

Nene Gate

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135386
Local Authority	City of Peterborough
Inspection number	329091
Inspection date	7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hankins
Headteacher	Mr James Simon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Park Lane Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE1 5GZ
Telephone number	01733 349438
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

NeneGate school was opened in January 2008. The first headteacher left after the first term. The deputy headteacher became acting headteacher and was appointed permanently in March 2009. The school caters for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and serves the whole of Peterborough. Currently there are 27 boys and two girls on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational need. Four of the young people are looked after by the local authority. Most students are from a White British background with 7% from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly half of the students are eligible for free school meals. Many students have had a very disrupted previous educational experience and enter school with attainment well below the national average. There are currently no Year 11 students on roll.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school got off to a very difficult start when it opened in January 2008, and systems were not put in place to control behaviour and enable students to learn. The acting leadership team which took over in May 2008 has worked hard to remedy this situation. Behaviour is now satisfactory. The number of exclusions, while still very high, has reduced dramatically and there is a calm atmosphere in the school. Personal development is satisfactory. Students are learning about healthy lifestyles and growing in confidence and self-esteem. Their attitudes towards school are positive and this is reflected in the improved attendance figures for the last term, although attendance remains below average overall. Students recognise that the school has changed for the better and they appreciate being given a second chance. They say that staff at the school understand them and are 'down to earth'. The very few parents who responded to the questionnaire are happy with the support the school gives to their children. For example as one parent wrote, 'At this school they are very good at sorting problems and listening to both sides.'

The academic progress that students make is inadequate. Students are not achieving as well as they could because nearly half of them do not attend school full-time and many are regularly excluded. The curriculum is inadequate because it does not sufficiently meet the different needs, interests and abilities of the students. Many aspects are still being developed and too many students have reduced timetables. There is no coherent literacy strategy across the school and not enough emphasis is placed on helping students to read, write and use numbers.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers manage behaviour well and are effectively supported by skilful teaching assistants. However, there is still scope for teachers to provide further drive and challenge to push up levels of achievement. Students are well looked after and there are satisfactory links with the Connexions service, therapists and the school nurse. However, care support and guidance are inadequate because there is no consistent system in place for tracking the students' academic progress and using the information gathered to intervene and help students regain lost ground.

Leadership and management are inadequate because although improvements have been made and the school is moving in the right direction, the pace of improvement has been too slow and has had too little impact on students' learning. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. There is a plan in place and students are taught about their responsibilities as citizens but there is still more to be done. Records are kept of racist incidents and racial harmony is promoted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by reducing the levels of absence and exclusions and ensuring that teaching always challenges students' learning.
- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that it meets the needs, interests and abilities of all students and that all students receive the full number of recommended hours of teaching time.

- Ensure that a literacy strategy is put in place across the school.
- Implement a system to assess and track students' progress and use this data to plan future learning

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The levels students reach in teacher assessments are well below those expected for their age because of the nature of the students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although students make some progress in very important areas such as their behaviour and have a positive attitude towards the school, their achievement is inadequate overall. Many students have little interest in developing their literacy or mathematical skills. For example, few see real value in developing their writing skills and do not try as hard as they could. Targets in academic work are not sufficiently widespread, challenging, clear or specific. Students are unable to say what their targets are, how they relate to National Curriculum levels, or if they think they are learning well. The school does not systematically collect data that would enable it to judge the progress of different groups of students or plan future learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of students are making good progress in improving their behaviour and developing social and personal skills. The number of exclusions has fallen sharply since last year and is declining, although the number is still high. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Students gain an appreciation of other cultures through their black history project. They participate in a themed assembly programme and are well-mannered in the dining room. Students know what is meant by a balanced diet and appreciate the need for regular exercise to keep healthy, but their knowledge and understanding of the dangers of drugs and alcohol are less well developed. Despite efforts by the school, attendance remains below average overall and is set in a context where many students do not yet have a full time timetable. However, attendance reached 90% last term in Year 10, and in other years attendance is improving. Students generally behave safely around the school and they have been taught why bullying is unacceptable. Attempts are being made to engage students with the school and wider community. For example, they are keen to welcome newcomers and show them round, they raise money for charity and a school council has just been set up. Students presented two films they have made about school life in last term's celebration assembly. Although students are making good progress in developing some workplace skills, such as teamwork and practical skills, their unsatisfactory progress in literacy and mathematics and poor attendance do not prepare them well enough for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers deal with the challenging behaviour of students calmly and treat students with respect. As a result there are good relationships in the classroom. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students' behaviour. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enliven lessons. Students greatly enjoy vocational, practical and creative activities which engage them in their learning in, for example, physical education (PE), design technology

and cooking. However, some lessons are not always well planned and do not always have clear learning objectives. Teaching does not always present sufficient challenge to students and specialist knowledge of teaching literacy is insufficiently well developed. There have been difficulties with staffing and in recruitment, but most lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

A high proportion of students have reduced timetables and do not attend school full time which limits the progress that they make. In Key Stage 3 there is an appropriate range of subjects, though religious education and modern foreign languages are not taught. Basic subjects such as English, mathematics and science feature well in the weekly timetable of lessons. However, no-one is responsible for implementing a literacy strategy. Students do not all have reading books, there is very little extended writing and there are no support programmes in place to improve literacy skills. Schemes of work for other subjects are not well developed. ICT is taught as a separate subject, and is used satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects. Afternoon activities such as PE, cooking, music, art and humanities motivate students and are well organised. The programme for personal and social development is satisfactory, but is not sufficiently developed.

In Year 10, more able students are learning English and mathematics at GCSE level but no other opportunities to learn other subjects at this level are offered to them. One course is certificated by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network for personal and independence skills. There is a strong vocational element, with courses such as motor mechanics, catering, and hair and beauty. These are mainly organised off-site by a local provider. There is good careers support from the Connexions partnership for students in Years 9 and 10. Although students have regular visits out of school as part of their 'Friday Rewards', few visits are made in order to support learning across the curriculum. There are no after-school activities but well-supervised activities take place at lunchtime.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

All students have a clear awareness of what their behavioural targets are and how well they are progressing in their social and behavioural development. This is not the case with their academic development however as students have little knowledge of how well they are learning or what their targets are in different subjects. Teachers do not have a clear view of the overall level at which students enter the school because the school has only recently begun to assess all students on entry. The school does not track progress carefully, and therefore cannot judge easily whether or not students are making satisfactory progress. This also means that comparing students' progress with that of students in similar schools is difficult. Although there are intentions to develop new systems, these have been slow in coming.

The school provides appropriate individual support for all students through teaching assistants and agencies outside the school. These include various health and therapy organisations, prison and police visitors and different education personnel. Consequently, students are confident that they can talk through any problems they have with teachers or other classroom staff. All staff have undertaken appropriate training in health and safety, safeguarding and assessing risks. The appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff, and the current requirements are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The headteacher is relatively new to the post. Although he is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher, a full leadership team is not in place. A new permanent deputy headteacher has been appointed for September 2009. Monitoring of teaching has taken place and is accurate but the focus has been on behaviour management and not learning. The school's own self-evaluation is too generous. The main areas for improvement have been identified and set out in an appropriate school development plan. However, progress in implementing the plan, assessing students' progress for example, has been too slow and actions have not had sufficient impact on improving achievement. Therefore capacity for improvement is inadequate. The drive to improve attendance and behaviour has been much more successful, and the school is on track to meet its targets in these areas. The governing body struggles to recruit members and although governors are supportive they have not sufficiently challenged the senior management team over the rate of academic progress; consequently governance is inadequate. Resources are deployed satisfactorily to ensure students are well supported by skilled teaching assistants, but because of the inadequate achievement the school does not give satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of NeneGate School, Peterborough PE1 5GZ

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you. You told us you enjoy being at NeneGate School. The school is improving slowly but there are still some important challenges to be met. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how we thought it could get even better.

- Your behaviour is improving and fewer of you are being excluded.
- Your attendance is improving, especially in Year 10.
- You know how to keep healthy by eating the right food and taking exercise, and you are growing in self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Your teachers and support staff make sure you behave and they look after you well.

This is how we thought the school could improve.

- You could do better work in English and mathematics and all your other subjects if you all came to school regularly and fewer of you were excluded. All of you should have full-time learning programmes for every day and these should include more time spent reading and writing.
- Teachers should measure the progress you are making and compare the work you do with work from other schools to keep a good check on the progress you are making.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Jones HMI