

SMS Education

The New Bungalow, 133 Broadstone Road, Reddish, Stockport SK4 5HS

Inspection dates	12–14 July 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and centre manager drive a nurturing ethos that supports all pupils in their quest to recover and re-establish self-belief and a love of learning.
- Vocational providers effectively support pupils' needs and aspirations. They provide good teaching and pupils reap success in the qualifications they gain.
- Communication between the school and the vocational providers is highly effective. Pupils' progress is closely tracked and monitored to ensure success.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are safeguarded effectively. Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant so that pupils are protected and sheltered from harm.
- Staff are quick to form excellent relationships and re-build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' personal development is good.
- Teachers design work to meet the personal needs and interests of each pupil. As a result, pupils engage in their learning and make good gains in their progress and development.
- Teachers develop positive learning environments and skilfully manage pupils' behaviour. No pupil has been excluded since the school was established and there have been no recorded incidents of serious misbehaviour.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe in the school. Their attendance is good.
- Pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance and make well-informed choices for their next steps in education, employment or training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few opportunities for staff to share good practice across the school. Consequently, teaching and learning are not yet outstanding.
- Links with highly effective schools are not established. Staff lack models of excellent teaching to support their work to ensure that pupils excel.
- Pupils' work in English, mathematics and science is not fully supported by an effective range of stimulating resources.
- Governors do not always challenge staff rigorously enough to push for exemplary standards across the school.

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 the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils' achievement is outstanding, by:
 - further extending links with good or outstanding schools to allow all staff to sharpen their understanding of highly effective teaching and learning
 - providing even more opportunities for staff to share good practice within school
 - ensuring that teaching and learning resources within English, mathematics and science are further enhanced to stimulate pupils' love of learning.
- Ensure that governors are provided with further training so they can challenge school leaders more fully and hold them to account more stringently for pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The quality of leadership and management is good. An effective school has been well established in the short time since registration. Appropriate and skilled staff support good teaching and learning and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher and centre manager have high expectations for the school and understand the complexities of pupils in their charge. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development and have established a clear development plan for the school which is communicated well to all staff.
- The headteacher and centre manager have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school has appropriate resources and is well maintained. Policies and procedures are up to date and successfully promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Risk assessments are in place, and health and safety checks are regularly completed.
- The headteacher has established effective systems to monitor teachers' performance. He meets with teachers to discuss their performance regularly throughout the year. In these meetings, teachers provide evidence of their lesson planning and pupils' classwork. They also discuss pupils' achievements and identify areas for improvement. Teachers are held strongly to account.
- The curriculum is balanced and provides a range of opportunities for pupils. The curriculum is tailored to meet pupils' needs using a wide range of vocational opportunities. All pupils are assessed on entry and their prior learning and aspirations are established. Leaders establish clear learning plans for all pupils and review these regularly throughout the year.
- Staff feel supported in school and value the 'family feel' culture and ethos created. They believe that everyone works well together to ensure that pupils have rich and diverse opportunities to catch up and achieve. A comment by a staff member on the staff questionnaire conducted by inspectors epitomised the views of all staff: 'Pupils make good progress. They are nurtured and leadership is focused on their needs.'
- Pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance from specialists. This includes opportunities for pupils to complete curriculum vitae and complete a mock interview. As a result, pupils make informed choices related to options, careers and employment. Pupils are prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.
- The headteacher and centre manager are effective in developing the skills of all staff. There is a clear programme of professional development provided to all staff to extend teaching and learning skills. However, there are not enough systems to share good practice and observe high-quality teaching and learning. As a result, opportunities to further sharpen teaching and learning and raise pupils' outcomes even further are missed.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The headteacher has an effective, close working relationship with the proprietors. Regular meetings ensure that the headteacher is challenged by the proprietors in relation to the school development plan and pupils' achievements. The proprietors are knowledgeable about the school.
 - Governors are strongly committed and aware of their responsibilities in raising school standards. They meet regularly and use their wide range of experiences and backgrounds in both challenging and supporting school leaders.
 - Governors play a clear role in the construction of the development plan and have a clear vision for the future development of the school. They support the school's ethos and inclusivity and recognise the vulnerability of pupils and the challenges that staff face in raising pupils' aspirations.
 - The governing body is effective and supportive. Clear systems of accountability and checks have been established. However, governors are not yet fully effective in challenging the school to pursue outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher provides appropriate training to all staff to ensure that they are vigilant and alert to the risks pupils might encounter. There is a clear focus by all staff on keeping pupils safe. Procedures are fully in place and leaders and governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people. For example, they have attended training on the 'Prevent' duty to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of being radicalised. As a result, pupils overwhelmingly feel safe in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- On their admission to school, each pupil's basic skills are assessed. Taking into account pupils' starting points, teachers carefully craft work to ensure that all pupils' needs are met so that they can make good progress. Teachers are highly motivated to ensure that pupils catch up with their learning.
- Teachers tailor work to match pupils' interests. This approach maximises pupils' learning potential and they make great gains in their understanding. For example, an English lesson was constructed around a pupil's love of motorbikes to suitably engage and motivate and build discussion skills.
- Lessons are carefully planned to support pupils' needs effectively. Teachers use their knowledge about pupils to plug gaps in their learning, build social and communication skills and raise aspirations. Teachers' good subject knowledge allows them to adjust learning plans to match the daily flux in the emotional and social developmental needs of pupils.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' needs are summarised and communicated in a personalised learning plan to provide individual work appropriate to each pupil. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and they consider this when planning for future learning.
- Teachers skilfully manage pupils' behaviour; there are clear rewards to encourage pupils in making the right choice for their learning. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils, and provide a positive learning environment to re-build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Support staff collaborate well with teachers and ensure that pupils are guided, motivated and cared for. The encouragement and support ensures that pupils make improvements in their personal, social and communication skills and in their academic achievements.
- The majority of feedback to pupils is provided verbally during lessons, allowing pupils to correct their mistakes straight away. Teachers discuss and delve into pupils' understanding with effective questioning to ensure that misconceptions are ironed out and next steps for improvement are clearly understood.
- Teaching at the vocational provision is appropriate and supports pupils' needs and aspirations well. Pupils display good attitudes to learning and make good progress in their qualifications. Communication between vocational providers and the school is smooth. Leaders are updated with daily reports on pupils' achievement and behaviour. The centre manager makes frequent visits to all alternative providers so that the school captures a clear understanding of pupils' learning and progress.
- The headteacher has ensured that English, mathematics and science teachers have access to appropriate resources to support pupils' learning. However, resources are not always very effective in stimulating and supporting pupils' love of learning.
- Leaders provide teachers with the opportunity to share good practice. However, these systems are insufficient to ensure teaching and learning skills are developed consistently across the school. Links with other schools have not been established. Staff lack models of highly effective teaching and learning. Consequently, pupils do not make outstanding progress from their starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All pupils enter the school with extremely challenging behaviour, and social and emotional needs. All have a history of disrupted education and a high number have not been in sustained education for a substantial period of time. However, after a short period of time at the school, pupils display enthusiastic and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils display a palpable sense of belonging to school.
- Pupils say they really enjoy the vocational learning provided by alternative providers. They cooperate well with staff and are keen to learn employability and life skills. The vocational curriculum engages pupils back into learning and prepares them for the next stage of their education. Pupils practise their social and communication skills and recognise the relevance of their learning. For example, some pupils develop their skills in bicycle maintenance while others learn more about music production.
- Systems of rewards and sanctions are well understood by pupils and support their learning of right and wrong. They respond well to the consistent promotion by staff of 'making the right choice'.
- Staff communicate their expectations of pupils clearly and use strong relationships to establish a calm

atmosphere for learning within the well-structured school day.

- Staff work with pupils so they understand their role as citizens in society. Trips and visits play a valuable role, developing pupils' personal and social development well. For instance, pupils experience visits to the national football museum to support their learning, and make visits to the local city centre 'China town' to enhance their understanding of different cultures.
- The school works well with other professionals to ensure that pupils' needs are met effectively and that good progress is made. For example, the school works with the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and other professionals to support pupils in their development.
- Significant emphasis is placed on extending pupils' understanding of risk as regards their sexual health or misuse of drugs or alcohol. This helps them manage risk and prepares them for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff work hard to get to know pupils well, build relationships and seize opportunities to raise pupils' understanding of moral values. This approach is re-building pupils' broken understanding of how to be successful in society. Staff are skilful in nurturing and supporting pupils' social and emotional needs. As a result, no pupils have been excluded. Serious behavioural incidents are non-existent and attendance is similar to that typically expected of a mainstream secondary school.
- The ratio of staff to pupils is one-to-one, and pupils are supervised exceptionally well at all times. Staff are very skilled at reducing disruptive behaviour and respond well to pupils' needs. They recognise pupils' anxiety triggers, and manage these well, so that disruption to learning is minimised. Surveys provided by the school reveal that pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Most pupils enter the school with no qualifications or accreditation, as a result of previously disrupted education. Staff quickly create a learning culture and build pupils' confidence. As a result, pupils are much more eager to learn and they quickly make up for lost time and make good progress.
- The headteacher and the head of centre act quickly and effectively to personalise accreditations and ensure that pupils leave with a range of relevant accreditation to support their next steps in education, training or employment. Pupils are equipped with the right tools for future success.
- Pupils make good progress in literacy, communication and mathematics from low starting points.
- The large majority of pupils make rapid development in their emotional, social and communication skills while at the school. Staff earn trust, remove barriers and have a strong impact on pupils' life skills. As a result, pupils successfully complete entry-level qualifications alongside other recognised and worthwhile accreditation.
- All pupils benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance provided by a qualified specialist. This ensures that learners make well-informed choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and English compared to their starting points and on entering the school.
- Pupils' progress through alternative vocational provision is good. The centre manager makes regular visits to review learning and make checks on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Great care ensures that barriers to pupils' learning are removed. Communication between the school and alternative providers is smooth. This ensures that the headteacher has a clear picture of each pupil's achievement over time.

School details

Unique reference number	142225
Inspection number	10012844
DfE registration number	356/6000

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	SEMH – social, emotional and mental health
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	13–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Jonathan Davies and John Gibbins
Chair	John Gibbins
Headteacher	Alec Dean
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,000
Telephone number	0161 820 1974
Website	www.smseducation.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@smseducation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- SMS Education opened in September 2015 and caters for pupils who find traditional school settings problematic and for those who find learning through vocational activities beneficial.
- Most pupils join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision.
- The school is registered for 15 pupils, aged from 13 to 16 years.
- Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Some pupils are children looked after from various authorities.
- The school uses a variety of external educational providers such as Rubbersoul, Cycloan, BabySteps and SMS Coaching and SMS Construction and Design.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, centre manager, the whole staff and both proprietors. Inspectors also met with the full governing body.
- The inspector visited all vocational alternative providers, spoke to managers, and observed teaching and learning. Providers visited by the inspector included: Rubbersoul, Cycloan, BabySteps, SMS Coaching, and SMS Construction and Design.
- The inspector also observed learning in English, mathematics and science taught on the school site.
- Pupils' files and work were scrutinised by the inspector, in lessons, and also separately in a detailed analysis of pupils' work.
- Observations of pupils' conduct and behaviour took place during lessons and within the vocational alternative providers.
- School policies and other documentation provided by the school were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. Records relating to safeguarding, pupils' achievement, monitoring of teaching, attendance and behaviour were scrutinised. During the inspection, consideration was given as to how the school prepares its pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The inspector took into account questionnaires returned by six members of staff. Responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire were insufficient to provide further parental feedback.
- A material change was requested by the school to raise the registered age range to include pupils from 13 to 18 years and to increase its maximum capacity from 15 to 25 pupils. However, this request was withdrawn at the start of the inspection.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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