

# Stafford Hall School

Cheltenham Place, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 0AW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–30 June 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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

- Directors and leaders are fulfilling their ambitious and inclusive vision to put pupils at the heart of all they do and ensure they make good progress in their learning, communication and personal development.
- From often unsuccessful previous experiences and low starting points into school, all six pupils are making tangible gains in their achievements, communication skills, behaviour and attitudes.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of each pupil's complex needs. They plan individual learning programmes that generally take account of pupils' current skills and abilities. Teachers use pupils' own interests to 'hook' them into learning. Daily planning and assessments of learning inform pupils' next steps effectively.
- Pupils express positive attitudes towards school life, in their sense of safety and the support afforded to them. This can be seen in the lack of exclusions and pupils' regular attendance, so much better than in their previous schools.
- There is a strong sense of moral purpose at Stafford Hall, and the cornerstone of the school's work is the development of high-quality trusting relationships with pupils. This is transforming pupils' confidence and self-esteem and helping to tackle the many barriers they face in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour improves as they settle into school routines because of the way that staff understand and respond to each pupil's complex behaviours. Staff provide a consistent and calm approach when concerns arise. The incidents that require physical intervention reduce as a result.
- The broad curriculum includes a strong focus on developing pupils' communication, English and mathematical skills. As well as this, it provides planned opportunities to develop the qualities they need to be well prepared for the future and to be active citizens in Britain today.
- Directors ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust and that all independent school standards are met.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not as effective as it could be in ensuring that the most able pupils can achieve the highest levels possible.
- Work to develop pupils' spiritual understanding is not as strong as that for their moral, social and cultural development.
- Directors receive regular, detailed reports about the school's work, safeguarding information and progress towards priorities in the school improvement plan, but do not receive sufficient written information about the progress pupils are making over time.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule of 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?

- Speed up the progress of the most able pupils by ensuring teachers plan work that takes full account of their current knowledge, skills and understanding and enables pupils to take higher-level courses.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring leaders' reports to directors include information about the progress pupils make so that directors have a clear understanding of pupils' progress over time.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore a wider range of faiths and beliefs.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Directors set up Stafford Hall to create a place where any parent's son or daughter with autism and complex needs is nurtured, can thrive in all aspects of their learning and development, and be well prepared for their steps into adulthood. Their commitment to the pupils can be seen in the exceptional quality of the accommodation, facilities and grounds that pupils access.
- The directors have appointed like-minded leaders who are driving their vision forward successfully. The head of education provides enthusiastic drive and 'gusto' to ensure that pupils' needs are well met and that they are making good gains in their personal, social, emotional, communication and educational development. She is well respected by staff who share her high expectations and inclusive approach.
- The directors have a good understanding of the school's work and pupils' individual progress, successes and challenges by visiting the school regularly and by the very immediate information they receive if any incident occurs. The head of education has a clear oversight of the school's work through regular observation of teaching and reviews of pupils' learning.
- Leaders and directors consequently have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. The head of education uses this information to develop action plans that directors keep an eye on as part of the detailed reports they receive for the monthly senior management team meetings.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is developing effectively. Systems to manage the performance of teachers are in place, but the school only opened in November so there has not been a full cycle of annual review. Nevertheless, there are regular discussions with staff. Outcomes of observations of teaching are being used to identify the strengths in teaching and determine training needs.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which is being embedded appropriately. It focuses primarily on improving pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills, with detailed schemes of work for these and all subjects in the national curriculum.
- Teachers use the schemes to develop individual learning plans in a cross-curricular way so that pupils' interests are the starting points and subjects are wrapped around them. For example the use of one young person's interest in his heritage has incorporated study of the history, geography, arts and culture of the region alongside and within his mathematical and English activities.
- The curriculum includes the promotion of values such as the rule of law, democracy, empathy and respect for others' viewpoints and feelings. Work to develop pupils' social, moral and cultural understanding is effective and threaded through the curriculum, by staff's interactions with pupils and by the moral code that pervades the school. Pupils learn about principles of right and wrong, and are developing resilience, consideration of others and self-confidence in lessons. Leaders know that more needs to be done to increase their understanding of faiths and beliefs other than their own.
- Developing relationships with Calderdale Connexions service and independent training providers are enabling pupils to access independent careers advice and guidance. Pupils are well supported to identify and work towards their future goals. Partnerships with the local college and two specialist maintained schools in the area are being pursued to enhance provision further. This work complements the carefully planned activities that are helping pupils to prepare for independence or their next steps. None of the pupils is old enough yet to have left the school and moved into training or employment.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance is effective. Directors visit regularly. They check on the achievements of pupils, all of whom are entitled to the pupil premium and have an education, health and care plan, to ensure that educational resources, including the pupil premium, are being well spent and making a difference. This is the case, because pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
  - Systems to check the impact of the management of performance of staff are developing to ensure that the first annual cycle of review is robust. Directors meet with leaders monthly and receive reports on safeguarding, the number and type of behaviour incidents or restraint and also information on the ongoing work within the school improvement plan. They know how well pupils are achieving because of the first-hand evidence when they visit the school, but reports do not include written information about the progress pupils are making. This means that they cannot check well enough the progress pupils are making over time.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has robust arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff and all staff have up-to-date safeguarding training. Leaders take appropriate action when concerns or allegations are raised. They ensure that any incident of pupils being unable to manage

their own behaviour or being at risk of harming others, thus requiring physical intervention by staff, are recorded and checked instantly and over time. Records show that actions taken by staff as pupils settle into school are reducing the number of incidents.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Strengths in teaching include the trusting relationships developed between pupils and adults. Teachers make it very clear to pupils what they will learn in each lesson so pupils can understand the routine of the day. This helps them settle down to their work.
- Close liaison and teamwork between care and education staff ensure that pupils' needs or successes are shared and each team can respond quickly and appropriately when pupils need extra support or guidance at the start of each day. This helps to smooth transitions into lessons.
- Teachers and support staff are vigilant in identifying any potential trigger points of untoward or reactive behaviour or episodes of acute anxiety. They are adept at taking diversionary action to de-escalate potential difficulties, to support pupils to overcome the temporary barrier they are facing and then enable them to get back to their work as quickly as possible.
- Assessment of pupils' abilities on entry includes pupils' communication, academic and developmental needs. This information is used to develop an individual learning programme that is tailored for each pupil and covers the whole curriculum.
- Teachers use pupils' own interests to entice pupils into learning, thus developing their basic skills in a way that is meaningful to them, for example using one pupil's interest in eco-systems to develop literacy and numeracy skills at the same time as science work. Visits to the countryside and wildlife habitats, and the opportunity for the pupil to develop their own eco-garden in the school grounds, enhance learning and broadens pupils' horizons well.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully each day so that work builds on the previous day's learning or tackles the previous day's misconceptions. Lessons are generally well matched to pupils' specific needs and, as a result, pupils engage in their learning and are making good gains from their starting points. Sometimes, however, teachers do not set work that challenges the most able pupils fully.
- Teachers provide ongoing individual feedback on pupils' work orally throughout lessons which helps pupils to understand how well they are doing and identifies gaps and next steps. Marking and written feedback are used effectively for those pupils who can understand its meaning.
- The strong focus on reading means that pupils read every day and in most lessons. Activities for pupils in the early stages of language development are carefully targeted to build their skills and understanding. However, opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure are more limited because of the small range of fiction and non-fiction books available. Leaders are currently in the process of increasing the range on offer.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The strong focus on building trusting relationships with pupils lies at the heart of the school's approach to increasing pupils' good personal development, self-confidence, empathy for others and belief in themselves.
- Staff are strident in their work to tackle stereotypes. They help pupils to understand the principles of right and wrong, tolerance and respect, that lie at the heart of British values. Pupils' understanding of democracy is emerging well through their attendance at regular house meetings, the school council and weekly management development team meetings where their views are shared with adults. They understand that decision-making and democracy are not just having what they want themselves.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of respecting and valuing people with different identities, and have recently improved the way that issues of sexual or gender identity are approached in school.
- Good use is made of opportunities within and beyond the school day to promote pupils' personal development. For example, one young person has been building his skills by visits into the community, learning to communicate with children and adults in the local park and developing skills of empathy and understanding of others' needs.
- Pupils report that they are happy and safe in Stafford Hall. They value the support they have to help them to achieve and be prepared for their next steps. They report that bullying is just not an issue, but

they would not hesitate to talk to their teachers or care staff should anything untoward occur. The school's meticulous records of any kinds of incident substantiate this view.

- There have been no complaints about the school. Three supportive views received in writing from a parent, a social worker and a local authority officer report the positive difference the school has made to the care, welfare and development of the young people at the school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enter the school having experienced a catalogue of unsuccessful education and care placements due to their autism, complex needs and associated behaviours. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes improve steadily as they settle into the school. This can be seen in the daily records staff keep and in the positive and caring ambience around the school.
- The focus on establishing trusting relationships helps to identify, and then to meet, pupils' personal, social and emotional needs. This helps pupils to engage in learning, and helps them to learn how to manage and regulate their own complex behaviours.
- Pupils are welcomed into school each morning in a calm and friendly manner and they soon settle down into their learning. They respond effectively to the creative and individual systems for rewarding positive behaviour, such as 'minutes' earned for computer time.
- A very high staff-to-pupil ratio ensures that staff can intervene and support pupils quickly if need be. The behaviour psychologist's regular and detailed reviews of incidents and potential behavioural trigger points inform strategies that are put in place to avoid similar incidents reoccurring.
- Directors and leaders have a commitment to not excluding pupils at all. There are very careful pre-admission arrangements to make sure the provision at the school is right for the pupils. Individual pupils' transition arrangements into school are carefully planned with the full involvement of parents or carers and pupils themselves. This smooths the pathway into school and reduces risks of serious incidents.
- The head of education and head of care work closely together to ensure pupils arrive in school promptly, ready to learn and to attend each day. Current rates are around 92%, which are well above those found in special schools as a whole.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- All pupils have social, emotional or behavioural issues arising from their autism. All have an education, health or care plan for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' individual needs are quickly identified and catered for because information from the early assessments of pupils are used effectively to plan learning and care.
- The school has not been open long enough to have any end-of-year outcomes. Observations of learning, work in pupils' folders and information about their achievements from entry show that the majority of pupils are making good progress in their learning, from often low starting points.
- Targets teachers set for pupils are usually realistic and based on their current levels of ability, taking account of the often significant gaps in their learning due to their unsuccessful previous encounters with education.
- Pupils' learning programmes are built on their individual starting points and there is usually no discernible difference in outcomes for different pupils across the curriculum. The intensive one-to-one support from teachers means that any gaps in understanding are identified quickly. Then pupils are supported to consolidate their learning and achieve their next steps.
- The only exception is for the small number of pupils who are most able. Not enough account is taken of their starting points in lessons and sometimes the work set is not challenging enough. There are currently limited opportunities for these pupils to study Level 1 or Level 2 qualifications. The head of education has identified this as a need and this situation will be rectified by September.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142324
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012870
<b>DfE registration number</b>	381/6016

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>	Independent
<b>School status</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	6
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	6
<b>Proprietor</b>	Young Foundations Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Not applicable
<b>Head of Education</b>	Aileen Overton
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£280,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 305910
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.youngfoundations.com">www.youngfoundations.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:barry.walker@youngfoundations.com">barry.walker@youngfoundations.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Stafford Hall is an independent residential special school registered for 12 pupils, both male and female, between the ages of 11 and 19 years. There are currently six pupils on roll, all of whom are boys. Their current ages range from 12 to nearly 16 years. One pupil boards for 38 weeks a year and the others for the whole year. No pupils are currently aged over 16; consequently, there is no sixth form.
- The school is a provision of Young Foundations, part of a national company called Mental Health Care UK.
- It caters for pupils with autism and associated complex needs and consequently all have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are currently placed by four different local authorities: Leeds, Birmingham, Calderdale and Wakefield.
- All pupils on roll are eligible for pupil premium funding (government funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who are looked after by the local authority). Five of the six pupils are children looked after.
- The school was once a vicarage and a care home and it has been substantially refurbished. It is situated in its own grounds with a range of areas for pupils to relax and exercise. Pupils learn in the downstairs classrooms and live upstairs in the living areas and the bedrooms that have en-suite facilities.
- Stafford Hall opened to pupils in November 2015 following registration of the care provision with the Department for Education. The school was registered in August 2015. The residential provision is subject to a separate inspection and did not form part of this inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision. It does not receive additional government funding called Year 7 catch-up.
- The school's mission statement is for Stafford Hall to 'become a beacon of excellence in education and care for pupils with autism and complex needs. The school will channel the talents and value the potential of every child and young person and prepare them for happy and productive lives as young adults.'

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. It took place over two and a half days.
- The inspector spoke to the head of education, head of care and service manager over the time of the inspection. She also spoke to teachers and one of the two directors of Young Foundations.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching and learning by visiting lessons and observed pupils in lessons and at break, lunchtimes and as they moved around the school. During this time the inspector spoke to pupils about their work and about the school in general.
- Pupils' work and current achievements were checked and their progress and learning discussed with leaders and staff.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including documents related to the safeguarding of pupils and information required as part of the independent school standards.
- No parents completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, but the views of one parent, a social worker and a local authority officer were considered as there was recent written testimony available from them.

## Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector



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