

Three Bridges

East Hill, Blackwater, Truro, Cornwall, TR4 8EG

Inspection dates

21–23 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher has established a purposeful and harmonious learning culture. She sets high expectations for staff and pupils so that high standards are maintained in all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils are well cared for and nurtured through individual support within a safe and calm environment. They settle well, develop a secure trust in the adults around them and are happy to attend school.
- Senior leaders have developed an appropriate curriculum. They have increased the focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy so that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Many pupils are working towards recognised accreditation and independence in a range of life skills.
- The school works very closely with parents to support their children. Parents are highly appreciative of all that the headteacher and her staff do to ensure the safety and academic and personal development of their children.
- Regular personal, social and health education lessons build pupils' self-esteem and an increased understanding of positive relationships and of how to keep safe.
- Pupils are supported extremely well to manage their behaviour and to recognise when they need help. They have learned coping strategies, with the help of staff, so that disruptive behaviour is rare. Respect and tolerance are the hallmark of all relationships within the school.
- Governors meet regularly and have specific areas of responsibility for the school. They work closely with leaders to support them in all aspects of their work so that pupils have a positive experience of school.
- Governors and leaders have worked hard to ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Learning support staff have been trained well but would appreciate further opportunities to train in areas related to pupils' learning and behaviour needs.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that staff have further opportunities to train in specialist areas to support pupils more precisely with their learning and in managing their own behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher has established a strong culture of high standards and expectations. As a result, pupils settle well and are keen to attend school. They feel secure and are able to make good progress from their starting points in their academic work and personal development.
- The school is a positive, safe environment. Senior leaders plan well so that consistent support from a range of staff enables pupils to develop a sense of trust in the adults around them.
- Pupils enjoy the calm and begin to thrive. Staff resilience and patience help pupils to develop a sense of self-worth within a purposeful learning environment.
- The strong relationships and cohesive team spirit sustain a sense of tolerance and respect for all within the school. Pupils develop increasing spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness during their time in the school.
- The curriculum is well adapted to pupils' individual learning needs. It includes a range of subjects to build pupils' life skills and to teach independence. Pupils learn how to learn and, as a result, can work towards accreditations and appropriate choices for their future.
- School leaders monitor the quality of teaching effectively to ensure that teaching is typically strong. Teachers and learning support assistants are given regular useful feedback on their teaching. Staff are appreciative of the approach to professional development. They would appreciate further training in areas related to pupils' specific learning and development needs.
- Leaders ensure that, on arrival in the school, pupils have a thorough assessment, undertaken over a period of time, to identify their specific learning needs. Information on pupils' progress from assessments and discussions between staff is used to plan effective teaching. It is also used to develop pupils' next steps and has resulted in improvements in their learning and overall achievements.
- Leaders monitor the behaviour of pupils rigorously. Clear procedures to reduce behavioural and emotional upsets are included in pupils' behaviour management plans. Staff know how to manage pupils well. Individual education plans show that, over time, incidents reduce in number and severity. In addition, leaders tackle any discriminatory behaviour or use of inappropriate language effectively.
- Provision for pupils to gain an understanding of equality and diversity is good. Pupils are taught to respect others in line with the Equality Act. As a result, bullying is rare and handled well by staff when it does occur.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain through the effective personal, social and health education lessons and citizenship programme. The lessons enable pupils to make good decisions and choices for their well-being and safety.
- When they are ready, pupils have specialist careers guidance for a wide range of vocational courses and apprenticeships. As a result, they can make informed choices about the next stage of their education.

Governance

- The proprietor and governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Any identified weaknesses result in effective actions by the proprietor and school leaders so that high standards are maintained.
- Governors regularly visit the school to keep up to date with the developments in the school and the progress and personal development of the pupils.
- Members of the governing body provide regular support and guidance for the headteacher and staff. Regular liaison and reporting to the governors ensure that they are kept up to date and can be instrumental in supporting staff and pupils.
- The governors hold the headteacher to account for the academic and personal development of the pupils. Support is provided to ensure that the specific needs of the pupils are at the centre of the school's work at all times.
- The proprietor ensures that finances are used suitably to maintain appropriate numbers of staff and that they have the resources they need.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy with information for staff and parents that meets statutory requirements and the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The policy is published on the school's website and is available to parents in hard copy on request.
- The designated safeguarding lead is trained to the required level. All staff are trained appropriately and are kept up to date and informed of the latest guidance and requirements in all aspects of safeguarding.
- The school has a strong culture of safety and of safeguarding pupils. Leaders and staff are highly aware of their responsibility to safeguard pupils. Staff know the procedures to follow in the event of any concerns raised by a pupil or a member of staff.
- E-safety, how to keep safe and how to avoid extremism or radicalisation are taught well through the curriculum.
- Rigorous safer recruitment procedures are followed at all times to check the suitability of staff to work with children. All checks are recorded on the single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- On each pupil's arrival in the school, their learning and developmental needs are securely and accurately identified. Assessments identify any gaps in pupils' basic literacy and numeracy and their language and communication needs.
- A range of assessments is used to assess pupils' speech, language and communication levels so that all aspects of their learning are considered to establish correct starting points. Information is shared with teaching support staff so that they plan learning effectively.

- Carefully planned programmes of work include literacy, numeracy, humanities, science and life skills challenges to set pupils on course well for their personal and academic development.
- As part of their learning, pupils are effectively taught coping strategies for their autistic spectrum conditions and their communication and speech and language development, which help them to learn.
- Teaching staff set realistic expectations for the pupils and plan effectively so that pupils learn well.
- A range of topics in the personal, social and health education programme is explored to develop pupils' knowledge and awareness of the world around them and to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe.
- Teaching and support staff are adept at reinforcing learning. They work sensitively and effectively with pupils to ensure that they know what is expected from them to help them to maintain their focus. Teachers encourage pupils to focus well and make eye contact with those with whom they are working.
- When pupils are reluctant to work because of emotional upsets or setbacks, teachers help them to use coping strategies and then gently draw them back to their learning to ensure good progress.
- Pupils' progress is checked carefully against individual expectations, and teaching is adjusted to ensure that pupils are able to achieve the tasks set for them.
- Teachers regularly discuss and share information so that the teaching across the curriculum collectively supports the learning of individual pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The highest expectations of respect and tolerance for all set the parameters for strong relationships. There is a real sense of care and support for all staff and pupils.
- On arrival, pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and knowledge of how to be a successful learner are at very low levels. Many have not thrived in previous settings. The calm environment and supportive team effort in the school help pupils to relax and to settle in to the school. As they lose their fear of failure, pupils' self-esteem improves and they begin to thrive. Their attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem all improve.
- The patience, resilience and persistence of staff are exceptional and help pupils with the routines and expectations of the school. Staff nurture pupils' language and communication skills effectively. They help pupils to develop an awareness of how to deal with what they find particularly difficult. As a result, pupils cope well and their focus for managing tasks is improved.
- Pupils learn to stay safe through the positive work in personal, social and health education and citizenship. The school works particularly hard to ensure that pupils understand exploitative relationships. They also learn how to stay safe on the internet, including from cyberbullying.

- Bullying is rare. Pupils have an increasing understanding of equality and diversity. They accept each other and those who are different because a positive culture of respect is expected and maintained at all times.
- Staff meet regularly to ensure that they are up to date with information on pupils' welfare and well-being and work unstintingly to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to develop to their potential.
- In discussion, parents overwhelmingly praised the efforts of all staff and the leadership of the headteacher to ensure that their children are safe and well looked after and have opportunities to learn and make progress in their academic work and personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding and a strength of the school.
- Staff are well trained in behaviour management strategies for pupils' specific needs. As a result, they are confident and constructive in helping pupils to manage their behaviour.
- Emotional and behavioural incidents are more common in pupils' early stages in the school, often triggered by previous traumas. Staff implement behaviour management plans effectively. Over time, incidents reduce in frequency and in severity, and pupils' behaviour improves.
- The persistent focus of staff enables pupils to manage their own behaviour. This transforms pupils' ability to learn and is significant in building their confidence.
- Pupils settle extremely well, begin to enjoy learning and realise that they are able to learn. Staff support is exceptional in its unwavering persistence to help pupils learn how to develop behaviour coping strategies, which enhance their overall learning and sense of well-being.
- The vast majority of pupils report that they are happy in the school. For the majority of pupils, attendance has improved significantly compared to that in their previous settings. Attendance levels are high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils have well below expected levels of academic development for their age on arrival in the school. Many arrive with little enthusiasm for school or a programme of learning. Over time, pupils adapt to the routines and expectations of the school and begin to flourish because they are so well supported. They lose their fear of attending school and of learning.
- Pupils improve well in their basic numeracy and literacy and develop their communication and language skills. Their confidence in their good progress enables pupils to study a wider range of subjects and develop new learning skills. All pupils have improved their reading skills so that they can enjoy simple books, although many still need some support.
- Many make great strides in their communication and language development from their low starting points. They are able to express opinions and discuss current affairs and

topics in the news that are of particular interest to them and research topics on the internet.

- The most able pupils explore ideas in science and mathematics and are eager to learn more. They have succeeded in achieving good results in functional skills in English and mathematics.
- Individual pupils help with tasks in school, such as shopping online in preparation for cookery lessons or watering and weeding in the vegetable garden. They build independence and useful life skills under the supervision and guidance of support staff. They enjoy these aspects of school life.
- When they have established good routines of learning and are ready, those pupils who are most able prepare for national accreditation to suit their levels of ability. Results show that pupils are achieving in line with others nationally who have the same starting points.
- With helpful guidance and support, the most able pupils are helped to move on to appropriate courses in local further education colleges in Cornwall.

Sixth form provision

Good

- All of the independent school standards are met in relation to the sixth-form provision.
- Leaders set high expectations. They consistently support learners and improve provision, by reviewing individual programmes of work. They monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that it meets the needs of the students well.
- Impartial guidance ensures that students undertake programmes of study that enable them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Students have well below expected levels of attainment for their age. However, the great majority of students make strong progress from their starting points. Students are prepared well for the next stage of their education or training.
- Leaders ensure that teaching and support staff plan and manage individualised programmes of study well. Effective planning ensures that students manage their behaviour and learning effectively and prepares them well for the next stage of their education or training, if appropriate.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge students so that they make good progress across all aspects of their programmes of study. Students are helped to sustain their learning if their progress slows. The most able students are challenged and supported to take up relevant accreditation courses in, for example, English, mathematics or information technology. They complete their programmes of study, develop skills and independence and are able to move on to sustained training or an apprenticeship.
- Students develop personal, social and employability skills, including through high-quality non-qualification activities and work experience relevant to their needs. They are punctual and attendance is high.
- Students are safe and said that they feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

School details

Unique reference number	129252
DfE registration number	908/6095
Inspection number	10012928

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Spectrum
Chair	Mary Simpson
Headteacher	Kathleen Hampshire
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,818–£54,670
Telephone number	01872 561010
Website	www.3bridges.co.uk
Email address	3bridges@spectrumasd.org
Date of previous inspection	14–16 May 2013

Information about this school

- Three Bridges is a small special school on the outskirts of Truro. It is registered to provide education for boys and girls aged, 11–19 years, who are diagnosed as having autistic spectrum conditions.
- The school, which opened in 2005, is managed by the Devon and Cornwall Autistic Community Trust, Spectrum. In December 2014, a new headteacher was appointed. In January 2017, two new teachers were appointed to replace staff that had left.
- The school uses the services of specialist external professionals. The specialists visit the

school when required to provide one-to-one support for pupils as part of their individual education, health and care plans.

- The school is registered to take up to 10 students. Currently, there are 10 students on roll. No student attends part time. All the students currently are male.
- All students have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school aims to develop the confidence and self-esteem of each student in an environment and atmosphere that ensures that students are safe and happy.
- The headteacher is currently supported by a school improvement partner who spends two days a month in school, agreed by the governors.
- The governing body for the school reports to the board of trustees for the Spectrum group that owns the school.
- The website provides all the required information for parents.
- The school was last inspected in May 2013. All of the regulations were met except for one point in the complaints policy. This has been rectified, and the policy now meets requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in five lessons and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in different subjects. Meetings were held with the governing body, senior leaders, teaching staff, several parents and specialist external professionals.
- The inspector examined a number of school documents to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included the school's website, policies, information about pupils' progress and the school's evaluation of its own work.
- Records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were scrutinised.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View survey for these to be analysed.
- The inspector took account of six staff questionnaire responses and spoke with pupils.

Flora Bean, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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