

Talbot House Trust, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Hexham Road, Walbottle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE15 8HW

Inspection dates

14–15 February 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Turbulence in staffing and leadership since the last inspection has slowed the school's rate of improvement. Current leaders have brought about substantial change but their actions have not led to consistently strong outcomes for pupils across the school.
- Leaders' checks on pupils' workbooks focus on teachers' compliance with the school's marking policy. Leaders do not challenge teachers with sufficient rigour in relation to the progress made by pupils from their individual starting points.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school and across subjects. It is stronger in key stages 3 and 4 than it is in key stage 2. Teaching is stronger in mathematics and science than it is in English and art.
- Teachers do not deploy and direct the learning support assistants sufficiently well. As a result, these staff do not have a significant impact on pupils' academic progress. Pupils are too reliant on one-to-one support and lack opportunities to become more independent.
- In phonics, staff do not always pronounce the sounds that correspond to letters correctly. This has a negative impact on the progress pupils make in reading, especially for those pupils in key stage 2.
- Governance is improving. However, there is not enough separation between those who carry out improvement actions, those who check the actions have taken place and those who evaluate their success.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, some staff do not adhere to the school's policies and procedures consistently. Too many accept pupils' inappropriate language as a matter of course.
- Pupils' attendance is low and too many are persistently absent. Pupils do not make rapid progress because they are not in school often enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Parents appreciate the very small class sizes and the bespoke pastoral support and care provided by the school for their children.
- Pupils develop social and cultural awareness well through the wide range of additional activities that they access on a daily basis.
- Pupils understand personal safety. They know how to stay safe online.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes, especially in English, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of their pupils
 - learning support assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils' academic and behavioural progress
 - teachers and learning support assistants are upskilled to deliver phonics effectively.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors develop their strategic leadership role further and evaluate the impact of actions taken by leaders
 - leaders secure stability in staffing so that pupils experience less discontinuity in teaching
 - senior leaders judge the progress made by pupils over time robustly when they observe lessons and check pupils' workbooks
 - strong middle leadership of subject areas, particularly in English, is established
 - effective systems are in place across all key stages to check teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Improve behaviour further by:
 - taking robust action to address pupils' swearing
 - increasing pupils' attendance and reducing the number who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils. He understands the need to address their social, emotional and mental health needs in order to maximise their academic progress from, often, very low starting points. The headteacher is aware that turbulence in staffing, at all levels, has had a negative impact on the progress made since the school's last inspection.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. They have given too much weight to the improvements seen since new leaders took up post during the autumn 2016 term.
- New leaders have established much more rigorous systems to monitor the work of the school. For example, they check teachers' marking and pupils' presentation more regularly. However, when checking pupils' workbooks, they concentrate on compliance with the school's requirements for marking and do not assess the progress made by pupils over time rigorously enough.
- Local authorities fund pupils' places at Talbot House. The school's use of this funding has not resulted in pupils making consistently strong progress, both behaviourally and academically.
- The coordinator for special educational needs, who is also interim subject leader for English, took up post in September 2016. Since that time, he has audited the provision for special educational needs, developed an action plan and led staff training. Staff benefit from their increased knowledge of conditions such as dyslexia. However, there is still some way to go to establish truly bespoke and effective provision for each individual pupil.
- The curriculum is under review. Currently, the focus is on pupils' development of skills in English, mathematics and science leading to five good GCSEs in Year 11. This formal curriculum is underpinned well through the award scheme development and accreditation network (ASDAN) and by the European Computer Driving Licence qualification. Pupils gain accreditations in areas such as animal care, which explicitly enhance their skills for learning, employment and life.
- The school's achievement partner has a very accurate view of the school's effectiveness through half-termly monitoring visits. She has identified the school's strengths and areas that require further development precisely. She has also delivered training to teachers about questioning and the provision of work that is just at the right level of difficulty to enable pupils to make rapid progress. Unfortunately, due to the large turnover of staff, this work has not had the impact it should have and improvements have not been as rapid as anticipated.
- The recent appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher, who is also subject leader for mathematics, has strengthened the senior leadership team immensely. Strong systems and procedures to track the attainment and progress made by pupils have now been established. Leaders have used their analyses of assessment information robustly to identify and challenge the underachievement of individual pupils in specific subjects and all key stages.

- The small amount of primary school physical education and sports funding is used well to supplement the exciting and enticing activities that take place every afternoon. Pupils benefit physically, socially and culturally from the wide range of activities which include ice skating, horse riding, life skills, beach games and gym.

Governance

- Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors possess a range of relevant skills and expertise, which they use increasingly well to challenge the headteacher.
- Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. They were disappointed with the outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 4 in 2016 and the achievement of key stage 2 pupils by the end of the autumn 2016 term.
- They recognise the need to have a well-trained, ambitious and stable complement of staff and are not afraid to tackle underperformance when it is identified.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors took immediate action during the inspection to ratify and publish a new policy for child protection that meets the requirements of the government's most recent guidance.
- Recent training has ensured that all staff understand and can explain how to keep children safe from harm in education. Staff make appropriate referrals to a wide range of agencies. Senior leaders follow up referrals tenaciously.
- The school's safer recruitment procedures and records are strong. Any gaps in candidates' employment histories are followed up robustly at interview.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and have a trusted adult to talk to if the need should arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Overall, teaching is stronger in mathematics and science than it is in English and art.
- Frequent changes to the school's teaching staff since the last inspection have led to teaching of an inconsistent quality. Teachers who had received training, for example, by the school's achievement partner, have left to pursue other opportunities. That training has been lost to the school.
- However, recent additions to the teaching workforce are leading to better teaching and more rapid learning. These teachers have higher expectations of their pupils. They provide work that is well matched to individual pupils' abilities and expect them to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers' deployment of learning support assistants is not effective consistently. Sometimes, learning support assistants only support pupils' behaviour. At other times, they over-support pupils and almost complete the work for them. Learning support assistants need clearer guidance and direction from teachers.

- Teaching is stronger in key stages 3 and 4 than it is in key stage 2. Teachers and learning support assistants require further training in phonics to ensure that pupils who enter the school at very low starting points in reading make rapid progress to catch up with their peers. Staff do not always pronounce sounds correctly when reading with pupils.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in accordance with the school's policy and leaders' expectations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are supported well to develop self-confidence and self-awareness as they progress through the school. The older pupils in key stage 4 were exceptional ambassadors for their school when talking to members of the inspection team.
- The school supports pupils' physical health well. Pupils really appreciate the nutritious breakfasts and lunches. They also enjoy and benefit from taking part in physical activities on a daily basis.
- Leaders make effective provision for pupils' emotional well-being. They have commissioned long-term and bespoke therapy for pupils with very high therapeutic needs.
- The care team liaises daily with pupils' parents and carers so that all are aware of incidents at home and at school. Parents are effusive in their praise of the school. One was overwhelmed when she saw her child's work in writing because 'he could hardly even write his name' on entry to the school. Another said the school is 'doing a fantastic job'.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative education for two days each week. These pupils make rapid gains in confidence as they develop their workplace skills and abilities within a safe and secure environment.
- Pupils have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They know the purpose of the child exploitation and online protection icon on their computer screens. Pupils understand the use of privacy settings. They know what sexting is and understand the risks associated with uploading photographs when using social media.
- Pupils understand and can explain the different forms of bullying. They are certain that staff deal appropriately with rare incidences of bullying.
- Older pupils receive impartial careers advice, information and guidance. Over time, all who leave at the end of Year 11 access further education or employment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils swear too often. Some staff fail to challenge this unacceptable language robustly. Pupils do not like it when other pupils use the word 'gay' pejoratively.

- The school's work to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence is not robust enough. Pupils' progress is hampered because they do not attend every day.
- Recently, staff and pupils have worked hard and cooperatively to develop the 'pod'. The 'pod' is a place that pupils can use to complete their work quietly or where pupils can go to calm down when they feel anxious. Pupils appreciate this new resource.
- Pupils usually behave well in lessons. They are interested and engaged in their learning. They want to make progress and please their teachers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the progress made by the small cohort of Year 11 pupils was stronger in English and science than in mathematics. However, this cohort of pupils made poor progress from their individual starting points to reach very low standards of attainment overall.
- This contrasts with current progress in key stages 3 and 4. Assessment information, in the new data-tracking system, shows that pupils are making much better progress overall. However, there are still variations in the progress made by pupils in different subjects. Pupils' progress in mathematics and science remains stronger than in English and art. Pupils told the inspection team that they are making better progress in mathematics because the new leader for mathematics knows exactly what they can do and what to teach them next. Disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 make steady progress in developing reading comprehension and spelling skills. However, they make more rapid progress when the provision is aligned tightly to their individual needs. For example, one pupil's reading age increased by 54 months in a 12-month period. Progress is not as rapid in key stage 2.
- There are wide variations in the progress made by pupils in non-core subjects. For example, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is much higher in computing than it is in photography or art and design.
- Over time, there have been too few pupils in Year 6 to report on attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have identified shortcomings in the available assessment information for current pupils in key stage 2. However, the work in pupils' books shows that they are making some, but not rapid, progress in English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	133779
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10023809

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The trust
Chair	Chris Matthews
Headteacher	Deidre Pearson (Chief Executive Officer), Crispian Woolford (Headteacher)
Telephone number	0191 229 0111
Website	www.talbothousetrust.co.uk
Email address	office@talbothousetrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2015

Information about this school

- Talbot House provides for pupils with severe social, emotional and mental health needs. Twenty-four pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Many have attended a number of different schools prior to admission. Some have had a significant amount of absence in previous schools.
- The school currently caters for 28 pupils aged from seven to 16 and supports local authorities in the north-east region. A small number of pupils attend from outside the region. There were no students in key stage 5 at the time of the inspection.
- Three quarters of the pupils are disadvantaged and a quarter are in the care of a local authority, much greater proportions than seen nationally.
- Local authorities fund the places at Talbot House for individual pupils. The school does not receive separate pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up or additional special educational needs funding for the overwhelming majority of pupils.

- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll.
- The school is part of a trust that includes a residential provision for up to seven residents. The last full social care inspection was in January 2017. The report can be found on Ofsted's website at www.gov.uk/ofsted
- The school uses one alternative provider of education, Stepney Banks Stables.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms across a wide range of subjects in all year groups. Eight observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they were learning. The lead inspector read with three key stage 2 pupils and listened to Year 9 pupils reading during a history lesson.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with a group of key stage 3 pupils and a group of key stage 4 pupils.
- An inspector accompanied a group of pupils during an educational visit to a local riding stable.
- Additional meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body, trustees and the school's achievement partner from Newcastle local authority. The chief executive and the head of development attended a team meeting and provided information throughout the inspection. The lead inspector talked by telephone to a member of staff at Stepney Banks Stables and the school's lead therapist.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, behaviour records and the school improvement plan.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be taken into account. Inspectors considered the school's own surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views. The lead inspector spoke to four parents or carers by telephone.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Darren Stewart	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Campbell	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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