

Peak Education

The Old School House, Watling Street, Gailey, Cannock, Staffordshire ST19 5PR

Inspection dates

28 February 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 3(a), 3(c), 3(d) and 3(e)

- The previous inspection found weaknesses in the teaching of academic subjects and pupils' progress over time. It was reported that teachers did not have adequate subject knowledge to enable pupils to make good progress and that they failed to expect the most able pupils to attempt harder work. The inspection also identified weaknesses in responding to pupils' needs during lessons. As a result, teachers failed to adapt tasks to the needs of individual pupils quickly enough. Teachers did not provide hard enough work for the most able pupils.
- Scrutiny of pupils' English books showed that they are now making good progress with both their reading and writing skills. For example, a year ago, they may only have been able to write in short simple sentences, but now can write well-reasoned arguments about the importance of work experience for young people. A year ago, they could only write simple answers to questions about their reading, but now their answers are much more fully considered. Scrutiny of work also showed that, in most of the books seen, their handwriting and spelling skills have improved.
- Sixth-form students are able to concentrate fully and develop arguments about, for example, the author's use of different types of sentences to create effects. This is because of the good questioning and prompting skills of the teacher.
- In mathematics, teachers are preparing key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils for the next stage of their education. Teachers make sure that each pupil is able to work at their own level, including the most able. Teachers spend time with individuals, use skilful questioning, prompts and demonstration of methods. As a result, pupils are able to gain confidence and succeed.
- In information and communication technology (ICT), sixth-form students work on challenging tasks that require them to use a range of evaluative skills, for example in comparing image file formats. The most able students respond to the challenges well. Students are deeply involved in the work and are confident to ask specific and relevant questions. Effective working relationships between adults and students ensure that pupils made good progress. A scrutiny of students' work shows that they made good

progress over time.

- Teachers know their pupils well. They regularly check for understanding through good questioning and discussion. This is possible because pupils have their lessons either individually or in small groups. The content of lessons is well matched to the needs of each pupil, because of the good subject knowledge of specialist subject teachers. Teachers typically spend time working with individual pupils. This enables staff to evaluate pupils' understanding accurately. Staff use these assessments to inform their lesson planning effectively, for example by moving pupils on to harder work or spending more time making sure that they have a secure understanding of the topic.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics, English, science and ICT lessons and are aware that they are making good progress. In discussions with the inspector, the majority of pupils said that they make better progress at Peak Education than in their previous schools. This is because they can work hard in the calm, quiet classrooms. They say that they are making good progress because the teachers have time for them and they have good support from their individual education practitioners.
- Experienced leaders of mathematics and English support the other teaching staff with planning. All teachers use an agreed lesson planning format consistently. The curriculum leaders ensure that they see the work of all pupils at least monthly, logging progress, planning challenge for most-able pupils and suggesting new teaching methods where pupils are finding the work difficult. As a result, they are able to have a significant impact on the standards and expectations of what the pupils can do.
- These standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b)

- Leaders have ensured that there is an appropriate safeguarding policy displayed on the school website that complies with statutory requirements. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school and staff are well trained to deal with any safeguarding issues. The building is secure. All visitors are appropriately vetted on arrival. All staff know how to safeguard pupils and who to go to if they have any concerns. Leaders make risk assessments of all aspects of school life and keep detailed documentation of issues. They work well with parents, carers and other agencies to safeguard the pupils in their care.
- These standards remain met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32 (1)(c)

- An appropriate safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website that complies with statutory requirements.
- This standard remains met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)

- The previous inspection found weaknesses in leadership, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. It also found that pupils' attendance was poor.
- Leaders work tirelessly and effectively to improve attendance and to ensure that pupils are safe. They work with other agencies to make plans that encourage those pupils who are poor attenders to attend more regularly. The vast majority of pupils have improved their attendance since they started at Peak Education.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have made sure that pupils are taught by well-qualified, skilled teachers of English, mathematics, science and ICT. The employment of experienced teaching staff has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching at the school.
- Leaders have employed a new head of school who is also an experienced subject teacher and manager. The new headteacher took up her post in November 2018. She has created a clear action plan for the school. As a result, she has been able to effect important changes very quickly that have had a positive impact on the quality of education.
- Significant improvements include, for example: training in lesson planning for teachers; a review of the marking and feedback policy, with training for staff; training for a mastery approach in mathematics lessons; and weekly, group-planning meetings. The headteacher has also introduced regular monitoring of lessons and scrutiny of work, along with opportunities for teachers to observe one another teaching. As a result, standards have improved markedly since the last inspection.
- Leaders employ an external, school-improvement consultant who visits the school monthly to support leaders and to identify strengths and areas for development. In addition to this, they work with outside agencies to quality assure, for example, safeguarding and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, they have the benefit of experienced education advisers to support them in their pursuit of excellence.
- The head of school is supported and challenged during regular weekly visits from the executive headteacher and the proprietor. They support her with all aspects of management of the school. As a result of their actions, teaching has improved and pupils make faster progress across the school.
- These standards are now met.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- Part 1, paragraph 3 – The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3(c))
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d))
 - demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. (Paragraph 3(e))
- Part 8, paragraph 34(1) – The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1)(a))
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1)(b))

School details

Unique reference number	137956
DfE registration number	860/6039
Inspection number	10094675

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Paul Ball
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Sharon Cliff
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,525
Telephone number	01902 790385
Website	www.peakeducation.co.uk
Email address	Sharon.cliff@peakpursuits.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	16–18 January 2018

Information about this school

- Peak Education is a small independent school situated in Gailey, close to Cannock in Staffordshire. It provides full-time and part-time education for boys and girls, aged 11 to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. Most have been excluded or were at high risk of being excluded from their previous school.

- The school is part of Peak Activity Services, a company which specialises in outdoor education and alternative provision for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- The new headteacher took up her post in November 2018.
- An individual proprietor owns the school. The head of school is responsible for the day-to-day running and organisation of the school, supported by two education managers. The executive headteacher divides his time between overseeing Peak Education and Peak Education Stoke, which is a separately registered independent school.
- There is no governing body. The proprietor uses an educational consultant for advice and guidance.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school's last standard inspection was 16 to 18 January 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged not to comply with at its previous inspection in January 2018.
- The school produced a statutory action plan in response to the previous inspection. It was rejected by the Department for Education.
- This was the first monitoring inspection following the full inspection in January 2018.
- The inspection was carried out without notice by one inspector over one day.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects and held discussions with teachers.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils from a range of year groups.
- The inspector held discussions with the head of school and the executive headteacher about teaching, safeguarding, attendance and leadership.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone to the external consultant for the school, the placement officer for Walsall local authority and the behaviour and attendance officer for Wolverhampton local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' books in English, mathematics and ICT. The inspector evaluated risk assessments, the safeguarding policy, the single central record and the attendance and admissions registers. She also looked at a variety of documents including education, health and care plans and lesson planning documents.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's new action plan and a report from the external consultant to the school. She also read documents from other agencies giving independent evaluations of the school's provision. She considered surveys of the opinions of seven parents and of 10 pupils.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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