

The NAS Anderson School

Rookery Lane, Pilning, South Gloucestershire, BS35 4JN

Inspection dates

6-7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness

Adequate **3**

Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Pupils' achievements in school are adequate, including in English and mathematics where they have made suitable progress in their short time at the school. This is in response to adequate teaching and the use of an appropriate curriculum.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have made significant improvement since coming to the school. When pupils' behaviour is unsettled it is well managed by the staff and the learning of other pupils is rarely affected.
- Teaching is adequate overall. It is not good because it is not consistent and because not enough attention is paid to planning work to suit the abilities and interests of individual pupils.
- There is room for improvement in the way that the assessment of pupils' work is used to plan lessons.
- Leadership and management are adequate. The headteacher has accurately evaluated what the school needs to do to improve. However, plans to help teachers improve pupils' achievements are not yet fully implemented.
- Arrangements to provide detailed information about pupils' progress and staff performance for the proprietor and the school's leaders are not well-enough developed.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a calm, safe and welcoming environment. Very good relationships between staff and pupils help them to settle and overcome their difficulties.
- Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good.

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 six lessons taught by two different teachers. 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.
- Ten questionnaire responses from staff were evaluated.
- There was insufficient information on Parent View, but the inspector spoke with the parents and carers of two of the pupils and the social worker of another.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The NAS Anderson School is a small special school that provides full-time education for boys and girls aged between 10 and 19 years. It is owned and operated by the National Autistic Society. Some of the pupils reside in residential accommodation provided by the proprietor. The school opened in February 2013 and this is its first inspection.
- All of the pupils currently on the school's roll have a statement of special educational needs in relation to autistic spectrum disorders. Most pupils have experienced disrupted education prior to attending the school. One pupil is looked after.
- The current headteacher was appointed in June 2013 and most of the pupils started at the school in September 2013.
- The school makes use of local sports and leisure centres.
- The school aims to realise and maximise each pupil's potential, support them to achieve their aspirations, develop their confidence and self-esteem, and support a successful transition into their local community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to help each pupil make better progress by:
 - enhancing the quality of regular assessments of pupils' achievements in all subjects
 - planning lessons and work for pupils which suit the varied range of individuals' abilities and interests
 - ensuring that marking of pupils' work provides guidance about what they can do to improve their learning.
- Provide more effective long-term curriculum planning and ensure that this is fully implemented.
- Ensure that pupils have further opportunities to learn how to avoid the dangers associated with the inappropriate use of social media sites and text messaging, and to build resilience against them.
- Improve leadership and management so that they have a greater impact on pupils' learning and progress by:
 - implementing the school's development plans for enhancing the performance management of staff
 - making available detailed information about pupils' progress and staff performance for the proprietor and the school's leaders.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Pupils' achievement is adequate. Most pupils have experienced substantial disruption in their education prior to coming to the school and the majority had attended the school for less than one term at the time of the inspection. They now attend school regularly and most pupils take an active part in many of their lessons. For a substantial proportion of pupils this is a significant improvement from previous school experiences. However, their academic progress is adequate rather than good because some remain unsettled in the school environment and because the teaching does not pay enough attention to pupils' individual capabilities. Standards in reading, writing and numeracy are below those expected of pupils of the same age nationally. However, the pupils are making progress in knowledge and understanding through the suitable opportunities which daily literacy and numeracy lessons provide. In areas of literacy they are beginning to make use of the specialist provision available in the school to help them to overcome the difficulties they experience with learning in school. For instance, although many of the pupils are reluctant to write, some are willing to complete tasks by explaining their ideas and understanding to teaching assistants. Similarly, while finding reading in class and group discussion difficult, pupils develop speaking and reading skills while working with the assistants. However, most pupils have difficulty with developing their number skills and many remain reluctant to take an active part in numeracy lessons and their progress is slower.

Nonetheless, pupils participate increasingly actively in the practical and creative subjects available including food technology and environmental science. They enjoy cooking, provide suitable care for the school's many small animals and have recently harvested a range of produce from the school's vegetable garden. Pupils develop their personal interests through the regular use of information and communication technology (ICT), where most are competent at finding and copying information and using the sites and programmes they enjoy. Those with an interest in music have regular opportunities to learn and practise. These activities help pupils to experience taking control of the learning environment and this results in growing self-confidence.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour is good, reflecting the improvement they make from when they join the school. Although some of the pupils continue to struggle to control outbursts of frustration, they are supported well by the staff and the number of these incidents is reducing. Overall, the school provides a calm learning environment, which helps the pupils to learn and make progress. Staff are knowledgeable about pupils' difficulties and are very good at supporting them and helping them to manage their behaviour successfully.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. Their attendance is good and punctuality to lessons is improving. Staff are consistent in their use of agreed approaches to supporting pupils' behaviour. For example, lessons regularly conclude with an opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own learning and behaviour targets. This enables pupils to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own actions. Pupils generally respond well to this and to the school's incentive scheme and enjoy the positive response to their efforts.

All pupils, including those who live in the school's residential facilities, benefit from the excellent partnerships with parents and carers that the school has developed through establishing and maintaining effective communication. Parents and carers say that their children are more confident and far more settled in themselves since coming to the school.

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All staff promote an ethos of understanding and mutual respect very well and this helps the pupils to

become more self-confident. Through their personal, social and health education (PSHE) and through the termly cultural study, pupils gain a good awareness of other cultures, hearing stories from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. These activities promote their awareness of other cultures and help them to develop an attitude of understanding and tolerance. Pupils learn about British institutions and services through citizenship and history lessons and this will be extended through the newly established school parliament. These activities help them to develop the attitudes and skills they need to take an active part in democratic society. The school ensures that whenever political issues are discussed, balanced views are promoted.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate overall because there is a mix of good and less effective teaching. The good teaching maintains the pupils' interest and enables them to develop new knowledge and skills. For example, a history lesson built well on pupils' prior knowledge and generated interesting discussion on social hierarchies, which led to learning about the feudal system in medieval England. In an English lesson pupils had opportunities to carry out individual, internet-based research on questions about Charles Dickens that they had identified in class discussion. Too much teaching, however, is addressed to a whole class that includes pupils of mixed age and differing ability. Some teaching fails to recognise pupils' individual ability and capacity to learn, and thus does not challenge or support all pupils well enough. This can lead to pupils showing a lack of interest and disengaged behaviour so that they do not participate as well as they could and make slower progress. Teachers sometimes spend too much time giving information without ensuring that pupils have really understood what is being presented.

Pupils' abilities are assessed when they start at the school and regularly thereafter. Although teachers know the pupils well, they do not make good enough use of these assessments to plan lessons and tasks for pupils which enable them to make all the progress they can. Teachers make suitable use of their subject knowledge and their understanding of autistic spectrum disorders. They also make regular use of ICT to stimulate learning. Arrangements to identify and track pupils' progress in their various subjects are satisfactory but still in the early stages of development. The school has recently invested in a new software program to bring additional rigour to this work, but its effectiveness has not yet been seen. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, offering praise and encouraging pupils' efforts. However, their comments do not always help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The quality of the curriculum is adequate. It is not good because, although there is a good balance of timetabled subjects which cover the required areas of learning, the curriculum is not, however, implemented in a way that enables pupils to make the progress and development they can, as plans are not adapted well enough to their individual needs.

The curriculum makes suitable use of schemes of work including those for personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and religious education. However, there is room for improvement in long-term curriculum planning so that it makes clear how the learning of pupils of different ages progresses from year to year.

The requirements of the pupils' statements of special educational needs are fulfilled through the curriculum arrangements and each pupil has an individual learning plan. These show suitable targets for areas of learning and development. However, the targets, especially for literacy and numeracy, are not specific enough to help pupils make as much progress as they could in these areas. Speech and language therapists provide expert interventions for the pupils as well as advising teachers and tutors. The school makes use of support from an educational psychologist to develop appropriate learning and behaviour strategies, and a clinical psychiatrist provides expertise as required.

Physical education takes place on the school's outdoor courts as well as at the local leisure centre and swimming pool. It is supplemented by outdoor activities such as horticulture and cycling skills as well as the regular tasks involved with feeding and caring for the school's rabbits and guinea pigs, all of which the pupils enjoy doing. 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. The school is developing plans to extend the use of its woodland to broaden the range of curriculum options for pupils.

Pupils are developing ideas about future careers and college placements and receive valuable advice about the future through PSHE lessons and through the review process. The school has recently established an arrangement for visits from a careers adviser, but this has yet to be implemented.

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' well-being and care, and all the regulations for independent schools are met. It is not outstanding because, although the behaviour management policies are clear and pupils' behaviour is well managed in the classroom, there is still room for improvement in the way that pupils are helped to overcome their barriers to learning so that they have the best possible opportunities to make progress with their academic work and their personal development.

All staff receive training that helps them to understand pupils' frustration and to provide a consistent response to any outbursts that occur in school and as a result physical intervention is rare. Records of responses to inappropriate behaviour are kept methodically. Staff use these to add to the list of useful suggestions that are available to help pupils to settle and take part in lessons. As a result the number of instances of inappropriate behaviour is reducing and they have only limited impact on other pupils' opportunities to learn.

Bullying and the perception of being bullied are considered in response to individual situations and in PSHE lessons. Bullying is rare in the school and pupils are aware of what action to take if they are bullied. They learn about the dangers associated with the bullying that takes place on social network sites and the inappropriate use of text messages. However, the school is aware that it needs to do more to help them to learn how to avoid these dangers and to build resilience against them. Pupils experience the school as a supportive and caring environment, and confidently place their trust in their teachers and tutors. Parents and carers very much appreciate the efforts that the school makes to support pupils' development.

Staff recruitment is carried out in a thorough manner and the required single central register is correctly maintained. 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 implemented rigorously. Risk assessments, including those for visits outside school, are thorough. Arrangements for educational trips are well planned and clearly recorded. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.

Pupils are very well supported to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They exercise well and understand the importance of healthy eating, and they enjoy very much the high-quality lunches and healthy snacks that are provided.

Leadership and management

Adequate

The leadership and management of the school are adequate. They are not good or better because the pupils are only making adequate progress as a result of the school's arrangements. The

headteacher receives regular and valuable support from a senior representative of the proprietor and engages in weekly teleconferences with other headteachers in the group. However, he has only been at the school for a limited time, and while the plans he has developed indicate that the school has substantial capacity to improve, many of these are still in early stages of implementation. They include arranging for detailed information about pupils' progress and staff performance to be consistently available to the school management team and the proprietor; and using new software to support more rigorous assessment of individual pupils' abilities so that lessons can be better planned to target individuals' needs and interests. In addition, suitable plans are in place to strengthen the management of staff performance, involving regular observation of teaching and learning as well as scrutiny of pupils' work. This is so that teachers receive knowledgeable and focused support to improve their teaching and enhance pupils' learning and achievement.

The approach of the proprietor to the learning and personal development of young people on the autistic spectrum is strongly promoted by the school's leaders and is shared and understood throughout the school community. This has a positive impact on pupils' development.

All pupils, including those who are looked after by the local authority, benefit from very effective meetings involving both school and residential staff, together with local authorities, parents and carers and other relevant agencies, where issues concerning their progress and well-being are carefully considered. The meetings are productive and beneficial and appreciated by the parents and carers and social workers involved.

The proprietor has provided the school with excellent learning facilities including classrooms that are light and airy, and well resourced. The premises and accommodation are maintained to a good standard. Inspiring photographs and examples of pupils' work contribute to providing an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements and is effectively implemented. 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	138563
Social care unique reference number	SC449331
Inspection number	420281
DfE registration number	803/6009

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	10–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Carol Homsden
Headteacher	Mark Helstrip
Date of previous school inspection	First inspection
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,600
Telephone number	01454 632532
Email address	nasanderson@nas.org.uk

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