

Maple Hayes Hall School

Independent special school standard inspection report

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| Reporting inspector | Judith Charlesworth |

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Maple Hayes Hall School is an independent day special school for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Primarily, these relate to dyslexia (difficulties with reading, spelling and writing) although many pupils also have dyscalculia (difficulties with numbers) and dysgraphia (difficulties with handwriting). Some pupils have further complex needs, such as additional language difficulties and Asperger's syndrome. All pupils are of at least average ability and have failed to make sufficient progress in mainstream school due to their specific difficulties. While the school is registered to take pupils from the age of 7 years, there are currently 118 pupils on roll aged 10 to 17 years, 80 percent of whom are boys. Ninety percent of the pupils have a statement of their special educational needs and are placed and funded by their local authorities. Currently, there are 16 placing authorities, with Birmingham, Staffordshire and Walsall placing the large majority of pupils between them. Some pupils are funded privately.

Maple Hayes Hall is situated outside Lichfield in Staffordshire. It first opened in 1982, and was last inspected in May 2006. The school is a well-known centre of expertise, training and research for dyslexia and has developed and implemented a unique way of addressing literacy. Its main aim is: 'To give pupils a fresh start in the acquisition of literacy, so raising their self-esteem, self-confidence and expectation of academic success.'

Evaluation of the school

Maple Hayes Hall School provides an outstanding quality of education. The outstanding curriculum, underpinned by the school's unique approach to teaching literacy skills, and excellent teaching enable pupils to make outstanding progress. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is good; they enjoy school and their attendance is high. Provision for pupils' health, safety and welfare is good and safeguarding arrangements are robust. The school has improved since its last inspection, effectively meets its stated aims, and all regulations are met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. The school has developed a unique, visual approach to teaching literacy skills as an alternative to the phonics approach which pupils have so far been unable to use effectively. The school's system breaks words down into segments of meaning which are then assigned pictorial icons. These help pupils to understand and read the words. The formation of correct handwriting is also heavily emphasised to reinforce reading and understanding. These specific skills are taught highly systematically. They are practised in dedicated lessons and in special computer-based sessions, tested every week along with spelling, and reinforced throughout the curriculum. The overwhelming majority of pupils and their parents and carers are very pleased with this approach, and pupils say that they will always need and use this methodology. Numerous comments on inspection questionnaires say that Maple Hayes has transformed pupils' lives and future prospects.

The curriculum includes a suitable range of subjects which lead to GCSE accreditation. There are no options at Key Stage 4, but short courses and additional GCSEs are provided in certain subjects, for example religious education and music, to suit individuals' interests. Pupils have the opportunity to gain other accreditation, such as first aid and alcohol awareness. All subjects are very well planned and documented to ensure that pupils make steady progress year-on-year. Many books, particularly those for English, have been specially adapted and reproduced to support understanding. In all subjects, including practical subjects such as design and technology and physical education, high quality school-developed workbooks help support and improve pupils' presentation and learning. A suitable programme of personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education (PSHCEE) is provided. This supports the pastoral work that is woven into the school's everyday work and which results in pupils' greatly improved personal development. Careers guidance and education are provided throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. This is taught separately at Key Stage 4 and integrated with PSHCEE at Key Stage 3. The curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential journeys, outdoor activities and music.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and are very skilled at supporting pupils' progress and well-being. Due to rigorous assessment, staff are highly aware of each individual's skills and abilities, and suitable work is planned to meet their needs. All lessons take account of and support pupils' literacy skills, as well as provide academically challenging work. In a history lesson with Year 8, for example, pupils were learning about the life of Napoleon. The task set helped them place events in Napoleon's life in chronological order, make complete sentences, and tested their knowledge and understanding. The completed task then formed the basis of a further activity to extend and assess their learning. Information and communication technology is used very well to engage pupils and support both teaching and learning. Lessons include a good balance of direct teaching, and independent and small group work. Probing questioning throughout lessons assesses and draws out pupils' understanding. The pupils' behaviour, enthusiasm and attitudes to learning in lessons are outstanding.

Assessment in subjects is good. Assessment of literacy skills is outstanding, and a very careful track is kept of pupils' developing reading, spelling and writing skills. Assessment is good in all other subjects. Staff use National Curriculum levels to assess pupils' attainment and progress, but their judgements are not routinely moderated to ensure accuracy. Furthermore, the wealth of assessment information gathered is not used to inform a system to track pupils' progress from their first admission to the point of leaving the school and inform management decisions.

The high quality educational provision results in pupils' outstanding progress. On entry, generally between 10 and 14 years of age, pupils' average reading age is around eight years old, and spelling age is around seven years old. However, individuals' skills are often significantly lower than these averages. Average attainment in English in relation to National Curriculum level descriptors is around that expected of seven to nine year olds. Progress is rapid and in the last five years, by the time they leave the school, all pupils have gained between five and eight GCSEs. In almost every subject, significant numbers of pupils gain grades higher than the most ambitious expected by their attainment on entry to the school. National data show that the 2010 results fall well within the top five percent of schools for both mainstream and special schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Discussion and inspection questionnaire returns indicate that the vast majority of pupils enjoy school. Pupils and their parents and carers compare their experience at Maple Hayes very favourably to their previous schools, where they say they were often bullied and felt isolated. From a position of low confidence and self-esteem on entry to the school, pupils' personal development improves considerably as they achieve success. Their attitudes to learning are generally outstanding. This is demonstrated in most pupils' very careful presentation of work and persistence to overcome their difficulties. Attendance is high, with no unauthorised absence. Pupils say that they enjoy the varied range of extra-curricular activities, and the take-up is high.

Behaviour is good overall, and exemplary in lessons. Pupils work effectively independently or in collaboration with others. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong in the school context and wider community. Through the curriculum and robust school reward and sanction systems, they understand that all actions have consequences. Pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. They make outstanding academic progress and older pupils generally have a clear idea about what they want to do in the future. Examples given include a professional chef, a lawyer and working with animals. All pupils move on to education, employment or training when they leave Maple Hayes.

Pupils enjoy positions of responsibility, such as being head pupil or class monitor. They regularly organise events and raise money for charities. However, they are not given enough opportunity to participate in decision making in relation to the school, and are not confident that their views, although gathered, are always acted upon. Pupils understand how societies function through experience and the curriculum, and have a good understanding of various public institutions and services. The school is a

racially harmonious community. However, the school does not do enough to extend pupils' cultural awareness and ensure they have enough knowledge of everyday life in a multi-cultural society.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Policies and procedures are clear and underpin good practice, for example, in child protection and safeguarding, behaviour management, anti-bullying, and fire safety. All required staff training is up to date. Regular checks are made of the premises in relation to health and safety. Records of these and other aspects, such as incidents, accidents and sanctions are appropriately made and monitored.

The staff show outstanding care and concern for the welfare and well-being of each individual pupil. Absence is very closely monitored and, consequently, attendance is high. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between most pupils themselves, are outstanding. This underpins the 'personal touch' that helps pupils thrive and enjoy school. Very occasional bullying, inappropriate behaviour and other incidents are quickly dealt with, and sanctions are generally understood and accepted. Pupils behave safely in practical lessons, and when outdoors and in the community. Parents' and carers' and pupils' questionnaire returns indicate that pupils feel safe in school, and they are quick to confirm this when asked. The school works effectively to help pupils take up healthy lifestyles. They understand what constitutes healthy eating, although a small number indicate that they do not enjoy the school food, and a large number take up sporting activities in their extra-curricular options. The school has planned well to improve access to information, the curriculum and the premises in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults, including the proprietors, to work with children. They are recorded as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's accommodation enables pupils to learn safely, securely and effectively. There are numerous classrooms which are well furnished. The standard of decoration, flooring and maintenance is satisfactory. Solar panels and a new heating system have recently been installed, which make a very good contribution to environmental sustainability. Improvements to the car park and classrooms have been made since the previous inspection, and the school is now planning for new, improved provision for physical education. There is a good range of specialist facilities, for example, for science and design and technology. Some of these rooms, however, are rather small for practical work. The premises are set in 200 acres of very attractive parkland which provide outstanding facilities for play and outdoor sports, and many opportunities for other curricular and extra-curricular activities such as horse riding.

Provision of information

The information provided for parents, carers and others is clear, well-written and up-to-date. It meets all regulations. The school has a website which is informative and easy to use. It is supplemented by the prospectus and a 'parents' pack' which includes relevant policies and additional information such as timings of the school day. Colourful, well-written newsletters inform parents and carers of the school's activities. Brief termly reports indicate what pupils have covered together with written and 'graded' evaluations of their effort and progress in each subject. Annual reports are detailed and include additional information about pupils' attainment and progress. Suitable information is provided for local authorities, as required.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a suitable policy and procedures which meet regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- use assessment data to track pupils' progress from their first admission to the point of leaving the school in order to
 - more clearly illustrate the impact of the school's provision
 - further support planning for additional interventions and whole-school improvements where necessary
- support pupils' personal development by
 - planning for additional experiences to develop their awareness and understanding of a multi-cultural society
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for contributing to the school, environment and wider community.

Inspection judgements

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|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

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|--|---|--|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | ✓ | | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | ✓ | | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | ✓ | | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | ✓ | | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | | ✓ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | ✓ | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

Inspection judgements

| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
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School details

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| School status | Independent | | |
| Type of school | Special | | |
| Date school opened | 1982 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 7-17 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 95 | Girls: 23 | Total: 118 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs | Boys: 83 | Girls: 23 | Total: 106 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £12,939–£17,496 | | |
| Address of school | Abnalls Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8BL | | |
| Telephone number | 01543 264387 | | |
| Email address | office@dyslexia.gb.com | | |
| Headteacher | Dr Daryl Brown | | |
| Proprietor | Dr E Neville Brown & Mrs Brenda Brown | | |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maple Hayes Hall School, Lichfield, WS13 8BL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching how well you were learning in lessons. I came to the school to see how well you were all doing and how happy you were. I found that Maple Hayes Hall school provides you with an outstanding quality of education. The school's unique approach to teaching literacy skills and excellent teaching enable you to make outstanding progress. The provision for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is the school's provision for your health, safety and welfare. These are some of the best aspects of Maple Hayes Hall:

- the success of the unique approach taken to help you improve your reading, spelling and writing skills
- your outstanding academic progress
- the great improvement in your confidence and self-esteem
- your outstanding behaviour and application in lessons, and your high attendance
- the quality of teaching and the commitment staff have to your progress and well-being.

I have asked the school to do the following things to become even better.

- Develop what staff do with all the information they have on your progress to help the school show the impact of its work and identify improvements needed.
- Improve your contribution to decision-making in the school, and give you more opportunities to learn about the multi-cultural society in which we live.

You can all help, too, by continuing try hard and aim high. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth
Lead inspector

