

Bladon House School

Newton Solney, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 0TA

Inspection dates

24–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including in English and mathematics despite the effect of their learning and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils make outstanding progress in English. This is because of good teaching and an effective curriculum.
- Most of the pupils work hard to behave well in school and when they find this difficult staff members support them very well, helping them concentrate on their learning.
- The proprietors have provided a good range of facilities and equipment that are used well to enable the pupils to do well in school.
- The school provides a caring and purposeful working atmosphere where pupils and staff respect one another, and where pupils can work in a good humoured and enjoyable learning environment.
- Leaders and managers are focused and diligent in making sure that teaching is strengthening and that pupils have good opportunities to achieve their potential. They are aware of what is needed to raise the quality of the school's effectiveness to outstanding, as it was at the last inspection.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is still room for pupils to improve their achievements, especially in mathematics.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are still occurring too often.
- Although the school collects a lot of information about the pupils and their progress, this is not used as well as it could to help them with their learning and personal development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice. The inspector observed ten lessons taught by ten different teachers in school and two sessions in alternative provision in Derby. He looked at pupils' work and held meetings with the headteacher, a representative of the proprietor, staff members and pupils.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of pupils' progress, monitoring reports of teaching and learning, records of lesson observations, and staff training records.
- No questionnaire responses from staff were made available and no parents or carers, pupils or local authority representatives had responded to the online Ofsted questionnaires. However, the school made available the results of a recent survey of parents' and carers' views as well as the views of parents, carers and local authorities collected at the pupils' annual reviews.
- The report relating to the care provision in the children's home, which should be read in conjunction with this report, is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bladon House is an independent special school for boys and girls with complex needs including autism, severe or moderate learning difficulties, mental health issues, challenging behaviour, and speech and language difficulties.
- The school caters for both day and residential pupils, and was registered as a children's home in July 2009. All residential pupils live on site.
- The school is registered for 130 pupils aged 5 to 19 years, but numbers are reducing as the complexity of pupils' needs is increasing. Pupils are admitted at any age, and a number are admitted towards the end of their compulsory school careers.
- There are currently 42 pupils on roll aged 10 to 19, with the large majority aged 15 and over. All pupils have a statement of their special educational needs and are funded by their local authorities. Two are looked after by their local authority.
- The school makes use of alternative provision operated by two separate organisations to extend the range of the curriculum for some of the older pupils.
- The school is owned and managed by the SENAD group which has several other establishments providing education and care for pupils and adults with learning difficulties. The school opened in 1969. Its last education inspection was in February 2010 and the last social care inspection took place in March 2013.
- The school's aim is 'to realise the full potential of children and young people with special educational needs through the provision of high quality education in a caring and supportive environment'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, and increase its impact on teaching, pupils' achievements and their behaviour by:
 - making better use of the available information about pupils' academic achievements to identify trends and to ensure staff interventions are used as effectively as possible
 - extending arrangements to analyse information collected about incidents of inappropriate behaviour in order to identify all possible means to help pupils to improve their behaviour and to reduce the number of these incidents.
- Continue efforts to enhance communication with parents and carers to ensure that they fully understand, and take part in, the strategies in use to improve pupils' behaviour and to counter bullying, including the perception of being bullied.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievements are good. They make good progress towards their targets in all subjects, including English and mathematics, and many make outstanding progress in English. Pupils experience a wide range of impediments to learning and they are able to make the progress they do as a result of good teaching and effective adaptation of the National Curriculum. Pupils who are new to the school and have experienced disrupted education due to their learning or behavioural difficulties re-engage quickly and make up lost ground well.

With careful and well-prepared support from teachers and assistants, almost all pupils take part actively in their lessons and most enjoy their learning. They take pride in their work, much of which is effectively displayed in classrooms and around the school, and they contribute well in presenting what they have learned. All pupils learn to use information and communication technology (ICT) which is effectively used throughout the school to extend learning, especially in literacy and numeracy. In addition to formal subjects, pupils' achievements include winning a national competition for the best anti-bullying cartoon storyboard and achieving a gold award in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme.

Pupils in Key Stage 5 work towards a range of appropriate and well-chosen nationally accredited qualifications with an emphasis on the functional skills of literacy, communication and numeracy as well as independent living skills. Some recent leavers have achieved a full diploma and have gained entry-level qualifications, while others have made good progress towards them. Their achievements are effectively extended by taking courses in alternative provision situated away from the school. This includes a commercial recycling centre where they help to prepare goods for sale and in a community arts centre where they take advantage of the expertise available to extend their skills in carpentry and pottery. These activities provide additional opportunities for pupils to experience working in public settings and help to prepare them for moving on to other settings when they leave school.

All those pupils who left the school in the previous year have made appropriate transitions, some to continue their further education in independent specialist colleges and others to supported living or residential care.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour is good, reflecting the improvement pupils make from when they join the school. Nonetheless, due to their conditions many pupils continue to demonstrate impulsive behaviour, and some struggle to control outbursts of frustration and anger. Staff are knowledgeable about their conditions and use effective strategies to support pupils and to help them better manage their behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is good rather than outstanding because there is still room for improvement and for a greater reduction in the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Pupils say that they enjoy school, and good attendance and punctuality confirm this. Staff use agreed strategies well to support pupils' behaviour. Lessons regularly conclude with an evaluation of learning and behaviour targets. Pupils respond well to the individually designed incentive schemes and enjoy the positive response to their efforts. Parents and carers are positive overall about the school's provision. One parent said that their child is 'happy and settled' and another commented on the 'exceptional progress' their child had made with his behaviour. However, some have expressed uncertainty about the way the school is responding to difficult behaviour.

The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. The whole staff team promote an ethos of understanding and mutual respect very well. This

supports pupils in adopting these attitudes in their own lives and helps them to become more self-confident. Through weekly assemblies and the work undertaken in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship lessons they gain a good awareness of other cultures, hearing stories from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. They celebrate a range of festivals, such as Diwali, and some have visited a Sikh temple. These activities promote pupils' awareness of other cultures and help them to develop an attitude of tolerance.

Pupils learn about British institutions and services through citizenship lessons as well as through visits from the community police liaison officer and to the local fire station. Older pupils gain additional awareness of their local community through their alternative provision placements. Pupils also develop very good relations with the local community through taking part in conservation projects. These include helping to maintain the tracks at the National Forest Cycle Centre and working as Peak Park Conservation Volunteers. The school has developed an effective policy to ensure that, whenever it is appropriate to introduce political issues, balanced views are promoted.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and it has enabled pupils to make good progress over time in their learning and development. During the inspection a substantial proportion of the teaching observed was outstanding. Teachers and their assistants have high expectations as to what pupils can achieve and they manage individuals' behaviour well. They use a range of effective methods to help pupils overcome specific barriers to learning and to make the most of their capacity, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils' abilities are assessed at the beginning of their placement and regularly thereafter. Teachers set individual targets for all National Curriculum subjects, while PSHE and citizenship are usefully used to assess abilities and set targets related to personal and social development. These assessments underpin lesson plans so that individual pupils are able to take advantage of the wide range of approaches and strategies and to make good progress in terms of their own abilities.

Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge, as well as their expert knowledge of complex learning difficulties, to enthuse and inspire pupils. In the alternative provision for older pupils, specialist teachers and staff members with good knowledge of commercial skills provide valuable opportunities for the pupils, which they appreciate and learn from. Across the school, teachers regularly make use of ICT to stimulate learning. They mark pupils' work regularly, using a consistent marking policy that identifies the level of support made available as well as praising effort and reinforcing the learning achieved. Effective procedures are used for allocating National Curriculum levels to pupils' performance in the various subjects and the school makes good use of moderation procedures to bring additional rigour to this process.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The school has developed a good curriculum that is built around all the National Curriculum subjects and makes good use of schemes of work in PSHE, citizenship and religious education. In Key Stage 5, a wide-ranging and appropriate curriculum enables pupils to make good progress in their independent living skills and to continue to develop functional skills in communication, literacy and numeracy. This is effectively supplemented by the use of alternative provision that extends their range of skills and awareness and helps to prepare them for the next stage in their lives. The curriculum overall is well used to enable pupils to make good progress over time.

Careful attention is paid to the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs. The curriculum, and the way that it is implemented, ensures that statement requirements are fulfilled. Occupational therapy and speech and language therapists provide expert interventions for the pupils as well as advising teachers and tutors. An educational psychologist supports teachers to

develop appropriate learning strategies and a clinical psychiatrist provides expertise regarding mental health conditions.

Physical education takes place in the school's gym as well as at the local leisure centre and swimming pool. It is supplemented by other outdoor education activities, such as football and using the trampoline, which pupils enjoy. The provision has a good impact on improving individuals' health and fitness. Regular outings, such as to museums and local places of interest, extend the pupils' knowledge and interest in their locality and in the world at large. These have recently included very popular visits to the Paralympic Games, and 'education afloat', where pupils experienced and learned about life on a canal boat.

The regular use of cross-curricular links support learning well and make the pupils' experience more meaningful. For example, during the inspection written and verbal literacy was consistently reinforced in all activities and mathematics skills were developed during an ICT lesson. Appropriate advice about future options is provided for pupils through lessons, the review process and visits from advisers.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. It is characterised by a high level of commitment to pupils' wellbeing and care, and all the regulations for independent schools are met. Risk assessments, including those for visits outside school, are thorough. The behaviour management policies are clear and effectively implemented, with all incidents of difficult behaviour carefully recorded and evaluated. However, the school's procedures to analyse behaviour in order to find all possible ways to improve it overall and to reduce incidents of inappropriate behaviour are not yet fully developed. Effective strategies to counter bullying are in use, with a suitable emphasis on helping pupils understand and make sense of their perceptions of being bullied. The dangers associated with the use of the internet are effectively raised. For example, an innovative scheme to enable pupils to use social media safely has been successfully piloted and is ready to be extended to all the relevant pupils in the school. The manner in which these policies and strategies are put into practice, together with effective and vigilant supervision, ensures that pupils are safe in school.

Pupils experience the school as a supportive and caring environment, and confidently place their trust in the teachers and tutors. They say that they feel safe and secure in school. Parents' and carers' views gathered by the school as part of the annual review arrangements show that they very much appreciate the efforts that the school makes to support pupils' development. However, in a recent survey a significant proportion of those who responded were unsure about the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying arrangements. The school has responded quickly and well to this, and has held meetings with parents and carers. It has designed new materials specifically designed to help parents understand and support the school's strategies to avoid bullying.

Staff recruitment is carried out in a thorough manner and the required single central register is correctly maintained. Robust arrangements are made to ensure the suitability of supply staff and those involved with the alternative provision used by the school for the Key Stage 5 pupils. Staff training in child protection and first aid is thorough, and is regularly updated within the recommended timescales. This includes suitable training, at the appropriate higher level, for the designated safeguarding officer. Pupils' safety is a high priority with fire drills and health and safety checks rigorously implemented. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.

Pupils are very well supported to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This covers not only an awareness of the importance of eating and exercising well but also relationships education for older pupils.

Leadership and management**Good**

The leadership and management of the school are good and have a good impact in ensuring that pupils achieve well and make good progress.

Since the last inspection, the school has been required to respond to a substantial increase in the complexity and difficulty of the learning, behaviour and development profiles of the pupils referred to it and, in addition, the proportion of day pupils has increased significantly. Adapting to these changes has been possible because the whole staff team shares the vision and high expectations of the strong and effective leadership of the headteacher and senior team.

Self-evaluation, including the monitoring of teaching, is accurate and the school's leaders are aware that the provision does not currently meet the criteria for outstanding as it did at the previous inspection. They also know what is needed to improve it. In addition, they are aware that, although extensive information is collected concerning pupils' progress and behaviour, arrangements to analyse this information and to discern all possible opportunities to enable improvement are not yet fully developed.

The proprietor has provided suitable premises and facilities for the school. Classrooms are well maintained and of a good size. Specialist teaching areas include appropriate facilities for therapy and a well-equipped food technology area. Appropriate equipment for science teaching and good arrangements for ICT are available throughout the school. Effective use is made of alternative provision to extend the range of the curriculum for older pupils.

All the required information for parents, carers and others is provided or made available through the school's brochure and information packs or on the proprietor's very informative website. The school's complaints procedure meets requirements and is effectively implemented.

The proprietor has ensured that all of the regulations for independent schools are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	113019
Social care unique reference number	SC372504
Inspection number	420228
DfE registration number	830/6009

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	SENAD
Chair	Mark Collins
Headteacher	Kate Britt
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,407
Telephone number	01283 563787
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