

Waterloo Lodge School

Preston Road, Chorley, Lancashire, PR6 7AX

Inspection dates 13–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Students achieve extremely well. They make outstanding progress from their different starting points in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching meets the different needs of students exceptionally well. Learning is well planned and students know what to do to improve.
- Students are clearly thrilled with their learning. Their very positive attitudes lead to high levels of engagement with learning.
- Staff manage students' behaviour exceptionally well. They make the best use of the school's well-thought-out systems. This ensures that their timely and appropriate responses give students every chance to behave even better.
- Students, staff, placing authority representatives, parents and carers say that the school keeps students safe.
- The curriculum provides many excellent opportunities to increase students' skills and experiences. It provides very well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors and senior leaders have a deep and robust knowledge of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Decisions made by leaders are well informed. They have developed systems to tackle underperformance robustly. They provide effective training to improve staff skills. As a result, the school maintains its outstanding performance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons and scrutinised samples of students' work in different subjects. Five observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with students and staff, including the Executive Headteacher, Head of Behaviour and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. The inspector held a meeting with the proprietor's Assistant Director for Education. He held a meeting with a social worker and spoke on the telephone to a representative from a placing local authority.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included the school's prospectus, information about students' progress and the school's own evaluation of its work. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke to parents and took account of 18 staff questionnaire responses. There were not enough responses to the online Parent View survey for these to be analysed.

Inspection team

Jonathan Woodyatt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Waterloo Lodge is an independent special school which occupies a restored Georgian house near Chorley in Lancashire. Additional classroom space and offices have been created in the buildings around the house. The rear courtyard and side gardens have been adapted for recreational use by students, such as during breaks and lunchtime.
- The school is registered to admit up to 50 students aged from 11 to 18 years. There are 49 students currently on roll. There are no students on roll in the sixth form; this has been the case for a number of years.
- Students start in the school at different ages. A very few join during Year 7 and remain at the school until the end of Year 11. The majority join at different times of the year and at older ages. Consequently most of the students are in Key Stage 4.
- All students have statements of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A large majority have additional special educational needs including moderate and severe learning difficulties, dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorder. There are no disabled students.
- There has been a change of headteacher since the last inspection. Similarly there have been changes in other leadership roles and a number of staff have left or joined the school.
- The Executive Headteacher is also the headteacher of Oakfield House School near Preston. This school is also part of the Acorn group of schools.
- There are three alternative providers used by the school: Heights Free School, ProCo Northwest and Parbold@castNW.
- The school was previously inspected in October 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching by ensuring that teachers take every opportunity to accelerate students' learning by reshaping tasks in response to students' existing knowledge.
- Extend teachers' mathematical knowledge to fully ensure the very best achievement for all students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher exudes a marked passion for enabling students to succeed in their learning. This is backed by a persistent drive for securing the best teaching and behaviour both in and out of the classrooms. His compassionate and caring approach demonstrates the school's ethos and sets high expectations for others to act similarly in and around the school. Parents overwhelmingly compliment staff on the huge difference they make to their children's various achievements.
- Middle leaders contribute highly effectively. They are held to account for their actions by the headteacher and they check the standards of their own work with exceptional attention to detail. As a result, the leadership has continued to improve the school.
- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Consequently the leaders know precisely how well they are performing towards their targets. Their plans to sustain the high standards of teaching and learning highlight appropriate actions which are carried out well and checked regularly by leaders to ensure ongoing improvement.
- The management of teachers' performance is very effective and identifies clearly the skills that they need to improve. Support for improving teaching is highly effective, with staff having the opportunity to see best practice within this and the company's other school. This has further boosted teachers' skills and contributed well to maintaining the improvements in achievement over time for students.
- The organisation of the subjects taught is extensive in its variety and exceptionally well matched to students' skills and interests. Since the last inspection, more opportunities have been provided for students to study other subjects, such as European Studies in Key Stage 3 and Fisheries Management in Key Stage 4. The curriculum in both Key Stages has a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and mathematical skills.
- Students are given helpful guidance by staff and placing authority workers on selecting courses to study when they leave at the end of Key Stage 4. As a result, almost all students continue in further education, training or employment. This reflects the deep commitment among the leaders and staff to ensuring that the school strives to offer students the best opportunities to succeed in the future, with a clear focus on promoting equality of opportunity for each individual.
- Staff are deployed very well by leaders: for example, they attend alternative providers in order to closely monitor behaviour and attendance and ensure students are achieving well.
- A number of activities contribute effectively to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them very well for life in modern Britain. These include studies of public services, citizenship, religious education and personal, social and health education programmes.
- Students play football against local teams. There are planned opportunities for them to attend residential activities, take part in fundraising for local charities and undertake trips to improve their social skills and tackle discrimination.
- Visitors help students to learn about other faiths, such as Islam, in order to develop mutual respect and tolerance. Weekly house group activities bring the school community together, increasing their self-confidence and responsibility to one another. The school is extremely effective in fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the school has continued to comply with the independent school standards since the last inspection.
- Changes of staff have had an impact on students' attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 4 in the last year. The headteacher is fully aware of this slight dip and training has been undertaken to secure the necessary improvements for the new staff. Evidence from the school's recent monitoring records indicates that this has rapidly improved the standards in this subject.

■ The governance of the school:

The Assistant Director for Education provides the link between the school and Acorn, the proprietor of the school. The Assistant Director has a wealth of experience and fully applies this in overseeing the school. He has secured a clear and accurate picture of how well the school is performing in order to incisively challenge the headteacher and others leaders.

Directors of the company meet at least monthly to scrutinise the performance of the school, using the extensive range of monitoring information about achievement and teaching provided by the Assistant Director and the headteacher. Consequently they have a very clear understanding of how well the school is performing and can hold the headteacher closely to account for making improvements.

The governors set clear targets for the headteacher and link these very well to pay. They are fully

aware of the targets given to staff and systematically check how well these are meeting their goals overall. They pick up on any underperformance and deal with it robustly through their well established procedures, ensuring the high standards of teaching continue to improve.

Finances are well targeted on securing the resources and staff structures best suited to the needs of students. Prudent management of their funds means that the school can, for example, progress with the recently drawn up plans to extend the premises.

Governors ensure that the school meets the required standards for safeguarding and has drawn up appropriate plans for improving accessibility at the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- Students are exceptionally keen to learn. Their positive attitudes shone through during observations carried out by the inspector. This has a very positive impact on their engagement with the tasks provided by staff and results in high quality work in their books and in discussions.
- Students promptly follow the instructions given by staff which means that they can carry out the tasks with minimal delay and make the best possible progress. Students told the inspector that they appreciate the extra help and support for their needs provided by the staff, for example in the 'one-to-one' sessions.
- Students wear the school uniform with pride. They work well together in their house groups and enjoy the challenge of gaining the rewards for their good behaviour.
- All students placed at Waterloo Lodge School have struggled with attendance and behaviour in their previous schools or placements. The school recognises it has to work hard to engage students and secure improvements in these areas. School records show that although overall attendance levels for many students are below those in other schools, they consistently improve to above the national average once they settle into their placements.
- Students are transported to and from the school at the start and end of the day. Many arrive in taxis arranged by their supporting local authority which ensures they are punctual.
- At times during the inspection some students struggled to make the best behaviour choices. The well trained staff intervened immediately, such as by accompanying them to the staffed behaviour room. Records show that these and similar actions, such as providing students with a good understanding of the risks resulting from their behaviour, help to secure exceptional improvements over time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students state that they feel safe in school because of the vigilant staff.
- The school's programme for personal and social development makes a very strong contribution to students' understanding of how to keep safe, including, for example, learning how to manage their own behaviour and keep safe on the internet.
- Students told the inspector about different types of bullying and gave examples of these from their own experiences. They are fully aware of the potential impact of bullying. They recognise that staff have provided them with essential knowledge to tackle bullying and poor behaviour. They value highly the work of the staff in helping them to make the necessary improvements to their own behaviours. This is clearly evident in school records and praised by parents, staff and local authority representatives.
- Arrangements to support students studying off-site are very good. Staff check the behaviour, safety and attendance of students every day. There are effective links to outside agencies.
- Leaders ensure the school complies fully with its duties to carry out safe recruitment and to provide staff training in child protection and first aid.
- Fire safety equipment is checked regularly, fire evacuation drills are carried out termly and procedures are monitored routinely by leaders.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Regular and accurate checking of teaching by leaders and consultants, the sharing of good practice and appropriate development of teachers' skills, have ensured that teaching standards have remained outstanding since the last inspection.
- Interesting and stimulating tasks and activities are well planned by staff to meet students' different

abilities, to capture their imagination and motivate them exceptionally well in a wide range of subjects. For example, in science students measured the height of rebound using a slow motion camera.

- Students focus strongly on their work and are very keen to do well. Very good relationships, high expectations and excellent use of praise help engage students well and are strong features in lessons.
- Systems for checking students' progress are robust. Information gathered through regular monitoring and assessment is used highly effectively to identify those students who require additional support in order to make the best progress. Through individual support with well trained staff, students who have fallen behind can quickly catch up with their skills, such as in reading, writing or numeracy. This is clear evidence of the school's commitment to equal opportunity for all.
- Throughout the school, students' work is marked regularly. Comments made in students' books and folders ensure that they are clear about where they have done well. Students explained to the inspector that they also receive verbal feedback from staff on how they can improve their work. They recognise that this is effective in helping them to improve.
- Highly-skilled learning support assistants make an excellent contribution to students' learning and behaviour. They work very skilfully with individuals or small groups of students, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Staff carry out regular and thorough checks on how well students are learning during lessons by questioning and reviewing their work. However, occasionally they miss opportunities to follow up on the ideas communicated by students and to reshape tasks to suit their level of knowledge even better.
- Recent changes of staff have meant that mathematics teaching has not been as effective in Key Stage 4. This is rapidly improving as a result of additional training provided by the school's leaders.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Almost all students join the school with starting points that are well below those of others of similar ages, with a few that are low due to missing too many lessons in previous schools.
- All students have special educational needs and from their different starting points make outstanding progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 in many subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- By the end of Year 11 in 2014, students' attainment in English, mathematics and science was below that of students in other schools. However, gaps in attainment, compared to others of similar age in other schools, have been closing well due to the outstanding teaching.
- The proportions of pupils making or exceeding the progress expected of them are higher than those in other schools in the key subjects. School records show that these proportions have improved consistently year on year.
- Records show that by the end of Year 11 in 2014 the proportion of students gaining GCSE awards increased from the previous year. A higher proportion reached better standards than before.
- Almost all students placed on alternative provision courses in 2014 gained awards for the courses they were undertaking.
- The school recognises that students make rapid progress at times and that their placements can end prior to Year 11. Consequently they consider carefully whether entering more-able students for GCSE subjects early would be most appropriate. Where the school enters students in Year 10, this boosts their confidence and ensures they do not miss this opportunity to achieve accreditations.

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.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	119853
Inspection number	454250
DfE registration number	888/6026

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Douglas Quinn
Headteacher	James Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	19-20 October 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,974
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