

# Avon Park School

St John's Avenue, Rugby, CV22 5HR

<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–9 October 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Senior leaders have high expectations and support staff well so that there is a clear focus on transforming the learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties faced by the pupils.
- Pupils join the school displaying extremely challenging behaviour but they are very well supported in developing much more positive attitudes and social skills.
- Good support for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps pupils to think more positively about themselves and other people.
- The school successfully promotes learning about British values of democracy and tolerance of others who hold differing views and faiths.
- Well-established routines successfully implemented by staff help to ensure that this is a safe place to learn and to develop more positive attitudes.
- Pupils have a range of complex learning and emotional difficulties and when they start have had very troubled times in other schools. Here they are able to learn and make good progress.
- Teachers work extremely well with their teaching assistants to create strong classroom teams that focus on meeting the individual needs of pupils.
- Very effective use of tablet computers by every pupil enhances learning and helps re-engage pupils with learning.
- Individual progress is checked and, when a pupil fails to make expected progress, a wide range of additional support is available to get learning back on track.
- The Witherslack Group, who own the school, provide excellent support, including support for the professional development of staff. There is a focus of raising standards and the school, only a year old, is already successful.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Class teachers are not fully held to account for the performance of their pupils.
- The roles and responsibilities for senior leaders and for the leaders of subjects or other areas of responsibility are not clearly established.

### 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 inspector observed six lessons, covering all five teachers and a higher level teaching assistant who lead a Forest School session in the schools environmental area. The inspector was joined by a member of the senior leadership team for each observation.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy director of schools for the Witherslack Group and members of the school's leadership team.
- There were not enough responses to Ofsted's on-line Parent View survey to trigger an analysis of parents' views because this is currently such a small school. However, their views were gathered from the school's own survey undertaken earlier this year, which is closely based on Parent View.
- The views of staff were gathered from the staff questionnaire and from talking with staff throughout the inspection.
- A meeting was held with a representative group of pupils and discussions held with as many pupils as possible to gain their views about the school. The inspector looked at their work and talked to them during lesson observations, and a detailed scrutiny of work was undertaken. Some pupils read to the inspector.
- A range of written evidence was examined, including information on pupils' progress, teachers' planning and marking, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Avon Park is a day school that is part of the Witherslack Group. It currently has 27 pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, both boys and girls, and is increasing that number over time. It is registered to admit up to 70 pupils between the ages of six to 16 years.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of complex learning difficulties, communication difficulties and challenging behaviours. A significant number have been diagnosed as having autistic spectrum disorders. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- Virtually all pupils are from a White British background and none speaking English as an additional language.
- The school was first registered with the Department for Education in October 2013 and admitted its first pupils in November 2013. This is its first inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the percentage of pupils making better than expected progress in each class by:
  - introducing half-termly pupil progress meetings between class teachers and a member of the senior leadership team to review the progress of each pupil
  - giving teachers responsibility for tracking and monitoring their pupils, and assessing their progress
  - supporting teachers to identify the level of work produced by their pupils and to keep examples of best work
  - subject leaders working with class teachers to analyse the impact of any additional support given to individual pupils
  - promoting the achievement of the most able and most talented by ensuring that they are always fully challenged.
- As the school continues to expand, ensure that systems for leadership and management:
  - allow senior leaders specific time to plan and focus on large whole-school matters that will drive the school forward
  - support the development of the roles of subject leaders so they are able to monitor classrooms, lead training, demonstrate best practice and help teachers develop their skills in understanding the levels at which each pupil is working.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The experienced and successful headteacher has been joined by a very committed leadership team to create what has become a successful school after only one year of operation. They lead by example and always seek to demonstrate best practice.
- Leaders enjoy good support from staff, creating a team committed to helping pupils do their best. There is an expectation that all staff will focus on supporting pupils' rapid progress, reflecting the school's high aspirations.
- The school knows that as it expands there will be a need to ensure that management systems are fit for purpose. It accepts that senior leaders will need more time to focus on being able to make the key decisions for moving the school forward. At present, teachers who lead key subject areas such as English and mathematics do not have sufficiently well-established roles and responsibilities that allow them to fully support the leadership effectively and take their subjects forward.
- Monitoring of lessons, planning and marking is undertaken regularly. This provides information that feeds into the appraisal process. This includes opportunities for teachers to self-assess their own performance. It leads to a review of performance and sets measurable objectives for the coming year, which are reviewed regularly. There is a clear and direct link between pay and performance.
- Linked to this are good opportunities for professional development. Staff are encouraged to take up a range of opportunities to help them with their career development, as well as to meet school needs.
- Self-evaluation is detailed and thorough. It is very accurate and, consequently, very useful in pointing to key priorities for improvement and school development.
- The curriculum contains clear focus on improving skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. Pupils who arrive with histories of broken education and failure start to catch up. A lot of work is undertaken through project work, much of which is imaginative and engages pupils. Now that the oldest pupil is in Year 8, the requirement to introduce careers guidance is in place.
- There is good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. A good example is the way in which pupils are encouraged to think about the needs of others, and to work and play with others in a cooperative way. They are much better able to accept that other people will hold different views and have different faiths. Care is taken to ensure balance in the curriculum and that extremist views cannot be taught.
- There are good standards of welfare, health and safety, including detailed risk assessment and health and safety checks. Leaders ensure that staff are aware of pupils at risk of harm and safeguarding is rigorous. This includes positive working with the local safeguarding children board.
- The school constantly seeks ways of engaging with parents, especially those difficult to reach. This includes home visits, a daily home-school diary and the provision of support to help parents facing difficulties with their children. There is a clear and published complaints process.
- There are very positive links with a range of external professional agencies, such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who work with a significant number of pupils. There are very positive links with the local authority which, for example, allow the school the opportunity to purchase its educational psychology and occupational therapy services which promote effective education.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The school is the latest to be opened by the Witherslack Group. The company's leaders have a clear view of the effectiveness of the school because they regularly check its data and their own teams monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning regularly. Rigorous procedures hold the school and

its leaders to account, including those for the appraisal process for staff. The company's leaders are aware of the performance and pay of each teacher, and give positive support when improvement is necessary. The headteacher is set challenging targets that are monitored through the year. Regular reports are submitted to the board of directors covering key areas of school life, including the curriculum. At the same time, the company provides effective support for learning through its own advice and support team, and through a large investment in supporting staff's professional development. Financial planning is robust and focused on meeting need.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enter the school with extremely challenging behaviour, having been permanently excluded or at grave risk of being permanently excluded, from previous schools, or having dropped out of education. Each pupil has an individual behaviour plan which is monitored carefully and which supports good improvement over time. This is a new school and as teachers become more used to the focus on implementing these plans, greater consistency of practice is developing.
- There is a clear and consistently applied behaviour policy that over time supports pupils to become much more responsive for their own behaviour. This helps them re-engage with learning in a positive way. They start to make good progress as a result. They appreciate, for example, that discriminatory language or language that seeks to put people down is not acceptable.
- When incidents do occur around the school, including in lessons, they are dealt with a calm, low-key way that does not affect the learning of others. All incidents are logged and analysed by senior leaders to look for trends or patterns that might trigger certain behaviours in individuals so that these can be addressed.
- The behaviour of pupils is monitored throughout the day, including break and lunchtime. A system of positive rewards leads to pupils being able to acquire points which lead to rewards of various kinds. Pupils readily accept that this is a very effective way of encouraging them to behave well.
- Care is taken to try to ensure that pupils understand bullying and why it is not acceptable. The detailed policy makes clear reference to different types of bullying, including that based on gender, sexuality, race, creed or ethnicity.
- Pupils learn about different cultures, faiths and cultures and show their appreciation of the diversity of modern British society in a positive way.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. This includes carrying out of detailed risk assessments in school and prior to any visits. All legal requirements relating to health and safety are met. Clear and effective arrangements cover the provision of first aid, provision for pupils taken ill and fire safety. Pupils are taught the risks of misuse of the internet or social networking sites.
- Pupils and a large majority of parents who expressed their views believe that the school is a safe place.
- Staff are trained in the use of restraint when there is a risk that pupils might hurt themselves or others. Incidents are logged and analysed thoroughly. The records shows that incidents of having to hold pupils have reduced to a small number because the school has used its analysis of previous incidents to de-escalate any emerging issues promptly.
- Since the school opened two pupils have received fixed-term exclusions. In both cases, subsequent reviews led to them being placed in other settings where their wider needs could be more effectively met.
- Care is taken to monitor all visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable, especially where they might come into contact with pupils. This includes visitors to lessons or assemblies.
- While attendance is low compared to the national average, this is often the result of wider difficulties beyond the school's control, not least of which is that many are brought to school by taxi sometimes from a considerable distance. The school works very hard to promote good attendance, working directly with

parents.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is very effective and leads to a high level of individual support for pupils. As a result, pupils are supported effectively and make good progress from their individual starting points, including progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all.
- Lesson planning is detailed, making good use of information on the progress of pupils. Work is generally set at just the right level to challenge every pupil within the wide range of ability seen in classes, although the most able are not always as effectively challenged and their achievement is sometimes not as high as it could be.
- There are high expectations of pupils and staff work hard to engage them. When pupils fall short of their expectations, there is always another chance with no recriminations. The focus is on learning and encouraging pupils to accept that they can be successful after their previous years of failure.
- Most teachers challenge their pupils through effective questions that help to get them thinking. They also make very effective use of technology. This is best reflected in the outstanding use of tablet computers. Every pupil has their own and uses it throughout the day to complete work. It is, for example, very effective in encouraging pupils to write, even if they had previously been reluctant. Appropriate reading books are downloaded to encourage pupils to become more active readers. This initiative has been so successful that the Witherslack Group is now to introduce it across all its schools.
- The school has a clear marking policy which is usually implemented effectively. It shows pupils what they have done well and what they could do to improve. The best marking also shows pupils responding to such comments to show that they understand what they need to do to improve. Good support is provided to help pupils meet their challenging targets. Over time it is possible to see the good progress they make reflected in the work they do in their books and tablet computers.
- Leaders analyse the progress of each pupil over time and look to identify any possible differences in the performance of different groups, such as boys and girls, or those who might be seen as disadvantaged. However, effective teaching for each individual means that no such differences are evident.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Attainment is low because of broken education prior to joining the school and the complex learning difficulties of pupils. However, once they are admitted they make rapid progress from their individual starting points, re-engaging with education and often enjoying their learning, so that achievement is good.
- Progress is measured by reference to the national progression guidance. This shows that the vast majority of pupils are making at least expected progress. Currently, it also shows that 21 per cent are making better than expected progress in English and mathematics. While this is good, the figure is not yet high enough for achievement to be judged as outstanding.
- The school is seeking to introduce changes that will address this and accepts that it can further raise current levels. It is seeking ways of making class teachers more accountable for assessment of their pupils, and for identifying and keeping on file examples of pupils' best work, so that they can focus on raising outcomes. For example, at present the most able and most talented are not always clearly identified and pushed to do their very best.
- A problem for teachers in very small schools is being able to accurately identify the quality of pieces of work when the samples they have are so small. Opportunities for working alongside teachers in other of the company's schools are in place and Avon Park has recently established links with local mainstream schools to further develop such opportunities to work alongside colleagues. As the role of subject leader

is addressed and they play a greater role in leadership they will be better able to better support class teachers so they challenge every pupil to do their best.

- Information on individual progress is collated on a termly basis. Teachers identify pupils who are not making the level of progress expected. A good range of strategies and extra support has been developed and a specific teacher works with such pupils on specific programmes over a six-week period to help them catch up. This is an effective way of stopping pupils slipping back with their progress.
- Standards in reading are low when pupils arrive but they are actively encouraged to read, including downloading suitable books to their tablet computers. Teachers also use a range of strategies to promote phonics (the knowledge of letters and the sounds they make). Over time this is encouraging pupils to read more and better, and to start to bridge the gap that is very apparent when they start at the school.
- In its first year the school has demonstrated that it is making a positive contribution to helping its students make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As students move into Key Stage 4, preparation is already underway to ensure that this progress will continue. This includes planning to ensure that there will be a smooth transition to life after school.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140354
<b>Inspection number</b>	447299
<b>DfE registration number</b>	937/6008

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	27
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Witherslack Group
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Barrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sophie Garner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	First inspection
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£44,793 - £79,281 depending on individual needs
<b>Telephone number</b>	01788 524448
<b>Fax number</b>	01788 524448
<b>Email address</b>	admin@avonparkschool.co.uk

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