

# Austen House

Swineherd Farm, Cobcastle Road, Haslingden, Lancashire BB4 5TS

## Inspection dates

20–22 September 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders are always seeking to enhance the quality of provision for pupils but their improvement plans are not specifically linked to pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders are diligent and vigilant in their duty to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils rediscover the joy of learning and the belief that they have a future following long periods of disruption prior to arriving at Austen House.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum and teaching are highly personalised and designed to meet the particular needs of each individual pupil.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. The school promotes and supports pupils' personal development through a sensitive and well-considered therapeutic programme. This gives pupils a confidence and sense of self-worth that they have never had.
- Pupils make good progress at this school given their starting points. The progress of pupils is sometimes hindered by weak assessment procedures that are not shared with pupils.
- Students in the sixth form receive good preparation for their future as a result of an individually tailored programme of study and support.

### 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?

- Ensure that all assessments carried out by teachers are rigorous and are used to set targets that are understood and achievable by pupils.
- Ensure that improvement planning and evaluation is specific about what needs to be done to improve the learning of pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are highly committed to improving the lives of the pupils in their care. All leaders' actions and decisions are made with the interests of each pupil at the fore.
- Leaders and staff daily go the extra mile for the pupils at Austen House. Pupils value and recognise this. As one pupil commented to the inspector, 'It is like a family here. It is the home that I have never had.'
- Staff are complimentary about the training and professional development that they receive. This training positively impacts on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Staff know that their views are valued and they can make recommendations to leaders on how provision can be improved. For example, they have requested extra resources needed to deliver aspects of the new curriculum. The work of leaders and staff is regularly reviewed and appraised.
- Curriculum provision meets the needs of current pupils well. Constant review ensures that there is equality of opportunity. Leaders are aware of the increasing demand that this puts on resources and are exploring ways to maintain the balance between academic and vocational subjects.
- Leaders frequently monitor and evaluate the quality of alternative provision. They not only review the quality of educational standards but also the effectiveness of safeguarding and pastoral care. The communication with each of the providers is daily and any issues that may arise are dealt with quickly.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are given many opportunities to explore each of the values. Recently, each pupil took a British value, researched it and prepared a presentation with practical ways in which the school community could embody this value.
- The provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is particularly strong. It is promoted through the curriculum and the vast array of extra-curricular activities. The pupils take part in reflective practice every morning, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the day before and the day that lies ahead. All around the school there are examples of pupils' moral, cultural and social development. A range of inspirational quotes on display encourages pupils to deal with everyday life.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about respect for all people and this includes people with different characteristics from themselves. The displays of pupils' work on the walls show that they have discussed race, gender, sexuality, disability and religion, among other topics.
- An external careers adviser regularly comes to the school to speak to pupils to offer information, advice and guidance. The pupils value this provision which confirms to them that they have a future.
- Leaders have a very detailed improvement plan on what needs to be done in order for the school to improve further. However, the actions and priorities are not specific enough on what needs to be done to improve the quality of pupils' learning.

### Governance

- Governance is effective.

- The proprietor and directors visit regularly. The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards and the provision at the school reflects current legislation.
- The proprietor and directors share the same passion and ambition for the pupils at the school to be fully integrated into society as confident young women. They are determined to see that the school is given the necessary resources to deliver good-quality education.
- The proprietor and directors hold leaders to account. They receive weekly, monthly and half-termly reports on how well the pupils are doing but these are not always sufficiently focused on pupils' academic progress.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping pupils safe is at the very heart of the school. There is exemplary practice with the weekly multidisciplinary team meetings and daily handover meetings where information about safeguarding and pupils' well-being is shared between care staff and teachers at length.
- Safeguarding policies invariably inform practice and are adapted and reviewed with the regular changing needs of pupils. The recruitment and induction procedures are thorough. The school's safeguarding policies are readily available on request.
- Leaders carry out weekly safeguarding audits and every activity is risk assessed. The clinical psychologist works with leaders on developing pupils' understanding of what constitutes healthy and safe relationships. This helps pupils to stabilise themselves and understand appropriate behaviours.
- The safety of pupils online and through other forms of social media is meticulously protected.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teaching is highly personalised and pupils are often taught on a one-to-one basis. The interests of pupils are incorporated into teachers' planning and this helps to re-engage the pupils in learning.
- Pupils told the inspector how much they value the positive relationships that the teachers have established with them. These positive relationships have helped the pupils grow in confidence and the pupils are happy to learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers build on these positive relationships to ask challenging and searching questions that require pupils to think for themselves.
- Homework is used effectively to support the learning that happens at school. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to continue their learning outside the classroom.
- Pupils' communication skills are continuously developing because they regularly debate and discuss topics that are current and of interest to them. For example, during the inspection, a lively debate took place questioning whether carers should be unpaid or not.
- Teachers daily assess the participation of pupils but do not focus sufficiently on assessing their learning. This slows down the learning of pupils who are not clear on what they need to do to improve.
- Extra-curricular activities form part of the learning experience for pupils. The pupils have visited local sites of interest, different places of worship and various restaurants to try out

new cuisines. Pupils take what they have learned from these activities and incorporate it into what they are doing at school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding and is a particular strength of the school.
- Leaders provide pupils with a carefully thought out programme that is tailored to meet the challenging needs of the pupils. The pupils make rapid gains in their confidence and they are able to function well in the school community.
- The multidisciplinary team meetings ensure that pupils' physical, emotional and mental well-being are improved. The impact of this team is very effective in greatly enhancing pupils' readiness for learning. Pupils and staff are highly complimentary of leaders' work in this area.
- The vulnerability of pupils at the school is immediately addressed on entry through the school's 'phases' programme which includes therapeutic contributions. Pupils learn about how to keep safe and care about one another and themselves. This programme helps to rebuild their fractured and traumatic lives.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to explore how they can be good, well-rounded citizens in modern Britain. Pupils are involved with meals on wheels and other local and national charity work.
- There have been no incidents of bullying since the school opened. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and pupils are confident that if bullying were ever to happen it would be dealt with immediately.
- Pupils feel very safe at this school and enjoy learning about how to keep themselves safe in many different situations.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance is high and there are none who are persistently absent. The pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and admit that it is the first time they have ever said this.
- Any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. Given the varying emotions of the pupils, staff deal with these incidents skilfully and sensitively. The records of incidents are documented well and are clear about any actions that need to be followed up. There have been no exclusions since the school opened.
- Behaviour at the alternative provision is good. The pupils are supported to manage their behaviour and leaders ensure that there are procedures and systems in place to promote good behaviour.
- The pupils respond well to the very tight structures to regulate their behaviour. They are growing in their self-awareness of boundaries and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and ways of speaking.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- All pupils make good progress in their learning across a range of subjects, not just in English and mathematics. This is especially notable given pupils' low starting points.
- Leaders work hard to plug the significant gaps in pupils' learning due to the fragile and traumatic experiences of the pupils that have resulted in significant periods of missed schooling.
- Pupils' progress is often in small steps but for the pupils this has been the first time they have ever experienced success in learning. This motivates them to focus and want to learn more.
- Pupils' work, seen during the inspection, shows that they are developing their learning from when they first arrived. For example, one pupil started the school so switched off she would not write a paragraph. Within a short period of time she was able to write an essay on political parties and voting, demonstrating skill in reflecting, analysing and evaluating sources of information.
- Pupils are encouraged to read. They were seen and heard reading throughout the inspection. All pupils visit the local library regularly. One pupil was very keen to point out to the inspector that before she came to the school she hated reading but now she loves to lose herself in a book.
- The pupils who attend alternative provision make expected progress given their starting points. The alternative providers keep the school informed of how well pupils are progressing on a monthly basis.
- Some weak practice in assessment does not support the pupils' fast progress. The targets for pupils are not always challenging enough and pupils are not always shown what they specifically need to do so as to improve their work.

## Sixth form provision

**Good**

- Students are provided with an individual programme of study that reflects their aspirations and choices post-16.
- Leaders ensure that alternative provision is selected carefully to provide the best educational and work-related opportunities for the students.
- Leaders are in weekly communication with the alternative provision and discuss the progress and general well-being of students. Any concerns are communicated immediately.
- Students have the opportunity to take part in work experience that is appropriate to their aspirations. Students have benefited from this and pursued courses that will allow them to move on to the next stage of education within this field.
- Students are supported to develop their independence and preparation for moving on to independent living and lifelong learning.
- Leaders have ensured that the key skills in English and mathematics are supported and developed in the sixth form if this is required.
- The students are supported by an external careers adviser on the next steps of their education.

## School details

Unique reference number	142333
DfE registration number	888/6062
Inspection number	10012972

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Care 4 Children
Chair	Kamran Abasi
Headteacher	Shaun Redgrave
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,000
Telephone number	01706 219277
Email address	<a href="mailto:shaun.redgrave@care4children.co.uk">shaun.redgrave@care4children.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Austen House is a registered independent school for five female pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. There are currently four girls on roll and their ages range from 14 to 17.
- The school is a provision of Care 4 Children. The organisation helps the most traumatised children and young people and provides for high-acuity young people whom local authorities find the most difficult to place.

- The school was once a farmhouse and has been renovated and refurbished to a high standard. There is copious outdoor space for relaxation and exercise.
- Austen House School opened to pupils in September 2015. The residential provision is subject to a separate inspection and did not form part of this inspection.
- The school uses Tower Learning Ltd, Red Box Training and Blackburn College as alternative providers.
- All pupils on roll are eligible for pupil premium funding and all pupils are children looked after. The school does not receive additional funding called Year 7 catch-up.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice and took place over two and a half days.
- The inspector spoke to the proprietor, director of education, lead teacher, care manager, clinical psychologist, sessional teachers, support staff and all of the alternative providers over the course of the inspection.
- The inspector observed a number of teaching sessions, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to a number of pupils about their learning and about the school in general.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed including records of pupils' attendance, progress and assessments, risk assessments, audits, policies, case studies and minutes of meetings. The single central record and other safeguarding policies and practices were scrutinised. The inspector also considered information and evidence as part of the independent school standards and toured the school.
- No parents completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but the views of external agencies were taken into account.

## Inspection team

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Jonathan Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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