

Fell House School

Grange Fell Road, Grange-Over-Sands, Cumbria, LA11 6AS

Inspection dates

16–18 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
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

- Pupils' behaviour and their attitude to learning are outstanding. Relationships are excellent. Rules are calmly but firmly reinforced by all adults throughout the school day.
- Pupils say they feel safe and they are educated well on how to keep themselves safe.
- Teaching is good and in a few subjects it is very good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and their passion supports pupils' good, and occasionally outstanding, progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour extremely well.
- Pupils join the school with very low starting points and standards which are below those expected of pupils of their age. However, the progress they make is good and in a few subjects and classes is outstanding.
- The progress older pupils make in art is excellent.
- Good leadership and management ensure that policies are consistently implemented to promote the safety of pupils and that the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders and members of the Advisory Board work well together to continually improve the educational and emotional experience of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are few opportunities for pupils to write at length about things that may stimulate them and capture their imagination.
- Pupils are not getting enough opportunity to develop the skills of writing for a variety of purposes.
- Teachers do not always check the comprehension of younger pupils during lessons to confirm if they understand.
- Pupils do not get enough chance to use mathematical calculations in different situations so that they can use and apply their mathematical skills correctly.
- Leaders and managers do not use information they gather effectively enough to improve the quality of teaching.

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 inspection took place over three days. During that time the inspector observed lessons during the mornings and afternoons and studied pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to pupils in lessons and at different times of the school day. She observed the behaviour of pupils throughout the school day and in all areas of the premises both inside and outside.
- The inspector spoke to staff and considered their responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire. She spoke to senior and middle leaders, representatives of placing local authorities, members of the Advisory Board and the head teacher of a local mainstream school.
- The inspector examined a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, policies and procedures, pupils' achievement, assessment, teaching, and records of attendance and behaviour.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fell House School is an independent special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is registered as a residential special school. It is registered for eight places for pupils aged from six to 12 years.
- There are currently seven pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. No disabled pupils currently attend the school. All pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, however not all local authorities placing pupils at the school show this figure as a separate amount when making payments to the school.
- All pupils are in the care of a local authority, and reside in the home. The school currently has five different placing local authorities.
- The school is part of the Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd group which also operates two other schools and residential provisions in the North West of England.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2012. The home is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted.
- Governance for the school is in the form of a Board of Directors.
- The school aims 'wherever possible, to return (children) to families and day schools before they reach their teenage years'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - pupils get more opportunities to write at length about things that stimulate and motivate them
 - pupils are able to develop their writing skills by having opportunities to write in a range of different ways
 - pupils use and apply the mathematical skills they have learnt in a range of different and interesting situations
 - teachers of younger pupils regularly check that they understand what they are being taught.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by evaluating all the information on the quality of teaching more thoroughly so that improvement can be more focused and weaknesses tackled.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- All leaders and managers have a shared vision to create a safe, calm and caring environment where pupils can improve their behaviour so that they can make progress academically. This vision is communicated to all staff exceedingly well.
- The school fulfils its aims well as all the pupils who have left the school since the last inspection have moved on successfully to other day schools. Support for pupils as they prepare to make their transition to their next school is good.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils are taught why 'we have rules' and why it is important to make the right choice. Younger pupils are taken to the shops and taught the expected etiquette; they later discuss why this is important. Older pupils learn about British institutions, for example the Houses of Parliament. They asked questions of the local Member of Parliament recently, such as 'we are taught to have good manners at Fell House and to listen when others are speaking but why do politicians interrupt each other in the Houses of Parliament?' All pupils contribute a piece of work in a book called 'Our weekly thoughts on current events taking place in the world'.
- The learning opportunities on offer enable pupils to take part in a range of experiences. They undertake activities such as swimming and visiting a local Hindu temple which prepare them well for aspects of life in modern Britain.
- Rules and routines are firmly and calmly enforced so that all pupils have equal opportunities. Any discrimination is quickly and effectively dealt with.
- Good links with a range of different professionals support the emotional needs of the pupils and this in turn improves their willingness to learn.
- Teachers and teaching assistants feel well supported through the school's system of managing performance. Very regular supervision meetings and lesson observations address any issues that may arise.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Middle leaders gather information on the quality of teaching through observing lessons and assessing pupils' performance. However, this information is not effectively analysed and evaluated to identify weaknesses and address them with focused targets so that the quality of teaching can be improved and weaknesses tackled.
- All leaders and managers ensure that pupils are safe. They ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and all independent school standards are met. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and procedures such as fire safety checks are well documented. All staff are well trained so that they are aware of what they need to do to keep pupils safe.
- **The governance of the school:**

Governance is effective. Members of the Advisory Board receive regular reports from the headteacher and annual reports where they gain information on the quality of teaching, performance management and pupil progress. One member of the Advisory Board regularly completes an in depth review of the quality of education in the school. The Advisory Board and the headteacher recognise the need for further evaluation of the quality of teaching so that weaknesses can be systematically tackled. The Advisory Board, along with the headteacher, manage school finances well. Where a local authority shows pupil premium funding as a separate amount, the Advisory Board show clearly how that funding has been spent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Improvement in pupils' attitude to learning is exemplary and reduction in the number of physical interventions required by staff is rapid.
- Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and rise to the high expectations of behaviour. At the end of every lesson they are rewarded for their excellent behaviour.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning enable them to make good progress.
- Classroom environments are cheerful with lots of resources available for pupils, such as computers, games and books. Pupils treat all equipment with respect and wear their uniform tidily and with pride.
- At the end of every day both educational and residential facilities staff discuss behaviours during the day

with the pupils. Any good behaviour is commended and any less than good behaviour is discussed and dealt with.

- Pupils' relationships with each other and adults are excellent. They are respectful and polite.
- Attendance is excellent as pupils enjoy school and are eager to get into lessons.
- All staff and placing local authorities comment about the dramatic improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. They attribute this to the clear and firm rules that are calmly and consistently applied.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Staff are well trained to ensure pupils' safety. The records staff keep about any incidents and physical interventions are detailed. Pupils know they can speak to any adult in school if they need to.
- Pupils are educated effectively on how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and in everyday life. Regular visitors, such as the railway police, visit the school to help pupils understand the dangers of the nearby railway line. Pupils are not yet involved fully in becoming responsible for their own safety such as taking part in risk assessments or being aware that visitors have identity badges they may check.
- Leaders and managers do not use supply staff. All adults coming in contact with pupils receive the required checks to keep pupils safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers support the development of pupils' good independent learning skills by giving them lots of regular opportunities to learn and think for themselves. This in turn supports their good achievement.
- Teachers of the older pupils have excellent subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, art and music. Their knowledge and enthusiasm for these subjects engages pupils' interest particularly well and supports the good and occasionally outstanding progress made. When given the choice of staying or leaving a music lesson on occasions when their behaviour does meet the required high standards, pupils prefer to stay, learn and behave.
- Teaching assistants offer extremely valuable support and work well alongside the class teacher to develop pupils' progress. They are very sensitive to the needs of pupils and offer support as necessary.
- Teachers make sure there are lots of opportunities for pupils to improve their reading skills and pupils welcome the opportunity to read to an adult.
- All work is marked and written comments give pupils a clear indication of what they have done well and how they could improve.
- Older pupils take part in peer assessment which is done well; the comments they make to each other are thoughtful, valuable and appreciated.
- Pupils take part in cookery lessons which, alongside physical education lessons, impact positively on their healthy lifestyles.
- Teachers question older pupils skilfully to make them think more deeply and consider if the answer they have given is correct and if they fully understand. However, this is not consistently done with the younger pupils.
- Pupils get the opportunity to write every day, however they are not given enough opportunities to write at length about something that has stimulated and motivated them.
- Pupils do not have the chance to learn about different types of writing skills such as poetry, letter writing and persuasive writing.
- Teachers teach pupils a wide range of mathematical concepts but give pupils few opportunities to use their skills in different situations so that they can use and apply them with full understanding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils join Fell House they generally have starting points which are considerably lower than those expected of pupils of their age. This is due to issues in their lives that have led to considerable lengths of time when learning has been severely disrupted. From their very low starting points, pupils make good progress over time. Standards they achieve by the time they leave the school are still lower than those expected for pupils of their age.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Pupils read on a very regular basis to adults and adults have

recently been trained in phonics (the sounds letters make) to support good progress in reading.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in art. They are keen to show off their skills with acrylic paints and their ability to identify the work of various artists.
- The most able pupils make good and sometimes better progress in mathematics, particularly the older pupils. They are questioned skilfully to reinforce what they have learnt and to help them to identify patterns and why they are occurring.
- Pupils make good and occasionally outstanding progress in mathematics, particularly the older pupils. Even though groups are small all pupils are taught at a level that meets their individual learning needs so that understanding is secure.
- Although pupils make good progress in writing, this is not as consistently strong as in other subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to write every day but sometimes topics are not engaging or exciting and the work set occasionally restricts pupils' ability to write more than one word at a time or one short sentence.

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	133346
Inspection number	463005
DfE registration number	909/6051

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	Special school
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	6–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd
Chair	Mrs Clair Davies
Headteacher	Mr Rob Davies
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£141,545 - £153,426
Telephone number	01539 535926
Fax number	01539 534847
Email address	admin@appletreeschool.co.uk

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