

Stonegate School

West Stonegate, 13 Main Street, Low Bentham, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 7BX

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. They ensure that pupils develop excellent personal skills and achieve academic qualifications that support the next steps in their education.
- Pupils feel included, nurtured and safe within the extremely positive culture in the school. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective.
- The headteacher, supported by the head of education, has secured improvement in all aspects of the school's work since the last inspection. Her inspiring teaching motivates pupils and enables them to experience success.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that pupils receive a meaningful education that meets their individual needs and abilities.
- Extra-curricular activities are stimulating and enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well.
- Outstanding support for personal development and welfare helps pupils grow in confidence and achieve well. They develop resilience and overcome any barriers to learning successfully.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They show empathy and are highly considerate of each other's needs.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their progress and achievements during their time at the school. They work hard and make good progress from their various starting points. They achieve a range of qualifications in functional skills and GCSEs.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics and computing are good but are not as effective as they are in other subjects. Teachers do not have the same depth of subject knowledge and assessment skills.
- Teaching assistant support is effective in physical education (PE) and personal and social education but is not deployed to the best effect in all class-based lessons.
- Strategic leadership is effective. The proprietor and senior management team have a good understanding of the school's performance and a clear vision to develop provision further.

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 teaching and learning in mathematics and computing so that pupils make more rapid progress, by:
 - developing the subject knowledge of staff in these subjects
 - improving day-to-day assessment to ensure that teaching is precisely matched to the learning needs of each pupil
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are provided with work that is sufficiently challenging and deepens their learning
 - applying and developing pupils' mathematical and computing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Deploy teaching assistants more effectively during class-based lessons to support assessment and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have high expectations for the performance of the school and all pupils. They ensure that all the independent school standards and other requirements are met.
- The headteacher, who had only just started at the school when it was last inspected, has secured significant improvement. She has established effective systems to track pupils' learning and ensure their good progress. She is a skilled teacher, who enthuses pupils and makes learning meaningful and relevant. Teaching has improved significantly.
- Staff are encouraging and supportive. The extremely positive culture in the school helps pupils to grow in confidence and experience success. Barriers to learning are minimised through excellent personal development and careful planning of activities that engage and motivate pupils.
- Leaders have resolved the areas for improvement recommended at the last inspection successfully. School improvement planning is based on thorough and accurate self-evaluation of current practice. Leaders build on the strengths and are tackling weaker aspects of provision effectively.
- The procedures to manage the performance of staff are good. Quality assurance procedures have been improved since the last inspection with the appointment of a head of education who monitors the school's work rigorously and reports to the company's senior management team. The objectives that are set for staff are appropriately linked to school performance and pupils' progress.
- Staff attend relevant training to ensure they are up to date with curriculum developments and latest government guidance. The headteacher is well qualified and knowledgeable. She ensures that all statutory requirements are met and the curriculum meets pupils' needs.
- The vast majority of pupils start at the school with large gaps in their education. They often have experienced failure or exclusion from their previous school. The curriculum is personalised effectively to meet each pupils' specific needs, build on their existing knowledge and skills and support them to catch up quickly.
- Pupils experience a broad range of subjects and activities that promote their literacy, mathematical, creative, social and physical skills. Topics are planned carefully to motivate and enthuse pupils and enable them to take qualifications in functional skills or GCSEs according to their ability. Pupils are successfully equipped with the qualifications and skills they need to access further education.
- Pupils' learning is enriched with exciting and motivating additional activities, both within and outside of the school day. Trips out, for example to the theatre, cities, Buddhist temple, mosque, and various museums, enhance learning. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed reading 'Jane Eyre' as part of the GCSE syllabus, visiting the Brontë parsonage and going to the theatre during a city break to see the play. Staff also make good use of the locality to support local history and geography studies and to promote health and fitness. Pupils enjoy walking in the surrounding countryside and they attend a gym and go swimming every week.

- The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. Pupils gain a good understanding of British values through the excellent personal, social and health education programme and enriching extra-curricular experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Since the last inspection, leaders have increased opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures by broadening the religious studies curriculum to include studies of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Pupils discuss moral issues in a range of subjects. The highly positive environment supports them to grow in confidence and develop strong social skills.
- Pupils are taught about protected characteristics and show respect for people, regardless of age, disability, gender, sex or sexual orientation. The school's equalities policy meets requirements. Discrimination is tackled robustly.
- Effective partnership working promotes pupils' progress and well-being. Leaders work closely with social workers and virtual school leaders to produce good-quality personal education plans (PEPs) and ensure that individual needs are met. They liaise with Coastal Child and Adult Therapeutic Services and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services to support pupils' mental health and emotional well-being. Therapy services are engaged as appropriate.
- Parents and carers are kept informed as appropriate about each pupil's care plan. Due to the vulnerability of pupils, the school does not have a dedicated website, but the prospectus details how policy documents, newsletters and information on admissions and complaints procedure can be accessed. Education reports are sent to each pupil's social worker, who sends them on to parents if appropriate. Carers, placing authorities and virtual school leaders are fully informed of pupils' educational achievements and needs.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. Governance is provided by Hexagon Care senior management team, which includes the proprietor. The head of education reports regularly to the senior team, ensuring that senior staff are well informed about pupils' progress, the strengths in teaching and areas for further development. The senior team has a good understanding of the school's performance and a clear vision to develop provision further.
- The pupil premium is provided to the school at the discretion of placing local authorities. It is used effectively to support pupils' PEPs and extend learning, for example through outdoor education and music therapy. Where appropriate, it is used to fund additional GCSE courses, for example in art and biology.
- Proprietors oversee the performance management of staff effectively. They ensure that objectives are appropriately linked to the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Hexagon Care adheres to stringent safeguarding and safer recruitment guidelines that comply with government regulations. The school's policies are up date, take account of the most recent government guidance and are implemented effectively. Due to the

vulnerability of pupils, the school does not have a dedicated website but leaders make all necessary safeguarding and policy information available to placing authorities and parents.

- Staff have completed training relevant to their roles and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. The designated safeguarding leads in school and on the senior management team have completed in-depth training. All staff in the school are trained in health and safety, first aid, fire safety, crisis intervention and physical restraint. They have read 'Keeping children safe in education' and are updated regularly to keep well-informed about safeguarding issues such as child sexual exploitation, the 'Prevent' duty and e-safety.
- All staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school. They engage effectively with carers and stakeholders to make sure all pupils are supported and safe. Their attendance is tracked carefully and followed up if necessary. Handover meetings at the start and end of each school day ensure that information is shared between care and education staff.
- Staff engage productively with other agencies to promote pupils' health and safety, including social care professionals, the local authority designated officer for safeguarding and police.
- The school premises are safe and secure. Pupils are nurtured and cared for effectively, so they feel and are safe in school.
- Risk assessments are thorough. Full risk assessments have been undertaken for activities in school and visits out, for example to the swimming pool, riding lessons, outward bound activities and trips out.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Individualised instruction supports pupils to make good progress from their different starting points. Pupils' PEPs and supporting individual education plans set ambitious targets and identify effective strategies to meet pupils' learning needs. Pupils make good use of their 'tracker' to reflect on their learning and evaluate their achievement.
- Positive, constructive relationships between teaching staff and pupils are key factors in the school's success. Teachers have in-depth knowledge of pupils' preferred learning approaches; any barriers to learning are analysed thoroughly and positive strategies are used to minimise them. Activities and work are planned carefully to motivate and engage pupils with learning.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge in English; religious studies; biology; health and social care; and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Teachers plan work that is highly motivating and supports pupils to make rapid progress from their various starting points in these subjects.
- Teaching focuses on equipping pupils to gain relevant qualifications that enable them to access further education. Where necessary, the school employs additional tutors with subject specialisms.
- Assessment is used effectively to establish pupils' starting points and identify gaps in learning. Teachers track pupils' progress with coursework to ensure that they are able to

achieve qualifications relevant to their aspirations and abilities. However, assessment is not used as effectively as it could be to match teaching precisely to pupils' learning needs in mathematics and computing.

- Teaching is not as effective in mathematics and computing as it is in other subjects. Teachers do not have the same depth of subject knowledge and work is not as precisely matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The most able pupils, in particular, are not challenged and extended as effectively in mathematics and computing as they are in other subjects.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed very effectively in English lessons and reinforced well in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils' mathematical and computing skills are not developed as effectively in other subjects as they are not given as much attention.
- English teaching is highly effective. For example, an excellent lesson engaged pupils in an interesting role play as detectives solving a robbery. It successfully developed their reasoning, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills while promoting effective personal and teamworking skills.
- The school is well resourced and resources are used effectively to add interest to learning. The teaching assistant supports learning effectively in PSHE and PE but is not deployed as effectively to support learning in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' induction into the school is managed extremely skilfully to minimise stress. Pupils often begin their education at this school during periods of trauma in their lives but they soon feel included, nurtured and safe. Highly effective procedures have been established to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils at all times.
- Staff are caring, encouraging and inspiring. They help pupils to grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem. Teaching is adapted skilfully to enable pupils to experience success and advance their abilities and interests.
- Pupils' physical, emotional and mental health is a priority. Handover meetings between care and school staff at the beginning and end of each day ensure that information is shared and any issues are dealt with before they escalate. Individualised support ensures that pupils' health needs are met. Pupils feel confident to talk to staff and say that any concerns they have are dealt with sensitively and positively.
- Pupils are free from bullying and harassment in school. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and do all they can to support each other. They demonstrate high levels of empathy and consideration of each other's needs.
- The excellent PSHE programme supports pupils to deal confidently with their experiences and keep themselves safe and healthy in the world beyond school. Pupils have a good understanding of risks associated with the use of social media, extremism and drugs and alcohol.
- The taught curriculum and affirming culture in the school help pupils develop highly

effective personal and social skills. For example, they develop effective team and leadership skills in outdoor education. Teaching promotes confidence and independence and successfully develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

- Good quality, impartial careers education, information and advice supports pupils to make positive choices for their future. Pupils gain from work experience within the locality and the PSHE curriculum includes units on applying for jobs and courses and making informed career choices.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning during their time at school, because they feel inspired, confident and experience success. For many pupils, this follows negative experiences and often exclusion from their previous schools. Their positive attitudes are reflected in the fact that all go on to further education when they leave the school in Year 11.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons is constructive and cooperative. They are keen to please and enjoy praise and success. They say that staff are understanding and supportive if they are 'having a bad day' and that lessons are never disrupted. Pupils are justifiably proud of their many achievements.
- Conduct around the school is sensible and records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils respect the behaviour code and where there have been minor incidents pupils show remorse. Rewards and sanctions are well understood.
- Pupils are punctual and their attendance is good. Close liaison with carers ensures that pupils attend every day unless absence is unavoidable. The school does not exclude any pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils often join the school with gaps in their education and with attainment that is below the standards that are typical for their age. Pupils' prior attainment, abilities and the extent of special educational needs are highly variable from year to year. Pupils' length of stay in the school is also variable, ranging from less than a month to a few years. The highly personalised curriculum and motivating teaching enable pupils to make good progress from their various starting points and catch up on missed education.
- At key stage 4, pupils make particularly rapid progress in English, PSHE, biology, health and social care, and religious studies, where teaching is most effective. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and computing but it is not as rapid because teachers do not have the same depth of subject knowledge.
- At both key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils experience a broad curriculum and build on their skills in subjects such as art, PE, design and technology, history, and geography.
- Pupils are encouraged and equipped to take qualifications that are relevant to their aspirations and abilities. All pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 complete qualifications in functional skills and those who are able complete GCSE qualifications in up to six subjects. Subjects are selected with care to motivate pupils and provide them with the

qualifications they need to achieve their aspirations.

- In 2017, pupils made good progress to gain passes in six GCSE subjects, which supported them to go on to college to courses of their choice. They also gained qualifications in functional skills, including computing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the personalised curriculum and make good progress. The most able pupils make good progress in most subjects but their progress is not as rapid as it could be in mathematics and computing.
- The good quality teaching, excellent personal development and inspirational support from the headteacher ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135292
DfE registration number	888/6098
Inspection number	10038844

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hexagon Care Services
Chair	Francis Ashcroft
Headteacher	Tessa Tyndall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,000
Telephone number	01524 263237
Website	www.hexagoncare.com
Email address	stonegate.headteacher@hexagoncare.com
Date of previous inspection	October 2014

Information about this school

- Stonegate School is a small independent school for girls aged 11 to 16 years with complex needs including, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In September 2016, the school moved to larger premises in the same rural village.
- All pupils attending the school are vulnerable and in the care of local authorities. Most pupils have had disrupted education in the past, with low attendance or long absences from school. Pupils may stay for less than a month or several years.
- The school is owned and run by Hexagon Care Services Ltd, which has several other schools across the North West and up to 30 children's homes nationally. The chief

executive of the company acts as the proprietor. The school was previously known as Evaglates and was under the proprietorship of Northern Care, which has ceased to trade.

- Due to the vulnerability of pupils, the school has no dedicated website. General information about the school can be found on the parent company's website. The school makes all necessary policy information available to placing authorities, carers and parents when appropriate.
- There are no pupils currently with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last full inspection was in October 2014. A material change inspection in November 2016 judged that the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined the premises and observed the school's work.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning and scrutinised pupils' written work.
- The inspector spoke with pupils in meetings to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including action planning, self-evaluation, performance management, pupil progress tracking, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks and risk assessments. School policies were seen.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the head of education for Hexagon Care Services Ltd and spoke with the school proprietor by telephone.
- There were no responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online parent questionnaire. Two staff questionnaire returns were considered.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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