

Windlestone School

Chilton, Ferryhill, County Durham DL17 0HP

Inspection dates

17–18 May 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders do not have an entirely accurate view of the school. They do not use all the information they have to work out what is working well and what is not. Their plans to improve the school do not specify how they will know whether they are making a difference.
- Leaders do not ensure that information about pupils' additional specific learning difficulties informs teachers' planning. Consequently, pupils do not get the specific help they need to overcome the difficulties they experience.
- Leaders do not have a sound plan for the use of the pupil premium grant or catch-up grant. As a result, some pupils do not get the help they need to overcome the disadvantages they face.
- Leaders do not use pupils' key stage 2 test results to set challenging targets for their progress.
- Some teachers do not plan work that challenges pupils to move on in their learning or to use and apply the knowledge and skills they have in different ways. As a result, some pupils do not gain the qualifications they should, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Leaders do not consider the different levels of support pupils need to move around the building and school site safely. As a result, some pupils do not get enough opportunity to learn how to manage themselves independently and safely.
- Too many pupils are absent from school too often to benefit from the opportunities the school makes available. Too many pupils smoke during the school day.
- Some teaching assistants do not provide effective support for pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The deputy headteacher has developed robust systems for ensuring that pupils at the Personalised Alternative Curriculum Centre (PACC) re-engage with learning. At the Durham centre, staff quickly refine pupils' programmes to improve their engagement and attitudes to learning, if these start to slip.
- Pupils make strong gains in their reading skills as a result of the support they receive. This includes pupils who are children looked after by the local authority.
- Pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils trust that staff will give them the right support to make positive choices about their behaviour.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - leaders' plans to improve the school define precisely what they need to do and what they have set out to achieve
 - leaders use the information they collect about all aspects of their work to evaluate the impact of the actions they take to improve the school and take further action if improvements are not happening quickly enough
 - leaders consistently use their procedures to enable them to assess and appropriately manage pupils' movement around the building and school site safely, so those who are able learn how to manage themselves independently
 - leaders set higher expectations for the progress of all pupils by taking into account their test results at the end of key stage 2
 - the pupil premium grant is used effectively to improve the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve pupils' progress and attainment through increasing the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use all the information available about pupils' different learning needs when planning tasks and activities so the most effective approach is used for each pupil
 - teachers plan activities and tasks that challenge pupils to move on to the next steps in their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - teaching assistants have the subject knowledge and skills to support pupils learning
 - all teachers model their planning and delivery of lessons on the practice of the highly effective teachers in school.
- Improve pupils welfare and behaviour, by ensuring that:
 - more effective work is undertaken to stop pupils from smoking on the school site and at other times
 - pupils' attendance improves, at all sites used, including alternative providers
 - the use of fixed term exclusions, particularly for children looked after, reduces.
- An external review of pupil premium spending should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is slightly skewed. They have not kept up to speed with the expectation that pupils who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs make strong progress academically and attend school as often as pupils in other schools. Consequently they have not acted quickly enough or effectively to ensure good attendance or good outcomes for the pupils.
- Leaders ensure that they assess the pupils' abilities in a range of areas when they start at the school. However, they do not take into account the results of pupils' key stage 2 tests. Consequently, they do not set sufficiently challenging targets for pupils to work towards, which limits aspirations and ultimately slows the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders do not use the information they collect about pupils' progress and attendance to help them fully understand what is working well in the school and what is less effective. As a result, their plans to improve the school are not precisely linked to areas that need most attention and do not define what difference new activities will make to pupils' progress, attitudes or attendance. The lack of precision in planning improvements, based on poor analysis of the information available, is threaded through most aspects of the school's work. This includes middle leaders' plans, teachers' performance management plans and pupils' individual plans and risk assessments. Consequently, leaders cannot act swiftly to refine actions when needed.
- Leaders have taken action to address the high rate of pupils absconding, identified at the inspection in 2015. They have increased the security of the site and building, and some pupils have risk assessments that appropriately identify the actions that staff should take if the pupil wishes to leave the building. However, leaders cannot demonstrate how they ensure that pupils who could learn to manage themselves independently are able to do so.
- Leaders have responded to some changes in the nature of pupils' SEMH needs by reviewing and extending the range of subjects and approaches used. They have introduced an internal alternative curriculum pathway for a small number of pupils who struggled to engage with the subjects available to all pupils. This is beginning improve these pupils' attitudes and attendance.
- The curriculum is wide ranging and includes a wealth of opportunities to learn outside the classroom, through the school farm, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and trips to other countries.
- The deputy headteacher has developed systems for tracking the progress that pupils make when attending PACC. The system is robust and uses a wide range of information about pupils' starting points. The information shows the difference in outcomes for pupils at the two centres. The deputy headteacher has identified this and is using the information to work out how to better meet the needs of all pupils.
- Parents who spoke to the inspectors and those who responded to Parent View are supportive of the school's work. They are particularly pleased with their children's personal development and the positive impact that this has had on their family lives.
- The local authority has contributed to the erosion of the school's effectiveness because

they have not challenged the headteacher's view of the pupils' outcomes or provided sufficient support and challenge to address the attendance concerns. Equally, delays over the last two years about the future arrangements for PACC have hindered leaders' plans to improve the work of both centres.

Governance of the school

- Most members of the governing body have joined the board in the last two years. They recognise that the key to improving pupils' attendance and progress is to closely match the range of subjects and approaches used to the different needs of the pupils.
- Governors have a robust approach to ensuring that policies are reviewed and updated, for example to address the concern about the number of pupils who abscond from the site. Governors have ensured that an effective performance management process is in place for the headteacher and teachers and question the recommendations for pay awards.
- Governors challenge the information leaders give them and ask pertinent questions but do not always check the accuracy of the information they receive. For example, leaders gave reassurances that all required information was on the school's website when this was not the case. Governors also accepted, from the information they were given, that the pupil premium and catch-up grants are well spent. However, inspection evidence confirms that only a small part of the grant, linked to children looked after, is used specifically for the purposes for which it is intended.
- Based on the information they have received governors have agreed with leaders and the local authority's over-optimistic evaluation of the school's effectiveness. There is sufficient evidence that governors understand the need to improve the school and have the skills to do so. However, they require more accurate information from leaders and the local authority in order to put their skills and knowledge to better use.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils said that they feel safe and parents who spoke to the inspectors agreed that their children are safe and well cared for. Although absence and fixed-term exclusions are too high, leaders do ensure that parents and carers are contacted when pupils are absent or abscond, so that they know they are safe. Leaders carry out all the required checks on staff before they start work. Records are maintained diligently and match the information in staff files.
- Staff receive appropriate training and they use their knowledge well to refer concerns to the appropriate leaders in school. Leaders make timely contact with other services whenever necessary and actively participate in multi-agency meetings to plan the best support for vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders keep records of their work to safeguard pupils but not all of these are in the same place or demonstrate a clear method for tracking concerns for individual pupils. Leaders' plan to introduce an electronic recording system is likely to rectify some of these administrative concerns.
- The headteacher is diligent in reporting any concerns that pupils raise about how staff

physically intervene when pupils are angry or lose control. He seeks and acts on the advice of the designated officer in the authority. Pupils are confident that when they record complaints in the complaints book, their complaints are dealt with properly. This effective practice keeps pupils safe and protects staff from misguided allegations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of teaching is varied across the school and PACC. Some teaching does not challenge pupils enough. For example, some pupils' mathematics books are full of work that is all correct. There is little to show that pupils are challenged to learn through tackling harder calculations or use and apply their knowledge in different ways. Equally, key stage 3 pupils' rural studies books, contain writing that is copied, restricting pupils' opportunities to write their own responses to questions and the information they are given.
- In most lessons, pupils get on with their work and accept the very high level of support they receive. However, the lack of challenge in most lessons stymies pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers do not routinely use the information about the specific learning difficulties and other barriers to learning that pupils experience to inform their planning. Consequently, in some lessons all pupils do the same work and so do not make rapid gains in their learning from their different starting points.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is broadly accurate in that they identify errors and misconceptions in ways that are helpful to the pupils' understanding. However, leaders do not ensure that teachers understand pupils' abilities that are demonstrated through their test results at the end of key stage 2. As a result, some pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils are not challenged to make consistently strong progress.
- The very high level of staff in each lesson and supporting pupils across the school day has varied impact on the progress that pupils make. Some teaching assistants' subject knowledge allows them to support pupils' learning effectively. This is not always the case, particularly when teaching assistants are not clear about their roles in supporting pupils' learning. Some teaching assistants do not challenge inappropriate language or model appropriate language consistently across the school day.
- Reading is taught well at the school. Pupils confidently read aloud in lessons. Checks on pupils' progress, a competition about the number of words read and a good range of books matched to pupils' interests result in pupils being keen to read. Staff check pupils' understanding of texts and the meaning of technical words consistently. All these strategies secure pupils' good progress in reading, including that of the children looked after.
- Some teaching, including at the PACC Durham site, successfully captures pupils' interests. Knowledgeable and skilful staff use, for example, pupils' interest in fishing, to get them to think deeply about environmental issues, animal welfare and, crucially, the consequences of their behaviour on themselves and others. Pupils' learning in these lessons is demonstrated through their discussions and attitudes. At the Durham site, a recent development in recording pupils' responses in lessons shows how at least two of

the three aims of the centre, improving attitudes and aspirations, are being met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Some pupils regularly smoke cigarettes on the school site. Year 10 and 11 pupils do so with leaders' agreement, if their parents give consent. The constraints of supervising pupils over the 30-acre school site and some parents' misguided belief that smoking helps their child, are compounded by the lack of school health services to provide smoking cessation programmes. Leaders know that the current policy is not encouraging pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and are aware that current lessons on the long-term health consequences of smoking are not fully effective.
- Other aspects of pupils' personal development and welfare are stronger. Many pupils have experienced significant difficulties in learning to manage how they respond to different situations and different people. Most make good gains in developing skills to control their responses and are respectful young people. Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of British values.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills, through their roles on the school council and as mentors to younger pupils. Activities organised for the extended school day are open to all pupils as well as those who are resident. They are varied and fully support the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Examples include cinema trips and a range of sporting and outdoor pursuit activities.
- Pupils, including those who attend PACC, have appropriate relationships and sex education. Pupils speak respectfully about people who have different sexual orientations. They also learn how to keep safe online and how to resist people who would seek to coerce them into unsafe activities.
- Advice, guidance and support for pupils during key stage 4 is leading to more pupils choosing to stay in education, employment and training. Pupils visit a range of local colleges and get sound advice to match their choices of further education to their interests and skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In 2016, over half of the pupils were frequently absent. Overall, pupils missed out on their education over three times more often than pupils in other schools. Pupils placed at PACC have even worse attendance, largely, but not solely, due to poor attendance at alternative providers.
- Until very recently, leaders did not track changes in individual pupils' attendance systematically, so they did not know why, overall, pupils' absence was increasing. The deputy headteacher has recently introduced a new system that clearly identifies what actions are leading to improvements in pupils' attendance. There are early signs that this is enabling staff to target the support needed to improve pupils' attendance.

- Fixed-term exclusions are too high, particularly for children looked after. Recent developments, including training staff to understand the reasons why pupils react in some circumstances in the way they do, are beginning to have a positive impact on reducing some extreme behavioural episodes.
- The number of occasions when pupils abscond from the site has reduced over the last two years. Leaders' information indicates that the number of occasions varies, as does the length of time for which pupils are offsite or their whereabouts unknown. Since the inspection in 2015, governors have adopted a very clear approach to responding to pupils who abscond. This, combined with the increasing understanding of why pupils react in the way they do, is, over time, reducing the time lost to learning through behavioural incidents.
- In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are varied. When work is well matched to their needs and aptitudes, they engage fully and are enthusiastic learners. For example, pupils were keen to bottle feed lambs and check on the recently castrated bullock, understanding how the procedure modified his behaviour. Their enthusiasm stayed high when moving off to clean out the chicken sheds.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Not enough pupils make good progress. Leaders do not ensure that all the available information about what pupils achieved at their previous schools is fully taken into account to set challenging targets. As a result, some pupils do not achieve the GCSE grades that they should, particularly in English and mathematics. This applies equally to pupils who are disadvantaged and to the most able pupils.
- Most pupils make good progress in their personal development. This includes learning how to manage and control their reactions to different people and events. Similarly, pupils spoke of their increased confidence in a range of different situations, including presenting to a large audience at an annual event to celebrate the life of Anne Frank.
- Since the last inspection, the number and range of qualifications that pupils achieve have increased. Leaders' decisions to enter pupils for lower-level qualifications early in key stages 3 and 4 help to boost pupils' confidence that they can achieve success in examinations. However, the approach also means that pupils spend time working on lower-level course specifications that limit the time they have to study at a higher level.
- Pupils attending PACC achieve some level of qualification in English and mathematics. This represents strong progress in pupils' attitudes to learning and, for some, in their attendance. It does not, however, represent strong academic progress from pupils' different starting points.
- The increasing range of vocational options and sound advice and guidance is leading to more pupils moving onto education or employment with training, at the end of Year 11. This includes the pupils at PACC.

School details

Unique reference number	114347
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10012558

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ewart
Headteacher	Tim Bennett
Telephone number	01388 720337
Website	www.windlestoneschool.net
Email address	windlestone.school@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	4–5 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils who have SEMH needs identified as their main special educational need. All the pupils have statements of special educational need or education, health and care plans.
- The school runs a residential provision for up to 20 pupils for four nights a week during school term time. The school provides an extended school day, open to pupils for four nights a week until 6.30pm.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British boys. A much higher than average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and children looked after.
- The local authority commissions the school to run the Personalised Alternative Curriculum Centre (PACC). Currently the centre is based at two sites, one in Durham and one at Ferryhill. Recently, the local authority has confirmed that it intends to reduce the number of places at PACC from 40 to 20. As a result, at the time of the

inspection, leaders and governors were consulting about a new staff structure for the centres, proposing to use only the Durham site.

- Pupils placed at PACC are in Year 10 or 11; all have education, health and care plans. They are all at risk of permanent exclusion from their home schools, including the local authority's other special schools. Pupils remain on the roll of their home school. At the time of the inspection, nine pupils attending PACC were on Windlestone School's roll.
- Pupils attending PACC have placements at alternative providers for two or three days a week. The providers are registered on Durham local authority's alternative provider directory and are: Home on the Range, Misty Blue Farm, Pinnacle Training, Educ8, Open Arms Stables and EENE.
- The local authority also commissions the school to provide a small number of assessment placements for pupils who have SEMH needs, who are on the roll of mainstream schools and who are at risk of exclusion. The provision, 'Stepping Stones' is based at the main school site. The pupils remain on the roll of their home school until a decision is made about where their needs will be best met. Following assessment, most of the pupils transfer to Windlestone School.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication on its website of information about the most recent key stage 4 results, the planned use and amount of the pupil premium grant, the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding, all the details required in the special educational needs policy or SEN information report or an accessibility plan.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons covering a range of subjects and year groups, with the headteacher or deputy headteacher, at the main site and at both PACC centres. During the visits, they observed learning, talked with pupils, heard them read and reviewed work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked with pupils as they arrived at school, at breaks and at lunch times, and held meetings with groups of key stage 3 and 4 pupils. An inspector also met with the school council. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the different sites and at different times of the school day.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders to discuss all aspects of the school's work. Documents and records, including those relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were reviewed.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other governors and reviewed the records of their meetings and visits to school. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority who advises senior leaders and governors. Records of her visits to the school were considered.
- Records relating to leaders' checks on the progress and welfare of pupils attending the alternative providers were reviewed.
- The views of eight parents who attended a meeting with an inspector and the six responses to Parent View were considered. No staff or pupils completed the relevant online surveys.

Inspection team

Susan Hayter, lead inspector

Judith James

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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