

# Fell House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Fell House is an independent special school which is dually registered as a residential special school and children's home. It is part of the Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd group which also operates two other children's homes and schools in the North West of England. It is registered for eight places for pupils aged from six to 12 years. There are currently seven pupils on roll aged from seven to 12 years, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. All pupils are in the care of the local authority, and reside in the home. The home is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted and did not form part of this education inspection. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008.

Fell House provides education for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Pupils often join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision. The school's primary aim is to re-integrate pupils into mainstream schools in time for secondary education.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Fell House School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and in their academic learning. The school successfully meets its aims by ensuring pupils make significant improvement with regard to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. The majority of pupils successfully re-integrate into mainstream schools. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Leaders and managers provide well for pupils' welfare, health and safety which are good and arrangements for safeguarding meet all the requirements. The school has improved the checks needed for staff who, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, are subject to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, and now meets all of the independent school regulations. Pupils are knowledgeable about their targets and this has improved since the last inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The curriculum and other activities are good in meeting the range of needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum, covers all required areas of learning and is significantly modified to take account of pupils' individual learning needs. The curriculum provides a structured 24-hour therapeutic programme which enables pupils to form positive relationships and to improve their self-esteem and confidence.

On admission to the school, a set of rigorous assessments are completed to identify the social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs of each pupil. Structured programmes are in place to ensure that well-matched activities are provided based on these initial assessments. These programmes ensure that the requirements of the pupils' statements of special educational needs are met well. Teachers' plans are annotated to show the different expectations for individual pupils. The timetable reveals that there is a well-balanced programme to develop basic skills in communication, language, literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). To these are added thematic topics which enable pupils to make sense of their learning by applying their skills in practical ways. For example, pupils were observed using basic computational skills while learning about bridges and structures. The curriculum provides for developing pupils' phonic skills but this is not systematic and does not ensure that these skills are reinforced across all curriculum subjects. The curriculum for ICT and opportunities for pupils to become increasingly independent learners through the use of ICT, are at an early stage of being embedded. The curriculum provides a good programme to develop pupils' personal, social and health education. For example, pupils enjoy a range of physical education activities including swimming at a local hotel pool. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the curriculum after school and at weekends. These include horse riding, cooking and gardening. Pupils are taught about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Frequent visits are made to places of educational interest, making especially effective use of the local area. For example, pupils took part in the 'big tidy' to remove litter in the locality. Links with drama groups provide good opportunities for pupils to perform in public and to develop their social skills.

Overall, the effectiveness of teaching and assessment in meeting the full range of pupils' needs is good. Assessment is robust and rigorous with regular checks and reviews of pupils' cognitive, emotional and psychological needs and development. The information gained is utilised extremely well by staff in planning learning activities. There are consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour which, combined with outstanding behaviour management strategies, result in pupils making very good gains in their personal development. The impact of this is seen in the improvement of pupils' attitudes to learning and their ability to concentrate and sustain their interest in learning. Assessments of pupils' academic learning are recorded frequently and the analysis of this, in order to target expectations of progress, is improving.

Teachers and support staff know individual pupils and their needs very well. This is a key strength of the teaching provision. High staff-to-pupil ratios ensure very good support and guidance is provided for pupils once tasks in lessons are underway. Due to this provision, pupils' individual needs are catered for well and good learning takes place because work is well matched to each pupils needs. Teachers and all staff show an excellent degree of patience and tolerance when pupils' behaviour or concentration wanes. They persevere and successfully re-engage pupils so that learning and progress is ensured. Teachers use a very good blend of praise and sanctions. In particular, pupils are motivated by the daily points and rewards which are converted into 'free choice' time.

Teachers have suitable subject knowledge. They are well prepared for lessons. Teachers have good relationships with pupils; they are cheerful and encouraging. Staff that provide additional support excel in caring for pupils' emotional and behavioural needs. However, the teaching skills of support staff are not maximised to reinforce teaching points. For example, opportunities to regularly model correct phonics are missed. The classrooms provide a satisfactory environment for pupils to learn. Pupils' work is celebrated and displayed but there are too few prompts, key words and reminders of prior learning shown in and around the two classrooms. Some teachers are particularly skilled in demonstrating or modelling the correct technique or skill to be learnt. For example, in a swimming lesson the instructor gave a very good demonstration of the arm movement for front crawl which pupils then copied very well.

Examples of work, an analysis of school data and observations of lessons show that pupils mostly make good progress in their learning. The rate of progress is improving. School data show that since the last inspection the targets for pupils' progress have been developed to provide greater challenge and the amount of progress is better. In lessons seen during this inspection, pupils made mainly good progress due to the excellent management of their behaviour and the very good one-to-one teaching. Occasionally, the academic expectations for the more able pupils are not consistently high enough in lessons and consequently, pupils lose interest and concentration and the rate of learning slows. Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding gains in developing social and emotional skills. Records show that over time almost three quarters of pupils are successfully re-integrated back into mainstream schools by the age of 12 years.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Due to the consistent application of the school's excellent strategies, pupils' behaviour is good. Occasionally, inappropriate language is used and there is some refusal to complete activities in class. Staff manage such occurrences well, showing patience and sustained perseverance when insisting that pupils do as asked. Pupils develop better self-managed behaviour as a result of the good application of the school's clear moral code. Most pupils enjoy school and their attendance is good. Pupils develop increasing confidence and self-esteem because staff take every opportunity

to praise and encourage pupils' achievements. Inspectors were moved by the wonderful end-of-day celebration in which pupils individually spoke about their best achievement. They took great pride in telling their peers and the adults present about what it meant to them.

The school's therapeutic team, including several external staff, work tirelessly to ensure that pupils' individual needs are assessed and identified. External professionals provide staff training and help devise bespoke programmes for each pupil to improve their personal development skills. Pupils' emotional development is a high priority and pupils are taught how to 'work, learn and live as a team'. This builds pupils' emotional security and confidence and pupils are comfortable in the company of each other, showing respect and consideration for much of the time.

Pupils develop their social skills through the structured daily routines of the home/school environment and by participating in the many and varied extra curricular activities. Pupils' cultural development is aided by many activities including learning about Indian dance and food, about the Polish language, the Chinese New Year and learning about Egyptian artwork and history. Links and partnerships with other cultures in Britain would benefit from further development to give pupils a fuller appreciation of cultural diversity.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Leaders carry out robust risk assessments and arrangements for safeguarding are thorough. Staff training in first aid and child protection is up-to-date and appropriate. Extensive policies are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and staff, though a few of these are broad company policies which are not all tailored well to match Fell House School. Leaders reacted swiftly and positively to amend these during the inspection. The supervision of pupils is vigilant. Most pupils say they feel safe and are looked after well by the staff. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles through the curriculum which includes personal and relationships education and teaching about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Healthy choices are available at meal times and pupils with weight problems have a personal health plan. There are good opportunities for participation in sport. Very good and effective use is made of external support such as the educational psychologist, play and art therapists, child and adolescent psychologists, speech and language therapists, the school nurse and a confidential councillor system to support pupils. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

Arrangements to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors meet all requirements and checks are recorded on the single central register as required.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school provides two suitable classrooms on the ground floor. Pupils' work is displayed in classrooms and corridors. Computer access to the internet is available in one classroom. Furnishings and fittings are of an appropriate standard. Outdoors there is a paved area which can be used for ball games, an attractive grassed area and a small wooden decked space. Overall, the premises make an effective contribution to pupils' provision for learning.

## **Provision of information**

The company has an informative website which includes sections about Fell House School. The website contains the required useful information for parents and carers or for local authorities regarding the aims, policies and expectations of the school. Additionally, there is a useful range of written information available to those interested at the time of admission. The school sends annual reports to parents and carers about the progress and attainment of each pupil as required. Similarly, annual accounts are sent to each placing local authority.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's policies and procedures meet all the requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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:

- improve the consistency of pupils' good progress by:
  - ensuring work more consistently meets the needs of more-able pupils
  - developing a whole-school plan for high quality teaching which incorporates teaching and support staff roles
  - providing professional development for teachers and support staff for the teaching of phonics in a systematic programme and implementing this programme
  - improving the classroom learning environment with appropriate displays and resources, especially including those for ICT
  - establish better links with schools or communities in contrasting areas of Great Britain to provide further opportunities for pupils to learn to be tolerant about cultural differences.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

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

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	January 2001		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6-12 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£125,670 - £133,290		
<b>Email address</b>	admin@appletreeschool.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Rob Davies		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd		

**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.**



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Fell House School**

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague into your school when we visited you recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and would like to share with you what we found out about your school. We judged that Fell House School is a good school. These are the main reasons why we judged the school to be good.

- The staff treat you fairly and expect you to be good and achieve well. In return you try hard.
- The quality of teaching and the curriculum is good so that you make good progress and learn new skills.
- You do very well in improving your behaviour.
- Most of you enjoy school, feel safe and behave well.
- You are improving your personal skills which will help you in the future such as by being well mannered and cooperative with others.

All schools need to develop and improve and I have asked that the staff teach you more letters and sounds to improve your reading and writing. I have also asked that more use is made of computers and technology to make your lessons more interesting. Also, I have asked that you are able to visit and communicate with some other pupils in different types of schools to help you understand what other cultures are like.

Thank you once again for all your help. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman  
Her Majesty's Inspector