

Halton School

31–33 Main Street, Halton, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2AN

Inspection dates	6–8 November 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Good leadership and management ensure that pupils achieve well and the outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps pupils to develop their self-belief and behave extremely well.
- The headteacher and his team have worked tirelessly to ensure that teaching has remained of a high standard since the last inspection whilst making key improvements to the school's work.
- Teaching is good and this ensures that pupils achieve well including in English, mathematics and science.
- Outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils ensures that they feel very safe and free to concentrate on their studies.
- The good curriculum ensures that pupils' needs are closely met and they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers do not always plan the learning outcomes they expect from pupils of all abilities in each lesson.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to achieve as well as they can in gaining skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

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

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by three different teachers. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and held meetings with staff including the director of education, headteacher, staff and pupils.
- The school's documentation was checked including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of pupils' progress, assessment records and self-evaluation. The inspector also looked at documentation relating to the school's welfare, health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- There were no Parent View responses. Questionnaire responses from pupils were analysed.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2000. It is a small independent special school which caters for residential pupils and is registered for up to 14 boys and girls aged from seven to 14 years who have significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school is owned by Keys Childcare Limited which also owns a number of other schools in England.
- Currently, there are 13 pupils on roll. All pupils are of White British heritage, nearly all have a statement of special educational needs and around half are in the care of their local authority.
- The school aims to provide 'a positive and safe environment where pupils are nurtured educationally, socially and spiritually'.
- The school has no religious affiliation.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in June 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching improves to outstanding by requiring teachers to always plan the learning outcomes they expect from pupils of all abilities in each lesson.
- Ensure that the curriculum improves to outstanding by providing more opportunities for pupils to achieve as well as they can in gaining skills in ICT.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good because teaching and the curriculum are good. The excellent quality of day-to-day care, guidance and support provided for pupils is also a significant factor which helps pupils to make sustained progress in most areas of learning over time. Pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the work in light of their starting points and capabilities in different subjects. They are achieving equally well. This includes pupils with different special educational needs and capabilities, boys, girls and those in care. For example, a number of pupils make gains in tiny steps but their achievements are just as good as those of other pupils.

Achievement in English, mathematics and science is good. Teachers and their assistants promote the development of good speaking, listening, language, reading and writing skills in most lessons. This approach has ensured that pupils quickly develop their basic skills in literacy. For example, in a history lesson, much opportunity was given to pupils to read aloud to develop their speaking and reading skills and to improve their writing as they learnt about the Vikings. Classroom support and interventions are effective. Pupils receive much support in the classroom and this is supplemented well by a good range of expert therapeutic support from the company's specialist staff. School records indicate that pupils are closing gaps in their education with their peers in other similar schools and taking advantage of the school's good curriculum. A significant number of pupils gained external accreditations in the last school year including in areas such as writing, basic mathematics and personal skills. These factors demonstrate that pupils develop and apply a wide range of skills so that they are well prepared for the future.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are outstanding. Pupils mature very quickly. They are full of personality and confidence. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. The great majority of pupils sustain very high attendance rates and this clearly reflects pupils' enjoyment of school life. The school is a very orderly and peaceful community. Pupils respond very well to the expectations of staff regarding working hard and personal conduct. There is often pin-drop silence in lessons as pupils concentrate on their work. Behaviour is exemplary, in and around the school. Pupils' consistently thoughtful behaviour and zest for learning make an excellent contribution to the school's ethos and helps them to achieve well in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Relationships between pupils are extremely good. In a rewards assembly, pupils were on the edge of their seats, eager to see what their peers had earned and were generous in their applause for those gaining certificates. School records indicate that pupils are settled into learning routines very quickly by the school. There is a remarkable reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour from individuals since joining the school. The school has excellent procedures to promote outstanding behaviour. Furthermore, work in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons and discussions in assemblies are very effective in helping pupils to develop anger management strategies. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and they feel very safe in school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Much work in PSHCE lessons, religious education and during assemblies enables pupils to develop extremely good personal qualities. The school is very successful in raising self-confidence. This is reflected in pupils' determination to achieve well. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on important matters in their education and in their lives. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They are taught to respect the civil and criminal law. Adults often discuss moral dilemmas with pupils in various lessons. In a discussion about capital punishment, pupils gave very thoughtful and well-argued points of view. Social skills development is excellent. There are many opportunities for social development through collaborative tasks in lessons, PSHCE and through

interacting with others in the community. Pupils recently met the local mayor and a Member of Parliament. The proprietor has ensured that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council provides a very effective pupil voice. Members are elected by their peers and this supports pupils' understanding of democracy. Pupils are very concerned about those less fortunate than themselves and actively support many charities. The school provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Educational visits include those to theatres, museums and several different places of worship. Related work ensures that pupils develop a very good understanding of their own and other cultures in Great Britain. Pupils are strongly committed to the importance of diversity and equality between people regardless of race, gender or disability. They are resolute in their belief that it is essential to respect the faiths, traditions and customs of others in modern Britain and say that community harmony is paramount.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good. Consequently, most pupils and groups of pupils including looked after children, boys, girls and those with different special educational needs, are making good progress and achieving well over time. Teachers have established a strong ethos for learning and this ensures that pupils are effectively engaged in their work. Teachers expect pupils to achieve well and frequently tell them to 'aim high'. As a result, pupils know that teachers want them to do well. They skilfully question and prompt pupils and this ensures that pupils always work hard and learn to think for themselves. Basic skills in language, reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively. The school places a strong emphasis on promoting literacy skills. For example, in a PSHCE lesson there was much reading aloud from all pupils and written work to do on the theme of friendship. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the success of lessons by providing much support for individuals. Teachers use the school's adequate resources well to support learning. Behaviour management is a towering strength of the school and any disruptive behaviour is managed very effectively. Praise, encouragement and rewards are frequently used to motivate pupils. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting activities for pupils. However, although lesson planning meets regulatory requirements, teachers do not always plan the learning outcomes they expect from pupils of all abilities in each lesson. Consequently, pupils do not learn outstandingly over time because the work is not always fully matched to their needs.

Assessment systems are good. When pupils start at the school an assessment is carried out of their basic skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Procedures for ongoing assessment ensure that the school knows how well pupils are performing. This information is used well by the school to re-shape teaching to ensure that pupils' learn well. Teachers insist on good presentation and neatness in pupils' workbooks. Marking is good and pupils are provided with good feedback to let them know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum and other activities are good. This ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and individual needs and interests are met well. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being. The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress in their academic development and outstanding gains in terms of personal development. The curriculum is well planned and organised. Schemes of work enable pupils to make gains in their knowledge and understanding progressively in all the required areas of learning. Teachers explain the importance of gaining skills in language, speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics to pupils at every opportunity. Consequently, pupils view the acquisition of skills in these areas as a top priority. However, the school recognises that although the regulatory requirements are met, there are not enough opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to achieve outstandingly in developing their ICT skills. The school offers a good number of external accreditation options. These include areas such as history, food technology, healthy eating and basic first aid. Pupils are given positive support and guidance regarding making choices about further education and careers. An external agency attends the

school regularly to develop pupils' careers awareness and personal skills. Educational visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. For example, pupils recently went to an environmental science centre to support their topic work and an Islamic cultural centre as part of their work in religious education.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Provision for pupils' welfare, health, safety and safeguarding is outstanding. All of the regulations in these regards are met and the school has fully implemented all of the required policies. Pupils form excellent relationships with their peers and adults in school who they view as excellent role-models. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and highly valued as individuals. As a result of these factors, pupils feel very special and develop high aspirations for the future. Staff are highly committed and competent in promoting pupils' well-being. They understand their roles and responsibilities through detailed written guidance about the school's policies and procedures. Senior managers are well trained in safer recruitment. The school carries out all of the required checks to ensure that all adults in school are suitable to work with children. Checks are recorded as required on a single central register. The designated officer for child protection and all other staff are appropriately trained regarding child protection. All staff are well trained to ensure that pupils in their care are not exploited in any way. Two staff are fully trained in administering first aid. Risk assessments are carried out for learning activities in and out of school. Any risks to safety are clearly identified along with detailed risk management procedures. Fire risk assessments are carefully attended to and the school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A clear policy is in place to eliminate bullying and this is very effective.

Much work in PSHCE ensures that pupils develop a very good understanding of how they can keep themselves and others safe. The police and fire services are regular visitors to the school and give talks on many aspects of personal safety. The school promotes healthy living by encouraging regular participation in sports and take-up rates are good.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. Judging by the views expressed by parents and carers in pupils' annual reviews, they are very pleased with the quality of education and care provided. The effectiveness of the school's leadership can be seen in pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. A great emphasis on PSHCE has resulted in outstanding behaviour, and the excellent promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The headteacher leads by example and works tirelessly with his staff to provide a good education for all pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear vision, high expectations and ambition which are communicated effectively to all staff. Good team work is emphasised at every opportunity including daily staff meetings. Leaders ensure that communications between the school and residential settings are effective. This has resulted in after-school activities dovetailing positively with the school's good curriculum to ensure outstanding personal development. Self-evaluation is accurate and insightful. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses. At the last inspection all areas of the school's work were judged as good. Since then, leaders have systematically made improvements to attendance, behaviour, personal development and the provision for welfare, health and safety. The leadership of teaching is effective. Teaching is thoroughly and accurately evaluated. Arrangements for professional development are good. As a result of these factors, teaching is consistently strong. The school attaches a high priority to developing basic skills in key areas of learning including literacy and mathematics. This is reflected in good achievement in these areas. Leaders recognise that there are not enough opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to achieve as well as they can in ICT. Plans are being developed to remedy this, including further training for staff to help them teach basic skills in this area.

The school's premises and accommodation are well maintained. All of the requirements regarding the provision of information for parents, carers and others and for the complaints procedures are

met. The proprietor has also ensured that all of the independent school standards 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	133485
Social care unique reference number	SC005204
Inspection number	422753
DfE registration number	876/6000

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 for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7–14 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keys Childcare Limited
Headteacher	Graham McHenry
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 June 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,540
Telephone number	01928 589810
Fax number	01928 592475
Email address	haltonschool@keyschildcare.co.uk

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