

Embleton View

Westgate House, Coniscliffe Road, Darlington DL3 8TF

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Directors, the headteacher and staff are highly ambitious for the school. They model the school's ethos well. They have a passion and commitment to do the best for all pupils.
- The directors and headteacher ensure that the school consistently meets all the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The curriculum is focused on personal development and includes a broad range of subjects, including English, Mathematics and work skills. Teachers also ensure that pupils have a well-developed understanding of British values.
- Highly trained staff provide pupils with personalised learning experiences. Therapeutic activities and an extensive visits programme complement this. As a result, pupils make rapid progress. They learn to keep themselves safe and their behaviour significantly improves.
- Both school sites provide a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils, who previously had poor attendance levels, want to be there. Consequently, attendance levels are high.
- Several organisations provide specialist services to meet pupils' needs. Impartial careers guidance and vocational activities enhance pupils' motivation and raises aspirations. The school is also better placed to support pupils because of the accurate diagnosis of their sensory and psychological needs.
- Behaviour is good because of leaders' high expectations. Any poor behaviour is viewed as a barrier to learning and is rapidly addressed through the pupil's learning plan.
- Teachers and support staff skilfully plan lessons tailored to meet pupils' needs. They build strong relationships and show great patience. Although pupils develop confidence and skills, teachers do not always help pupils sufficiently to consolidate learning and gain deeper understanding.
- Leaders have developed the school at a fast pace in the short period since registration. They have developed high-quality policies, monitoring systems and detailed development plans. They are aware that there is a need to consolidate their achievements, to build greater clarity into development planning, and to enhance the assessment of academic work.

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 leadership and management by:
 - refining the school's system for assessing academic work, so that leaders are astutely aware of the impact of their actions on pupils' academic progress over time
 - improving their development planning so that there is greater clarity about the priorities for taking the school forward.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that:
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to consolidate and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Improve the opportunities for pupils to read by providing a wider range of books and magazines.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders ensure that the school consistently meets all of the independent school standards.
- Since registration, leaders have made significant progress in developing a school that reflects their vision of a person-centred curriculum and therapeutic approach. They offer a broad and balanced curriculum which concentrates on personal and social development. Schemes of work and teachers' planning illustrates the innovative way in which this is integrated with English, mathematics, British values and careers advice. These inspirational programmes address pupils' special educational and behavioural needs and encourage them to be good citizens.
- Leaders ensure that pupils take part in a variety of physical activities both at the school and in local centres. There is an extensive programme of visits, which motivate and extend pupils' experiences. These have a positive impact on their development and progress. Pupils have visited garden centres, castles, a motorcycle centre and forests. A recent visit to an open-air museum was used to extend pupils' writing skills and promote an understanding of employment both in Victorian and modern times.
- The school invests heavily in staffing and in modern resources. High-quality training is a priority and there is a comprehensive induction process for staff. Training includes first aid, physical intervention, safeguarding, and developing staff skills in challenging and stimulating pupils. Consequently, pupils make strong progress academically and personally. Staff morale is high, and they are well-supported by leaders.
- The school employs the services of a wide range of expert providers and advisers. These are all thoroughly vetted to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. A counsellor/ psychotherapist provides therapeutic intervention with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- An occupational therapist provides sensory treatment sessions and helps pupils who find it difficult to maintain a calm demeanour. Another partner provides pupils with high-quality guidance in sexual violence prevention.
- Pupils are rigorously assessed on entry to the school and targets are carefully selected according to age and stage of development. These form part of individual learning plans.
- The school's systems are effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress both personally and academically. Leaders' assessment of pupils' academic progress is less sophisticated. While the progress of individuals can be tracked, that of a whole cohort is more difficult to assess.

Governance

- All the directors work hard for the school and have well-defined roles and responsibilities. They are committed to giving these young people, who often have complex needs and have had very poor educational experiences, opportunities for personal development in order to learn and to move on to better futures.
- Directors know pupils and their needs well and are involved in safeguarding, monitoring

and evaluation.

- Directors are keen to draw on the advice and expertise of others to improve their school. This includes an educational psychologist and an independent facilitator, who ensures that pupils have their say.
- An advisory board has been established, which consists of independent experts who will act as 'critical friends' of the school. It is too early to assess its impact on strategic development.
- The school has developed at a rapid pace. Directors and the headteacher have developed a comprehensive suite of policies covering all aspects of school life. They make thorough and accurate evaluations of the school's performance and make detailed improvement plans. However, some systems are too complicated, and development plans do not highlight the school's priorities well enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy is on the school's website and is compliant with the latest government guidance. Leaders ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training. For example, a training session led by a local authority officer on child sexual exploitation was delivered during this inspection. Also, staff receive training about the government's 'Prevent' duty. Wall displays around both sites help to reinforce the strong safeguarding culture that leaders foster.
- Leaders carry out all appropriate checks on adults who work with children. Leaders record these checks on a single central record. Safer recruitment certification is held by those leaders involved in recruitment processes, and they apply this well.
- The school has appropriate filters in place to protect pupils from accessing inappropriate material on the internet. Pupils are trained to keep themselves safe online.
- Leaders have thorough systems for risk assessment and the management of health and safety.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

All paragraphs in Part 5

- Directors have moved the school from its original locations to two new and larger sites. The new premises offer bright and welcoming learning environments. The premises meet the requirements of Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- Directors wish to increase the number of pupils who can be admitted to the school from 11 to 16. The new premises have been evaluated and there are more classrooms. There is more space overall and, consequently, easier access to resources. This means that the needs of increased numbers of children with special educational needs are likely to be met.
- Leaders have ensured that independent school standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff are effective at managing pupils' behaviour. They build strong relationships and have high expectations. They are patient and highly skilled at using their voices, humour, questioning and body language to maintain a peaceful working atmosphere and to draw pupils back on task if their attention wanders. They are adept at knowing just when a pupil might be at risk of misbehaviour. They act swiftly to defuse potential conflicts so that the learning of others is not disrupted.
- All pupils have a variety of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and teachers plan lessons effectively to meet these. High ratios of staff to learners ensure that individuals receive appropriate support to overcome their barriers to learning.
- Lessons are often challenging. For many pupils, who have learning difficulties or who have missed a large amount of education prior to attending this school, there is a significant difference between their age and level of academic attainment. Teachers work hard to pitch tasks at an appropriate level. In one lesson, pupils collected leaves, berries, snails and other items from a nearby wood and made a display of these. They then used resources provided by teachers to record features of these items. This also involved the use of some scientific terminology.
- Parents are well-informed about their children's progress through regular, often daily, contact and written reports. Parents also receive an outline of activities that are to be covered each term. This contains suggestions for activities that they can do with their child to promote further learning.
- Most teachers skilfully interlink a range of tasks, for example literacy, reading, a discussion about the historical employment of children, and health and safety. While teachers are effective in developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, there is some inconsistency in the consolidation and deepening of these. Where pupils have been encouraged to reinforce their understanding, there is evidence of more secure learning gains.
- A very detailed assessment framework has been developed for use in the school and teachers update it regularly. This is used to identify where pupils' understanding is strong, or when they have developed a skill. It is particularly successful in supporting teachers' assessment of personal and social development and in the mapping of pupils' behaviours.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good, in the school and when they attend the alternative provision.
- The alternative provision provides part-time specialist support for pupils with particular behavioural needs. This helps them to more successfully manage their behaviour in school and in the community.
- Pupil's personal development is at the heart of the school's activities. Individual learning plans are closely aligned to education, health and care plans and have detailed targets. Therapeutic activities provided through partnership arrangements contribute towards the

identification and meeting of pupils' needs. Occupational therapy sessions help pupils to stay calm and to regulate their behaviour. The techniques employed are shared with school staff and are used to consolidate pupils' learning. Counselling sessions similarly help in the school's promotion of pupils' emotional and mental health.

- Pupils say that there is little bullying, and school information confirms this.
- Pupils are taking great strides in overcoming significant barriers to successfully re-engage in education.
- The school works hard to prepare pupils for the world of work and adult life. In addition to receiving impartial advice and guidance, every opportunity is taken to help pupils learn about different types of employment and how to behave appropriately outside of school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and when taking part in school activities elsewhere. Pupils are very well supervised. Breaktimes are well organised and staff join in with pupils in playing board games and conversation.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the work of the school. All commented on positive changes in their child's personality and behaviour. One parent commented about how her son was transformed after 'years of watching him crumble at school'.
- Pupils can write neatly, and photographic evidence produced for work skills unit award assessments show that they are enthusiastic about cooking and are proud of their achievements. However, for a few pupils, attitudes to learning and the quality of written work are variable.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Pupils' attendance improves rapidly on admission to the school. The school works hard to encourage good attendance and, as a result, it is high and improving. The school provides transport to bring most pupils to school and take them home. Other pupils are brought by taxis. This has been significant in improving attendance and punctuality.
- Regular contact with parents ensures that relationships between home and school are positive. As a result of the regular encouragement, many pupils are now keen to come to school.
- Many pupils come to the school with severe identified behaviour difficulties. They have frequently struggled to maintain acceptable behaviour in their previous schools or pupil referral units. The school is quick to set intervention targets and apply therapeutic techniques to overcome pupils' negative behaviours. Hence, school records show very few incidents of poor behaviour and the need for exclusion or physical intervention is very low.
- The lack of damage or graffiti emphasises the success of the school in building an orderly and calm environment. Leaders say that pupils' use of derogatory language is rare, and none was heard during this inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour, when they are attending alternative provision, is usually good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Teachers support pupils very well in preparing for their futures. The school is starting to make progress towards the Gatsby Career Benchmarks. This is in line with the latest government careers strategy. Pupils receive impartial advice and support with visits and applications to local colleges. Teachers make use of every opportunity, for example using external visits to talk about careers.
- Due to the time that the school has been open, there are no external tests or examination results to compare pupils' progress to that of their peers nationally. School assessment information and pupils' work seen during the inspection shows that pupils make strong progress in their work skills lessons and in personal and social development. Some older pupils have successfully completed small entry-level qualifications.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils make strong progress in developing sensitivity and their understanding of right and wrong. Their social gains are also rapid. As pupils' personal development improves, progress is seen in other areas of the curriculum, for example in creative work and in developing an appreciation of history.
- The school recognises the importance of pupils gaining appropriate accreditations and qualifications. It aims to ensure that all pupils leave the school with as many units as possible. Passing many small units to build towards recognised qualifications is therefore an appropriate strategy.
- Teachers regularly encourage pupils to read during lessons. Most read with reasonable fluency and understanding. They understand punctuation and teachers encourage them to apply their phonics knowledge when they struggle with an unfamiliar word. The school has a very small collection of books and magazines. Leaders agree that a wider range of material would further support pupils in developing their reading skills.
- School progress information shows that pupils make better progress in mathematics than in English. The progress information allows pupils and leaders to see even very small increments of progress from very low baselines. In mathematics, progress is strongest in number work, and examples of increasing mastery were seen in pupils' books. Most pupils can write in short sentences and work seen in pupils' books shows progress in the quality of extended writing.

School details

Unique reference number	145127
DfE registration number	841/6008
Inspection number	10053840

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Graeme Turner and Mr Craig Bell
Chair	Mr Graeme Turner
Headteacher	Steven Clarke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,070 to £79,430
Telephone number	01325 288 722
Website	http://www.aldgroup.co.uk
Email address	info@aldgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Embleton View is an independent special day school, which is part of the ALD Group Limited. The school is registered to admit up to 11 pupils. Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities in the region.
- The school was first registered by the DfE in November 2017. This is its first standard inspection.
- The school operates on two sites. The main site is in Darlington and the second site is located approximately 13.4 miles away in Coundon, near Bishop Auckland.
- All of the pupils on roll have education, health and care plans. They have a variety of

special educational needs, including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. They have been excluded or have been at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools.

- Pupils take part in some physical education on site. This is supplemented by off-site activities at purpose-built facilities.
- The school uses one alternative education provider, Reintegreat, for part-time specialist behavioural support.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out over two and a half days, with half a day's notice.
- The inspector toured all buildings currently used by the school, both inside and outside.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons on both school sites.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and the ALD Group Directors.
- The work of several pupils was reviewed.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed. The inspector met informally with pupils.
- The inspector evaluated a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluations of the school and development plans, admissions and attendance registers, monitoring information, child protection and safeguarding information, and minutes of directors' meetings. The inspector also looked closely at all other documents and policies as required by the independent school standards.
- Consideration was given to the school's evidence of communication with parents. There were two responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the inspector spoke with several parents. Seven staff responded to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- The inspector also spoke with a local authority representative.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to use new premises and to increase the maximum number of pupils that can be admitted to 16.

Inspection team

Steve Rogers, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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