

Mountwood Academy

4 Mount Street, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 8BS

Inspection dates	23–25 September 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Pupils, including those who are disabled and have special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. The school's records show the quality of teaching is improving each year.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are happy in the school; they enjoy coming and attendance levels are high.
- Pupils say that they feel safe because the school staff keep a close watch on them and quickly step in to provide support.
- Parents, staff and local authorities who place pupils at the school, are very positive about the way the school ensures that pupils' needs are well supported.
- The activities provided for pupils are good because leaders match them well to pupils' wide range of different needs, such as their communication skills.
- The principal and deputy headteacher analyse the wide range of information collected about pupils' development. They use this knowledge well to provide training to boost staff skills. As a result, the school keeps improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Activities provided by staff are not always sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Feedback given to pupils about their work is not always acted upon. As a result, they miss out on this important opportunity to improve their skills further.
- Occasionally, pupils' good attitudes and involvement in their learning can slip and this limits them making outstanding progress.
- Opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and beliefs do not ensure that pupils have an outstanding understanding of living in multicultural Britain.
- The proprietors are not as clear as they could be about how well the school is performing and what is needed to secure the best improvements.

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 teaching in five lessons; all were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher. He also carried out short visits to classrooms with the deputy headteacher. He observed pupils during lunchtime and spoke to pupils in separate meetings.
- Separate meetings were held with the principal, deputy headteacher and staff. One meeting was held with two directors, including the proprietor. Meetings were also held with behaviour support staff from a local authority and a speech and language therapist. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a placing authority representative, an external consultant appointed by the school, staff involved in recruitment at the company's headquarters and a parent.
- The inspector took account of the results of online surveys which give pupils' and placing authorities' views, together with responses from 14 staff questionnaires. There were not enough responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) for the inspector to make a meaningful analysis.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included the school's prospectus, information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its performance, and work in pupils' books. Records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Jonathan Woodyatt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mountwood Academy is an independent school which is also registered as a children's home for young people who have a range of complex learning difficulties and require residential provision for up to 52 weeks a year.
- The school is located in a converted former detached town residence. It caters for boys and girls aged between eight and 19 years.
- The school aims to meet the needs of pupils who have learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, physical disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- There are currently seven pupils on roll at the school, three of which have a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils on school roll, who are over the age of 16 years, are also registered at Myerscough College and attend full-time courses there. Consequently there are no pupils attending post-16 provision at the school.
- The school was previously inspected in February 2011.
- An inspection of the care provision took place at the same time as the education inspection and is reported on separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement so that it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that helpful comments provided by staff to improve pupils' work are always acted upon by pupils
 - providing activities that closely match pupils' needs and skills in order to boost progress further.
- Develop personal and social education to instil even better attitudes to learning.
- Increase the range of opportunities for pupils to learn about multicultural Britain, including the diversity of beliefs.
- Increase the understanding of directors about how well the school is performing in order that they can challenge school leaders better.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at different times in the year and at different stages in their schooling. They start with skills that are typically low or very low compared to those of others of a similar age.
- Leaders and staff ensure pupils undertake a period of assessment as soon as they start in order to accurately determine their levels of skill in different subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. Pupils and placing authority representatives commented on how well the school uses these assessments to provide different subjects which are relevant to pupils' interests and abilities.
- Leaders use assessment information well to develop plans for ensuring pupils' different needs, including special educational needs, are well supported. For example, as part of the school's activities, the school provides regular therapy for pupils who need to boost their health and wellbeing; this takes place in a purpose-built provision on a different site and is very effective.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is below average due to the complexity of pupils' needs. However, pupils have targets set by staff to ensure that they make good progress and evidence in their books demonstrates that they regularly meet these. Sometimes pupils miss out on making even better progress when they lose concentration; however, their overall achievement is good.
- Pupils, including the most able, who demonstrate the skills necessary to achieve awards or qualifications, access courses at college which are suited to their skills and abilities. Recent success in gaining GCSE passes in mathematics, English, science, general studies and religious education is an example of their good achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the excellent support they receive, which is planned effectively to meet their individual needs.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. In conversations they talked about how the staff have helped boost their confidence as well as their skills. As a result, pupils participate successfully in further education opportunities such as placements at college.

Quality of teaching

Good

- Teaching is good. School records and inspection evidence demonstrate that teaching has improved well since the last inspection because leaders have ensured that the subject knowledge and teaching skills of the staff continue to improve.
- Pupils benefit very well from the small classroom environments and the close support from staff. This ensures that staff can enthuse and motivate pupils well. In addition, this close support ensures that the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs can be met well. This demonstrates the school's effectiveness in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Staff use innovative teaching techniques to develop pupils' reading and writing. These have been developed well by the school since the last inspection. For example, pupils who struggle to speak have developed skills to recognise symbols that represent the words that they want to say. They have learned to press the appropriate buttons, linked to these symbols, on their specialist tablet computers which can speak these words for them. By improving communication skills in this way, staff have ensured that pupils progress well in this important aspect of their development.
- Mathematics is taught well because teachers use a variety of resources to help pupils with different needs to learn effectively. For example, in a mathematics lesson one pupil used a weighing scale appropriately to identify correctly how many counters were needed for it to

balance.

- Pupils who attend college explained that the staff are good at helping them to settle because they have been prepared well for their next steps through the social activities provided by the school.
- The good teaching skills of the staff lead to activities being provided for pupils that ensure they can make good progress from their different starting points. However, at times the work provided does not ensure that pupils make outstanding progress because it is not always matched as closely as it should be to pupils' different abilities in order to challenge them better.
- There are ample opportunities provided by staff to assess how well pupils are doing either in lessons or through frequent marking of their books. However, pupils do not always act on the helpful advice provided and this limits them from making best progress because, for example, they do not learn well enough from their mistakes.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is clearly reflected in the sensible and responsible manner in which they take part in discussions with staff and others at different times in the day.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. Their levels of attendance are high compared to those in other schools and have been so over a number of years.
- At lunchtime, pupils and staff eat together in one of the larger classrooms. Consequently, pupils benefit well from these opportunities to build important relationships and improve their social skills effectively. This helps them to prepare well for their next stages of education or employment.
- Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths as part of their religious education programme. This helps them explore people's different beliefs well. However, there are not enough opportunities to find out even more about these important spiritual aspects, for instance by listening to visitors or attending different places of worship, in order to be even better equipped to live in a diverse society.
- Pupils have good opportunities in personal, social and health education to consider how to improve their behaviour and they repeatedly show a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. However, at times pupils' attitudes can slip when they struggle to manage their own behaviour, and this has an adverse effect on their learning. Consequently, there is more to do to ensure that their attitudes to learning are consistently positive.
- There have been no permanent or fixed term exclusions since the last inspection. The school's records show bullying very rarely happens. There are very few racist incidents in the school's logs and no homophobic incidents. Records show that incidents are typically name-calling and that staff are very quick to deal with these so that they are not repeated.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff, pupils and the placing authority representatives agree with this view. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because staff keep a close lookout for them at all times during the school day. The school's arrangements for the recruitment of staff, training in safeguarding and first aid, and the management of health and safety, including fire safety, meet the regulatory requirements.

Leadership and management

Good

- The principal and deputy headteacher are closely involved with rigorous monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the year. This has led to an honest and accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' self-evaluation provides them with the information necessary to make the decisions, such as developing staff skills, which have led to the school's rapid improvements since the last inspection.

- Leaders have established high expectations for the quality of teaching provided by staff and have strived to increase their skills, such as through whole-staff and individual training. They have used different strategies well, such as linking pay to targets, in order for the standards of teaching to rise over time. Occasionally pupils' learning is held back when activities provided by staff do not challenge them to make the best progress of which they are capable.
- The activities provided for pupils are innovative; staff use a wide range of approaches to ensure pupils can take part fully in learning: they meet pupils' different needs well. Leaders secure extra help from specialists, such as speech and language therapists, which makes a significant contribution to improving pupils' essential communication skills.
- A representative from a placing authority commented very favourably on the improvements made by the young person that they had placed at the school. They recognise how well the staff have supported pupils' different needs and how well leaders provide programmes of learning that pupils enjoy and find interesting. Similarly, a parent told the inspector about the considerable improvements seen in their children's progress.
- The proprietors take a close interest in how well the school is performing when they meet every month. They visit regularly, seek out the views of the school leaders and consider the advice from the external consultant that they appoint. However, they are not fully aware of what the information provided by the leaders is telling them and this limits their ability to hold leaders fully to account for the school's performance and to drive the school further to become outstanding.
- The leaders and proprietor have ensured that safeguarding meets requirements.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136069
Inspection number	446274
DfE registration number	888/6056

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	ROC North West Limited
Chair	Hillary Waterhouse
Principal	Graeme Pyle
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,000
Telephone number	01524 762222
Fax number	01524 760067
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