

# Fell House School

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

## Inspection dates

7–9 March 2017

<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>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The directors and leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders share a strong vision and drive for improving the school. They have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. They make good progress from their starting points when they join Fell House. The school is successful in removing many of the barriers to learning that the pupils have previously experienced.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well and make good use of resources in planning activities that motivate pupils.
- Attendance is high. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have great confidence in the adults who care for them.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Support programmes and interventions that are offered rapidly build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding and welfare are implemented rigorously.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Assessments systems and the tracking of pupils' progress are not precise enough in art, music and computing. Consequently, tasks set for pupils in these subjects are not always pitched at the right level.
- Development plans are not always sharp enough to allow leaders to check the impact of their planned actions.

### 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?**

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - sharpening success criteria in development plans to enable leaders and the board to more easily evaluate the impact of their actions.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that:
  - pupils are provided with more opportunities to use and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English
  - information on pupils' progress in subjects such as art, music and computing is more precise and used to plan future work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the paragraphs in all parts of the independent standards.
- Fell House school aims to 'help children to establish a secure, safe base in the world' by helping them in a variety of ways. The school provides an environment where pupils thrive both emotionally and academically.
- The board and leaders have set out a shared vision for the school which is embraced by all staff. They are passionate about the school, set high expectations and demand only the best from staff and pupils.
- The board and leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. They are receptive to feedback and the deployment of an external adviser to evaluate the school's effectiveness has produced positive benefits. For example, reports are becoming more evaluative.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities to develop learning in a wide range of subjects, with a strong emphasis on the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and science. It prioritises filling the gaps in pupils' previous learning as well as developing their social and communication skills and life skills. The curriculum successfully develops pupils' independence and prepares them well for their next stage of their education and care.
- Pupils experience an extensive range of visits, visitors and well-planned residential activities, such as swimming, ice skating, cinema trips and shopping. Together with strong links with the local community, these enrich the curriculum and build pupils' confidence, self-esteem and resilience.
- Good leadership of teaching, through appraisal and regular monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, is continuously improving the provision and pupils' outcomes. Regular, high-quality training for staff supports professional development well.
- Middle leaders make a strong contribution to the success of the school. They have good subject knowledge and lead by example.
- There is a good range of carefully considered opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of British values through topics on different cultures, world religions and occasions such as the celebration of Remembrance Day. British values are discussed during regular citizenship lessons and pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is successfully promoted throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils have a growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities as well as the need to show respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values. Equality of opportunity is well promoted.
- Local authorities hold the school to account for how their funding is used. All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are eligible for pupil premium funding. Leaders manage the resources allocated for pupils well. The school provides detailed reports on each of the pupils, explaining how the provision is making a difference.

- School development planning and evaluation is comprehensive. Progress towards meeting the school's stated aims is regularly checked and there is a rigorous cycle of monitoring. However, some of the proposed actions and success criteria contained within the plans are too broad and general. For example, the intention to raise pupils' achievement does not make it clear by how much it will be improved or how the success will be measured. This makes it difficult to check that targets have been met or to evaluate the impact on pupils' learning of changes that have been made.
- Leaders ensure that assessment of pupils is undertaken rigorously, especially in English and mathematics. This helps to ensure that any potential underachievement can be picked up early with the right interventions offered. Tracking of pupils' progress in subjects such as art, music and computing is not as precise and this makes it difficult for staff to pitch pupils' work at the right level.

## **Governance**

- The board of directors of the school, Appletree Treatment Centre, holds staff to account and provides good support to make sure that the independent school standards are met.
- The directors have a highly accurate view of the school's work through first-hand joint visits with senior leaders to lessons and by undertaking learning walks.
- The directors ensures that the arrangements to safeguard children are implemented effectively through rigorous checks and scrutiny of reports.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a suitable safeguarding policy, which is readily available for parents on request.
- The safety of pupils is paramount in this school. Arrivals, departures and visitors are managed with absolute care by attentive reception staff.
- The site is managed very effectively to ensure that safety checks and service checks are regularly undertaken and meticulously recorded.
- Arrangements to protect children are embedded throughout the school and managed extremely well. Child protection records show detailed and clear histories. Concerns are reported without delay to the designated person and appropriate agencies. Staff are well trained.

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

**Good**

- Pupils' work and leaders' records of lessons over time show clearly that teaching and pupils' learning are good across the school. It is an improving picture year on year.
- There is consistently strong teaching of English, mathematics and science. This helps to explain why pupils make such rapid progress in these subjects from their starting points when they join the school.
- Teachers and other adults working with the pupils have good subject knowledge and work hard to ensure that pupils are engaged in and stimulated by the tasks that are set

for them. This is essential for some of the pupils, who struggle to concentrate for extended periods.

- Staff use resources well to support pupils' learning. For example, older pupils are adept and skilled at using computers to aid their learning. In mathematics, pupils learn to record the properties of three-dimensional shapes using their laptops. As a result of skilled teaching, most older pupils are able to incorporate formulae into a spreadsheet so that they can calculate the properties more easily.
- Excellent relationships exist between adults and pupils. 'All the staff here are ready to help us even if we misbehave', is typical of the comments made by pupils.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour calmly, even when pupils might become challenging. A strong feature of the school is the consistency of approach taken by all adults who work in the school.
- Teachers are providing pupils with some opportunities for pupils to extend and practise their writing skills in subjects other than English. However, this is not provided consistently enough. As a result, pupils' written work in subjects such as history or citizenship is weaker than that found in their English books.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment on entry to school and tracking their progress over time are effective, particularly in subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments are less effective in art, music and computing, where the checks are less rigorous. For example, records of pupils' progress refer only to coverage of the curriculum statements in these subjects. Consequently, it is harder for staff to plan future work for pupils at the right level.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff provide excellent role models and provide strong pastoral support for each pupil. A strong nurturing environment underpins all aspects of school life.
- The school provides pupils with a wide range of specialist support designed to meet their individual needs. Using a multidisciplinary approach, pupils experience therapies that are tailored to their stages of emotional development and mental well-being. These are highly effective. As a result, pupils are developing a growing self-confidence and self-worth.
- Pupils are generous in their praise of what the school has provided for them. 'This place is the best thing that has happened to me in my life so far', was one of the many unsolicited pupil comments shared with the inspector.
- The longer pupils attend the school, the better they are at coping with unfamiliar situations and the better they learn how to respond when they feel angry or upset. Staff are very aware of any changes in pupils' behaviour and emotional well-being. They intervene with sensitivity and a calmness that invariably manages to defuse situations.
- Pupils learn about their bodies, including how they can stay healthy by eating sensibly. They know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter. Pupils say that it rarely happens to them and they know how to

respond if something concerns them. They have a good understanding of the school's reporting systems. On most occasions, 'we can sort things out in our weekly community meeting. If someone calls names we tell them how we feel and that puts a stop to it', was how one pupil described his experiences.

- Pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure within the school environment. They understand their responsibility in keeping themselves safe including when online.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- For all pupils, observations around the school, case studies and records demonstrate that there has been rapid and sustained improvement in their behaviour. Pupils are quick to explain just how much they have changed since arriving at Fell House. 'When I first came here I used to be angry all the time and didn't know why. Now I know what to do if I feel it coming on because my therapy has helped me', was typical of the comments made.
- When pupils do demonstrate challenging behaviour, the situation is managed swiftly and efficiently. Experienced, well-trained staff calm the situation and ensure that the learning of others remains unaffected. Records of any incidents are kept meticulously and include any follow-up actions that might be necessary.
- Staff provide excellent role models for behaviour and manners. They celebrate pupils' successes both individually and as part of the bigger class group. For example, pupils are involved in designing their own rewards system and know what is expected of them.
- Pupils' attendance levels are high. They enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Typically, pupils' starting points at Fell House are below the expectations for their age. Many struggle to access the curriculum at these early stages because of their poor literacy skills and negative experiences of education in the past.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at Fell House, especially in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics. By the time they are ready to leave, most pupils are close to achieving age-related expectations in these subjects. Progress is speeding up in other subjects, including writing.
- The overall good rates of progress are confirmed by talking to pupils, looking at the work in their books and observing them in classrooms.
- Regular reading sessions, including listening to adults read, encourages pupils' love of reading. They talk confidently about books they have enjoyed and what they like about them. Success in this area allows most pupils to access the full curriculum that the school offers.
- Pupils are inquisitive, keen to learn and enjoy sharing their new-found knowledge. For example, some older pupils have become 'experts' in electronic games and delight in explaining to adults their research findings using highly technical language.
- Filling gaps in pupils' previous learning is a major priority for staff. They focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills through topic-based approaches. This enables

pupils to use and apply what they are learning in practical 'real-life' situations, especially in mathematics. For example, pupils made comments such as, 'I'm much better at my number work now because I can see a reason for it.'

- The learning needs of all the pupils represented in the school are well provided for. There is no difference in the rates of progress for the different groups.
- While pupils' progress in writing is strong, it lags behind the progress they make in other parts of English. Pupils complete too few extended writing tasks in subjects other than English. Consequently, there are limited opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects such as history and citizenship.
- Pupils' progress is carefully tracked, with most emphasis placed on how well they are doing in English, mathematics and science. However, checks on pupils' progress in art, music and computing are less precise.
- As a result of the good progress that pupils make academically and the excellent progress they make in their personal development, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and care.

## School details

Unique reference number	133346
DfE registration number	909/6051
Inspection number	10033388

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 special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd
Chair	Clair Davies
Headteacher	Rob Davies
Annual fees (day pupils)	£161,298
Telephone number	01539 535926
Website	<a href="http://www.appletree.uk.com">www.appletree.uk.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@appletreeschool.co.uk">enquiries@appletreeschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–18 June 2015

## 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 eight pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. 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 is part of the Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd group, which also operates one other school and residential provisions in the North West of England.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2015. 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'.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in several lessons, some of which were jointly visited with the senior teacher.
- The inspector spoke with pupils, looked at their work and scrutinised the school's records of their progress.
- The inspector held meetings with, or was in contact by telephone with, senior leaders, staff, pupils, the manager of the children's home and a range of other professionals.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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