

Loxley Hall School

Stafford Road, Uttoxeter, ST14 8RS

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership and management, including effective support from governors, have ensured a professional nurturing approach throughout the school that helps students to transform their behaviour and personal development.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Classes are calm and students mostly have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The residential provision is outstanding in all areas.
- Teaching is good. Activities are fun and promote good and relevant learning.
- Students make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Extra support, based on assessment of students' progress, is provided for students who fall behind.
- By the end of Year 11, students are well prepared for their next stage. They gain worthwhile vocational qualifications and continue in education or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few students do not attend as regularly as they ought. This impedes their rate of progress.
- There is some inconsistency in setting work in lessons at the correct level of challenge.
- While the marking of books is thorough, as are the discussions with students about what they need to do to improve their work, teachers do not always follow up quickly enough on the points of improvement they give to students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited twelve lessons taught by nine different teachers across both sites and at an external alternative provision. Eight of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors examined students' work across the school jointly with senior leaders. They also listened to students read and looked at their reading records.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, head of care, curriculum manager, facilities manager, family support worker and other members of staff. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. Informal and programmed discussions were held with students during the school and residential time, and a telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. In addition, the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the manager of one of the alternative provisions.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents, including those relating to students' academic and social progress, school self-evaluation, curriculum and assessment, students' residential experience, and keeping students safe.
- Inspectors took account of inspection questionnaires returned by 23 members of staff together with the school's own surveys of the views of students, parents and carers and staff. There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents) to be shown.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Julian Mason

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Loxley Hall School provides for students aged 11 to 16 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students are boys. It offers residential provision, in two purpose-built blocks, as part of its educational provision.
- All students have complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and very challenging behaviour. Many experience other significant difficulties and social circumstances which affect their ability to trust adults and learn.
- All students have statements of special educational needs.
- A high proportion of students receive the pupil premium, the additional government funding for those eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by their local authority. A significantly high number of students are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and none speak English as an additional language.
- The school has high levels of student mobility. Students join at any time in their secondary school years, often as late as Years 10 or 11. Each year a number of Key Stage 3 students return to mainstream school before they reach Year 10.
- In September 2014, a Key Stage 4 annex opened on a new site. The school operates on a split site.
- The school increased its number of planned places to 96 in September 2014.
- Most students stay in the residential accommodation for up to two to three nights (on a rotating basis) to supplement their day-time education. All have an equal chance to experience residential accommodation.
- The school makes use of 15 off-site alternative provisions: South Staffordshire College; Highfields Farm; Burton College; Nova Training Brownhills; Nova Training Stafford; Independent Learning Centre Cannock; Sporting Stars Milton; Leek College; Leek Honeycomb Centre; Greenwood Studios Cannock; Walsall College; Multi Media Arts Project Walsall; Nacro Longton; Churnet Valley Steam Railway; and John Sewell Garages. These provisions provide a wide range of vocational and GCSE courses as well as extended work experience opportunities.
- The school became federated with Cicely Haughton School, a day and residential school for pupils aged five to 11 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, on 1 May 2013. The governing body and executive headteacher are responsible for both schools.
- On the 25 September 2014 the school received its conversion order and is going to convert to academy status on 1 April 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects so as to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make effective use of what students already know and can do to plan work at the correct level of challenge to move them on more rapidly with new learning
 - all teachers follow through on the points they make on how students can improve their work when they mark their books and when they conference with them face-to-face to ensure that students make those improvements speedily.
- Improve attendance by:
 - establishing meetings between the school's family worker, parents and carers to identify the reasons for a few students persistently failing to attend school
 - working with these students, their parents and carers, and the deputy headteacher of the school with responsibility for driving attendance upwards to draw up and implement plans to help students improve their attendance.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team and governors have developed a nurturing learning culture. Consequently, students overcome their fears of learning and believe that they can succeed. Most do.
- Senior leaders monitor effectively the impact of teaching. Teachers receive training based on these checks and most respond enthusiastically and improve their practice. However, in a few instances training has not yet had the impact required.
- Ongoing assessment of students' behaviour is used to set challenging targets to help them improve.
- The residential provision is very well organised and managed. There is outstanding communication between care and education staff in support of pupils' social and academic progress. Effective links with parents and other agencies also underpin the school's approach to working in partnership with key people who are involved in the lives of residential students.
- Students benefit from living in a provision where its stated function and purpose is translated into an exceptionally well-run service. A key aim of the two residential houses is to provide an enriching residential experience and this is achieved extremely well in practice. The experienced head of care provides clear leadership that shapes a child-centred approach to the work of the whole team. He is supported by senior managers and residential staff who actively contribute to the successful operation of residential provision.
- The school is developing a preferred approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels, but it is too early to evaluate this. However, assessment is not always used consistently to set work at the correct level of challenge in all teaching.
- Middle leaders are effective. For example, the management of the Key Stage 3 nurture class where subjects are taught through play (a therapeutic approach) enhances students' confidence and enables them to make good progress with their literacy and numeracy.
- The school uses established external agencies to raise students' awareness of extremism and domestic violence. The headteacher has been on a course about sexual exploitation of children and has trained staff about the signs to look out for.
- Flexibly planned and highly personalized, the curriculum provides an equal chance for all pupils to succeed. A broad and balanced range of subjects, alongside an extensive work experience programme, enables students to gain the qualifications and skills required for employment. In 2014, all Year 11 students accessed a meaningful post-16 college course or found paid employment.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about British values through visiting courts and learning to tolerate each other. Through their subjects and visits they learn about a range of religious beliefs. The residential provision makes a strong contribution to their development of social skills. As students mature they model what is right and challenge what is wrong.
- Students interviewed had a well-developed understanding of injustice. No discrimination is tolerated based on disability or race. In exploring their emotions through therapy they enhance their spiritual development. On the school's farm students watched a piglet being born with a full sense of awe and wonder.
- The school's family worker supports parents and carers. He accompanies them with their children to appointments with external health care professionals and helps them to manage their children's behaviour.

- The local authority provides light support, as befits a school where residential provision is outstanding and where alternative provisions comment positively on the behaviour of students who can be very challenging. It has supported the school in refurbishing the building used for Key Stage 4 students.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors provide good support for both the school and the residential houses. They contribute well to the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning and review the impact of their work. Governors have an accurate view of teaching and the residential provision based on the interpretation of data and careful scrutiny of reports provided by the headteacher and head of care. They ask tough questions.
 - Governors effectively oversee the changes to the curriculum and assessment. They understand that only effective teachers can be rewarded. There is an agreed approach to check how well the headteacher performs and to set him targets aimed at improving students' achievement.
 - Governors make sure that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met. They check on the safety of the external providers.
 - Governors hold leaders to account for the spending of pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding. They carefully watch the school's budget and are supporting preparation for conversion to academy status. They have discussed how to best promote British values in the setting and they have decided to focus on tolerance between students with a wide range of social disadvantage factors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most students arriving at Loxley Hall School have experienced significant difficulties in managing their behaviours in their previous schools.
- Teachers and residential care staff support students in working through their negative feelings about school. Access to an emotional support room when they feel distressed helps students enormously. When in the support room, they work hard and keep up with what is going on in their class. As students gain in confidence they show positive attitudes to learning.
- Students benefit from their residential experience because they are able to develop their relationships in a nurturing and supportive environment. Staff place emphasis on praise and rewards and so students understand what is expected of them through the use of the 'merits' system. Behavioural boundaries are communicated consistently. More formal measures of behaviour management are kept to a minimum.
- Parents and carers are full of praise for the way that the school and care staff in the residential houses have turned around their children's attitudes to learning and transformed their behaviour.
- Students appreciate the space they are given to manage their own behaviour. They value the rewards for good behaviour and accept sanctions when they do not behave well.
- Classrooms are calm and orderly and there is little graffiti on books. Students respect the school sites and look after the high quality displays of their work on show in the corridors. Lunchtimes are happy, family-based occasions where students and staff eat together and students learn valuable social skills.
- Challenging behaviour, reflecting students' difficulties, occurs occasionally. Students say that cyber-bullying does not occur at school and the school's log confirms that this is the case. Racism and other forms of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively. Spontaneous fights are quickly nipped in the bud and positive outcomes occur. Fixed-term exclusions are rare, as are physical interventions to keep students safe.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students feel safe and have immediate access to an adult they trust in the residential houses and while in school. Assessments of risky behaviours are thorough and staff have robust plans to keep students safe.
- Students' enjoyment and keeping them safe lies at the heart of residential practice. Students enjoy their overnight stays. They say that they feel safe and cared for by staff who know them well. Students say that the activities provided for them are excellent. The provision of fitness rooms and outdoor activities in the evenings in residence, improves students' physical fitness.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the residential houses are very effective. Staff recognise the diverse and vulnerable needs of students and diligently ensure that they are protected. Trained senior staff take the lead on child protection matters and work in an effective partnership with a range of external professionals who have responsibility for protecting children.
- Students know how to keep safe, particularly in the work place and when participating in outdoor physical activities like mountain biking. They know that they must be careful when using computers; they understand the risks of getting involved with a gang and have a clear understanding of the risks associated with unsafe sex.
- Attendance for a few students is not as good as it ought to be. These students do not do as well as their peers. External agencies support the few students who refuse to attend. There are, though, signs of improvement; for example, since the opening of a separate Key Stage 4 site the attendance of Year 10 pupils has improved.

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching on students' learning over time is good. Work in students' books, folders of assessed samples of work, the school's progress data, feedback from external providers and visits to observe learning in lessons contribute to this judgement.
- Overall, work shows that teaching challenges students through interesting and relevant activities. But this is not always the case. Occasionally, teaching does not take sufficient account of the assessment of what students know and can do to set activities at the correct level of challenge to move them on to new learning quickly enough.
- Teaching impacts effectively on learning where students assess one another. This contributes to their confidence as learners and helps them to learn from each other.
- Basic skills are taught effectively across a wide range of subjects. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, as is their understanding of a wide range of special educational needs in their classes. Teachers skilfully bring back any student who wanders off task and successfully engage them with purposeful learning.
- Relationships between staff and students are good, and students are given space to focus on a problem and work it out without being rushed. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning.
- The teaching of reading is good. The flexibility to teaching reading and the methods used take full account of how each individual learns. Those with additional special educational need are taught individually or in small groups and so make good progress. The more able are given more challenging texts to read.
- There is a similar pattern to teaching writing and mathematics. In lessons where teaching impacts particularly well on learning, the students who struggle are given additional support and do well. High expectations result in more able students reaching good learning outcomes.

- Teaching promotes students' employability skills. In practical workshop lessons they learn how to service a motor car engine and master the skill of setting a corner brick. In these relevant lessons, students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills are promoted. Such lessons give students the opportunity to practise their numeracy and communication skills.
- The marking of students' work is mostly good. However, in a few books students are not moved on to respond as they ought to comments made by teachers on what they need to do to improve their work. This slows their learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress from their low starting points in English and mathematics. They demonstrate a wide range of emotional and cognitive needs.
- By Year 11 students make good progress. In the summer of 2014 the more able students gained GCSE passes in English and mathematics while others gained Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 in English and Entry Level 3 in mathematics. All gained qualifications that demonstrated good progress from their starting points in these subjects.
- Students gain a wide range of vocational qualifications and in 2014 all Year 11 students went on to college to follow meaningful courses or into employment. Their progress and achievement on vocational courses taught by alternative providers were good. Given the emotional difficulties of these students when they started out at this school, this represents a good level of achievement.
- All groups of students make good progress, including those eligible for free school meals and minority ethnic students.
- Weak attendance has a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of a few students. For example, a few Year 11 students who did not attend as regularly as they ought to have done last year dipped an average three grades below what they were predicted in their GCSEs. Conversely, the current Year 10 students have almost a 100% attendance record and the school's moderated data shows that they are achieving their current targets in English and mathematics.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	are outstanding

- Residential provision is outstanding. All national minimum standards are met.
- Students' development is promoted through targets that encourage personal growth and enable them to acquire and use new skills. The promotion of their self-care, social interaction skills, independence and communication is outstanding. Close monitoring and evaluation enables key workers and managers to determine whether or not the care provided makes an impact. Most students make outstanding progress in their personal development despite sometimes experiencing setbacks. Staff have high expectations that all students will improve their relationships and social skills.
- Promotion of good health, including the safe administration of medication, supports students in staying fit and healthy. Staff are trained in how to respond to the needs of each individual student. Effective links with health professionals help to promote and sustain students' well-being. Good health is supported by a flexible menu that includes a range of foods that reflect healthy eating.
- The residential provision, like the school, operates a positive culture of consultation. Residential students are encouraged to contribute to decision making regarding their daily routines and the development of the service.
- There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and the two areas identified for development at the last full welfare inspection have been addressed. In addition, improvements to menus and food preparation; the promotion and encouragement of more reading for leisure; and better use of assessment information to inform residential staff about students' learning have been made. These areas are further examples of the school's drive to advance the residential provision for the benefit of everyone who uses the service.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

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

School details

Unique reference number	124509
Social care unique reference number	SCO38729
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	448920

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Number of boarders on roll	86
Appropriate authority	Staffordshire
Chair	Christina Pearson
Headteacher	Richard Redgate
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2011
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