

Stroud and Cotswold Alternative Provision School

Belle Vue Centre, Belle Vue Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 1JP

Inspection dates

12–13 July 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

- Since the arrival of the headteacher in 2015, the quality of teaching and learning has been steadily improving, especially for older pupils. However, a lack of rigour in checking teaching, learning and assessment has led to too much inconsistency in pupils' outcomes across the school, particularly for younger pupils and the most able pupils.
- Members of the management committee are knowledgeable and suitably experienced. However, the local authority and the management committee have identified that they need to review governance arrangements in order to adapt to the changing nature of alternative provision so that school leaders receive robust challenge, as well as effective support. This review is not yet completed.
- Too many pupils do not read widely or enjoy their reading.
- Too often, learning does not match pupils' interests or needs closely enough because teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for pupils to do their best. As a result, some pupils are less interested during their lessons. In these cases, behaviour sometimes deteriorates, and causes disruption to learning.
- School leaders ensure that pupils are safe when in school. However, leaders do not provide rigorous scrutiny to ensure that safety issues are regularly evaluated and improved.
- A number of pupils do not make the progress they should because they do not attend school often enough. A small number do not attend at all.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported well by other senior leaders, has created a collaborative and positive ethos in which to work and learn. Staff provide the day-to-day nurture and care that help pupils to feel secure and safe while attending school.
- Some teaching and learning is good and as a result, these pupils, particularly older pupils who attend well, make good progress.
- Pupils appreciate the extra support and structure that staff provide and many develop skills such as confidence and resilience, which helps them to return to mainstream settings.
- The school works with a wide range of other providers to ensure that pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, have experiences that meet their needs and prepare them well for their next steps in education or training.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders, including those responsible for the governance of the school, should ensure that they provide consistent support and rigorous challenge so that:
 - issues related to safety and safeguarding are appropriately and systematically checked, evaluated and improved
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve, particularly for younger pupils and for the most able pupils
 - pupils enjoy their reading and read more widely
 - attendance improves and that those pupils who have very low attendance have the support and help they need to ensure that they are safe and to improve their attendance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Systems for checking, analysing and evaluating the school's performance currently lack rigour. The provision has experienced considerable turbulence, particularly in its leadership. This situation is hampering more rapid improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders and managers have not been able to make a significant impact on some areas identified at the previous inspection. For example, strategies to improve attendance and the level of challenge given to pupils during lessons still require improvement.
- The management committee does not currently provide the rigorous scrutiny to hold the school's leaders fully to account. Effective safeguarding procedures are in place, but they are not systematically checked or evaluated in order to improve the effectiveness of such procedures.
- The local authority has provided some support and challenge to assess progress in the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection. Local authority representatives are aware, however, that the governance of the school needs to become more active in holding the school to account for the progress it makes. They are also aware of the need for governors to work more directly with leaders in order to fulfil their roles effectively and to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The headteacher is ambitious for pupils and has developed strong teamwork among staff. Some improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are evident, particularly in key stage 4. All staff who responded to the online survey agree that leaders provide an ethos that ensures staff are motivated and respected.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad in order to meet the needs of pupils. For example, it is planned that younger pupils develop their self-confidence and esteem through a programme of enrichment activities such as forest school or horse riding where pupils' social and behavioural needs are the focus. The impact of this curriculum planning varies according to how successfully behaviour is managed.
- Through an initial detailed assessment and careful tracking, the special educational needs coordinator ensures that additional funding, including funding for special educational needs and pupil premium funding, is used purposefully. Funding supports extra, therapeutic activities as well as some additional therapies in order to meet the specific needs of pupils who are disadvantaged or for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Developing pupils' social and moral understanding and learning about values such as respect, tolerance and democracy are at the heart of the curriculum and are reinforced throughout the day. For example, younger pupils' participation in mock elections enhances their learning about current news and democratic processes. Visits out of school, for example to a local mosque, also support pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding.

Governance of the school

- Members of the management committee, the governors, do not hold a secure enough grasp of the impact of key school policies on pupils' outcomes. Members focus too much attention on the approval of policies rather than on the difference they are making.
- The management committee is over-reliant on the headteacher to monitor and check his and other leaders' actions and the impact these have on pupils' progress. Minutes of meetings demonstrate an over-reliance on leaders' reports of the school's performance.
- The management committee is currently reviewing how to provide more effective governance of the school. As part of the review, the committee intends to carry out an audit of skills to ensure that the committee members have the skills needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This has yet to be completed.

Safeguarding

- The management committee does not rigorously check safeguarding practices in school. Leaders do not ensure that there are systems in place to secure further improvements to health and safety practices across the school and promote the highest standards of safety and pupils' well-being.
- The day-to-day arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff are vigilant throughout the day to ensure that pupils feel safe and are secure in school. They are aware of how to report concerns and they are confident that any concerns raised are dealt with well. The designated leaders for safeguarding have appropriate training and ensure that they liaise with a suitable range of agencies in order to provide appropriate support and care for pupils. Staff professional development about safeguarding arrangements covers an appropriate range of areas and staff are kept up to date with any new information.
- The daily briefings held across the school demonstrate how well staff understand pupils' social, emotional and safety needs. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Parents describe how much they appreciate the detailed information they receive about their child, although a small number express concerns about incidents that occur when pupils lose control of their emotions during the day.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too inconsistent across the school.
- Sometimes, expectations of what pupils know, understand and can do are not high enough and the challenge provided for pupils in lessons is not sufficient to interest them in their learning. Learning is also less productive on the regular occasions when staff need to focus on pupils' behaviour rather than on developing new knowledge, understanding or skills.

- Younger pupils are sometimes unclear about what it is they need to do to improve their work. There are targets set which pupils are aware of, but they are generally very broad and do not help pupils to know precisely what their next steps in their learning are in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have identified that pupils need more help to read more widely and to enjoy their reading. Older pupils engage in reading activities related to their courses and read these materials in depth. However, few pupils said that they enjoy their reading. Plans are in place to add to the reading resources in school so that pupils have a wider access to quality, interesting reading materials.
- Positive professional relationships exist between staff and pupils across the school and this supports pupils as they work to develop their social skills in order to make progress in areas of learning. Staff have detailed daily conversations about pupils' successes and any issues that have taken place during the day and they use this information well to plan the organisation of staff for the following day.
- In Years 10 and 11, teachers have a strong knowledge of subjects being taught and the courses followed. The activities are generally purposeful and meet pupils' needs as activities build on what pupils know, understand and can do. For example, in learning about food, pupils use learning from previous lessons to share how to adjust the flavour of tomato sauce using sugar. For older pupils, courses chosen match pupils' needs, abilities and ambitions and include GCSEs. These accreditations help pupils who attend well to gain future employment, or move on to education or training.
- A wide range of alternative providers help the school to provide interesting, relevant learning for older pupils. Activities such as pottery, boxing, music, silversmithing and landscaping help to meet pupils' interests. Leaders evaluate how well providers continue to meet the needs of pupils and monitor pupils' attendance at these activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils now have fuller access to appropriate outside professionals who provide additional personal development and welfare support within the school. However, the impact of interventions and support provided by these professionals is not closely evaluated by leaders and managers to inform future decisions about the effectiveness of this provision.
- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school, including those pupils scheduled to attend alternative provision. Their poor attendance hinders their future life chances and career opportunities. In addition, the school does not do enough to ensure that those pupils who are absent from school have their welfare supported. Communication with the parents and carers of these pupils is infrequent when pupils are absent from school.

- Leaders do check the impact of external providers on the personal development and welfare of pupils. Leaders report a varying picture, some providers are successful at meeting pupils' needs and pupils generally attend these well and improve their skills. Other providers are not as successful in maintaining the interests and therefore pupils' attendance is irregular.
- Pupils report that there is little bullying in the school and should it happen, staff deal with it effectively and quickly. The curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to take responsibility for their behaviour and how to respect others' views and opinions. Pupils explore issues such as homelessness through reading texts in lessons.
- Pupils value the mentoring programme, which supports their emotional development. Pupils say that it helps them to discuss any underlying issues and to understand their own barriers to being successful learners.
- Some parents who expressed a view during the inspection gave high praise for the level of care and attention given to pupils by staff. A typical comment received from parents was, 'It's given him back respect for teachers and for schools. It's given him a fresh start.' Some others were less positive about how behaviour is managed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The management of behaviour across the school is inconsistent. At times, pupils do not manage their behaviour well, particularly when they are unsure of the actions they can take to help them to manage their emotions. At other times, pupils show well-developed social skills and they are confident and respectful of each other and staff.
- The number of exclusions due to unacceptable behaviour is high and numbers have not significantly reduced.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are inconsistent. Where the planning of activities meets the needs and interests of pupils and provides sufficient challenge for them, pupils want to learn more. There are too many occasions, however, where pupils are reluctant to be involved in learning tasks.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Across the primary phase, the progress pupils make from their starting points, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, requires improvement. Activities do not regularly challenge pupils. Therefore, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics skills, too many pupils do not make good progress. Too few pupils develop secure reading and comprehension skills or read widely for enjoyment.
- In key stage 3, books show a wide range of themes covered. However, there is little evidence of pupils successfully developing their technical writing skills. Misconceptions, for example in grammar, punctuation or spelling, are highlighted but pupils are not regularly shown how to improve these aspects when errors are made. Therefore, pupils complete tasks but often do not make good progress in improving their skills.

- An increasing number of courses and opportunities for older pupils ensure that they are well prepared to obtain nationally accredited qualifications. Those older pupils who attend regularly are therefore prepared well for leaving school to go on to other destinations. Effective careers advice, mentoring and support towards the successful application for jobs contribute strongly to this process. However, leaders are aware that the pupils who do not attend well or the small numbers who do not attend at all do not benefit and are consequently less prepared for the next stage of their life.
- Overall, pupils who spend longer in the school and attend well, particularly the oldest pupils in Years 10 and 11, make good progress and some complete GCSE courses. Pupils take examinations as they are ready and all pupils who are regularly attending school achieve functional skills qualifications and sit a range of GCSEs. Staff are successful in ensuring that pupils make good progress in developing personal and social skills such as confidence and resilience. Pupils arrive at the school with different learning experiences from a range of other settings. Many, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, have had their learning disrupted both because of their own behavioural, emotional or social difficulties and by periods of absence. For example, in the current school year 146 pupils have spent time at the school, over half returned to a mainstream school and 92% of these pupils have remained at the same school.

School details

Unique reference number	135331
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10033147

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Robinson
Headteacher	Nick Stanton
Telephone number	01453 767293
Website	www.stroudandcotswold.eschools.co.uk
Email address	admin@scaps.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A reorganisation of alternative provision in Gloucestershire was instigated in 2015. At this time, an executive headteacher and a management committee with oversight of all three maintained alternative provision schools in Gloucestershire took up their roles. The current headteacher took up his post in 2015 as operational headteacher for the Stroud and Cotswold Alternative Provision School with responsibility for the two centres that currently make up this provision. The executive headteacher who resigned in July 2016 has not been replaced and the operational headteacher now has a much wider set of responsibilities.
- The two centres provide places for primary and secondary pupils permanently excluded from schools in this part of Gloucestershire, places for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion and short-term places for pupils who need support with improving behaviour.

- The number on roll varies throughout the year due to the nature of the provision. The average number of pupils on roll has risen from 32 in 2014/15 to 74 in 2016/17.
- The school receives pupil premium funding but does not receive additional catch-up funding for Year 7 or primary sport funding.
- Alternative provision for some pupils is offered part time.
- The local authority has supported the school through regular meetings, in order to assess the progress the school is making. Through these meetings, additional support for the school is decided. A link governor liaises between the local authority and the management committee.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning on both sites, often with the headteacher or other senior leaders. A range of pupils' books were looked at. Some younger pupils were observed as they read to staff. Times outside lessons were observed, such as lunchtimes, and the daily staff briefings were observed.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, members of the management committee and representatives of the local authority. A telephone discussion took place with three parents and the small number of views on Parent View, the online survey, was taken into consideration, as was the online staff survey.
- A range of school documentation was looked at, including documents related to the school's own evaluation of its performance and the school improvement plan. Documents also included those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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