

# Cheshire Alternative Provision School

Lower Park Mill, Centenary Place, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1EH

## Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' development plans are not precise enough. It is not clear how proposed changes will improve the provision for pupils or how the impact will be checked in the future.
- Leaders do not monitor the school's work often enough or hold teachers to account for the quality of teaching and academic outcomes.
- The quality of teaching is not yet good. It is too variable, and teachers' planning and delivery of lessons do not consistently challenge pupils to achieve well. As a result, pupils' progress is too slow.
- Some teachers fail to check pupils' understanding during lessons and adapt their teaching approach accordingly. Consequently, work set for some pupils is either too hard or too easy.
- Gaps in pupils' previous learning are not picked up quickly because assessment and tracking systems are not sharp enough.
- The attendance of some pupils is of concern because they fail to attend school regularly. This has a negative impact on their learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have high aspirations for the pupils. They have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- More recently, leaders and the proprietor have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching by recruiting experienced teachers.
- Staff generally manage pupils' behaviour well. There are trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils, staff and parents are positive in their comments about the school.
- The curriculum is personalised to capture the interests of individual pupils. Their personal development is particularly well promoted.
- The safeguarding culture is strong within the school. Pupils say they feel safe and staff are extremely vigilant about pupils' welfare.
- The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.

### 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 leadership and management of the school by:
  - implementing effective monitoring systems so that leaders and governors can hold staff to account for pupils' outcomes and for the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that pupils' abilities are accurately assessed on entry to the school and that their progress is tracked effectively during their time at Cheshire Alternative Provision School
  - ensuring that the school's self-evaluation and development plans make it clear what will be improved for the pupils and how the successful implementation will be checked.
- Improve teaching and learning so that:
  - teaching and learning are consistently good or better
  - pupils make good progress in lessons and over time across the full range of subjects
  - pupils' work is well planned and carefully matched to their needs and abilities
  - teachers check pupils' understanding more frequently during lessons and adapt their teaching strategies where necessary so that pupils make faster progress and attain higher standards.
- Implement strategies to further improve pupils' attendance so that all pupils attend school regularly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- All independent school standards are met. Despite recent improvements, the school is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good school.
- In the last year, since the school first opened, high levels of staff turnover and changes in leadership have stalled the school's progress. Following the departure of the previous headteacher in February, the proprietor assumed the role. She has experience of teaching and leading in similar schools. Time has been well spent on recruiting and inducting suitably qualified and experienced teachers who are now permanent members of staff. These have replaced temporary teachers who were previously in post.
- Staff are held to account through a programme to manage their performance but this is not linked closely enough to their success in the classroom. Leaders have spent insufficient time monitoring what is happening in the classrooms and checking how well pupils are learning. Nevertheless, changes in staffing and leadership and the greater stability in recent months have started to improve the provision for pupils.
- The school's self-evaluation and development plans accurately identify that the school requires improvement. They set out, in general terms, how the school aims to improve the provision. Individual plans are not sharp enough. For example, they do not identify which specific aspects of teaching need to be improved or how they will be addressed. Consequently, some of the common issues with teaching seen in some classes, such as a making sure that tasks are set at the right level, have not been tackled as quickly as they could be.
- Leaders check regularly on pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality, but pupils' academic progress is not recorded in the same depth. A new system for tracking pupils' progress in different subjects has been introduced but it is too soon to evaluate its impact.
- The proprietor is ambitious for the pupils. She invests heavily in staff training, and staff are positive about the support they receive, for example during their induction to the school.
- The curriculum is tailored carefully to pupils' individual needs and interests. There is an emphasis on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics, which helps to prepare them adequately for their return to school, the workplace or the next stage of their education. The curriculum is enriched through a programme of extra-curricular visits locally, as well as through having a range of visitors to the school, including local police officers.
- The curriculum also gives pupils a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in contexts that are meaningful and practically based. For example, as pupils discussed how they would respond to an emergency, most recognised the additional training they would need before they could assist.
- Personal, social and health education lessons and whole-school meetings enable pupils to understand the democratic processes. Pupils learn to listen to and respect other views and beliefs. They generally express their opinions in a calm and measured way. In this way, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully.

This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and for their transition to the next stage of education or employment.

- The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to provide pupils with effective care and welfare support. Parents and local authority representatives who spoke to inspectors were positive about the school's provision. Strong links with parents, local authority representatives, social workers and referring schools help to ensure that the needs of the pupils remain central to any decision making.

## **Governance**

- Governance requires improvement. Pupils' outcomes and teaching and learning are improving but they are not yet good.
- Governance has been successful in establishing the school and in providing suitable accommodation with adequate resources for the number of pupils on roll.
- The chair of the governing body brings his expertise and experience of leading a similar provision to this school. He and the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, are in regular contact. They have a good understanding of what needs to improve but they have not yet translated these into actions.
- Governors hold the school to account for financial and administrative matters, which are carefully scrutinised.
- Leaders' and teachers' training records are regularly monitored by governors to ensure that staff are kept up to date. For example, all staff, including the most recent recruits, have received the required safeguarding training.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The policy is published on the website and is readily available. It is detailed and meets the most recent government requirements.
- Policies and systems for managing pupils' behaviour, assessing risks and referring concerns to the relevant authorities are implemented effectively.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Cheshire Alternative Provision School. The proprietor and chair of the governing body have completed safer recruitment training. Leaders are scrupulous in carrying out all pre-employment checks to satisfy themselves that staff are suitable to work with children. Relevant training supports staff and enables them to fulfil their duties proficiently.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but it is still too variable. It is not strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects.
- Gaps in pupils' learning are not picked up quickly enough when pupils arrive at the school. Assessments of pupils' academic abilities on entry and the tracking of their progress are

completed but are not sharp enough. As a result, some pupils make slower progress than they should because work set for them is not always set at the right level.

- Teachers do not plan well enough to enable pupils to systematically expand their knowledge or gain new skills. Some teachers do not take into account prior achievements or plan activities with a clear progression in mind.
- Teaching rightly concentrates on improving pupils' English and mathematical skills. These are the subjects that most pupils at the school find difficult and in which they have fallen behind in the past. During some lessons, teachers' responses to pupils' learning is variable. Too few teachers adapt the task set quickly enough in response to pupils' questions or answers. This results in missed learning opportunities, when it becomes clear that the work set is too hard or too easy.
- On most occasions, teachers establish good relationships with pupils who often present challenging behaviour both in class and around the school. Pupils' behaviour is generally managed well. Most staff are skilled at defusing situations. Pupils are learning to moderate their behaviour and recognise the impact it will have on others. As a result, most lessons proceed in a calm and orderly way. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed and appreciated this aspect of the school. 'I'm learning more here because the teachers know how to deal with us,' is typical of the comments made by pupils.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read widely and support them well with their developing understanding of texts and different genres. Most pupils were happy to read for the visiting inspectors, spoke about books they enjoyed and showed positive attitudes towards reading.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Many pupils enter the school with poor attitudes to learning and low self-esteem. As they settle into the school, the large majority believe that they can be successful learners. Consequently, most pupils develop positive attitudes towards school during their time at Cheshire Alternative Provision School. For many this is the first time that this has happened. Pupils grow in confidence to try new things and make the right choices.
- Pupils know that adults care about their safety and welfare. They are confident that staff will listen to any concerns that they raise and help them to overcome any barriers to their future success. These include supporting pupils with any emotional or mental health difficulties they experience. Parents who spoke to inspectors confirmed the difference that the school had made for their children. 'My daughter goes off to school happily now and is much more confident in her work. I can't believe the difference that moving her to CAPS has made,' was a typical comment.
- Pupils generally get on well together. Some find it difficult to conform when they first arrive, but they soon settle. Pupils say there is no racism and bullying is rare. This is confirmed by the school's records. Pupils are confident that any incidents would be dealt with promptly if they did occur. Pupils enjoy the recognition that comes with good behaviour, including the weekly certificates of achievement. They also recognise and

accept that poor behaviour results in consequences, such as loss of privileges.

- Pupils say they feel safe. They also understand how to keep safe and healthy, including when they take part in off-site visits.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Learning takes place in a supportive environment. Pupils understand how their behaviour in the past has stopped them learning. They also know what they need to do to improve. The longer pupils stay at the school, the more positive their attitudes to learning become. There are occasions, usually when pupils are in the earlier stages of settling into the school, that learning is disrupted.
- When problems do occur, other pupils know not to join in with those who are finding it hard to manage. Pupils value the consistent way in which they are treated by staff.
- Staff challenge pupils' inappropriate behaviour, including unacceptable language, and pupils generally respond positively because they know what is expected.
- Staff have a good understanding of pupils' emotional needs and vulnerabilities. A comprehensive range of risk assessments means that staff are vigilant and take swift action to address concerns.
- Many pupils had poor levels of attendance in their previous schools but now attend school more regularly. Nevertheless, too many still have irregular attendance. This slows their progress because it affects the continuity of their learning.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The first cohort of Year 11 pupils took GCSE examinations recently. There are no external examination results available for pupils in the school.
- Pupils join the school because of the difficulties they faced in their previous schools. Many have been absent from school for extended periods or have been excluded from schools before they arrive at Cheshire Alternative Provision School. Some have experienced both.
- Pupils often have significant gaps in their learning, and their attitudes towards school when they arrive are often negative. As a result, most, but not all, enter school with standards that are below those expected for their age.
- Although pupils' academic progress is improving, the school is still not ensuring that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. Lack of precision in pupils' initial screening when they arrive at the school makes it more difficult for teachers to pinpoint exactly where to pitch the work. In some lessons the same work is set for the whole group, which means that, for some pupils, the tasks are too hard or too easy. The quality of teaching is too variable.
- Nevertheless, checks on records that are available, scrutiny of pupils' work and talking to pupils confirms that most do make adequate progress in their academic studies during their time at Cheshire Alternative Provision School. Staff accept that pupils' overall rates of progress are not fast enough. For many pupils, their earlier educational experiences

mean that they have fallen well behind their peers and so now they have much to catch up on.

- Pupils make good progress in their personal development and in their ability to moderate their behaviour in most circumstances. They become more confident learners and most are ready to learn in the lessons they attend.
- Careers education and guidance are delivered successfully. Staff talk regularly to pupils about future careers and aspirations.
- Comprehensive arrangements are in place to smooth the transition from Cheshire Alternative Provision School to the pupils' home schools or to their next stage of education or employment.

## School details

Unique reference number	143930
DfE registration number	895/6004
Inspection number	10043790

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Lana Wild
Chair	Shane Mahon
Headteacher	Lana Wild
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,600
Telephone number	01260 289391
Website	<a href="http://www.caps.cheshire.sch.uk">www.caps.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:lwild.caps@outlook.com">lwild.caps@outlook.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- In April 2017, the school was granted registration for 50 pupils aged from 11 to 16 years. Currently there are 25 pupils on roll.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with a history of disrupted schooling, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils join the school and leave it at different points during the academic year.



- The headteacher is also the proprietor. She took over as headteacher following the resignation of the previous headteacher in February 2018. There have been high levels of teaching staff changes during this school year.
- The school aims to support pupils as they 'grow, aspire and achieve', enabling them to return to their home school. Most pupils follow a 12-week programme at Cheshire Alternative Provision School, followed by a staged transition period as they return to their home school. The length of this reintegration varies according to pupils' needs.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a range of lessons, or part-lessons, in a variety of subjects.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, school leaders and staff.
- The inspectors had phone conversations with parents of pupils. They also spoke with officers of local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- The inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally. They looked at their work and the school's records of their progress. They also listened to individual pupils as they read.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. There were no free-text responses received from parents.
- The inspectors took into account three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website, to check compliance with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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