

The Connected Hub

Tilbury House, Florence Place, Brighton, BN1 7GU

Inspection dates 8–9 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The very strong leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school has rectified the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection and continues to improve.
- Students now make significantly faster progress in English and mathematics.
- All students, including disadvantaged students, are very well supported.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers challenge students appropriately and relationships throughout the school between all staff and students are productive.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The students accept and abide by the school's behaviour expectations.
- Students' safety is a very high priority for all staff who work very hard to ensure that these vulnerable young people understand how to keep themselves safe and secure.
- The range of subjects available for students is good. Students can continue to study their option subjects from their previous schools as well as English, mathematics and science.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and their social development and emotional well-being improve significantly during their time at the school.
- All the school's leaders, including senior and middle leaders and the members of the management committee, are ambitious for the success of the students and committed to making improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement is not outstanding. Boys, especially White British boys, do less well than other groups.
- Teaching is not outstanding. Teachers do not do enough to help students develop the confidence to make progress on their own.
- Middle leaders are not as effective as they should be. They do not play the part they should in assessing the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons jointly with the headteacher, a one-to-one mentoring session and a 'drop everything and read' activity.
- The inspector met with students and members of the staff responsible for aspects of the school's work including subject leaders, learning mentors and the student attendance officer. She also met members of the school's management committee and the school improvement partner.
- The inspector spoke to the headteachers of three mainstream schools who had students referred to the school and visited students attending their beauty therapy placement.
- The inspector checked behaviour logs and observed students during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at students' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work from across the school. She also looked at student achievement data, 2014 examination results, school policies, the minutes of the management committee and evidence about the spending of additional funding.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for the results to be shown so the school's own parent survey was taken into account. Questionnaires from 11 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Jackie Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Connected Hub provides full-time education for 35 students in their final year of secondary school who are struggling to engage in education in a mainstream school. Many of the students had poor attendance and behaviour at their previous schools.
- Students attend The Connected Hub for a maximum of nine months. They follow agreed, individualised timetables which include English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education and catering. In addition, they have regular one-to-one mentoring sessions.
- About half the students receive some of their education from City College and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Students can also, where appropriate, continue GCSE option courses at their previous school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is more than double the national average.
- All of the students are designated as having special educational needs.
- At the time of the inspection, 85% of students were from White British backgrounds. The other students came from a variety of different minority ethnic groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students make good or better progress by:
 - developing the role of middle leaders, especially in monitoring the quality of teaching
 - giving students the confidence to work on their own
 - developing a curriculum which engages boys more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The very strong leadership of the headteacher has been fundamental in bringing about rapid improvements since the last inspection. As a result, students' academic achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and safety continue to improve.
- All staff are ambitious for the students. As a result, students successfully re-engage with their education during Year 11 and leave The Connected Hub well prepared to continue their education, training or employment.
- The school's view about its own performance is robust and accurate. It informs a realistic plan to bring about improvements that have measurable outcomes. As a result, provision for all students has improved significantly since the last inspection. Accurate judgements about the quality of teaching are verified through a quality assurance programme involving staff from similar and mainstream schools in the local authority.
- Middle leaders understand what students need to learn and ensure that the courses they follow are appropriate. However, they do not engage systematically in the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that all students make the progress they should.
- Training for staff is focused on the needs of the students and all staff have received training in supporting students who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, radicalism and involvement in gangs. In addition, staff attend subject meetings and training provided by the local authority for all teachers. This ensures that staff at The Connected Hub stay up to date with subject developments. The support given the school by the local authority is good.
- Systems for the management of staff performance are rigorous. Salary progression only occurs when merited by good performance and school leaders have taken robust action to challenge underperformance.
- The curriculum is broad and personalised to meet the needs of each student. As a result, students are able to participate in a good balance of academic and work-related courses. Initiatives, such as theme of the week, ensure that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. During the inspection the theme was veganism; other themes have been remembrance and Black History Month.
- The school is aware that the curriculum does not engage boys sufficiently, and that this is impeding their progress.
- Students participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as 'poetry slam' and museum and theatre visits. These activities are important for students, many of whom have not had these opportunities before. Students also work in the local community through work experience in local nurseries and primary schools.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good and significantly helps their emotional well-being and social development.
- Leaders effectively ensure that there is no discrimination; all students can participate in all the activities provided by the school. The school uses the additional funding for disadvantaged students to ensure that they have the equipment needed to participate equally in lessons. For example, funds are used to buy uniform for students studying specialised courses off site and to support internet access for students at home.
- The school very effectively monitors the performance and well-being of those students who receive their education in other settings.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. The school's safeguarding processes and procedures are very effective. Leaders make extremely good use of outside agencies to provide support for students.
- The advice given to students about the next stage of their education, employment or training is very good. As a result, all students progress to education, employment or training when they leave the school.
- The school works very hard to engage parents in their children's education from the first induction meeting to the end of their time at The Connected Hub. This helps students to re-engage with their education. Parents agreed that the school responds well to their concerns and provides valuable information about their children's progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance provided by the management committee is a strength of the school. Members of the committee effectively support and challenge the school and are ambitious for its success.
 - The committee is fully involved in reviewing students' performance and setting the school's priorities. Members discuss the school's view about how well it is doing, scrutinise relevant performance data and

contribute effectively to plans for improvement.

- Members of the committee are very well equipped to carry out their statutory duties, including ensuring the safeguarding of students, which they do effectively.
- The management committee manages the school's finances well and ensures that spending is linked to students' learning. For example, the construction of the catering classroom has significantly enhanced the curriculum.
- Members know how additional funding is used to support disadvantaged students. They know how good the teaching is and are keenly aware of what is being done to reward good and outstanding performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students often arrive at the school with a record of poor behaviour. By adopting 'positive regard' for the students, staff at The Connected Hub help students to feel valued as individuals so that their behaviour improves. Students talked about how the staff 'don't judge us' and 'treat us with respect'.
- Behaviour expectations are clearly laid out to students and parents from the start. Initially, students find it hard to conform and there are more exclusions in their first term than there are subsequently. However, overall, students are excluded less frequently than they were at their previous schools.
- During the inspection, all lessons proceeded smoothly with very little low-level disruption. Any poor behaviour is managed by using effective strategies to calm students down.
- As students' behaviour and attitudes to school improve during their first term, their academic and personal development also improves.
- Students' punctuality to school and lessons is variable. However, all lessons begin as soon as at least one student is present, so that the importance of punctuality is demonstrated.
- Students abide by the school's dress code and respect their environment. There was no evidence of litter or graffiti around the school.
- The behaviour of students attending off-site provision is closely monitored by the school. The Connected Hub staff work with college staff, students and their parents to attend to any poor behaviour. As a result, students continue to make good progress.
- Staff and parents commented favourably on students' behaviour and the consistency with which it is managed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students said that they feel safe, a judgement confirmed by both staff and parents.
- Students, who are very vulnerable, are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. The curriculum is used well to teach them about the risks associated with extremism, sexual exploitation and the internet.
- Students reported that there is little or no bullying. Any disagreements are dealt with swiftly. Records show virtually no racist or homophobic bullying.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Staff work very hard to engage students and their parents so that they see the value of education. The school has very effective systems to monitor the attendance of students who receive their education at other settings.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good. It is not outstanding because teachers do not help students enough to develop the capacity to work on their own.
- Relationships between staff and students are very productive. This is fundamental to re-engaging these students in their education and helps them to make good progress.
- All subject teachers have high expectations of the students' ability to make progress. They plan work which meets students' needs and challenges them. During the inspection, a lesson on the relationship between daughters and fathers compared the plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This engaged the students in a challenging discussion about attitudes to women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively. Staff ensure that literacy and numeracy are promoted well, both in lessons and around the school. Words of the week are linked to the theme of the week, and information about various mathematical skills are displayed in all classrooms and social spaces.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively in all lessons. They support students well in their learning, often individually. In fact, students make no distinction between teachers and teaching assistants in lessons.
- The school has developed and implemented an effective marking policy since the last inspection. In their written feedback to students, all staff praise achievement as well as setting targets for improvement. Scrutiny of students' work in all subjects showed that the students act upon these comments to improve their work. In lessons, teachers use verbal feedback skilfully to support and challenge students.
- Staff set homework regularly. This is an important part of re-engaging students in all aspects of their schooling, helping them to make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students arrive at the school after a prolonged period out of continuous education. When they arrive at The Connected Hub, baseline academic assessments provide staff with a measure for each student in English, mathematics and science. Students are also assessed using the pupil attitude to self and school (PASS) survey.
- Since the last inspection, a robust progress tracking system has been introduced. Students' academic progress is assessed six times a year and staff act immediately to support students where they detect any underachievement. Students' emotional well-being and attitudes to school are assessed one month after their enrolment, as well as when the students leave.
- The 2014 examination results showed that 66% of students had made good or outstanding progress in English from their baseline assessment and that 42% had made outstanding progress. The school judges outstanding progress to be an improvement of one whole GCSE examination grade on their predicted grade on entry to the school. In mathematics, 55% of students had made good and outstanding progress, with 32% having made outstanding progress. These were significant improvements on the previous year.
- Disadvantaged students made the same progress and attained academically as well other students in English and mathematics in 2014. Their attainment in English and mathematics was below national standards compared with other students in English by half a grade and in mathematics by three quarters of a grade.
- Students from different ethnic backgrounds achieved similar results to other students except for White British boys. Overall, boys did less well than girls in 2014.
- The PASS and attitudes surveys show that all students make good progress in this aspect of their development. In 2014, for example, students' attitudes to school improved from 25% feeling good about their education on entry to over 80% when students left. Half way through Year 11, the views of the current cohort of students on their engagement with school are significantly more favourable than when they began.
- The most able students fulfil their potential and successfully achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE.
- The achievement of students who receive their education at other settings is monitored well by the school. As a result, they are enabled to continue the work-related courses they started at their previous schools and make the expected progress.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, students' achievement was consistently good.

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	137750
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	453751

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	15–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Mike Newman
Headteacher	Louise Cook
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 January 2013
Telephone number	01273291294
Fax number	
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