

Brambles School

29 Ashworth Lane, Mottram, Cheshire SK14 6NT

Inspection dates

12–14 December 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 proprietors, headteacher, lead teacher and staff share an unwavering commitment to prepare pupils well for their future lives.
- Leaders and proprietors have focused on providing training, challenge and support to staff to ensure that pupils' behaviour and well-being improves.
- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- Relationships are a strength of the school. Adults provide a warm, nurturing environment for pupils. They are very responsive to pupils' emotional and social needs. As a result, adults support pupils so that they succeed in an educational setting, often for the first time.
- Staff are adept in asking pupils questions in lessons, checking their understanding and developing their learning. This enables them to address pupils' misconceptions effectively.
- Adults design the wider curriculum around pupils' individual likes and needs. They ensure that the curriculum is broad. Nevertheless, leaders rightly recognise that the provision in the wider curriculum is not fully effective in preparing pupils for the transition to mainstream education
- Staff do not routinely challenge derogatory language or utilise opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development sufficiently.
- At times, staff do not recognise when pupils are ready to learn. Adults do not systematically challenge the most able pupils well enough to ensure rapid progress across the curriculum.
- While leaders gather a lot of information about pupils' challenging behaviour, they do not always gather information about lower-level disruption to help with future planning.
- Leaders and proprietors have ensured that all independent school standards are met.

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:
 - further developing teachers' subject knowledge in English and phonics, so that they can challenge pupils and further develop learning
 - aligning teaching and assessment fully to the new national curriculum so that pupils who transition back to mainstream settings can keep up with their peers.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - monitoring the frequency of lower-level challenging behaviours so that adults can check the impact of teaching on behaviour
 - ensuring that pupils' use of derogatory language is challenged by adults at all times
 - developing the curriculum further, including developing pupils' cultural understanding, so that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- All of the independent school standards are met. Policies and procedures are in place and are effective in promoting the school's aims. Most pupils transition back into mainstream schools within 18 months.
- The head of education, the proprietors and all adults are highly ambitious for the school. At the heart of everyone's work is a commitment to preparing all pupils for their next steps and going the 'extra mile' to make the best impact on their future lives. Staff share these aims and work very well together to build strong relationships with pupils that help them to start to succeed.
- Staff work well under the clear strategic direction of the head of education. There is a clear cycle of improvement based on meeting the needs of individual pupils. Leaders use staff appraisal effectively to set targets and to provide support and training to develop further teaching skills. However, leaders acknowledge that further development is needed to secure teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in English and phonics.
- Leaders have focused on providing the right training and challenge to staff to enable them to support pupils' behaviour and well-being effectively. An external adviser checks the quality of teaching and learning systematically. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and pupils' behavioural needs are met very well.
- Strong relationships ensure that pupils' behaviour and personal development improve during their time at the Brambles. Leaders support staff well so that they can build important trusting relationships with pupils. Daily meetings, including with 'therapeutic parents', enable staff to share successes and ways that they can adapt their support and provision for pupils. Leaders use this to make important changes to timetables so that all pupils have the best opportunities to learn.
- All adults follow the clear behaviour strategy consistently. Pupils respond well to the reward system.
- The curriculum meets the independent school standards. Adults focus on developing key skills, including life skills, that meet the needs of pupils. However, some areas of the wider curriculum do not fully prepare pupils for their transition to mainstream education. Teachers do not ensure that pupils develop the skills needed in history, geography and computing for successful reintegration into a mainstream setting.
- Adults promote British values effectively. Pupils understand the rule of law and recognise that we have rules so that they are kept safe. Adults give pupils opportunities to vote on matters of importance to them. Pupils know that in a fair society, everyone has the same rights to express their opinions.
- Parents, carers and placing authorities receive information about pupils' progress through regular reports.
- Behaviour is improving considerably for many pupils. Leaders track and monitor incidents of challenging behaviour. They analyse these incident to see how adults could better support pupils. However, lower-level challenging behaviour is not analysed to the same extent. As a result, staff do not check on the impact of this as well to see how it could be

further improved.

- Staff provide a range of enrichment activities linked to pupils' interests.

Governance

- The proprietors have a clear vision and are committed to ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive a high-quality education, which enables them to reach their potential and succeed in life.
- The head of education has an effective working relationship with the proprietors. Regular reports and meetings ensure that the proprietors challenge the headteacher in relation to key performance indicators, including attendance and reintegration into mainstream schools or other appropriate provision. The proprietors are knowledgeable about the school.
- The proprietors ensure that the school buildings are fit for purpose. Classrooms, although small, are suitable for the teaching required. Plans show that this space is due to be increased. Outdoor spaces are available for pupils to use during the day. Leaders are planning to improve the outdoor provision so that pupils can benefit from more play equipment and increased opportunities for recreation.
- Proprietors ensure that the company's website is informative for parents and carers. The website meets requirements for safeguarding, complaints and curriculum information. Leaders have ensured that the school prospectus provides specific information about the Brambles.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietors and leaders ensure that checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' welfare. There is a culture of vigilance because leaders ensure that safeguarding pupils is everyone's priority. Staff receive regular training and updates. Leaders tailor these updates to the school, such as how to prevent child sexual exploitation and understand the dangers of children missing in education. The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the company's website. This sets out clear guidance for staff. Consequently, staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.
- The school works closely with a range of other professionals to help keep pupils safe. Staff keep a close eye on pupils and take action to address unsafe behaviours or situations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from good teaching and from adults' commitment to do the best they can for the pupils' wider needs.
- Teachers plan from consistent assessments of what pupils know and can do. Adults understand that pupils have particular gaps in their knowledge and understanding,

particularly in English and mathematics. These gaps in learning stem from periods when the pupils have been absent from school in the past. Teachers' planning has a firm focus on enabling pupils to secure the necessary knowledge to move forward with their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science, during their time at The Brambles.

- The work that adults do to support pupils' well-being means that behaviour improves considerably over time. This allows pupils to engage in their learning. However, some teaching does not move learning on quickly enough when pupils are ready to learn.
- All adults check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. They use effective questioning to check on what pupils have understood. As a result, adults change what they are teaching to make sure that pupils are able to learn. However, this questioning and reshaping of the lesson is less effective for the most able pupils. Adults do not move learning on quickly enough for these pupils in English when they have understood and are ready to learn.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well in mathematics to develop and extend pupils learning. For example, in an art lesson, pupils used knowledge of perimeter to extend their learning. Adults challenged pupils thinking by giving the pupils additional problems to solve linked to their earlier work in mathematics. However, teachers' subject knowledge in English and particularly in phonics is less secure. As a result, although pupils' progress in English is good, it is not as rapid as that seen in mathematics.
- All adults work well with pupils to build confidence and resilience. Pupils begin to learn from their mistakes and accept that they cannot get things right all the time. Those pupils who have benefited from the school's approach to improving behaviour want to do well. They engage well with adults and, at times, ask for additional challenge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and other adults support pupils' developing confidence. Over time, because of the high levels of individual support offered, pupils' self-esteem and confidence improves. As a result, some pupils are able to hold thoughtful conversations with adults.
- Pupils who have had time to benefit from the school's approach are very supportive of other pupils. They demonstrate a growing understanding and empathy for their peers. This is evident in the care and consideration that these pupils show towards one another.
- When pupils are ready to learn, they demonstrate a growing commitment to their own progress. Pupils value the improvements they make in English, mathematics and behaviour while at the school. Pupils demonstrate ambition and aspiration for their own futures. Adults consistently remind pupils that they can be whatever they set their minds to as long as they work hard.
- For all pupils, their attendance, which has often been very poor previously, improves dramatically while at the school.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe. They understand the way in which adults are helping them to make the right choices. Pupils also understand what adults do to help them stay safe

from harm.

- The curriculum, together with adults' ability to adapt their teaching, enables pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Frequent visits into the local community and the opportunities teachers give pupils to use public transport contribute well to this. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's approach to working with pupils so that they better manage their own behaviour leads to significant improvements in the behaviour of individual pupils. Adults learn from any instances of particularly challenging behaviour. However, leaders do not analyse the impact of the low-level disruption that occurs in lessons to the same degree.
- Teachers and other adults challenge pupils' use of poor language effectively. However, adults do not challenge the use of homophobic language consistently. As a result, although instances of the use of derogatory language are diminishing, pupils continue to use homophobic comments in a flippant way.
- Over time, pupils build a respect for what adults provide for them. Pupils value the care shown and place trust in the adults to do what is right for them. Adults maintain a warm and relaxed relationship with pupils while ensuring that expectations are consistent. These exemplary relationships between adults and pupils contribute well to pupils' overall well-being and development.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Many pupils start at The Brambles having missed significant amounts of their previous education. As a result, there are some significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. Due to the good teaching that they receive, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their different starting points in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' progress across the rest of the curriculum is not as strong as it is in English, mathematics and science. Although pupils make good progress across the rest of the curriculum, teachers' planning of the rest of the curriculum, while taking account of pupils' interests, is not developed well enough to ensure the same rapid progress as seen in mathematics.
- Adults provide opportunities for pupils to read widely across the curriculum. As a result, the progress that pupils make in reading is good. Pupils develop a love of reading and several pupils have expressed an interest in work experience in libraries and bookshops. Early phonics teaching enables pupils to sound out words. However, the weaker teaching of phonics seen hampers pupils' progress with spelling.
- Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities. This support enables these pupils to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The support from the wider company means that pupils do not have to wait for additional support.
- Leaders' work to meet the aims of the school to return pupils to mainstream education is effective. Pupils are prepared well to meet the demands placed on them in terms of

behaviour and maintaining relationships. Teachers find out what pupils will need to know in areas of the wider curriculum so that pupils get a head start on reintegration. However, this approach does not ensure that teaching in some areas of the wider curriculum is detailed enough to help pupils when they move back into a mainstream setting.

School details

Unique reference number	140814
DfE registration number	357/6004
Inspection number	10043785

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	6 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Halliwell Homes
Chair	Karen Mitchell Mellor
Headteacher	Mathew Hargreaves
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,500
Telephone number	01457 764658
Website	www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education
Email address	contact@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 February 2015

Information about this school

- The Brambles is an independent school which opened in February 2015. The previous standard inspection of The Brambles was also in February 2015.
- The school is owned and managed by Halliwell Homes.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, some of whom have an education, health and care plan. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The head of education manages three other Halliwell schools. Since the last inspection, a new senior lead teacher manages this school.
- The school aims to 'provide the best quality of education and care for vulnerable children

through a vibrant curriculum which fully prepares pupils for their future economic well-being and nurtures outstanding personal development’.

- The school aims to re-engage pupils with an appropriate mainstream or special school provision within 12 to 18 months of enrolment at The Brambles.
- The school uses local sports facilities for physical education and games. The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects and classes. The inspector toured the site and checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector met with pupils, both formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the head of education, senior lead teacher, lead teacher and other staff. The inspector also spoke with the chair of governance for Halliwell Homes by telephone.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online parent survey for those to be taken into consideration.
- The inspector took into account the views of one member of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed pupils in lessons and during social time. The inspector also scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of their books.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action points for improvement and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tanya Hughes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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