range of imaginative tasks and activities to make sure that students extend their knowledge and understanding. For example, students showed a good understanding of the processes of physical and chemical weathering as a result of fieldwork undertaken in the local area.
- Teachers take account of the targets in students' statements of special educational needs, particularly those related to students' personal development and behaviour. They are successful in helping students improve their attitudes to learning and their willingness to take part in lessons.
- Additional members of staff are present in most lessons. These adults help students to retain their focus on their learning, enabling them to understand the tasks set and encouraging them to complete their work diligently.
- Students in Year 11 have the opportunity to take part in work experience with local employers. Decisions are based on the readiness of individual students and their interest in particular careers. Recent examples have been very successful and have contributed to students' desire to move on to a college placement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

- The behaviour of students is good, as shown by their concentration and involvement in lessons. The staff are skilled and successful in helping disaffected students re-enter school and take an interest in their work. They demonstrate patience and good humour in their language and manner, together with clear expectations about what is acceptable behaviour.
- A daily 'responsibilities' session provides an effective focus on individual and group targets for the day. These targets are displayed for all to see and are reviewed by the whole group at the end of the day. Students take their individual targets seriously and reflect positively on the extent to which they have achieved them.
- The attendance of the majority of students is good and a significant improvement on their attendance at previous schools. The staff, including the proprietors, work extremely hard to improve attendance, maintaining continuous direct contact with students' families. Despite this positive action, a small number of students are persistent absentees.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust. All the required checks on the suitability of staff are completed diligently, the staff are appropriately trained in child protection and first aid policies for the management of behaviour are implemented consistently. Appropriate steps have been taken to deal robustly with any incidents of attempted bullying; as a result, students state that they feel safe and enjoy school.
- The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Students have regular opportunities to reflect on their personal development and to plan how they will meet their personal targets. As a result, they develop self-confidence and the ability to manage frustration and anger.
- As part of their studies for the ASDAN award, students enjoyed a successful visit to the Houses of Parliament, learning about the role of public institutions. They also develop their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens, for example, through the study of criminal law and the role of services in the local community such as the fire service and the Red

Cross.

- Students take part in a variety of activities to raise money for charities and act as volunteers in charitable activities organised by a local church.
- A number of activities, including the regular review of current affairs, discussion about the impact of migration, celebration of Black History Month, and multi-faith themes in the ASDAN programme, provide students with opportunities to develop understanding and respect for cultural diversity in the wider community.
- The proprietors have produced a clear statement which ensures that any controversial political issues are addressed in a balanced and non-partisan manner.

Leadership and management

Require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because there is insufficient balance in the range of academic learning opportunities for students and they do not consistently achieve the standards of which they are capable. In particular, the arrangements for teaching science and ICT are not sufficiently rigorous as a result of recent difficulties in recruiting staff.
- The proprietors, because of their daily involvement in the work of the school, have a good understanding of the characteristics and needs of each student. Their evaluation of the work of the school provides a clear description of the range of actions they have taken to improve provision. However, it does not provide sufficient analysis of the impact of these actions on the outcomes achieved by students.
- The school's leaders and managers have ensured that students who have often missed much of their previous education regain their confidence and make progress with their learning. However, the attendance of a minority of students is not consistently good and not all students benefit from the learning opportunities provided.
- The school's leaders, including the proprietors, demonstrate high expectations of what can be achieved in the personal development of students. They, together with the staff, work tirelessly to ensure that students with previously troubled experiences of education are able to respond positively and make rapid improvements in their attitudes and behaviour.
- The proprietors work continuously with the centre manager to create a positive climate for learning in which the staff are able to focus on building effective relationships with students and motivating them to succeed. They are developing their understanding of appraisal processes. All members of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire are proud to work at the school.
- Those parents spoken with during the inspection were pleased with the way in which the staff have encouraged and supported their children in making an effective return to school, with improved attendance and behaviour. Students state that they are making good progress with their learning and they recognise how much their attitudes to learning have improved since joining the school.
- The school's leaders know how well students behave in lessons and recognise their improved attendance and willingness to take part in school activities. They undertake regular supervisions with staff and work with them to manage their performance. However, staff have received too little training to enable them to understand the extent to which the work set is challenging enough so all students can fulfil their potential.
- The school is developing a working relationship with a local mainstream special school which could provide an appropriate independent external view of the quality of the school's work.
- The school's leaders and managers have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	140039
Inspection number	443027
DfE registration number	303/6001

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–17 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietors	Susanne Jones and Lorraine Wetherilt
Head of Centre	Jamie O'Malley
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,650 to £20,475
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