

High Peak School

Kedleston Group Limited, Holloway Lane, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Middlesex UB7 0AE

Inspection dates

29–31 January 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- High Peak School is led with dynamism and innovation. The principal, senior leaders and the proprietor work exceptionally well together to ensure that teaching is good and pupils achieve highly.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that highly effective safeguarding procedures are in place and all independent school standards are met.
- The new leadership team has got off to a good start. All staff are on board with the principal's vision and new direction for the school.
- Staff form strong relationships with pupils and have an in-depth understanding of pupils' educational and personal development needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and have high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils benefit from excellent therapies, such as owl, equine, canine and occupational therapy, all of which promote their personal, social, physical and academic development exceptionally well.
- Some pupils lack resilience; their confidence to tackle challenging work is still developing.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum which matches their individual interests and secures their engagement.
- Pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Pupils rarely miss school. They say they enjoy learning, feel safe and behave well.
- Staff ensure that pupils have a strong understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters and British values.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the school. They indicate that their children are safe, well looked after and are making good progress.
- Representatives from local authorities state that the school is very responsive. They are of the view that pupils are safe and making strong progress, both socially and academically.
- Pupils have increasing opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial skills, as evident in their start-up café and carwash businesses.
- The school is expanding its provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and those in the sixth form, to include work-based learning, college placements and apprenticeship opportunities. This is an area in need of further development.

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 strengthening links with colleges, and other providers and widening pupils' academic and vocational pathways.
- Improve pupils' personal development by enhancing their resilience to learn from their mistakes and tackle more challenging work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new principal and senior leaders are highly ambitious. In a short time, they have galvanised the support of staff and implemented comprehensive plans, aiming to further improve the quality of teaching and extend the range of learning for pupils. Leaders are brimming with ideas. New approaches to therapy, including owl and canine therapy and programmes of learning closely tailored to pupils' interests, have generated a sense of excitement amongst staff and renewed pupils' interest and ability to participate in learning.
- High Peak School is a place where all staff work together to help pupils overcome barriers to learning, whether due to pupils' previous traumatic experience, or their complex learning difficulties. The proprietor knows exactly what the school is trying to achieve and fully supports leaders in their ambitions. Leaders and the proprietor ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers who spoke with the inspector, as well as those who completed the inspection survey, expressed their approval of the current direction the school is taking. Staff stated that: 'there have been big improvements, learning is more structured and there is now a "yes can-do culture" '. Teachers are highly appreciative of the training and development they receive, which help them to keep abreast of developments in their respective specialist areas.
- Leaders set high standards. This is evident in the targets set for staff as part of their performance management, all of which are linked to improving academic outcomes and supporting pupils to engage in learning. Senior leaders regularly monitor teachers' practice. They check the quality of work in pupils' books and talk with pupils about their studies. Where teachers need support to improve their practice, training and mentoring is available from experienced practitioners.
- Pupils benefit from an exciting and ever-expanding curriculum. Whenever possible, leaders respond instantly to pupils' interests. This is evident in pupils' learning plans, which mirror the interests and targets identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils' reading, writing, communication and calculation skills are promoted well across the curriculum.
- Leaders' work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural appreciation is good. Pupils learn about the major world faiths and important events in different religious and cultural calendars, such as Diwali, Ramadan, Hanukah, Christingle and Chinese New Year. Pupils are aware of the culturally diverse nature of British society. They have visited various museums, including the International Slavery Gallery in Liverpool and local places of interest. Pupils like drama. They go to the theatre, enjoy pantomime and regularly utilize the school's dance and music studios, where they can engage in contemporary dance and play various string, percussion and keyboard instruments.
- Leaders ensure that pupils understand the importance of adhering to British values. Pupils have a deep sense of fairness and empathy with those less fortunate than themselves. The democratically elected pupil council meets regularly. Meeting minutes reveal lively

discussions and many examples of decision making. Pupils raise money for various good causes, including children's and cancer research charities.

- Parents and carers speak highly of the school and of the progress their children make. Parents are particularly complimentary about the school's work to develop their children's ability to overcome learning difficulties. Parents' testimonies, and the many case studies available, provide evidence of pupils often exceeding teachers' and parents' expectations.
- Representatives from local authorities say that placements at the school are successful. Those who spoke with the inspector indicated that communication is good, stating that leaders are responsive and well organised. Representatives receive regular reports on pupils' attendance, progress and behaviour. They are satisfied that all such areas are good.
- Many opportunities are available for staff to learn from best practice within the Kedleston group of schools. Expertise in areas including safeguarding, working with vulnerable children, use of therapies and good behaviour management is regularly shared in meetings and training sessions. This helps to ensure that staff remain at the forefront of developments within their sector and further afield.
- The principal is eager to expand provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and those in the sixth form, to include work-based learning, college placements, apprenticeship and other vocational pathways. While plans are well underway, there is more work to be done before the school can offer a comprehensive range of qualifications and opportunities in these areas.

Governance

- The proprietor and governors have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the school. They know exactly what the school needs to do to improve further. The principal provides the proprietor with detailed reports, which ensure that he is fully aware of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the school's work with commissioning authorities and other partners.
- Termly governing body meetings are held in the school. Meeting teachers and other staff and talking with pupils about their learning are always on the agenda. This gives the proprietor first-hand information about how well the school is performing.
- Governors work closely with senior leaders to identify the school's strategic priorities. They give support and advice on matters such as finance, the curriculum, staff recruitment and health and safety.
- The proprietor oversees regular audits in areas such as safeguarding, personnel, policy development and educational standards. He enlists the services of an independent school improvement adviser who contributes to the principal's performance review. In addition, the executive principal for Kedleston schools in the region works closely with the leaders, offering training and advice linked to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The principal is the main designated safeguarding lead. She is at the forefront of developments in children's welfare and safety. Other designated leaders have had specialist training to ensure their effectiveness. All staff are familiar with the government's latest guidance on keeping children safe in education.
- Additional training, such as 'Prevent' duty training and training on managing allegations and on recognising child exploitation, has been completed by staff.
- Well-established procedures are in place to record any concerns raised by staff. All staff know how to spot signs of neglect and/or abuse. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to ensure that they are safe to work with children. Risk assessments are in place to make sure that pupils are safe when at school and when out on educational visits.
- The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and current. It is available on the school's website and to parents on request. There is a positive culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to keep pupils safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching across the school, including in the nurture group, ensures that pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and art.
- All teaching takes place in small groups. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly work with pupils on a one-to-one basis. Additional support is available through a range of therapies, including occupational therapy. Mentoring, care and support are at hand when barriers to learning make it difficult for pupils to engage in classroom activities.
- Teachers devise tailored learning programmes, in which pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are regularly assessed. Typically, such programmes are directly linked to pupils' targets, as set in their EHC plans. Teachers share targets with teaching assistants, mentors, care workers and pupils. Workbooks, observations of teaching and discussions with pupils indicate that pupils regularly meet and sometimes exceed, their targets.
- The nurture group for pupils aged seven to 11 has only been in operation for three weeks. However, planning information, workbooks and discussions with the nurture group leader indicate that pupils have got off to an excellent start. Pupils learn in well-resourced rooms, which include a kitchen, and role play and computer areas. Assessments show that pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills are below those typically expected for their age on entry to the school.
- The nurture base is well resourced. Pupils engage in role-play activities, read with their peers and develop their measuring skills and recognition of different geometric shapes. Tactile timetables, three-dimensional letters and textured toys help pupils to develop the fine motor skills they need to write legibly. A high priority is placed on reading and phonics, both of which take place during breakfast. Pupils regularly access music and physical education. They enjoy exploring the school's 80-acre site, 'bush' activities and

boot camp, where they learn the social skills they need to interact with their peers and adults.

- Science teaching is strong, providing opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge of scientific theory and engage in practical investigative skills. Staff develop well pupils' understanding of scientific language. This was the case in a class where pupils carried out an experiment to see if 'brain chocolate' improved their calculation skills. Pupils confidently discussed their hypothesis and considered different variables that could influence their findings.
- Teachers ensure that pupils acquire good calculation skills, which they use when shopping, planning events and collecting money for charities. Good mathematics teaching is developing pupils' fluency in using various operations. This was evident in a lower-school class, where pupils were refining their division skills. All were willing to share their ideas. The most confident demonstrated the 'bus stop' method, which they used correctly to calculate various sums.
- Some pupils are developing into confident readers, and the most able regularly read challenging book series, including those by writers such as Suzanne Collins and J. K. Rowling. Teachers have good subject knowledge and support pupils well in acquiring secure grammar, spelling and punctuation skills. This was evident in an upper-school class, where pupils were asked to punctuate two paragraphs correctly. This they did accurately. Pupils were further challenged to make the paragraph more interesting by adding their recently learned 'spellings of the week'.
- Food technology teaching is good, focusing on developing pupils' household-management skills and understanding of the importance of kitchen safety. This was evident when pupils prepared pasta. Pupils made sure their hands and utensils were clean, before carefully placing the pasta in hot water.
- Teachers adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy, offering useful advice to pupils on how to improve their work. As a result, pupils are developing their understanding of what they need to do to improve their work in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history and physical education.
- Teaching is rapidly improving. However, it is not yet outstanding. Although pupils' progress is strong, strategies to ensure that they attain highly are in their early stages of development. For example, there is more work to do to develop pupils' confidence to tackle more demanding work in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils value their regular therapy sessions. Talking and play therapies and a blend of different approaches, including owl and occupational therapies, provide pupils with coping strategies, which they put into effect when they find concentrating and behaving well in class difficult.

- Pupils are eager to demonstrate that they can be responsible and reflective citizens. This is evident in the care and support older pupils give to nurture group pupils, helping them with their mathematics and written work. In addition, pupils enjoy supporting the physical education (PE) teacher, in helping younger pupils gain their confidence in the swimming pool.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly confident and self-assured. For example, in the school café, pupils develop good customer relations and line-management skills and hone their budget-balancing abilities. Pupils participate in other activities, such as managing small businesses, enhance their entrepreneurial skills and powers of persuasion when marketing their services to staff and visitors.
- 'Canine interventions' with the therapy dog are highly effective in supporting pupils in developing social skills, such as turn taking, cooperating with their peers, listening to others and following instructions.
- Pupils develop their negotiation skills as school council members. They discuss lunch menus and maintenance issues with staff and give their views on the purchase of PE equipment. Recently, pupils voted for a modified school uniform, to include the replacement of cardigans with sweatshirts, and made a request, which was accepted, for greater freedom of movement and fewer locked doors around the school.
- Developing pupils' employability skills has recently become a central part of the curriculum for pupils in key stages 4 and 5. Pupils develop a range of vocational skills, which are accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).
- Pupils learn about animal husbandry and assist with feeding and looking after animals on the local farm. In the school, they engage in construction activities, including carpentry, bricklaying and bicycle maintenance. The availability of external vocational courses and accreditation for pupils in key stages 4 and 5 is proving very popular. However, this aspect of the school's work is still in its early stages of development.
- Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. The work done by staff to develop pupils' resilience and ability to learn from their mistakes is usually very effective. However, some pupils are risk averse and find it difficult to understand that making mistakes is an important part of learning. As a result, some do not attempt challenging work. Staff are constantly developing strategies to support pupils in this area.
- Pupils benefit from independent careers advice to support their readiness for the next stage of their journey after leaving school. They are signposted to an increasing range of training, employment and further education courses.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school, and are well mannered and eager to help others. This was evident during the inspection, when they quickly alerted staff to visitors who were stranded in their cars due to icy road conditions and heavy snowfall.
- Pupils are proud of their school and eager to welcome visitors. They take care of their excellent facilities, including the swimming pool, dance and music studios, badminton

courts, fitness studio and the gym, and move around the school sensibly and with due consideration for others.

- Pupils are of the view that behaviour is good most of the time. Pupils acknowledge that they can 'sometimes have a wobble', but indicate that staff are well trained to help them deal with their emotions, ensuring that such lapses are quickly resolved. Pupils indicate that the school is much calmer than previously. This they link to recent changes, such as daily assemblies, 'pupil of the day' awards and award points, which they can cash in and put towards school visits.
- All staff are familiar with pupils' risk assessment and behaviour management plans. They take a consistent approach to managing challenging behaviour and helping pupils to appreciate the consequences of their actions.
- Throughout the course of the inspection, pupils' behaviour in class was good. Teachers are effective in helping pupils to develop coping strategies and encouraging them to maintain focus and engage in activities for sustained periods.
- Pupils attend the school regularly because they know the importance of good attendance. Those who spoke with the inspector said they enjoy coming to the school to catch up with their friends and because they fear missing out. School records show that attendance improves as pupils settle into school life. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Where there are concerns, immediate action is taken.
- Parents and representatives from local authorities are of the view that pupils' behaviour is good. Inspection evidence, including school records such as behaviour logs, indicates that behaviour is typically good over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils make good progress in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, food technology and art. Evidence of this is found in pupils' workbooks, continuous assessments carried out by teachers and pupils' performance in national examinations.
- Many pupils start school with significant gaps in their learning, having experienced trauma, long periods out of education and problems functioning in mainstream schools. Soon after arriving at the school, teachers carry out baseline assessments. Assessment data gives the school useful information on pupils' reading, writing, speaking, listening and calculation skills, and provides an accurate starting point from which teachers can measure pupils' progress.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2018, pupils were successful in acquiring GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science and photography. Current pupils are making good progress in these subjects. All pupils are prepared well to acquire functional skills in reading, writing and mathematics, for which they are accredited through various awarding bodies, including ASDAN. Pupils are also successful in gaining qualifications in information and communication technology and food technology. They are awarded certificates for the employability skills they acquire.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in photography, as evident in their GCSE and AS level portfolios, which show pupils' exceptional skills in manipulating photograph editing software. Pupils are highly skilled in producing still life and landscape works, as well as

renditions in the style of photographers such as Edward Weston, Damon Clarke and Anna Atkins.

- Pupils like to read and make strong progress in this area from their different starting points. The most able pupils enjoy reading challenging texts, written by well-known authors. Pupils in the nurture group have access to a wide range of books in different genres. The school is currently implementing a systematic programme of teaching phonics in order to improve pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills.
- Assessment information and workbooks indicate that pupils are at different stages in the development of their fluency and depth of understanding in mathematics. For example, in relation to using and applying mathematics, understanding algebra and identifying geometric shapes, some pupils are at beginner level, others are developing these skills, while a few have mastered them. Most are making good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are improving, as is the presentation of their work. Pupils regularly practise their writing across the curriculum. They report their findings from scientific investigations succinctly and produce biographical work on the works of different artists. Pupils skilfully write for a range of purposes, producing correctly punctuated letters of application for employment, as well as succinct reviews of (fictitious) hotels and holiday destinations.
- Pupils regularly engage in practical activities in science. They use different instruments to carry out interesting investigations into pitch, loudness and timbre, into force using the Newton metre, and into combustion. All these activities stimulate pupils' curiosity and develop their understanding of the world around them.
- History workbooks provide evidence of good progress. The curriculum for this subject covers a wide range of themes, including life in Roman Britain and visits to places of interest such as Chester. Pupils learn about the British monarchy, comparing life in Victorian times to contemporary British culture. Pupils' natural history work, exploring the conservation of endangered species such as the cheetah and white rhinoceros, illustrates their good skills in acquiring facts and producing interesting, well-written, discursive texts.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's curriculum reflects the individual requirements of pupils who have EHC plans. Teachers are conversant with pupils' targets and make sure that effective support is available to ensure pupils' good progress.
- The basic skills and GCSE qualifications which older pupils acquire in English and mathematics help to ensure their readiness for further training, employment or education. Pupils' excellent progress in gaining entrepreneurial, management, animal care, construction, debating and interpersonal communication skills ensures that they are well placed to be successful after leaving the school. Senior leaders are continually developing initiatives to enhance the skills of the less resilient pupils and those averse to tackling challenging work.

School details

Unique reference number	141502
DfE registration number	895/6001
Inspection number	10067920

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	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Anne Price
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000
Telephone number	01663721731
Website	www.highpeakschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@highpeakschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 July 2016

Information about this school

- High Peak School is one of 10 schools that form the Kedleston group of schools, the first of which was opened by the proprietor in 2006. High Peak School opened in October 2015 and is located in Higher Disley, Stockport.
- The school aims to ensure that: 'Young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, autism spectrum disorder and other presentations can continue to develop skills and strategies that enable them to participate as independent, valued citizens, enjoying equal rights, opportunities and a good quality of life.'

- The school is registered to provide for up to 60 pupils, aged seven to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were very few sixth-form learners. Those currently in the school work alongside their peers in key stage 4. At the start of the calendar year 2019, the school took in its first cohort of primary school pupils, who are educated in the school's nurture group. Currently, the school provides for a total of 32 pupils, most of whom are boys.
- All pupils have SEND. Almost all have an EHC plan. Those who do not have such plans are in the process of acquiring them.
- The school is increasingly using alternative provision to facilitate apprenticeships and work-based learning for pupils. Currently, a few pupils attend Stoke-on-Trent and Stockport colleges.
- The school uses a range of therapies to meet pupils' specific learning and development needs.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several staffing changes, including the appointment of a new principal, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator (also the assistant headteacher), nurture group leader and occupational therapist.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector together with the deputy headteacher observed learning in a range of subjects, including English, science, food technology and mathematics.
- Pupils' work and assessment folders were scrutinised during observations and separately.
- Meetings were held with the principal and senior leaders, including the head of education, the assistant principal responsible for pastoral care, the assistant head of education and the director of quality and compliance.
- A telephone conversation was held with the proprietor and representatives from local authorities. There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to be considered. The inspector considered five text messages submitted during the inspection, as well as 22 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.
- Due to inclement weather at the time of the inspection and the difficulty in accessing the school, day pupils were absent.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils. 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.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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