

The Linden Centre

Oak Road, Overdale, Telford, Shropshire TF3 5BT

Inspection dates

24–25 April 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well at the school. Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding, because staff provide exceptionally successful care and support.
- The headteacher provides inspiring leadership that has helped to improve the school.
- Pupils make good progress, especially in English and mathematics, in all three key stages. Outcomes for pupils are improving. Good support ensures that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged make good progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers plan lessons that keep pupils interested and focused.
- The governors are a strength of the school. Together with the leadership team, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means that they have ensured many improvements, for example to pupils' behaviour and the curriculum.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. It is at the heart of this school. Pupils are safe, and staff are well trained to provide a nurturing and secure place to learn. As a result, pupils thrive.
- Pupils make less good progress in science, geography and history. Leaders have not yet taken steps to ensure that standards in these subjects are as high as those in English and mathematics.
- Challenge for the most able pupils is inconsistent. Though this is improving in English and mathematics, it is not yet established in science.
- Teachers are making use of opportunities to moderate and standardise their assessments so that they are even more accurate but have not had opportunities to do this in science.
- The curriculum supports pupils' personal development and their social and health education exceptionally well, while also providing them with a range of experiences that encourages their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress pupils make in science, geography and history by:
 - making sure that teachers' plans for the development of these subjects are put into action
 - ensuring that the challenge in these subjects is at the right level for all and especially for the most able pupils
 - aiming for standards in these subjects to be as high as those in English and mathematics.
- Improve the accuracy of assessments of pupils' work, especially that of the most able by:
 - helping staff to work with other schools to standardise assessments.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is an inspiring force for change and school improvement. Since she has been at the school, two new sites have been opened. This has allowed pupils to be offered a wider range of behaviour-support services. As a result, pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- The headteacher puts pupils' behaviour and personal development at the heart of everything the school does. She has inspired other leaders and staff to make significant improvements in the lives of the pupils in all three key stages.
- Leaders believe that social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is key to the development of the curriculum. So, pupils are taught about respect for one another and the difference between right and wrong in their subjects. This has helped pupils to learn and to improve their behaviour.
- Leaders have a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know that, while pupil outcomes are good overall, there is more to do to achieve consistently good outcomes for the most able pupils in science and in humanities.
- The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have a wide range of relevant experience. They have supported the headteacher and the staff well, providing challenge and clear strategic direction.
- Leaders use performance management to hold teachers and each other to account. Staff targets are clear and linked closely to pupil outcomes. This means that staff are motivated and focused on bringing about swift improvement in the lives of the young people.
- Leaders have developed a thorough and comprehensive training programme for all staff. Staff regularly and frequently receive well-delivered training in such things as pupil behaviour management and the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils' achievement is rising. It is less strong in science and such subjects as geography and history. Leaders have a clear plan to improve these areas, although as yet staff do not have the opportunity to work with other schools to standardise their assessments.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium grants and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. Leaders hold teachers to account for the spending of this money. They have improved physical education learning, for example, so that pupils learn how to stay healthy effectively and develop the skills of coordination and self-discipline.
- There is a broad and balanced curriculum at the school. All subjects have as common themes personal development and welfare, behaviour and understanding the difference between right and wrong. At key stages 1, 2 and 3, pupils are taught drama, music and art and they enjoy this learning because it helps develop self-confidence and self-expression.
- Pupils' progress in reading is a top priority in the school's curriculum. Reading skills such as inference and comprehension are well learned throughout all three key stages.

Inspectors heard pupils read in key stage 2 and these pupils read with interest and developing expression.

- There is a range of extra-curricular opportunities in which pupils enjoy taking part. There are residential trips, for example, when pupils learn how to get on with each other and how to take on personal responsibility, and discover talents in such activities as archery and story-telling.
- The curriculum places a high value on diversity and equality. Pupils learn how to value different faiths and lifestyles effectively. Pupils spoke respectfully about their experiences with the school's restorative justice curriculum, for example believing that it helped them understand rights and responsibilities in modern British life.
- Leaders train staff well in how to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Pupils have learned how to stay safe online and in the community. Pupils know how to challenge derogatory language, for example, and help people of different backgrounds and traditions feel welcomed and valued.
- A few pupils are taught through alternative providers. The curriculum for these pupils is tailored around their specific behavioural needs. Pupils learn at provision such as Telford football club and equine therapy, and their attitudes to learning and self-discipline are improving and are well monitored by school leaders.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have a clear strategy for the school and it has resulted in good progress for pupils in most subjects:
 - Governors support and challenge the headteacher well. They have monitored the changes the headteacher has brought about. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Governors work well with other agencies, such as the local authority and local schools. They put safeguarding at the centre of everything the school does. As a result, pupils are well managed through the school day, on residential activities and at alternative provision.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of how pupil premium grants are used. They regularly check whether such funding is leading to improved outcomes. As a result, for example, pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is rising. Governors have well-designed plans for improving areas that are less strong, such as science.
 - Governors have ensured that staff training is well suited to the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors monitor the regular reviews for pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan. They ensure that leaders have close contact with families and offer effective help.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is highly successful. Risk assessments are rigorous and monitored by leaders to ensure that pupils are safe throughout the day, when travelling to and from school and on extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils say they feel safe.
- On all three sites, safeguarding is exceptionally well led and managed. Staff keep accurate records that are held securely. This means they can offer early help when it is needed and identify pupils who need support quickly.
- Staff work with local authority agencies effectively to share information, manage referrals and work with families to keep pupils safe.
- Six staff are trained to the highest level of safeguarding leadership. All staff have regular and frequent safeguarding training. First-aid training is frequent and effective.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the various types of safety. Pupils say there is no bullying in the school, as staff do not allow this to happen. They know how to stay safe on the internet and how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism.
- Governors are well trained in safer recruitment, and staff are only appointed following extensive safeguarding checks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons that are carefully matched to pupils' widely differing needs. Pupils are engaged and interested in their learning.
- Teachers use accurate information about pupils' reading, writing and mathematics ability. This means they help pupils of different abilities to make progress.
- Pupils learn effectively how to behave. Teachers use what the school calls 'passports' that pupils use in each lesson and at break and lunchtimes. These help teachers communicate well with each other about what pupils need. They also help reward pupils and offer corrections to their behaviour when this is occasionally needed.
- Teachers are well trained in behaviour management, reading, writing and mathematics. They use this well to challenge pupils.
- Questioning is a strength of teaching. Inspectors saw learning where teachers used precise and helpful questions to help pupils' make progress and to help pupils make safe decisions about their behaviour.
- Homework is a strength of pupils' learning. Teachers use homework to communicate with parents and carers and improve pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are proud of their workbooks. They were eager to show their work to inspectors and we could see that, over time, pupils grow in neatness and standards of handwriting.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are well managed at the school's alternative

providers. Teachers keep in close contact with one another at the school's three sites and the alternative providers. This means that pupils' learning is accurately assessed and improvements are quickly made to pupils' learning.

- Pupils learn from their mistakes and inspectors could see where pupils had made improvements in their work because they wanted to make progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils learn how to be resilient. In a key stage 2 lesson on poetry, for example, inspectors heard pupils reading aloud. Pupils want to understand new vocabulary and were keen to read with expression.
- Some science learning is less successful. In particular, there is a lack of understanding about scientific methods for the most able pupils. The most able pupils are also not well enough challenged in subjects such as geography and history.
- Teachers have not yet been able to check with other schools their assessments in subjects such as science, history and geography and this limits the quality of their provision in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of pupils who successfully return to mainstream schools. This is the case across all three key stages.
- Pupils quickly understand how to be a successful learner. Teachers are skilled at helping pupils reflect on their previous personal development and put in place a wide range of help. This means that pupils develop positive attitudes and self-confidence.
- The school is highly effective at helping pupils to be ready for mainstream learning in a secure and successful manner. Typical of the pupils' attitudes was the pupil who said, 'I want to stay here, but I know I can't.' Another said, 'I used to be a very angry person. I now know how to control my anger and I have a very good understanding of my problems.'
- Teachers put pupil safety first in all their teaching about personal development. Consequently, pupils are knowledgeable about staying safe and leading healthy lifestyles. The school has some imaginative and successful approaches to this. For example, every pupil in key stage 2 and key stage 3 follows the Jamie Oliver Home Cooking BTEC. Pupils enjoy learning about their welfare and take pride in discussing their achievements.
- Staff give all pupils clear and demanding personal development targets. Most pupils are successful in reaching them. Care plans and education, health and care plans are thoroughly reviewed and actions swiftly put into place. As a result, pupils' personal development and welfare are frequently transformed. The significant majority of pupils leave the school ready to learn.
- Teachers are successful at helping pupils prevent arguments and conflict between themselves. Bullying is very rare and dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils said there was almost no bullying on any of the three sites.

- Parents are supportive of the school. Parents speak highly of the way in which pupils are taught to stay safe and to improve their behaviour. They say the school is always approachable and open to them.
- Pupils respect each other and treat each other with politeness and, often, courtesy. The school uses every part of the school day, whether lesson or breaktime, to teach pupils how to speak and listen thoughtfully, how to take turns and how to create a positive social environment.
- There is a full careers programme and visits by vocational providers such as the Army and the police. This helps pupils develop optimistic attitudes to their futures. Pupils understand which behaviours are likely to lead to their employability. Teachers ensure that pupils, no matter what their age, feel they have potential to make a positive contribution to the school, their family and wider society.
- The few pupils at alternative provision also follow detailed personal development and welfare programmes. They have challenging targets that they meet quickly and make effective transition back into learning on one of the three school sites.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- When pupils arrive at the school they have had extremely poor experiences of school. Staff immediately set about changing pupils' attitudes with high levels of success in all three key stages and on all three school sites. As a result, pupils are punctual to lessons, attend school regularly and make dramatic improvements to their behaviour.
- Staff are consistent in their application of the behaviour policy in all three key stages and across the three sites of the school. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them. Rules and rewards are very clear to pupils and staff. Pupils value the rewards system. Pupils know that teachers will quickly respond with fairness to any incidences of poor behaviour.
- Levels of disruption in classrooms are very low.
- Displays are high quality. They remind pupils how to learn and behave and show respect for one another. Pupils have helped design the posters that reinforce positive behaviour.
- Pupils are usually polite and courteous in lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Teachers help pupils learn how to manage their behaviour. Staff prevent poor behaviour and encourage positive attitudes to learning. On all three sites of the school, inspectors saw consistently high standards of behaviour. Relationships are positive and trusting.
- Pupils rise to the staff's high expectations. Pupils are encouraged to be proud of themselves, each other, their work and the school.
- Pupils who attend the three alternative providers used by the school have made marked improvements in their attendance, punctuality, attitudes to learning and behaviour. They develop self-esteem and positive attitudes to their work. They develop the skills necessary to move on to mainstream schooling.

- Exclusions do not occur at this school. In the past two years, there have been no exclusions from the school. This is because staff have consistent approaches and firm and fair behaviour management. They identify behaviour problems early. There is strong home–school liaison.
- Restorative justice is used at the school and pupils speak highly of this. One pupil said, ‘Pupils at this school talk to each other rather than react aggressively.’
- The overwhelming majority of pupils in key stages 1, 2 and 3 make marked and sustained improvements in their attendance.
- The staff work closely with parents and local authority agencies to promote attendance. Staff make visits to pupils’ homes whenever there are any absences to check on pupils’ welfare. Pupils respect the school’s rewards. Tutors actively promote attendance and its links to employability. Every day there are whole staff updates from leaders on attendance and how to improve it, and information about individual pupils’ circumstances. Court orders have not been necessary.
- Stereotyping and derogatory language do not arise. Pupils learn that they are unacceptable. They are actively taught how wrong this language is.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe on all three sites. Teachers are effective at encouraging pupils to learn how to keep safe in school and in the wider community.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. This is the case in all three key stages.
- Pupils come to the school usually having missed important steps in their learning. Their starting points at the school are well below the average for their age. By the time pupils leave, most have made good progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- Most pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress because leaders and staff carefully check pupils’ learning on entry to the school and have detailed and effective plans to help them.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. The gaps are diminishing between the progress of these pupils and others in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A few pupils attend alternative provision and here they learn positive attitudes to school and hard work and they grow in self-esteem. This means they try harder at subjects such as English and mathematics and learn important skills such as spelling, reading comprehension and the times tables.
- Pupils make good progress in personal, health and social education skills such as making the right choices, motivation, self-regulation, and about online safety and cyber-bullying. Three afternoons a week, pupils in key stage 3 follow the Duke Of York award. As a result, pupils improve their attitudes to learning and make progress with computer skills.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their

education. They make good enough progress, for example, to make a successful transition to mainstream education.

- The progress of all pupils in science, history and geography is not as good as their progress in English and mathematics. Teachers have not yet focused fully on planning for these subjects.
- The most able pupils' progress is improving but not quickly enough in science, history and geography. These pupils make good progress in mathematics and English. This is because staff plan appropriate challenges for them. In other subjects, such as science and humanities, their progress is not good enough. This is because teachers do not yet have an accurate understanding of what the most able pupils can achieve.

School details

Unique reference number	123349
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	10048230

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	5 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Jenny Hornsby
Headteacher	Rachael Brown
Telephone number	01952385601
Website	In development
Email address	rachael.brown1@taw.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 December 2013

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there has been a new headteacher, a new leadership team and a new governing body.
- Since the last inspection, the school has reorganised its provision. Key stages 1 and 2 are taught at the school's Overdale site. Key stage 3 pupils are taught at its Dawley site.
- The school is developing a new resource base for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in key stage 2, called the Linden Mini-School.
- A small number of pupils attend three alternative providers used by the school. These providers are the local authority Student Engagement Programme, Association Football Club Telford and Stable Relationships Equine Therapy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all three school sites twice.
- Inspectors observed learning in wide range of lesson through key stages 3, 2 and 1.
- Inspectors held a meeting with the school's alternative providers.
- Inspectors conducted a joint work scrutiny with members of the middle leadership team in the presence of the headteacher.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team and middle leadership staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with a parent.
- Inspectors met with pupils and discussed with them their learning and workbooks.
- Inspectors scrutinised the single central record, met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised a range of records of recruitment, welfare plans and actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation the school produces as part of its self-evaluation, and development planning, policies and documents made available during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at 22 responses from the staff questionnaire. There were very few responses to Parent View and 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Elliott

Ofsted Inspector

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