

Aidenswood

48 Parson Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4ED

Inspection dates

18 to 20 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Senior leaders promote a positive attitude to success for all pupils. Adults share a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils feel safe, enjoy school and are proud of what they achieve.
- Staff go about their work with absolute determination, and with the highest expectation of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils make excellent progress. All pupils arrive with attainment well below what is expected for their age. The vast majority thrive at the school and gain places at colleges.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Staff enable pupils to re-engage with learning. Teachers are highly skilled at tailoring their teaching to pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils' progress is checked closely. Leaders adopt a holistic approach towards pupils' academic, personal and emotional development. The academic checking system has been recently adjusted to take account of new GCSE specifications.
- The school leaves nothing to chance when it comes to safeguarding. Work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. As a result, the school operates as a calm, harmonious community, where behaviour is excellent.
- The curriculum is designed to match precisely the needs and interests of pupils. It has an excellent focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills along with a wealth of other opportunities.
- The exemplary partnership between the care staff, therapist and education staff results in pupils who experience success and grow in self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Leadership and management of the highest quality means that the school has maintained outstanding provision. It has built successfully on the many strengths demonstrated at the previous inspection. The proprietor, head of education, deputy head of education and headteacher are highly effective in ensuring that the independent school standards are 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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement actions identified in the school development plan to refine the new assessment system.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders ensure that the care, support and education provided for pupils is of the highest quality.
- All the necessary policies and procedures required to meet the independent school standards are in place. They translate into exemplary practice.
- Staff training and development is frequent and ensures that all staff have regular opportunities to increase their skills. Leaders provide many opportunities for staff across the Hexagon group to share good practice with other professionals. For example, recent training has been provided on topics such as 'Science in the Classroom' and 'Mental Health in Schools'.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning because of their very effective monitoring system. The company has developed a fair performance management structure, which enables all staff to develop and progress.
- The school delivers a bespoke and personalised curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. The aim is always to challenge and inspire pupils and to raise their aspirations. Literacy and numeracy are essential elements in all subjects within the curriculum. During key stage 4, pupils take a range of external examinations. This includes subjects such as psychology, science and information technology.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of fundamental British values are fostered across the curriculum. These are evident in class discussions, practical activities and in teamwork. This is also seen in the development of pupils' appreciation of art, music, drama, dance, food and cultural differences. Pupils reflect on their learning and develop a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.
- The school uses additional funds for disadvantaged pupils imaginatively, in order to provide a range of support as it is required by individual pupils. For example, recently, funds have provided additional resources in science, fees for evening classes, paid for theatre tickets and for trips out of school.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have greatly improved the extent and quality of independent careers advice and guidance provided for all pupils. They have opportunities to do work experience. Pupils also visit colleges, attend careers fairs and have personal interviews with external careers advisers.
- Staff morale is high. There is a very strong sense of teamwork among leaders and teachers, so that all staff know that they are valued and listened to.

Governance

- The proprietor and directors of Hexagon Care services have established excellent, effective arrangements for the checking and review of the school's work.
- The head of education meets at least monthly with the headteacher. They review all aspects of the school's work in order to ensure that each pupil is receiving the best

education possible and experiencing success.

- The proprietor ensures that all staff and pupils work in an attractive, well-resourced, safe and comfortable environment.
- The school does not have a website. However, all policies are available for parents and carers to view in school, including the safeguarding and complaints policies. The safeguarding policy is tailored precisely to the requirements of the school, and it takes into account current government guidelines.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff understand that safeguarding is of paramount importance. The school works very closely with other agencies to make sure that staff are aware of any hazards that pupils might face.
- There is regular staff training so that all staff are fully up to date with the latest guidance and information.
- Safer recruitment procedures and the completion of the single central record meet requirements.
- Classroom systems are organised to ensure that pupils feel safe and protected throughout the day. Pupils understand the very explicit rules which exist for their safety.
- The proprietor and head of education ensure that the school is protected from any inappropriate use of the internet. There are effective measures in place to restrict access to the internet and social media.
- The therapist works closely with all colleagues to ensure that individual pupils are supported as effectively as possible. This enables staff to deal with any anxieties and problems which pupils might have.
- Risk assessments are in place for all kinds of activities and for individuals who need them. The building is safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Positive and respectful relationships underpin the successful learning in the school. Classroom routines are well established, accepted and understood by all pupils. High-quality teaching results in pupils who are motivated to learn and who enjoy their education.
- Teachers plan lessons to inspire and fire the imagination of their pupils. They capitalise on pupils' interests. For example, pupils were engrossed in a recent documentary about the damage to the environment caused by single use plastics. This has become a key focus this term, as pupils want to research and learn more.
- Teachers provide a good balance of activities so that pupils listen, discuss, debate, write and explain to deepen their understanding. Very high expectations are set for what pupils can achieve in all subject areas.
- Teachers have expert subject knowledge. They know how to pitch work at precisely the right level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. Teachers' use of questioning is

excellent.

- Teachers use the curriculum to motivate pupils and to make connections between different subjects and areas of learning. This deepens pupils' understanding.
- Staff employ many effective strategies to develop pupils' reading skills, for example by focusing closely on a short piece of text, and then analysing it line by line. This enables pupils to uncover deeper meaning. They increase their vocabulary and understand nuances and irony in different genres. Pupils learned much about French culture from a study of just one paragraph of Peter Mayle's book, 'A Year in Provence'.
- Teachers have developed spelling tests so that they have become much more useful and challenging, for example by requiring pupils to write a meaningful paragraph to include all the week's learned spellings.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics because of excellent teaching. They gain much greater confidence in their own ability as they develop mastery. Mathematics is often taught within different contexts. For example, pupils learned about the history and work of Pythagoras before solving problems using his theorem.
- Secure understanding of mathematics is helping pupils to improve their examination and test results in subjects such as psychology and science.
- Pupils especially enjoy their learning in psychology. They make strong progress in understanding the very subject-specific vocabulary required to answer GCSE questions.
- Assessment is detailed and thorough. The school is currently trialing a new progress tracking system to match the GCSE specifications more closely. This system is not yet fully embedded.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have nothing but praise for the care, support and education they receive at Aidenwood School. Pupils who have recently left school were equally positive in their appreciation of the school's work.
- Pupils learn how to be self-aware and manage their feelings and emotions so that they can take their place as responsible members of society.
- On a practical level, pupils learn how to budget and manage their finances, cook and do their own laundry.
- Pupils understand and appreciate the diversity of modern British society. They do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
- Pupils speak with real enthusiasm about their learning about ecology in science. They have become well informed about the hazards of plastic waste and the rapid diminishing of the earth's resources. Pupils are currently fundraising for charities that are working to protect the environment.
- Pupils enjoy the many after-school activities which enable them to follow particular interests, such as in sport. Some pupils contribute to the local community by working in a

community café. Pupils know that their voice is heard. They enjoy planning each week's activities.

- Therapy is an integral part of the school's curriculum. The school therapist works with pupils to help them to gain an understanding of past events and to plan for the future. Excellent, trusting relationships are built up over time, which enable pupils to concentrate, work hard and enjoy their education.
- Pupils feel valued and secure. All pupils were adamant in stating that there is no bullying of any kind in school, and that staff vigilance ensures that bullying does not happen.
- Pupils are confident that they know how to keep themselves safe in risky situations. They have a good understanding of the rules for safe use of the internet and social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour across the school is excellent because of the positive relationships which exist and the mutual respect between staff and pupils. The behaviour incident book has very few entries.
- Attendance is consistently above average because pupils enjoy school and are keen to gain qualifications for the future.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils achieve excellent outcomes. This is because of excellent teaching, high-quality care and a curriculum which is exceptionally well adapted to meet pupils' needs. Most pupils arrive with significant gaps in their knowledge and, often, with negative attitudes to learning. By the time they reach the end of key stage 4, all pupils achieve external qualifications which provide access to post-16 college courses.
- Overall comparisons with national data are not viable as the number of pupils is small. However, work in pupils' books shows that pupils make very good progress in both English and mathematics. Some pupils achieve grade 4+ passes in English and mathematics.
- In English, pupils study a variety of different genres. Pupils make excellent progress in grammar, spelling, punctuation, comprehension and in writing at length. Pupils' literary skills are enhanced by being encouraged to listen to 'talking' books. Leaders are gradually building up a library of books on CDs or MP3 players which pupils can enjoy at home. Pupils regularly use dictionaries to check their spelling and widen their vocabulary.
- Strong progress in mathematics enables pupils not only to achieve good passes at the end of key stage 4, but also to be more successful in science subjects and in psychology.
- The most able pupils gain sufficient passes to progress to A-level courses at local colleges. When there are pupils on roll with special educational needs and/or disabilities, records show that they are strongly supported so that they can access foundation level courses.
- The school tracks the destinations of pupils who have recently left the school. Records show that most of these pupils progress on to Level 2 courses at colleges or go on to

apprenticeships.

- Pupils make good progress in their emotional, social and communication skills while at the school. They know that they are valued members of the community, and they act responsibly. They are well prepared to become productive citizens.

School details

Unique reference number	125814
DfE registration number	895/6000
Inspection number	10092573

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 17
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Proprietor	Francis Ashcroft
Headteacher	Marion Goodwin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,940
Telephone number	01260 281 353
Website	www.hexagoncare.com
Email address	aidenswood.headteacher@hexagoncare.com
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Hexagon Care group.
- The school caters for small groups of boys who have very complex social, emotional and mental health needs, and who have struggled in previous educational placements.
- The school employs a team of therapists and works very closely with care staff, who are on-site.
- The school does not offer a post-16 curriculum. Pupils over the age of 16 continue to follow a key stage 4 curriculum because of earlier gaps in their education.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all pupils in different lessons, including English, mathematics, psychology and information technology. She scrutinised the work in pupils' books in these subjects as well as their work in science.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other members of staff, the head of education, the deputy head of education and the school therapist. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with the proprietor.
- The inspector met formally with a group of pupils. She also had informal conversations with all pupils.
- There were no responses to the staff questionnaire, but the inspector was able to meet and talk to different members of staff.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documents. These documents included safeguarding policies and procedures, risk assessments and health and safety systems, the school's review of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching and learning, records of attendance and behaviour and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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