

Longdon Hall School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Longdon Hall School is an independent day school which is registered for boys and girls aged seven to 18 years. It admits students who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some students also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). As a result, students display associated behaviours. All students have a statement of special educational needs and have had disrupted educational backgrounds. There are currently 10 boys on roll. The school is owned by Acorn Care and Education; a provider of schools and foster care nationwide.

Longdon Hall School is housed in a property of Georgian Design, near Lichfield in Staffordshire, built approximately 200 years ago; it occupies an extensive site in excess of two acres, with a woodland area and a small playing field. The school currently takes students from four local authorities in the midlands. The school aims to provide a 'caring, structured learning environment in which all pupils can develop academically, socially, emotionally and morally to their full potential and in which pupils and staff feel safe, secure and valued'.

This is the school's first full inspection since it opened in September 2011.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding and all of the regulations for independent schools are met. Although the school has been open for less than a year, it is conspicuously successful in meeting its aims. As a result of outstanding teaching and assessment, students rapidly become re-engaged in their education, make outstanding academic progress and develop personal, emotional and social skills outstandingly well. This is the school's first full inspection and the areas where there were some failures to meet regulations, following the registration visit last June, have been successfully tackled. Welfare, health and safety are outstanding, and arrangements for safeguarding are robust and rigorous.

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. It meets all requirements and links education and therapy input so that students' personal development and learning are supported to a high level. It is highly personalised and is based on the National Curriculum with a strong emphasis on developing students' academic, social, emotional and moral skills. A range of 'curriculum enrichment' activities including outdoor learning, the Duke of Edinburgh's award and sports' leaders' award are also provided. As a result of the curriculum, students make outstanding progress overall in their learning and personal development. They make impressive and rapid progress in developing their readiness to learn and participate in lessons. Lesson planning is sharply focused on meeting students' specific needs and capabilities extremely well. In Key Stage 3, there is an emphasis on the development of cross-curricular skills through a themed topic approach. This helps students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in an integrated, meaningful and coherent way. A wide range of qualifications are available, including Award Scheme and Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, Entry Level Awards, BTEC and GCSEs. This allows the curriculum to provide pathways which cover a range of interests, preferences and areas of learning. Students receive information, advice and guidance which help them to start to think about the next steps in their lives.

Staff are unerringly consistent in their approach to the students and as a result of this, students rapidly develop trust in the adults who work with them. Training is provided for staff on all aspects of the school's work, including regular input from therapists, so that staff are able to develop the skills they need for working successfully with the students in the school in a way that effectively meets their specific needs.

Plans for individual students cover all aspects of their development, including behaviour, academic progress and other areas of their development through various therapies. Clear targets are in place which are meaningful for the students and which actively support the academic and personal progress they make. Provision and outcomes are closely monitored by staff, who continually assess the progress which students' make against all of their targets. This shows that, over time, students develop independence and become less reliant on others to complete tasks. Strong procedures are in place for communication with the students' homes. This allows a continuity of approach which benefits the students. Parents and carers were united in their praise for how much help this is to them and for their part, often call the school in the morning to inform them of what to expect when their child arrives.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding across the school. Structures for planning are consistently implemented. Throughout the school, teaching results in outstanding progress due to impressive pace and activities which are suitably matched to the needs of all students. In all lessons seen, support staff showed that they are highly skilled in supporting the students in the school. This is achieved by providing a range of enjoyable activities, in short bursts of work, and being very skilful in knowing when to intervene and challenge students' learning and when to

step back and allow time for reflection and independent working. A particularly striking example of this was a 'murder scene' in an English lesson. Students used a range of skills they have recently developed such as observation, discussion and note-taking to produce a full police report on the crime. They were fully engaged as the 'murder' stimulated their imaginations and they enjoyed the detail established at the scene of the crime. Teachers are consistently clear about linking the aims of the lessons with what has been previously learnt. The school's systems for monitoring progress provide a well-rounded assessment of students' academic and personal progress and allow for the school's leaders to monitor the progress for any patterns or trends made by students.

Students make outstanding progress. Students meet the targets set for them and are keen in being involved in assessing how much progress they have made. School data show that more progress is made in maths than it is in English. However, the current focus on the development of literacy has already started to have a significant impact on progress in this area. The school's assessments show that outstanding progress is made by all students in areas of personal and social development. This was clearly seen in lessons and other areas of the school throughout the inspection.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The development of these areas is a major focus of the school's work and there is strong evidence that during their time in the school, students' independence and sociability are developed well. Additionally, students develop an excellent understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and respond extremely positively to this. Most lessons seen during the inspection contained elements which helped the students to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. However there are not enough opportunities for students to meet people from cultures different to their own.

Students greatly enjoy their learning, as the majority of teaching meets their needs outstandingly well. As a result, students improve their attitudes to learning and work from the day they enter the school. Although students' attendance is low overall, this is a legacy of their past negative experiences of schooling. There is clear evidence that during their time in Longdon Hall, they re-engage in education to varying levels, including students who started when the school opened who now have high attendance. Attendance improves because students enjoy coming to school. When discussing their experience of this school, they all agreed that 'it is a good school'. This shows a remarkable turnaround in attitudes for this group of students who have been significantly disengaged from their education prior to attending this school.

Student's behaviour is outstanding and no disruption to their learning was seen during the inspection. Behaviour improves rapidly and significantly for all students in the school as a result of the therapies, support and interventions which are provided according to each student's needs. Behaviour is handled exceptionally well and consistently by all staff. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire

agree that the school has had a strong impact on their child's behaviour and that this has been the direct result of the school's consistent management of behaviour. Many also credit the impact of the school's work for improved behaviour at home. A typical view was: 'his behaviour and education have come on in leaps and bounds'. The credits system to reward positive behaviour is taken very seriously by the students and has a genuine and significant impact on their learning and behaviour. Another significant factor in the improvements is that students feel valued and feel that they are treated with the utmost respect at all times.

Students' develop cultural understanding well through specifically taught cross-curricular themes such as 'Stepping Stones' and the 'Beliefs and Values Award' and the recent ongoing theme based on the Olympic Games. The school also has links with a school in Zambia and has supported the Samaritans Christmas shoe box appeal. Such opportunities help students gain an appreciation and respect for cultural diversity that promotes tolerance and harmony. Work to promote students' awareness of other religions and human rights are explored through the curriculum and educational visits. A recent example of a visit which promoted students' spirituality was a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum. The school has an active student council, including a committee which has helped the school achieve 'Eco-school' bronze award.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All of the required policies, including detailed guidance for child protection are in place and are implemented extremely well. Policies are robust, comprehensive and clear, and provide all of the necessary guidance for staff. The school's behaviour policy is effectively implemented, so that it is instrumental in bringing about rapid and significant improvements in behaviour. Appropriate reference is made within the e-safety policy to the use and abuse of new technologies and cyber bullying. Students have been fully involved in developing this area of policy. Individual behaviour plans are very well devised, consistently applied by all staff, and meet the needs of all students extremely effectively.

Robust risk assessments are in place and they accurately identify any risks associated with students, external visits or classroom activities. Procedures to ensure that the premises and accommodation are safe are also robust. The school carries out checks on portable electrical appliances to ensure equipment is in good condition. Very good attention is paid to fire safety, with regular fire drills and evacuations in place. Smoke alarms are tested regularly and clear records are kept of fire alarm tests and checks. All staff, including the designated person for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level.

All students, who responded to questionnaires or were involved in discussions with the inspector, confirmed that they feel safe in the school. There is no evidence of bullying and the school has clear procedures in place should it occur. Students lead healthy lifestyles and make positive choices with regard to the food they eat. They

participate in a range of sporting and physical activities that keep them fit and ensure that they get enough exercise.

The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on staff and others are carried out and are recorded appropriately in the single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

There are high quality facilities and accommodation which enable students to learn safely and effectively. Classrooms are of a good size and are used as generic and specialist teaching areas. They are newly decorated and are well maintained throughout. There is plenty of space for outdoor recreation and sporting activities. There is also a good range of additional facilities which meet students' particular needs, such as individual teaching rooms and common areas.

Provision of information

The school's prospectus provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information. It is clear, accurate, detailed and up-to-date, although it is the first year of the school being open and it is not yet possible to include a breakdown of qualifications gained by students and the destinations of those who have left the school. Parents and carers are provided with suitable termly and annual reports about the attainment and progress made by their children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet regulatory requirements.

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.

- Provide opportunities for students to further develop their cultural awareness by meeting people from a range of different cultures, heritages and backgrounds.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent Special School		
Date school opened	1 September 2011		
Age range of pupils	7–18 years		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 0	Total: 10
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 10	Girls: 0	Total: 10
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,295		
Address of school	Longdon Green, Lichfield WS15 4PT		
Telephone number	01543 491051		
Email address	matt.storey@longdonhallschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Matt Storey		
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education		

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Longdon Hall School, Lichfield, WS15 4PT

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting and talking to you and seeing you working in your lessons. I was impressed by your attitudes and how welcome you made me feel over the two days.

Your school is providing you with an outstanding education. Your teachers, and other staff, know you extremely well and plan lessons which help you to make outstanding progress in your academic and personal development.

The staff look after you exceptionally well. You all feel safe, enjoy being in the school and you have been helped to manage your own behaviour far better than before. You are given a lot of opportunities to participate in activities and lessons that you enjoy. I was particularly impressed by the way that you were all so engaged in your learning and how your behaviour improves because of the support you receive. Your attendance is low overall, but those of you who have been in the school for the longest time, have high attendance, which shows how much you enjoy coming to school.

I have asked the school to improve one area: to provide you with opportunities to meet people from other backgrounds, so that you understand more about different cultures that there are in the UK.

Thank you again and I would like to wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector