

Maple Hayes Hall School

Abnalls Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8BL

Inspection dates

31 October–2 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Parents describe Maple Hayes Hall as 'an answer to prayer'. They say that, from the moment they start at the school, their children's lives and those of their families are turned around. Inspectors agree that pupils benefit tremendously from their time at the school.
- The success of the school is due to the vision, expertise, determination and hard work of the proprietors and headteacher. Their ceaseless efforts ensure that the independent school standards are met and that the quality of education at the school meets pupils' needs and keeps improving.
- The innovative and unique approach to teaching literacy unlocks the barriers to learning that pupils have experienced in the past. Upon joining the school, pupils immediately begin to read and write words confidently. This experience opens up learning across the whole curriculum.
- Teachers have an exceptionally detailed knowledge of each pupil as an individual. Lessons are impressively tailored to cater for each pupils' specific needs. As a result, pupils' progress is rapid.
- By the time they leave the school, all pupils gain nationally accredited qualifications in a range of subjects, including at GCSE level in English and mathematics. Given their previous difficulties with literacy, these outcomes are exceptional.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. The school is an extremely harmonious, close-knit community. Everyone is aware of the needs of others. As a result, pupils feel safe, valued and very well cared for.
- The deeply embedded values of the school promote an impressive degree of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils become confident, self-assured and socially capable young people. They are very well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education or to the world of work.
- Leaders are continuously looking for ways to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, they are currently seeking to refine the use of literacy skills across the curriculum and to ensure that the measures used in assessments align with expectations of pupils in mainstream schools.

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?

- Ensure the steps the school is currently taking lead to further improved outcomes across the widest possible range of subjects by:
 - continuously adjusting and refining the use of literacy skills in all curriculum subjects
 - completing the work to align the school's assessment measures to nationally recognised standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietors established the school because they believe that all pupils, regardless of their educational needs, deserve the best. They and the headteacher are inspirational in the determined and uncompromising way in which they pursue this vision. As a result, the school meets the independent school standards and provides an exceptional quality of education.
- The school's values are derived from a genuine belief in equality, which leads to an ethos of respect and tolerance. Pupils arrive at the school having often been made to feel 'different' due to their special educational needs. They say what makes this school exceptional is that they feel no different from everyone else.
- From this basis of similarity, the school values each pupil for their uniqueness. Leaders seek to accommodate each pupils' individual needs and interests, for example by adjusting the building or by adding to the list of subjects taught. Pupils and their parents hugely appreciate the school's capacity to adapt to pupils' particular circumstances.
- The unique approach to teaching literacy is extremely effective. It is known in the school as 'icons'. This approach underpins a broad, rich curriculum which builds on pupils' basic skills and gives them a solid basis for the next steps in their education or training. The headteacher continuously seeks to refine these opportunities and align them ever more closely to different subjects and aspects of the whole-school curriculum.
- In addition to providing the building blocks for pupils' literacy skills, 'icons' lessons promote learning across the whole curriculum. As each new word is introduced, it is explored through discussion. This practice draws on learning across a range of subjects. It also engages pupils in thoughtful, reflective consideration about religion, identity and belief. In this way, these lessons strongly promote pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- In-school lessons are significantly enhanced by an impressive range of additional activities and experiences, such as horse-riding, music tuition and sports. These contribute enormously to pupils' enjoyment of school, self-confidence and sense of well-being.
- The proprietors and headteacher continuously seek ways to improve the school. They provide the resources needed to meet their aims. For example, they invest strongly in the quality of teaching. They recruit well-qualified, specialist teachers for all subjects and train them to use the 'icons' teaching approach. Each teacher's work is reviewed termly. Additional support and training are provided, if needed, to help teachers develop into highly skilled practitioners. This is why the quality of education is outstanding.
- The proprietors and headteacher actively seek external expertise. For example, they engage external consultants to provide regular challenge about the quality of education and arrangements for safeguarding. Similarly, plans are underway to work with mainstream schools to ensure that the school's assessment measures align with the age-related standards expected of all pupils.

Governance

- The proprietors are very well informed about the school's effectiveness because they:
 - are frequently present in the school
 - require the headteacher to report regularly and in detail about the impact of his work
 - seek and welcome external views
 - are exceptionally knowledgeable about what constitutes effective education for their pupils.
- Over recent months, the proprietors have had to become more involved in operational matters than they would wish. This is because external factors have, necessarily, involved a substantial amount of the headteacher's time. Nevertheless, the proprietors have maintained a sufficiently strategic view to enable them to effectively question the school's effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They take into account current government requirements.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has thoroughly reviewed and revised policies and procedures. These are set out in a comprehensive policy for protecting children that is published on the school's website. The number of staff trained in the leadership of safeguarding has been increased substantially. This ensures effective sharing of information and transparency in the processes involved.
- Pupils' safety and well-being are completely central to the school's work. Staff are acutely tuned in to indications that all may not be well for a pupil. Any concerns are noted quickly, followed up swiftly and pursued until the headteacher is satisfied that the pupil is no longer at risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The exceptional quality of teaching is derived from the focus on literacy skills that is integral to the entire curriculum. The literacy programme (the 'icons'), teaches pupils to recognise chunks of meaning within words. Each chunk is represented by a cartoon picture (an icon). Pupils use these icons to help them read and spell new words. As a result, pupils' confidence and belief in themselves as successful learners rapidly improve. All teachers use this method to help pupils read, write and understand the language used in different subjects. This helps pupils to learn across the whole curriculum.
- Teachers use the icons to help pupils recognise and understand subject-specific and technical language. This enables pupils to make sense of new and challenging ideas. Teachers also help pupils to use their wider literacy skills to support learning in other subjects. For example, in a biology lesson, the teacher guided the pupils to use the glossary in the text book to help them learn the meaning of terminology about the structure and function of the circulatory system.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge of what pupils can do and what difficulties they need to overcome. As a result, they precisely challenge individuals. During lessons, teachers

keep a close eye on how pupils are learning. They know if each pupil is doing as well as expected. When someone encounters a difficulty, teachers use carefully chosen questions to lead the pupil to solve the problem. This secures pupils' knowledge and deepens their understanding.

- Pupils believe that teachers know them well and understand how to help them learn. All pupils spoken to described ways in which the approach to teaching has made a difference to their learning. One expressed it delightfully when she said, 'It's like they can see inside my head!'
- Teachers' sensitive, caring, understanding approach ensures that pupils feel safe to learn. Pupils are keen to please their teachers, and believe they can succeed. As a result, pupils push themselves to do well. They work hard, seek feedback from their teachers and act on the advice given. These attitudes contribute substantially to their progress.
- Homework makes an important contribution to pupils' learning. All pupils follow a structured programme of 'prep', which reinforces their literacy learning. Additional activities supplement learning in other subjects as appropriate. 'Prep' is carried out in school after lessons have finished. This ensures that pupils are confident to complete it and that teachers see how well they are doing. The accompanying workbooks form a valuable, ongoing communication with parents about their children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Many parents contacted inspectors during the inspection, both in person and through the online questionnaire, Parent View. They are overwhelmingly grateful to the school for how it supports their children, themselves and their families.
- Pupils do, indeed, thrive at Maple Hayes Hall. They grow quickly in self-confidence and become self-assured learners who are, rightly, proud of their achievements. Given their previous experiences, this is impressive.
- A real community spirit exists in the school. Pupils are proud to belong. Parents and pupils told inspectors that the school is like a family, full of love and care.
- Pupils have lots of opportunities to contribute to the running of the school. Class monitors represent their peers in consulting with staff on ways to improve aspects of school life. In Year 11, pupils have the chance to be house captains, sports captains, vice prefects, prefects, senior prefects and head pupils. In these roles, pupils help to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school and implementation of the school's rules. Pupils aspire to and respect these roles.
- Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They take full responsibility for their own actions, respect the school rules and accept the consequences of misdemeanours with good grace.
- Pupils told inspectors there is little, if any, bullying in the school. One explained the reason for this is that pupils all follow the school rules. Staff are alert to any instances of bullying and intervene appropriately if necessary.

- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. They are sensitive to the needs of others and keen to help. They extend this care to the wider community. This is shown by the tremendous efforts they make to support worthy causes. For example, in recent years, pupils have raised substantial sums of money to support a wide range of local and national charities. A recent project to support a local foodbank resulted in the distribution of a very large amount of food to those in need.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is impeccable at all times. Pupils enter classes calmly and quietly. They respond immediately to teachers' instructions. As a result, lessons proceed smoothly and efficiently. During lessons, pupils listen carefully to the teacher, asking questions if they need help or further explanation.
- The school's rules are extremely clear. Pupils appreciate this, as they say it helps them know what is expected. Worthwhile rewards are on offer for compliance with the rules, as are effective sanctions for breaking them, known as 'demerits'. Pupils follow the rules almost without exception. Demerits are rarely required.
- Pupils show great respect to adults and to each other. They greet staff in corridors and speak politely to each other. During lessons, pupils listen to one another respectfully and with interest. Pupils are very encouraging towards each other, helping anyone who is struggling to overcome difficulties in lessons.
- Pupils attend regularly, despite some having very long journeys to get to school. Many pupils' attendance has improved considerably since they joined the school. This is testament to how much they enjoy it and value what it has to offer.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils enter the school having underachieved considerably. All pupils have specific difficulties with reading and spelling (dyslexia). As a result, pupils' literacy skills on entry are a long way behind those of most similar-aged pupils. Many have other difficulties in addition to dyslexia, which provide extra barriers to achievement. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 11, pupils gain nationally accredited qualifications, including at GCSE level. Given pupils' starting points, these outcomes are exceptionally high.
- From the point at which they join the school, pupils' ability to recognise and write words improves almost immediately. Their handwriting improves quickly. As a result, their confidence soon grows and they start to make rapid progress in a range of subjects.
- Pupils learn to read confidently and fluently. This is achieved through reading and responding to a series of specially written 'set texts'. These texts and accompanying questions are carefully designed to ensure that pupils make sense of what they are reading and learn to work out meaning that is not explicitly stated on the page. This is a crucial skill and helps pupils achieve well across the curriculum.
- Pupils make rapid and sustained progress year on year. This is because the exceptional quality of teaching ensures that their skills and understanding build quickly and systematically. This is why pupils make up so much lost ground and achieve well by the end of key stage 4. Last year, half the Year 11 pupils attained good GCSE passes (at

grade 4 or above) in English. Almost all achieved these grades in mathematics. The difference between the subjects reflects the specific difficulties pupils had with literacy in their younger days, and continue to overcome.

- Pupils are ambitious for their futures. The school provides helpful careers guidance and supports pupils well to take their chosen next steps. Current Year 11 pupils have clear ideas about what they will do next year. They are in the process of applying for courses of further study. Some have already secured places at their chosen college. All pupils in the last 10 years have successfully gone on to appropriate study courses or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	124488
DfE registration number	860/6022
Inspection number	10026104

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	7 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Dr E Neville Brown and Brenda M Brown
Headteacher	Dr Daryl Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,525.60 to £14,775.60 – pupils under 13 years £19,490.60 to £19,740.60 – pupils over 13 years
Telephone number	01543 264387
Website	www.dyslexia.school
Email address	office@dyslexia.school
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2015

Information about this school

- Maple Hayes Hall is a small school for pupils who have specific difficulties with reading and spelling (dyslexia). It uses a unique approach to teaching literacy skills that has been created by the proprietor. This approach focuses on helping pupils read using the meaning of words to overcome previous failings in phonics and in other approaches to the teaching of reading and spelling.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. Most are funded through local authorities. Many pupils have additional special educational needs such as dysgraphia (difficulties with handwriting), dyscalculia (difficulties with numbers) and dyspraxia

(difficulties with coordination). Some have needs related to specific speech and language difficulties. All pupils have made insufficient progress in previous settings.

- The school does not use any alternative provision. All pupils attend Maple Hayes Hall full time.
- The most recent standard inspection was in March 2015. The school met all of the independent school standards and was judged to be good.
- An emergency inspection, commissioned by the Department for Education, was carried out in September 2016. The inspection focused on pupils' welfare, health and safety. Inspectors judged that the school did not meet some requirements for the reporting of safeguarding concerns.
- Although the school is registered for pupils up to the age of 17, it does not provide a post-16 programme of study.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching by visiting lessons in all year groups, talking to pupils about their learning and looking at the work in their books.
- Inspectors toured the school premises; examined the school's policies; and checked records about health and safety and other requirements to determine whether the school meets the independent school standards.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher; the proprietor; other school staff; and two groups of pupils. They spoke informally to other pupils in the dining room and in the playground.
- Inspectors met with two groups of parents (13 in total), spoke to one parent on the telephone and considered the 51 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, along with letters received from two parents.
- The 24 responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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