

Willow House

Halliwell Homes Education Centre, 120 Stanley Road, Cheadle, Stockport, Greater Manchester SK8 6RF

Inspection dates

17–19 October 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The head of education, lead teachers and proprietors have a strong vision and understanding of what is needed to move the school forward. This is shared by the close and dedicated staff team, who work very hard to ensure good outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils joining the school often have large gaps in their learning because of their behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. As a result of good teaching over time, pupils make up lost ground and are enabled to return to mainstream or special education after an average of 18 months.
- All groups of pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. A strong focus on core subjects such as English, mathematics and science is enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities which enable pupils to rediscover a love of learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and taught well through a range of topics.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' well-being is excellent. Pupils learn how to manage their feelings and emotions and to behave well.
- Systems to ensure that pupils are protected from risks and stay safe are strong. The school provides very effective teaching about how to stay safe online. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for.
- Leaders, staff and the proprietors have made sure that all the independent standards are met.
- Sometimes staff do not expect enough of pupils and set work which is not sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils correct spelling and punctuation errors.
- There are currently very few opportunities for pupils to learn outside.
- When observing teaching, leaders do not put enough emphasis on how well pupils are learning.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that work is sufficiently challenging so that all pupils make rapid progress
 - improving the quality of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - implementing plans to enhance and develop opportunities for pupils to learn outside
 - making sure that when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, leaders place more emphasis on what pupils are learning rather than on what teachers are doing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers are passionate about re-engaging pupils in learning and helping them to fulfil their potential both academically and socially. This passion is shared by all staff across the school. The proprietor, leaders and other staff work together to ensure that the independent standards are fully met.
- Staff form a cohesive and enthusiastic team who ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils quickly learn what is expected of them and improvements in their learning and behaviour are rapid.
- A very clear behaviour strategy with a positive reward system is consistently used by all staff on a daily basis and pupils understand it well.
- All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. The lead teachers have more responsibility than previously and take part in monitoring teaching and learning. One lead teacher has devised a highly effective progress tracking system so that staff know exactly how much progress each pupil has made in each subject. This enables them to plan the next steps for each individual and measure the success of the school's work.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants have their work regularly appraised by the head of education, who gives them clear feedback on how to improve their performance. However, sometimes in observing teachers at work too much emphasis is put on what teachers are doing rather than on how well pupils are learning. This means that teachers' areas for improvement are not as clearly focused as they could be on accelerating pupils' progress.
- The school's well organised curriculum has a clear focus on ensuring that pupils make as much academic progress as possible in the time that they are in school. There is a strong emphasis on English, mathematics, science and information technology. Other areas of the curriculum are covered in topic work at present since all current pupils are in key stage 2.
- A wide range of enrichment and sporting activities is offered every afternoon such as swimming, cycling and sports hall games. Pupils regularly visit Manchester museums, the town hall, Chinatown and local mosques. These visits help to broaden their horizons and build self-esteem.
- Pupils develop an understanding of British values through personal, social and health education lessons. They learn about British customs celebrating events such as London fashion week, Bonfire Night, Remembrance Day and St Andrew's Day. In addition to the major Christian festivals, pupils learn about Divali, Chinese New Year and the key aspects of other faiths in religious education lessons. Through these topics, and the ethos of the school, pupils are helped to develop good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Parents and carers have very positive views about the school. They feel that children are nurtured and cared for and comment on how impressed they are with the commitment and dedication of the staff.

Governance

- The proprietors of the school show great interest and enthusiasm in all aspects of the school. They are passionate about bringing change for the better to pupils' lives.
- The proprietors have a good understanding of the financial aspects of the school and make sure that all profits are spent in further enhancing the school's provision. For example, there are plans to provide facilities and opportunities for the younger pupils to learn outside.
- The head of education provides the leadership of the school but the proprietors have regular updates on all aspects of the school's work and ask searching questions in order to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietors, head of education and lead teachers ensure that safeguarding is a key priority within the school. A comprehensive safeguarding policy is published on the company website. The policy is fully up to date with all recent guidance and is reviewed annually. All records relating to safeguarding are kept meticulously and policies are up to date and comprehensive. The school has excellent links with other agencies to ensure the well-being and safety of all pupils. A culture of safeguarding pervades the school. All senior leaders strive to ensure that the independent standards are consistently met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Once pupils join the school their academic and social and emotional needs are assessed. This helps staff to identify gaps in learning and to put in place an individual timetable which enables them to catch up on missed learning.
- All staff work hard to break down barriers to learning, such as low self-esteem, and to help pupils to feel comfortable, safe and secure. Lively teaching, very positive relationships and plenty of praise engage and inspire pupils to work hard and so make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations for attention and behaviour. They adapt topics to follow pupils' interests and enthusiasms to make learning enjoyable. For example, in science pupils were able to choose which animals they wanted to learn more about as they studied different habitats.
- Learning is often enhanced by using music, video and practical art work. Younger pupils enjoy sensory activities such as using modelling clay or shaving foam.
- Teachers work very closely in partnership with each other and with teaching assistants. All staff are skilled in behaviour management so that the school is generally calm and pupils are able to concentrate and make good progress.
- Reading is well promoted across the school. There are many books in classrooms and pupils read aloud most days to increase their reading skills.
- Mathematics is well taught across the school because the work set matches pupils' needs well. A scrutiny of pupils' books shows a good range of different skills being developed. These include number work, early algebra and geometry.

- Good progress in writing is evident in pupil's books. Teachers set high expectations for handwriting and the presentation of books but do not always ensure that pupils use correct spelling and punctuation.
- Just occasionally work is too easy for some pupils and lacks challenge. Sometimes staff are slow to recognise that pupils are ready to move on because they have already understood the key aspect of learning.
- Younger pupils have little opportunity to enhance their development through learning outdoors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff ensure that there are lots of opportunities for pupils to develop independent and cooperative learning skills. This helps pupils to become more confident in their abilities and more successful at learning alongside their peers.
- There is a very effective partnership between the school staff and the staff in the residential setting next door. The house staff make sure that pupils arrive on time, well equipped for what they need each day and ready to learn.
- The nurturing environment in which pupils are taught helps them to trust adults and to begin to manage their own feelings and emotions. Pupils enjoy the many social activities which are part of the curriculum. For example, they go swimming and cycling each week and on Fridays pupils and staff work together to cook lunch.
- The importance school leaders place on promoting each individual's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the care and concern shown for the welfare of pupils and their families and foster carers.
- The school successfully promotes the British values of respect for the law, democracy, tolerance and respect of other groups through personal, social and health education lessons. These values are central to the ethos of the school and the Halliwell organisation.
- Each pupil has an individual education plan which is reviewed regularly. These include targets for personal development as well as academic targets, which helps staff to focus on how to meet pupils' very individual needs.
- Pupils are very well informed about how to keep themselves safe in different risky situations. They have excellent training on how to use the internet and social media safely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- When they start at the school pupils often display very challenging behaviour. For example, they find it hard to sit down, listen and obey instructions. However, once they have settled into the caring atmosphere created by the school, they learn how to control their feelings and behaviour better.

- Pupils' behaviour is rigorously tracked and improvements from their starting points are significant. Incidents of disruption or physical restraint decline over time because of the excellent behaviour management systems in place.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and very quickly identified and addressed by staff.
- Generally pupils behave well in lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes. However, there are still some occasions when pupils are overwhelmed and their behaviour deteriorates.
- Improvements to attendance are good. Overall attendance in the last academic year was above the national average. Many pupils have a record of 100% attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make excellent progress in managing their feelings and emotions so that they are able to get on well with staff and other pupils and learn successfully.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and English from a range of different starting points. School tracking information and the work in pupils' books confirm a similarly good level of progress across the curriculum.
- In English pupils cover different genres and are able to write creatively, using their own similes and metaphors.
- In mathematics pupils present their work neatly and master a variety of different mathematical techniques.
- In science pupils conduct investigations and experiments and show good understanding of the work they have covered, such as magnetism and human biology.
- Pupils also make good progress in history and geography and art. They acquire an understanding of key aspects of British history and learn about the main festivals of major faiths in religious education.
- Similar progress is evident for all groups of pupils so that no one is left behind. The school has a strong record of success in returning pupils to mainstream education within 18 months to two years.
- Pupils make good gains in reading but work in their books shows that teachers do not set high enough expectations for correct spelling and grammar.

School details

Unique reference number	136230
DfE registration number	356/6035
Inspection number	10038932

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 special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Karen Mitchell-Mellor/Andrew Constable
Chair	Karen Mitchell-Mellor
Head of Education	Mathew Hargreaves
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,500
Telephone number	0161 437 9491
Website	www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education
Email address	contact@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 December 2014

Information about this school

- Willow House is an independent school which is owned and managed by Halliwell Homes. Attached to the school is Ivy Cottage Residential Home, which provides care for the pupils who currently attend the school. Ivy Cottage was last inspected in April 2017.
- The school provides education for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including those placed in a residential setting. It is registered to take a maximum of 15 girls and boys aged between five and 14 years. The school aims to reintegrate pupils to mainstream education within an 18-month period.
- Pupils use local facilities for physical education.

- All of the pupils currently on roll have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- All of the pupils currently on roll are in key stage 2. All reside in the attached residential setting.
- The head of education also manages three other Halliwell schools.
- Since the previous inspection a new lead teacher has managed the school on a day-to-day basis.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in eight part lessons across a range of subjects. Four of these observations were carried out jointly with the head of education.
- The inspector spoke with pupils informally and listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector held meetings with the head of education and the lead teachers. She spoke on the telephone with the proprietor of Halliwell Education.
- The inspector toured the school site with the head of education and checked the school's documents relating to health and safety.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and topic work. She looked at records of pupils' progress and attainment, school development planning, policies and procedures and information relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector spoke to staff during the inspection and took their responses into account. There were four responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and one response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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