

Lawrence House School

Inspection dates

25–27 September 2018

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	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Lawrence House School is much improved since its previous Inspection. Senior leaders, with the full support of the proprietor and governors, have worked tirelessly to ensure that all aspects of the school, including teaching, learning and safeguarding, are now good.
- Leaders are supported and challenged by knowledgeable and committed governors who know the school exceptionally well.
- The school is a calm and purposeful place, where pupils benefit from a good curriculum which is tailored to their interests. However, too few opportunities are available for pupils to engage in practical activities in science.
- Teachers, clinical staff and other adults work together highly effectively to meet pupils' individual learning needs.
- Staff are trained well. They employ good procedures to assess and monitor pupils' performance. Opportunities to learn from outstanding practice in other schools is limited.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and enhance their appreciation of British values is good.
- Pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, visual and performing arts and sports.
- Representatives from local authorities speak highly of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is exemplary. They follow instructions well and enjoy discussing topical issues. Highly structured activities sometimes prevent pupils from discovering things for themselves.
- The school meets pupils' personal development and welfare needs outstandingly well, equipping them with the skills needed to be confident and productive in further education and work.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. Their attendance improves significantly after they join the school.
- Safeguarding procedures are highly effective, comprehensive and fully understood by all staff. Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to an exceptionally high standard.

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:
 - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to develop their practical and investigative skills in science
 - enabling pupils to use their own initiative and find things out for themselves.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - providing opportunities for staff, including teachers, clinicians and care staff, to learn from outstanding practice in other schools and settings.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school's leaders, the senior education manager and education coordinator are highly organised. Together with the support of staff, governors and the proprietor, they have worked tirelessly to transform the school into a place where pupils are safe, enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Leaders have addressed all areas for improvement identified from the last full inspection and subsequent monitoring visits. Governors know the school exceptionally well. They have given effective support to senior leaders as the numbers of staff and pupils have increased significantly over the last two years.
- Together with governors and the proprietor, the senior leadership team work effectively to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Staff morale is high. All staff who spoke with the inspector, and those who completed the inspection questionnaire, said they are proud to work at the school. Staff are appreciative of the training and development opportunities available to them. They enjoy the 'camaraderie' and the support available from the 'fantastic psychology team'. Typically, staff commented that 'the school has changed dramatically since the last inspection' and 'behaviour is good because there are clear systems in place which everyone follows'.
- The senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths in teaching, as well as the areas which could be developed further. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, offering helpful advice to teachers on how they can improve their practice.
- Well-established procedures are in place to check the performance of staff, including teachers, care workers and members of the clinical team. Staff are responsible for pupils' academic performance and personal, social and emotional wellbeing. Staff receive regular specialised training to further their understanding of conditions such as autism, obsessive compulsive disorder and other conditions which affect pupils' mental health and behaviour.
- Pupils benefit from a highly stimulating, imaginative and creative curriculum, which secures their full involvement in their learning and their good progress. Senior leaders have developed programmes of study which help pupils to appreciate the links between sports and physical activities, such as boxing and emotional well-being. Many pupils have experienced significant trauma. Carefully planned activities help them to begin to explore such experiences and overcome them.
- A high priority is placed on reading. Through topics such as 'The American Dream' and 'Around the World in 80 Days', pupils explore the poetry and writings of well-known African-American authors, the Beat poets of 1950s America and haiku, traditional Japanese poetry. Mathematics is promoted well across the curriculum, as is writing. Work to promote science is not as effective, with few opportunities available for pupils to engage in experiments and investigative activities.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a precise understanding and appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society. They have visited many different places of worship,

including mosques and churches, and written about life in countries such as Turkey and Egypt. Pupils have a remarkable capacity to empathise with those less fortunate than themselves. They volunteer to work with children and adults who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and staff 'soup kitchens' for the homeless. Pupils enjoy making videos, writing songs and playing musical instruments. They visit museums, galleries and art exhibitions as part of their creative curriculum.

- Pupils' understanding of British values is well developed. They are charitable and raise funds for many worthy causes. Lawrence House pupils are not afraid to make their voices heard and were recently involved in choosing a school uniform. They like to celebrate important commemorative events, such as Remembrance Day, and discuss what constitutes 'Britishness'.
- Representatives from local authorities are highly complimentary about the school. They are of the view that the school is good value for money. Typically, representatives say that the school 'does a good job with difficult children'. In addition, they acknowledge that the school takes a consistent approach to educating pupils and refrains from 'moving pupils on' to other providers. Local authorities receive regular reports which detail pupils' academic and personal development and their reflections on their time at the school.
- While staff work collaboratively, regularly sharing their practice and learning from each other, few opportunities are available for them to learn from good practice in other schools and settings.

Governance

- At the time of the previous inspection, no formal mechanisms were in place for senior leaders to report on their work. The recently formed governing body, chaired by the proprietor, has got off to an excellent start. Governors meet regularly to consider the work of the school. Reports from senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and head psychologist, ensure that governors are well informed about school matters. Reports are evaluative and provide achievement data analysis and information on matters such as pupils' attendance, staff training and work with local authorities.
- Governors come into school regularly and have first-hand experience of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, personal development and welfare. They know where the school priorities lie. They have recently agreed to the appointment of a science teacher and an outdoor activities coordinator.
- Governors keep themselves abreast of developments in education and are well trained, including on matters relating to safeguarding children.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The administration and record-keeping of safeguarding information is good. All records are safe and kept confidential. Checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough, as are safety checks and risk assessments in relation to buildings and premises. The school leaves nothing to chance when it comes to educational visits and school trips. Every excursion is well planned to avert any potential dangers.

- Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to an exceptionally high standard, as are governors responsible for ensuring the safety of children. All staff have safeguarding training as part of their induction. This training is regularly reviewed and updated in line with new legislation.
- All staff have had 'Prevent' duty training. This is in keeping with the government's agenda to counter terrorist and radicalisation. The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and available on the school's website. It refers to the very latest guidelines on keeping children safe in education. All staff sign to indicate they have read the school's policies and government guidelines.
- Reporting procedures relating to safeguarding are comprehensive, in line with the culture of the organisation, which is to mitigate risk and take all safeguarding matters seriously. Staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Teachers form highly effective partnerships with clinical staff and behaviour support and care workers. They form an excellent team, providing pupils with one-to-one and small-group support.
- Collectively, staff have a comprehensive overview of each pupil's academic, behavioural and SEN and/or disabilities. All pupils have a personalised learning programme which supports their good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- A large proportion of pupils are new to the school this term. However, pupils quickly settle into school life. They know exactly what is expected of them and soon form trusting relationships and secure bonds with teachers.
- Whenever possible, pupils are encouraged to read and share their research findings. This was evident in a class where pupils shared information about the composition of the earth's crust. In another class, pupils were introduced to the sights, sounds and aromas of India, then encouraged to find out facts about the Asian subcontinent.
- Mathematics teaching is highly effective. Pupils' books contain numerous examples of pupils applying their mathematical skills to solving problem. Examples of this include activities such as working out to the nearest hundredth of a second the speed differences between competitors in 100-meter sprints and 50-meter freestyle swimming competitions. Teachers are highly effective at consolidating pupils' learning and developing their fluency, for example in recalling facts about numbers and the characteristics of different shapes.
- Teachers encourage pupils to take pride in their work. Pupils do this, as shown in books, exhibitions and carefully prepared folders. Teachers celebrate pupils' achievements, as shown in the attractive classroom displays of pupils' written work and art. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings in poetry and prose. This is evident in their poignant and well-written poems, some of which have received recognition in national poetry competitions.
- Teachers consistently apply the school's feedback and assessment policy, offering advice on how pupils can take the next steps in their learning. Teachers praise pupils for their efforts.
- Pupils' books reveal that the content of science topics is limited in the school's creative curriculum. Few opportunities are available for pupils to engage in experiments and

investigations. This aspect of the curriculum is not as strong as others. Senior leaders are addressing this imbalance.

- Occasionally, pupils are not expected to discover and work things out for themselves. As a result, their independent learning skills are not as well developed as they should be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The outstanding care and support available from teachers and the clinical team helps pupils to find purpose and meaning in their lives. Staff are effective in helping pupils to 'open up'. This is evident in the thoughtfully crafted music videos, poems, songs and biographical works produced by pupils. These reflect on areas such as gang culture, illegal drug use and broken family ties.
- Staff harness the energy of sport to promote discussion and written work about issues such as decision-making and moral dilemmas. Pupils are highly positive about this aspect of learning, typically commenting that 'I have learned how exercise can take your mind off problems' and 'I feel better after the programme, I realise that I am not alone.'
- Pupils have access to outstanding therapies, including counselling and animal therapy. The school has compelling evidence that such therapies support pupils well in managing their feelings and expressing themselves. In addition, pupils know that they can self-refer to the school's various therapy sessions. They can also take 'time out' in the sensory room when learning and relationships become too difficult to manage.
- Pupils benefit from bespoke independent careers advice. They learn how to prepare personal statements and conduct themselves during interviews. Pupils attend careers and recruitment fairs and receive information about apprenticeships and employment opportunities. Pupils are well prepared for life after school. For example, on one site, older pupils spend time in the independent living cottage. Here they cook and clean and manage the household budget.
- Pupils regularly volunteer their services to adults and children who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils recently built a garden wall and planted flowers for a local charity. Many opportunities are available for pupils to take up long-term placements with local branches of national charities.
- The school's excellent relationships with local colleges helps to ensure that most pupils who stay in Merseyside after their time at the school take up full-time courses in areas such as childcare and health and social care.
- Pupils' understanding of safe and unsafe situations is exceptionally well developed. They have an in-depth understand of how to stay safe online. Pupils' access to the internet is strictly available for school work only and the use of mobile phones is restricted.
- Pupils are acutely aware of the harmful effects of illegal substances, smoking and drinking alcohol. They appreciate the importance of a healthy diet and participate in a wide range of sporting activities and after-school clubs, including Thai boxing, rugby and athletics.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good
- Pupils' behaviour in class is usually impeccable. They listen to teachers carefully and follow instructions closely. Most teaching is one-to-one, requiring good dialogue between pupils and teaching staff. Such dialogue was evident in most classes during the inspection.
- The school's behaviour logs show that pupils who infringe the school rules are sanctioned appropriately in line with the school's policy. The school's own surveys and the Ofsted inspection questionnaire for staff indicate that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence concurs with this.
- Pupils frequently discuss matters relating to race, disability, gender and sexuality. As a result, they have an in-depth knowledge of such matters. Pupils say that racism and discrimination rarely, if ever, take place. Those who spoke with the inspector said that there is no bullying at the school, indicating that they feel safe, happy and able to talk to any staff member if they are concerned.
- Pupils are proud to attend the school. They are respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils ensure that the school and the generous outdoor gardens and facilities on each site are well looked after and clean.
- Most pupils have previously attended school infrequently; some have spent extended periods of time out of school. Their attendance improves significantly as soon as they settle into school life.
- Occasionally, pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions and participate in lessons. However, pupils continually learn how to conduct themselves appropriately when in school, on placements in college and when on educational trips and visits.
- Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. At the time of the inspection, the school was calm and purposeful, no poor behaviour was observed. Those who find long periods of concentration difficult can apply various coping strategies, including taking time out of lessons for short periods.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Having spent extended periods not in education, almost all pupils start school with skills and abilities below those expected for their age. Pupils' reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculation and problem-solving skills are assessed shortly after entry. The results of such assessments enable senior leaders and teachers to develop personalised learning programmes which are aligned to pupils' individual skills and abilities.
- A large proportion of pupils spend short periods of time at the school; very few stay for a full academic year. However, pupils engage and start to develop their skills soon after they join the school. Those who stay at Lawrence House for long periods make consistently good progress in English, mathematics and visual and performing arts.
- School records show that pupils make strong progress in reading. This is because most lessons contain an element of reading. Pupils are encouraged to read newspapers and magazines, discuss headlines and analyse topical stories.

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because they enjoy problem-solving activities. They understand the importance of well-developed calculation skills in everyday life and benefit from good teaching. Workbooks show that pupils make strong progress in developing their understanding of numbers, weights and measures.
- The SENCo is well organised and trained to a high standard. She works in partnership with various specialists, including clinicians, care staff and educational psychologists, to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Individual learning plans are closely monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that almost all reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills soon improve after joining the school. They write passionately about their experiences, skilfully penning poems, rhymes for music videos and scripts for movie trailers. Teachers usually check grammatical errors, which they encourage pupils to rectify. Teachers also help pupils to extend their vocabulary.
- Pupils' information, communication technology (ICT) and design skills are good. They produce excellent artwork and are encouraged to make three-dimensional models of well-known wonders of the world, such as the Taj Mahal, as part of their 'Around the World in 80 Days' curriculum module.
- Where possible, the school accredits pupils' work. Pupils have attained accreditation, qualifications and awards (AQA) covering areas such as slavery, creative poetry and film making. In addition, they have secured qualifications accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). This is in subjects such as community and citizenship, environmental studies, health and fitness and understanding religion and beliefs.
- It is not possible to compare the performance of pupils taking GCSEs to that of other pupils nationally, due to the small numbers. At the end of Year 11 in 2018, a small number of pupils attained GCSEs in subjects including English, mathematics, science and health and social care.
- The 'entry level' basic skills qualifications that older pupils acquire in English and mathematics, help to ensure their employment and further training readiness. Coupled with independent living experiences and volunteering opportunities, pupils are well placed to be successful in the next part of their learning and employment journey after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	136752
DfE registration number	340/6001
Inspection number	10053733

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Proprietor	Anthony Nolan
Education coordinator	Fay Donnelly
Senior education manager	Nicola Sothern
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,300 to £44,200
Telephone number	0151 480 8287
Website	http://qpconline.co.uk/education
Email address	lawrencehouseschool@qpconline.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–15 September 2016

Information about this school

- Lawrence House School is a specialist independent school which provides for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It is based on five sites across Merseyside. All pupils at the school have SEN and/or disabilities. Most have social, emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. A significant proportion of pupils have mental health difficulties. Several pupils have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school's aim is, 'for Lawrence House to be a school of excellence where high expectations are fundamental to all that we do...we strive to ensure that pupils leave school as well rounded, confident individuals and critical thinkers with the necessary skills and aspiration to be lifelong learners.'

- The school is registered to admit up to 28 pupils. It is owned by 'Quality Protects Children' and had its last full inspection in September 2016. A monitoring visit took place in June 2017. There are 11 pupils on roll, a large proportion are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils are from regions across the country. All are in the care of the local authority.
- Due to the complex nature of most pupils' educational needs, support from adults is often intensive. All pupils are educated in very small groups or on a one-to-one basis.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased. Some pupils follow the national curriculum. Bespoke programmes of learning are available for all pupils; their work is accredited by various examining bodies.
- Most pupils have had either extended periods out of school or been on limited education programmes in other schools and pupil referral units. All have gaps in their learning. Pupils are highly mobile, entering the school at various times during the school year and often staying for short periods only.
- Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been strengthened to include a senior education manager. A governing body has been formed. The chair of the governing body is the proprietor. Most staff, including several teachers, have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- Premises have been extended to include two new classrooms on the Bluebell Cottage site. Outdoor areas on some sites have been refurbished.
- The school works with several local and national registered charities to provide work experience for pupils. It aims to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream education and work or college placements. Currently, the school is not catering for sixth-form pupils.
- The school's clinical team is made up of a head psychologist and three assistant psychologists.
- Since opening, the school has catered for very few post-16 students. Records show that when the school has students on roll, they are supported along similar lines to all pupils in school. Currently, there is no sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. All observations were made jointly with senior leaders. Pupils' work was scrutinised during observations and also separately.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the proprietor's representative and governors. Meetings were also held with the SENCo and the leader of the school's clinical support team. The inspector met with a group of staff.
- Questionnaires submitted by seven members of staff were scrutinised. There were no responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. The inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from two local authorities.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the course of the inspection.
- The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included: checks on the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation including risk assessments, various records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, development plans and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's development plans and reviews of its own performance.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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