

Blue Mountain Education

Willow Farm, Off Newton Lane, Ilkeston, Cossall, Nottinghamshire NG16 2SD

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Staff plan lessons carefully to meet pupils' individual needs. Because of this, pupils who are present at the school for sustained periods of time are able to catch up where previously they have fallen behind, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has ensured that the curriculum responds to the individual needs of the pupils. Through their studies, pupils become secure in the key skills that they will require when they leave school.
- Staff work closely with pupils to ensure that pupils can manage their behaviour effectively.
- Staff closely monitor pupils' attendance. They provide effective support for pupils who find attending school difficult.
- Pupils receive effective opportunities to develop their understanding of the need to respect all people, including those who demonstrate the different protected characteristics as set out in the 2010 Equality Act.
- The school's staff are highly vigilant, and work well as a team to ensure that pupils are kept safe, and know how to be safe.
- Leaders regularly monitor pupils' progress. They put into place effective strategies to support pupils in their learning.
- Staff maintain close contact with the local authorities who are responsible for the care of the pupils. Staff also communicate regularly with the children's homes where the pupils live.
- The proprietor has a precise understanding of the quality of the school's provision. He provides the headteacher with appropriate levels of support and challenge to ensure that the pupils make strong progress and to make sure that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Some pupils' awareness of national issues, including current issues reported in the media, is not as secure as their awareness of issues found within their local community.
- Leaders have not always ensured that staff take full note of information about new pupils' learning and emotional needs as soon as it is available. Where this is the case, staff do not meet the needs of these pupils quickly enough.
- Leaders do not apply their checks on the quality of teaching consistently across both school sites.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent school Standards) (England) regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (English) (Amendment) regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the checks that leaders undertake on the quality of teaching are consistent across both of the school sites, to enable leaders to have a precise understanding of the quality of all aspects of the school's provision.
- Ensure that all staff take into account and use well the information about the learning and emotional needs of pupils who are new to the school. This is to ensure that all staff can plan effectively for these pupils' progress and pastoral support at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Ensure that pupils' understanding of national, topical issues is as secure as their understanding of the issues that exist within the local area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher has ensured that there is a caring culture across both of the school sites that allows pupils to access their learning in a safe and supportive environment. Staff know the pupils well and care for them deeply. Due to this, pupils who previously have been disaffected from education engage well with their learning.
- Pupils who remain at the school for sustained periods of time are able to catch up where they have previously fallen behind, particularly in English and mathematics. This is due to the close support and personalised teaching that the pupils receive from the staff.
- The headteacher has taken effective action to resolve those areas that at the previous inspection were identified as requiring improvement. She provides the staff with strong leadership, and has high expectations of all members of the school community.
- The well-designed curriculum meets the individual needs and interests of the pupils. There is a strong focus on securing any gaps that pupils may have in their understanding of English and mathematics. However, pupils are also able to explore other subjects and topics that may interest them. For example, pupils have previously been able to learn about furniture restoration, and have engaged in designing murals for the school.
- Staff ensure that pupils are able to undertake a range of educational trips to take advantage of resources in the local area. These visits enable pupils to become secure in their understanding of the topics that they are studying, particularly in the creative subjects.
- Encouraging pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem, and to develop positive relationships with others, is at the very heart of the school's work. Through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, pupils explore a variety of topics that secure their understanding of their role as a citizen of the society in which they live. Pupils also receive opportunities to reflect on the need to respect all people, including those who meet the protected characteristics as set out in the 2010 Equality Act. Staff reinforce this understanding through their daily contact with pupils, both formally and informally. These curricular and wider experiences enable pupils to become secure in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff model the behaviour that they expect of their pupils. They are quick to challenge any prejudiced or discriminatory behaviour that pupils may demonstrate.
- Pupils receive wide-ranging opportunities to explore the fundamental British values, including developing their understanding of democracy, and the accompanying rights and responsibilities. For example, pupils engaged in political discussions during the 2015 general election. Pupils also work with representatives of the local police, and use these discussions to explore their understanding of right and wrong.
- Leaders undertake regular checks on the progress that pupils make. These checks enable leaders, working closely with staff, to put into place close support for pupils who are not making sufficient progress.

- Leaders provide the local authorities who have responsibility for the care of the pupils at the school with regular updates of the progress that the pupils make. For example, leaders contribute to the reviews of each pupil's personal education plan (PEP).
- The headteacher undertakes effective checks on the performance of the school's staff, particularly of those who teach on the Willow Farm site. These checks enable the headteacher to identify appropriate training opportunities to ensure that staff are able to fulfil their responsibilities well. This includes ensuring that staff plan pupils' learning effectively and are secure in their own teaching skills.
- Leaders are quick to identify the prior attainment, learning requirements, and the social and emotional needs, of pupils who are new to the school. On occasions, however, leaders do not ensure that all staff use this information quickly enough to be able to cater fully for pupils' individual needs at the earliest opportunity.
- Pupils receive wide-ranging opportunities to learn about the local community. This includes through undertaking educational visits, and through meeting with representatives of local services, including the police. However, pupils' understanding of recent national, topical issues is not as strong as their understanding of local issues.
- The headteacher undertakes regular checks on the quality of teaching at the Willow Farm site. However, these checks do not currently take place at the Toll House site. Because of this, leaders' understanding of the quality of provision at the Toll House site is not as precise as their knowledge of the quality of the provision at the Willow Farm site.

Governance

- The proprietor has a comprehensive understanding of the quality of the school's provision. He takes a keen interest in the progress and welfare of the pupils at the school. He has appointed senior leaders to the company to which the school belongs, to ensure that he receives regular, accurate feedback on the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are appropriate resources to meet the individual needs of the pupils, and to enable them to engage fully in their learning and make progress. For example, the proprietor has provided a fully-fitted kitchen area to enable pupils to learn food technology. He has also supplied laptops and an interactive screen to allow pupils to learn more effectively about computing.
- The proprietor has taken effective action to ensure that the proposed educational provision at Bluebell House meets all of the independent school standards. As a result, this proposed provision, which is currently not operational, now meets all of the standards that the material change inspection of January 2017 judged unlikely to be met.
- The proprietor has a secure understanding of the actions that he must take when there are concerns about pupils' safety. This includes the actions that he must take where there are safeguarding allegations against a member of staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available upon request to parents, carers and professionals who have a duty of care for the school's pupils.
- All staff receive regular, comprehensive safeguarding training. The headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead, ensures that this training covers any social, emotional or mental health needs of the pupils. For example, staff have received training on attachment theory, managing aggression, and child sexual exploitation.
- As a result of this comprehensive training, all staff have a secure understanding of the different types of abuse, and the signs to look out for. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities, and know the action that they must take where they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. They take great care in monitoring the well-being of their pupils, including identifying any expressions of radicalised or extremist views.
- The headteacher takes swift and effective action when she has a safeguarding concern about a pupil. She communicates closely with the managers of the children's homes where the pupils live, and works with local agencies, including the local police. In her dealings with all welfare professionals and local agencies, the headteacher is tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the support that they require. She maintains comprehensive records of the actions that she has taken to support pupils.
- Pupils learn how to be safe, particularly through their PSHE education programme. Pupils learn how to be safe online. They also learn about the risks posed by smoking and substance misuse. Pupils learn about safe relationships, and the causes and consequences of domestic violence. In addressing these issues, all staff are sensitive to the possible previous experiences of the pupils.
- Pupils understand who they should speak to if they have a concern or a worry. They are confident that staff will listen to them, and take effective action to support them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All staff carefully plan lessons that engage pupils in their learning, and that take into account their prior attainment.
- All staff are sensitive to any gaps that pupils may have in their learning due to any previous disengagement with education. Staff carefully plan activities that enable pupils to fill these gaps quickly.
- Staff review with each other the learning that pupils have undertaken each day. This enables staff to have a secure understanding of the progress that pupils have made that day, and to plan effectively for the next day's learning.
- Teachers check on pupils' learning through undertaking regular assessments of pupils' understanding. They also ask carefully considered questions to establish pupils' learning, and to identify where further support may be necessary.
- Staff provide detailed written and oral feedback that helps pupils improve their work, and become secure in their learning.

- Staff are quick to identify and clarify any misconceptions that pupils may demonstrate. Such clarification enables pupils quickly to become secure in their understanding.
- All staff promote pupils' skills in reading. The school has a display on books that have been banned around the world. This has provoked a discussion, for example on why some countries choose to ban works such as the Harry Potter series, and has inspired in the pupils a desire to read.
- Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work that pupils should complete, and the neatness with which they present their work. Most pupils present their work well.
- Teachers are quick to challenge any stereotypes or inappropriate preconceived ideas that pupils may express, either in lessons or during social time. This includes any inappropriate views that pupils may hold about people who display the protected characteristics. This challenge enables pupils to reflect upon, and change, their opinions.
- On occasions, staff do not use the information about new pupils quickly enough to plan from the outset learning activities that fully meet these pupils' needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils learn about healthy living, through their PSHE programme of study and through their subject studies, including science, physical education (PE) and food technology. Because of this, pupils have a clear understanding of how to live healthy lives.
- Pupils learn of the need to show respect to all people, regardless of their differences. Pupils explore different cultures and religious beliefs through their PSHE studies, through educational visits, including to the National Memorial Arboretum, and through the study of half-termly themes across the curriculum. For example, pupils have considered the role of women throughout history, particularly in the world of science, and the history of different ethnic minority groups. Staff are quick to challenge pupils regarding any prejudicial behaviours or attitudes that they may demonstrate.
- Staff work closely with all pupils to support them in their emotional well-being. Staff take time to listen to pupils if they have concerns. In so doing, staff take appropriate action to support the pupils. The headteacher maintains detailed records of any concerns that the staff may have regarding pupils' well-being. She ensures that there is close contact with those professionals who have a duty of care for the pupils. This is to ensure that the professionals are aware of any concerns or worries that the pupils may have.
- The school undertakes rigorous risk assessments of each pupil, and of all educational activities that the pupils undertake, particularly away from the school site. These assessments allow staff to take appropriate action to reduce any risks that pupils may encounter when engaging with educational activities. These assessments also enable staff to engage well with the pupils, and promote positive relationships.
- The pupils that inspectors met appreciate the support that they receive from the staff at the school. They value the work that staff undertake to help pupils to engage in their learning, manage their own behaviour, and prepare for life when they leave the school.

- Pupils have a secure understanding of the local area within which the school is situated. However, some pupils' understanding of national issues is not as strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All staff work closely to enable pupils to manage their behaviour. Because of this, behaviour in lessons and during social times is good. The school's own behaviour records demonstrate that there has been a substantial decline in serious incidents this year. This is due to the work that staff have undertaken to help pupils to manage their behaviour.
- Leaders closely monitor pupils' attendance. They take effective action to support the education of those pupils who refuse to attend school. Leaders ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to ensure that pupils who regularly refuse to attend school begin to attend more regularly.
- The pupils who met inspectors said that bullying is very rare, and that staff deal with it quickly on those occasions that it might happen. The school's own records show that incidents of bullying are low. Staff provide support to both the victim and perpetrator, when incidents of a bullying nature occur.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils, including the most able, arrive at the school with levels of attainment across most subjects that are well below those expected for their age or their stage of education. Staff are quick to establish the different starting points of each pupil, based upon their previous experience of education.
- Staff use this information to plan carefully designed programmes of study that enable pupils to make strong progress in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics. This is especially the case for the pupils who remain at the school for a sustained period.
- While at the school, most pupils make strong progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills across the range of subjects that they study.
- The progress that pupils make in their learning also enables pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Because of this, pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain, and for their future, independent living.
- Pupils develop their reading and communication skills well because of the strong focus that the school places on developing pupils' literacy skills.
- Those pupils who are studying towards qualifications in communication and numeracy make strong progress. These qualifications enable them to become secure in their understanding of how to use these skills in their personal life, and in the workplace.
- Pupils receive wide-ranging opportunities to explore their next steps for when they leave the school. This includes through visiting different colleges, completing work-experience placements, and receiving impartial careers, advice and guidance from a local careers advice service. This support ensures that pupils receive effective preparation for their next steps after they complete their full-time education.

School details

Unique reference number	131536
Social care unique reference number	SC047978
DfE registration number	891/6026
Inspection number	10033624

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 school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Proprietor	Mr Pradeep Manaktala
Headteacher	Mrs Charlotte Hextall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,000
Telephone number	0115 932 1153
Email address	charliebmh@btconnect.com
Date of previous inspection	11–13 June 2014

Information about this school

- Blue Mountain Education is an independent special school for pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social needs. It opened in April 2006, and is owned by Blue Mountain Homes.
- The school provides education for eight full-time pupils, who are not attending mainstream education. The school is registered to admit pupils between the ages of eight and 18. Currently there are no pupils on roll who are above the age of compulsory education and who are studying 16–19 study programmes.
- The school provides education for its pupils at two sites. Most pupils receive their education at Willow Farm. Some pupils receive their education at the Toll House site.
- The school has a further site at which leaders propose to provide education. This is at Bluebell House at New Ollerton. Currently, there is no educational provision at this site.

- The school received a material change inspection in January 2017. This inspection was in relation to the opening of the educational provisions at Toll House and Bluebell House. The inspection judged that the Toll House site was likely to meet the independent school standards, but that the Bluebell House site was not.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 11–13 June 2014.
- All of the pupils are in the care of the local authority. They are all resident in children's homes that Blue Mountain Homes owns. There are a range of local authorities that use the services of the school to educate the children who are in their care.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- An inspection of the children's home that is situated on the Willow Farm site took place at the same time as the standard inspection of Blue Mountain Education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors inspected the two sites at which the school currently provides education. An inspector also visited the Bluebell House site to confirm that this site is not currently providing any pupils with education. In so doing, the inspector checked the likelihood that this site will meet the independent school standards.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of each school site, to check the facilities against Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, representatives of Blue Mountain Homes, including the proprietor, members of staff, and pupils.
- Inspectors observed an occasion where learning was taking place. Inspectors also looked at pupils' books and other evidence of the work that pupils have completed.
- Inspectors took into account the three responses to a questionnaire for staff. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to be able to make an analysis of parents' or carers' views.
- Inspectors spoke with a manager of one of the children's homes at which current pupils are resident. An inspector also spoke with representatives of the virtual schools of two of the local authorities that have a duty of care for pupils at the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's provision, including those concerning: the school's self-evaluation and improvement; pupils' attainment and progress; behaviour and attendance; complaints against the school; accessibility plans; the quality of teaching; and safeguarding. An inspector scrutinised pupils' PEPs and other documentation related to their learning and behaviour needs. The lead inspector checked the school's single central register and the Blue Mountains Homes' systems for recruiting staff to the school

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Duignan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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