

# Peak Education

The Old School House, Watling Street, Gailey, Cannock, Staffordshire ST19 5PR

## Inspection dates

1–3 March 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attendance is low. Too many do not attend school regularly or arrive late despite being collected from home by staff.
- Behaviour requires improvement because some pupils are too slow to settle to learning, particularly for classroom-based subjects.
- The proprietor and school leaders do not yet hold teaching staff rigorously enough to account for pupils' progress.
- Information gathered about pupils' progress and behaviour is not yet used effectively by leaders and by teaching staff to drive forward improvements in the curriculum, teaching, learning, behaviour and in pupils' progress.
- Pupils' progress is too variable. Teaching and the curriculum do not always inspire pupils to learn and to stay on task. Some subjects, such as science, are not planned in sufficient detail or checked on rigorously to ensure that pupils make enough progress.
- Teachers' planning does not focus sufficiently on the skills that pupils need to develop next. Consequently some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- A few pupils with special educational needs do not make as much progress as they could in managing their behaviour and learning because not all staff have had training in how best to meet pupils' complex needs.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress on their outdoor education programmes, achieving a range of qualifications and improving their teamwork, personal and social skills.
- The provision for sixth-form learners is a rapidly improving part of the school's work. Programmes are generally well tailored to learners' needs so that most pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders, including the proprietor, know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Almost all weaknesses identified by the inspection are part of the school's current action plan. The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- High levels of personal support mean that pupils feel and are safe and most build trusting relationships with staff. Most improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning so they are better prepared for their next steps in training and education.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - performance management for all staff is used effectively so that teaching, learning, assessment and pupils' progress improve
  - all staff have training and support to improve their teaching, including training relating to the special educational needs of the pupils they support
  - the range of courses on offer are extended and schemes of work exist in sufficient detail in all the required areas of learning
  - the system for tracking pupils' progress and attainment is fully developed, includes checks on all the subjects and courses pupils follow and teachers use this information to tailor work accurately to pupils' next steps.
  
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan work that takes good account of pupils' prior learning and achievements
  - have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour
  - provide a broader range of opportunities for pupils to write, so that progress in writing is good
  - give feedback in line with the school's marking policy so that pupils know how to make their work even better
  - use a wider range of resources and methods to gain pupils' interest in their learning
  - have a good understanding of how to provide for the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, such as those with autistic spectrum condition.
  
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - improving pupil attendance and making sure that pupils arrive at school on time and that lessons start promptly
  - ensuring that staff respond consistently and in line with pupils' behaviour management plans when pupils' language or behaviour is inappropriate.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The headteacher (the Education Director) and the proprietor have an ambitious vision for the school's future and are determined that the school will have a positive impact on pupils' personal, social and academic futures.
- The school has expanded considerably since the last inspection. However, weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment and in the curriculum mean that pupils' outcomes in these areas are not yet good.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met. They are quick to deal with any health and safety issues and ensure that there are good-quality risk assessments in place for both school-based and outdoor-based activities. They work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. All the required checks to ensure that fire safety and the safety of the premises are in place.
- Leaders have not been able to ensure that all pupils attend regularly, despite being responsible for transporting pupils to school. Although most pupils do improve their attendance, others do not and refuse to attend when collected. Some pupils regularly arrive at school late and lose considerable learning time as a result.
- The education managers and the Education Director collect information about pupils' academic progress. They also have detailed information about pupils' behaviour and engagement with learning and their progress on outdoor education courses. This information is not yet fully analysed and shared with staff. Although it informs the school's self-evaluation and targets for improvement, the information is not yet used effectively with staff to improve teaching and learning or to consider the performance of different groups.
- The school teaches all the areas of learning it should, but the curriculum requires improvement because the programmes for some subjects, such as science, are not detailed enough. The school identifies English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and life skills, alongside its sports qualifications, as its 'core skills'. Other subjects are taught through themed days or through units linked to the life skills programme. Individual pupils at Key Stage 3 have discrete time allocated to science, art and music.
- While leaders track pupils' experiences and achievement in their 'core skills', they do not check pupils' progress in other subjects robustly enough.
- Each pupil has two members of teaching staff assigned to them, called inclusive education practitioners and apprentices. These staff teach all subjects to the pupil they are responsible for and collect pupils from their homes. They also accompany them to outdoor education activities. Not all staff are knowledgeable about supporting learning in a particular subject or about how best to enable the learning of pupils with special educational needs, such as those with an autistic spectrum condition. Leaders are aware of this and are in the process of appointing a qualified special educational needs coordinator to advise and support staff and improve this aspect of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have introduced weekly training for all staff as part of its programme to improve teaching. However, systems for monitoring the performance of staff, including holding them to account for pupils' progress, are not robust enough and are not yet linked effectively into a programme of continuing professional development.
- Pupils study units of work that explore issues related to diversity and British values effectively. This, plus the many discussions that pupils have with the inclusive education practitioners, reflect the school's determination to transform pupils' attitudes and personal and social awareness. Pupils are quick to say 'we are all different but we are also the same', for example in a discussion about racism and stereotypes.
- Appropriate careers guidance, including impartial advice, is in place. Sixth-form learners feel very secure about what they will do after leaving school and are pleased with the work-related opportunities the school provides. Their programme meets their needs effectively and all pupils are clear about the courses they will study or the training or apprenticeships they wish to pursue.
- The school's website is still developing. However, parents and carers and placing authorities have access to all of the necessary information, including that relating to child protection, health and safety, the curriculum and the complaints procedures. The school's formal reports and staff's daily contact with parents and carers ensure that there is a good exchange of information about pupils' progress and welfare.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The school does not have a governing body, although the proprietor has involved a small group of individuals in supporting the governance of the school. The Education Director and education managers report to the proprietor regularly, particularly regarding pupil behaviour and attendance.
  - The proprietor has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met and that pupils' social development, welfare, health and safety are a priority.
  - The proprietor and senior staff have governance responsibilities in maintained schools and are fully aware of their responsibilities. They have much information about pupils' achievements and progress but do not use this as effectively as they could to challenge staff to improve pupils' outcomes further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. Staff have received appropriate up-to-date child protection and other training, including training for first aid, physical restraint and behaviour management. Senior leaders have had training linked to radicalisation and extremism and whole-staff training is about to take place. Leaders have carried out an audit to identify where such issues are explored within the curriculum. All the appropriate checks are carried out on staff prior to their appointment.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable because teachers' planning is inconsistent and does not take sufficient account of pupils' prior achievement and learning. This means that the work is not focused sufficiently on what pupils need to learn next. Sometimes the work is too hard and sometimes too easy. Some teachers instinctively adapt the learning as pupils respond to their questions or explanations. However, others simply move on to the next worksheet or task on a commercial scheme, without considering whether these support the next steps in a pupil's learning.
- Pupils learn best when the learning has been planned to build on their interest or makes the relevance of the skill clear to them through relating it to real life situations or practical activities. This is particularly the case in mathematics. For example, sixth-form learners described how mathematical operations became more meaningful and motivating for them when they were related to their kayaking, water sports courses or future career in car mechanics. Also, younger pupils are proud that they know their multiplication tables and that they now understand why they need to know them.
- The teaching of English requires improvement. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to express themselves and pupils strengthen their reading skills through researching topics in other subjects as well as in English. As a result, most pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills, in their reading and in their social use of language. However, their progress in writing is less strong. The work in pupils' books shows that they have fewer opportunities to write at length. The feedback pupils receive from their teachers does not always help them to know how to improve.
- Life skills are used well by teachers to explore a range of topics including personal, emotional and economic development and scientific concepts such as environmental change, recycling and aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of climate change and the part everyone should play in conserving the planet's resources.
- Staff have appropriate subject knowledge when supporting pupils' functional skills and life skills work in English and mathematics. For example, one pupil made noticeable progress in his accurate use of punctuation because his teacher dramatised the text so that he could recognise the difference between exclamations, comments and questions. The pupil himself improved his expressive reading when he read his work back.
- Pupils are taught individually or at most in pairs, sometimes in the same room as other pupils, sometimes by themselves. They mostly stay on task at such times, because they build strong relationships with their teachers. When the work is too challenging or not interesting to them, a few become over-loud and disrupt the learning of others. Pupils say that some teachers are more confident at dealing with such outbursts than others. Inspectors' observations showed this to be the case and that occasionally staff did not respond appropriately when a pupil's language was not respectful.
- The teaching of pupils' outdoor education courses is good because instructors and staff are highly skilled at managing pupils' behaviour, keeping them safe and ensuring that they behave as part of a team. As a result, pupils successfully complete a range of awards, including units relating to health and safety. Some pupils learn so well that they decide to take an additional qualification and to take up apprenticeships linked to these courses.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare **require improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly or arrive late. A few are very disruptive when staff arrive to collect them. Individual pupils also have limited work in their books because even when they are attending they do not complete all of their work willingly.
- Pupils feel, and are, safe in school. Those who attend regularly build strong relationships with their inclusive education practitioner which support their learning and their willingness to have a go at tasks.
- Most pupils improve their attendance and their attitudes to school so that they take more pride in their work and complete it willingly. Several pupils were working on past examination papers at the time of the inspection and listened carefully to their teachers' advice and feedback. They said they were keen to do well and hoped to take GCSE qualifications afterwards if they did well in their entry-level examinations.
- Learners in the sixth form reflect carefully on their future careers and are ambitious to achieve them. They know what they must do to improve and say they would not have been aiming so high without the support from this school.
- Pupils make good progress in their moral and social development because they have many opportunities in their outdoor education and life skills work to build these skills. They are polite and respectful to visitors, although a few have outbursts which they still struggle to manage. School records show that incidents decrease as pupils settle in at the school. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on and celebrate their own and others' beliefs, achievements and the wonders of the world. The school is currently strengthening its provision for spiritual and cultural development by extending its visits and visitors' programme.
- Pupils study issues such as e-safety, diversity, bullying, racism and relationships. They have many opportunities to consider others' needs as well as their own. They have a basic understanding of other religions and lifestyles and say that they are more concerned with what someone is like rather than what they look like or believe in. They use words like respect, tolerance and democracy when speaking about why it is good to live in Britain.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand fully how to keep safe on their outdoor activities. They have a good understanding of internet safety and the dangers of social media. They understand that sometimes their own actions put them at risk, but say that the school is helping them to avoid doing this.
- Pupils have appropriate opportunities to engage in work placements and experience. Such placements are praised by learners as giving them confidence in their ability to get on with people and hold down a job.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils' behaviour improves because leaders and most teachers have high expectations of them. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that their behaviour has improved while at the school, because staff encourage them to find other ways of expressing their feelings and that they are 'always there to listen'.
- Incident logs show most pupils' behaviour improves over time. However, some do not improve enough in what they say or do. This is why behaviour is not good. Other pupils are slow to settle to work, even when they arrive at school. Staff themselves do not always show urgency in starting lessons, occasionally tolerating a much too slow start to the day. This does not prepare pupils well for the world of work.
- Pupils' behaviour on outdoor education activities is almost always good. Pupils indicate that they value such activities and the ways in which staff enable them to keep safe and reflect on what is happening. They know that it is essential they think about the needs and behaviours of others.
- Pupils understand and value the reward system, feeling that it helps them to improve their behaviour and makes it clear to them what good behaviour looks like.
- The school has detailed systems for recording good and poor behaviour but does not analyse the information in depth to identify where an intervention or approach has been successful.

## Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- Pupils start at the school with significant gaps in their learning because of the disruptions in their previous learning. This means their starting points on entry to the school are usually lower than others of similar

age. Lesson observations, work in books and discussions with staff all confirm that some pupils make good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects.

- Pupils take a range of entry-level and functional skills qualifications. Only a very small number of pupils leave the school before they complete their studies. They make good progress on their outdoor education courses because instructors are skilled and pupils find the courses motivating. This spurs pupils on so that they achieve recognised qualifications and wish to build on these further.
- In 2015, all Year 11 pupils achieved multiple outdoor education qualifications, All, except for those who arrived very late in Year 11, achieved entry-level functional skills awards in English, mathematics, information and communication technology and life skills. They were prepared well for their next steps in education and made smooth transitions into further education, training or employment.
- A number of pupils achieve levels closer to those expected for their age. Leaders are introducing GCSE qualifications to challenge such pupils. A few learners in the sixth form are working towards a GCSE qualification in English and mathematics. They have made good progress in their attitudes and study skills since joining the school and now feel confident enough to take these more challenging courses. Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that some individuals are working at levels closer to those of their peers.
- Pupils make good progress in their spoken English and listening skills. They learn to adapt their language more appropriately for different audiences. Individuals who have additional speech and language difficulties grow in confidence and are prepared to voice their opinions and answers even when strangers are present. Pupils make less progress in writing because some have too few tasks that require them to write at length.
- Pupils are proud of the progress they make in improving their basic numeracy skills, asking the inspector to listen to their 'times tables', for example, and explaining how they used these to draw bar charts. They gain in confidence in using such skills because most have good opportunities to apply them to practical situations, for example on their sports courses and in tasks which involve calculating how many miles to a litre a car will travel.
- Current pupils are online to achieve a range of qualifications. These include mathematics and English, a range of units that support their personal development and knowledge of the world, 'life skills' and functional skills qualifications in ICT. Pupils make limited progress in some areas of learning, such as the scientific and creative, because the school does not check that their experiences build sufficiently on prior experiences and learning. Other pupils make only limited progress overall because they do not attend school regularly.

### Sixth form provision

### requires improvement

- The provision for sixth form is a new and improving part of the school's work.
- Sixth-form learners follow individual timetables for either three days or a week. Their programmes build on their previous achievements and interests. Most sixth-form learners attend school well in comparison to their attendance previously. They are well focused on their next steps and become more ambitious for their future while at the school. However, the range of courses they can study is still developing and teaching, learning and assessment share similar limitations to those throughout the school.
- Learners' programmes show an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Most take further qualifications in these subjects, sometimes achieving close to the standards of others of their age. Their programmes of study interest them because they are often linked carefully to the college courses learners want to study next. One learner, for example, has made good progress in the application of his mathematics skills through work linked to his enthusiasm for cars.
- The school's work and community awareness programme for sixth-form learners is still developing. However, individual learners have been well supported with work experience in outdoor education and are now applying for courses and apprenticeships linked to such studies.
- Sixth-form learners have a good understanding of British values and how to keep themselves safe. They are kind and supportive to younger pupils. They value the relationships they build with staff and the ways in which they are encouraged to be more mature and take responsibility. However, individuals wish they had more subjects and qualifications to study.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137956
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008530
<b>DfE registration number</b>	860/6039

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	21
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	4
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	3
<b>Proprietor</b>	Paul Ball
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Ball
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew McCreedy
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£48,450 to £60,800
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782722226
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.peakeducation.co.uk">www.peakeducation.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Andrew.meccreedy@peakpursuits.co.uk">Andrew.meccreedy@peakpursuits.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5–6 March 2013

## Information about this school

- Peak Education is a small independent school, based at Gailey, near to Cannock in Staffordshire, for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All current pupils are boys, although the school does admit girls. Often pupils have special educational needs and disabilities such as an autistic spectrum condition or communication, speech and language difficulties. All have been excluded or were in danger of being excluded from their previous placements. Often they have not attended school for long periods of time.
- Since its last inspection the school has expanded to include a second site based at the proprietor's headquarters in Audley, near to Stoke-on-Trent. Most current pupils are based at the Audley site. The school notified the Department for Education of this change in August 2015. In January 2016 it requested permission to incorporate a third site in Stoke-on-Trent, which it is not currently using as this has not yet been approved.
- The school is owned by Peak Pursuits, a company which specialises in outdoor education and alternative provision for pupils at risk of being excluded from school. Pupils who are taking part in alternative education provision also attend the school's Audley and Gailey sites, though they remain on the roll of their own school. Pupils on the school roll take part in a range of outdoor education activities as part of their agreed programme of study with their local authority.

- The school was first registered in March 2012 for 20 pupils aged 11 to 16 years. At its first inspection it had only two full-time pupils and a number of part-time pupils. Currently it has 21 pupils on roll. Three are part-time. Four learners of sixth form age joined the school later in Key Stage 4 and were felt to need an extended placement before being ready for college placement or next steps into training and employment.
- There is no governing body, although a small group of interested businessmen and educationalists do support the school and advise as to its management.
- The school does not use alternative provision or receive pupil premium funding.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and ages at the school's two sites and visited one of its outdoor education provisions, an indoor climbing wall. They examined current pupils' work and records, including those of sixth-form learners. In two lesson observations the lead inspector was accompanied by the headteacher (the Education Director).
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, the proprietor, teaching staff and pupils. Too few responses were received from parents to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire for these responses to be considered. The views of 24 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire were also considered.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school's documentation and policies, including information on pupils' progress, the school's planned curriculum, development planning and policies and practices relating to behaviour, attendance and admissions.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's documentation and procedures relating to keeping pupils safe, including evidence relating to staff training and the safe recruitment of staff.

## Inspection team

Susan Lewis, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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