

Weston Point College

Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4UN

Inspection dates

9–11 July 2019

Overall effectiveness

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 Insufficient evidence

- The headteacher, senior leaders and proprietors are dedicated to their work and committed to helping pupils to engage in learning and realise their potential.
- Proprietors work closely with leaders to ensure that stringent safeguarding procedures are adhered to and all independent school standards are met.
- Few staff are familiar with school improvement plans. Such plans lack the precision needed to help the school to move into its next phase of development.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and instructors (teaching assistants) know how to motivate pupils, with whom they have excellent relationships.
- Pupils benefit from an exciting curriculum, which is closely linked to their interests, aptitudes and ability.
- Pupils' information, communication (ICT) skills are somewhat limited, as are their writing skills.
- Senior leaders' work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and appreciation of British values is very effective.
- A wide range of work-based learning experiences in areas such as construction, joinery and motorcycle maintenance are available to pupils.
- Pupils attend school regularly. They enjoy learning and have strong bonds with staff. Pupils' behaviour is good, most are respectful. However, systems to monitor and analyse patterns of behaviour lack precision.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. All who left school at the end of Year 11 in 2018 went into education, employment or training.
- Procedure to assess pupils' progress in subjects such as English, mathematics and science are in place. However, too few staff are familiar with such procedures, which are not shared across the school.
- Parents, carers and representatives from local authorities are highly positive about the school. Typically, parents comment: 'The school is excellent' and 'my child has come on leaps and bounds.'
- Pastoral support is highly effective in helping pupils to manage their feelings and emotions.

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:
 - ensuring that school improvement plans are shared with staff and indicate precisely what the school needs to do to improve further
 - systematically monitoring pupils' behaviour
 - making sure that all senior leaders and teachers are familiar with assessment information on pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - enhancing pupils' information, communication and technology skills across the curriculum
 - further developing pupil's writing skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is highly committed and determined to help pupils reach their potential. Together with senior leaders and staff and actively involved proprietors, the headteacher has maintained good-quality teaching and learning and resolved most of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders and staff are very effective in engaging pupils with complex learning needs, many of whom have been out of school for extended periods. Weston Point College is highly regarded by both parents and placing authorities because of its ability to secure pupils' good attendance and maintain their interest in learning. In addition, the school ensures pupils' good progress. Due to its popularity and success in engaging pupils, the school has expanded since the previous inspection to include a third site called learning, education, achievement and progress (LEAP) 2, which caters for vulnerable pupils.
- Proprietors work closely with senior leaders to maintain and regularly update stringent safeguarding procedures, which are adhered to by all staff. Together with senior leaders and staff, proprietors ensure that all independent school standards are met.
- Some aspects of senior leaders' work lack the precision necessary to move the school forward on to the next stage of its development. For example, while details of pupils' performance in areas such as English, mathematics, history, art and science are available, this information is not readily shared beyond the senior leadership team, thus limiting teachers' planning and in some instances pupils' progress.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher checks teachers' practice. This includes scrutinising teachers' planning and assessing the quality of work in pupils' books. The headteacher and proprietors talk to pupils about their learning, capturing their views in order to tailor teaching and the curriculum to meet their specific needs. Feedback given to teachers is focused on helping them to constantly improve. All staff are set challenging improvement targets, which are linked to raising pupils' achievement and catering for their social and emotional needs.
- Staff, including those new to the school, are very positive about their work, which they acknowledge is both challenging and rewarding. Staff are appreciative of training, most of which is linked to safeguarding. Senior leaders help staff to pursue their individual interests in areas such as forest schools and encourage staff to follow their academic interests. Staff say that leaders pay attention to their welfare and are mindful of the duty of care responsibility accorded to them. All staff who completed the inspection survey indicated that the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- School improvement plans, including the self-evaluation, lack precision and do not state clearly enough what the school does well or what it needs to do to improve further. In addition, few staff outside the senior leadership team are familiar with the school's priorities. In addition, the school does not routinely collate information on pupils' behaviour. Details of individual pupil's behaviour and exclusions records are available, as are accounts of misdemeanours. However, overall trends in behaviour are rarely fully analysed.

- Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum which is tailored to their individual needs. Pupils' mathematical skills are promoted well across the curriculum and used in many different situations, including shopping, planning events and calculating budgets. Many pupils are reluctant to write. However, teachers explore ways to get pupils to put pen to paper. As a result, such reluctant writers make small steps in improving their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills.
- Senior leaders' and teachers' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate the basic principles of various religions and have visited different places of worship including a mosque, synagogue and cathedrals. Pupils have a good understanding of the culturally diverse nature of British society and enjoy participating in charitable activity. For example, pupils recently volunteered their services and helped to tidy pensioners' gardens. Pupils frequent charity shops, supporting their different causes, and visit residential care homes to help with care for the elderly.
- The school promotes British values effectively. Pupils observe Remembrance Day and have studied D-Day, the day of the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944, and St George's Day, as part of the history curriculum. Pupils understand fair play, democracy and the rule of law. They explore issues such as racism and homophobia and other forms of discrimination in lessons and have a general understanding of equalities legislation.
- Parents and carers and representatives from placing authorities are very positive about the school. Parents who spoke with the inspector and completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were of the view that their children are safe, happy and making good progress at school. Typically, parents commented, 'We have exceptional communication with the teachers. Our child enjoys attending school, is making good progress and has 100% attendance.'

Governance

- Proprietors are highly supportive of the school, which they know exceptionally well. Leaders, staff and pupils benefit from the many years of experience in social work and education, which proprietors bring to the school.
- Proprietors know the school well because they regularly meet with the headteacher and talk to staff and pupils about learning and related matters. Proprietors' regular presence in the school informs their view that all aspects of the school are good. Proprietors are especially proud of the school's success in extending the range of qualifications open to pupils and pupils' success in their work placements.
- The headteacher reports regularly to proprietors, who indicate that they trust the headteacher's judgments and are happy with the school's ethos. Proprietors have high expectations of the headteacher and set challenging targets in relation to pupils' progress, attendance and personal and social development.
- Proprietors approve resources for the school, including for additional staffing and building refurbishments. Most recently, they approved the acquisition of new premises, called LEAP 2, which has enabled senior leaders to increase the number of pupils on roll.
- Proprietors help with complex safeguarding cases, provide training in child welfare, and enhance staff awareness of new safeguarding guidance. Proprietors give advice and guidance to the school on issues pertaining to counselling and meeting pupils' mental

health needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Due to the vulnerable nature of pupils, senior leaders are very aware that safeguarding procedures must be stringently applied and consistently adhered to by all members of staff.
- The school's single central record is current, in order and contains all necessary information. All staff, except for a small number of new members, have had 'Prevent' duty training, which is part of the government's strategy to combat radicalisation and extremism. Designated safeguarding leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, are training to a high standard.
- Rigorous induction procedures are in place. Staff sign to indicate they have read the school's safeguarding policy and associated policies, including those relating to behaviour and internet safety. Records show that all staff have read the latest government guidance on keeping children safe in education.
- All appropriate checks are made on staff to ascertain their suitability to work with children. Risk assessments are regularly carried out to make sure that school premises are safe and secure. In addition, school trips and educational visits are risk assessed, helping to ensure pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use a range of different strategies to engage pupils in learning. Most pupils are initially reluctant to engage in classroom activities because of their complex learning difficulties and their negative experience of school.
- Most pupils in the main school, Weston Point College, are educated on a one-to-one basis. School records indicate that once pupils settle into school life, they engage in learning more readily and develop strong, trusting bonds with staff.
- Teaching in history is strong, this is evident in pupils' workbooks. Discussions with pupils reveal they have a well-developed understanding of economic and political history. For example, pupils' workbooks show that they have a deep understanding of the causes of the Cold War, from 1945–1972, and the effect it had on countries such as America, Great Britain and Russia.
- Staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' skills and ability to be responsible citizens. This was exemplified as pupils in LEAP 2 prepared the school car before setting off for Conway on a fact-finding mission. Diligently, pupils checked water and screen wash levels and studied the colour and viscosity of the oil on the car's dipstick, before declaring the vehicle safe for the road.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable when on work experience. This was evident when observing pupils on placement with a company specialising in the hire, repair and sale of bicycles. Pupils were highly focused, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the functions of different bicycles, including road, mountain and hybrid types. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of bicycle maintenance and regularly check brake

pads, tyres and steering for defects.

- Teachers make learning fun and know how to get the best out of pupils. This was evident in the main school as teachers focused on the structure and function of different parts of the body. Teachers were happy to fully participate, one having stickers on his body to mark body parts such as the head, spine, heart, kidneys and muscles. By the end of the session, pupils had learned a range of new words, including 'phalanges' (fingers) and 'clavicle' (collar bone), both of which they correctly located on a model of the body.
- Art teaching is highly effective. Art sessions are used to develop pupils' painting and drawing skills. In addition, they allow pupils to talk freely about their experiences, thoughts and feelings. This was evident during an observation, where pupils calmly shared their ideas while producing excellent pieces of art. Pupils' folders contain well-executed artwork in the style of Van Gogh and Picasso. Pupils are also knowledgeable about experimental artists such as Kandinsky, whose artwork pupils described as 'surreal and impressionistic'.
- Citizenship and the personal, social and health aspects of teaching are strong. Pupils enjoy debating and do so regularly on topical issues and moral dilemmas relating to issues including abortion and crime and punishment. Teachers and visitors help pupils to understand the dangers of joining gangs and the unlawful possession of prohibited weapons, including knives.
- A few pupils, including the most able in LEAP 1, have well-developed writing skills. However, the majority struggle to produce extended writing, with limited examples of factual, discursive and persuasive writing seen during the inspection. Pupils' writing is usually brief, enabling them to meet the criteria for different open and unit awards.
- Photography teaching is good. Pupils are keen to learn about technology. Those studying digital and analogue photography have a well-developed understanding of the main functions of cameras. Pupils are developing their appreciation of the purpose of shutter speeds and aperture controls on analogue and digital single lens reflex (SLR) cameras. However, pupils' technical skills in other areas, such as ICT, are somewhat limited. Pupils have few opportunities to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Meeting pupils' individual educational and personal development needs is central to the work of all staff in the school. All staff, including the headteacher, work tirelessly to understand pupils and support them so they fully engage in learning and realise their potential.
- Pupils benefit from informal therapeutic support, which is offered by most staff. At Weston Point, there is always a member of staff available to lend a listening ear. Staff are acutely aware of the complex lives that most pupils live. The excellent communication between school staff and parents and carers helps staff to anticipate pupils' behaviour and provide effective support. Pupils benefit from art therapy. In such sessions, pupils talk about their experiences and concerns while producing well-crafted artwork.
- Staff are careful to help pupils make informed choices. This they do highly effectively

through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum. Pupils know of the dangers of being involved with gangs. They learn about knife crime and child exploitation and are aware of 'county lines' activities (the process of recruiting children and young people from rural areas to sell drugs in cities across the country).

- The many work-based learning placements, including with local businesses, help pupils to develop a range of skills, including time management and teamwork, and enhance their appreciation of the importance of honesty and reliability. Such placements also help to ensure pupils' readiness for the next stage of their education and employment after leaving school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and confident to share any concerns with any member of staff. Pupils know who safeguarding leaders are because leaders' pictures and contact details are posted on notice boards around the school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet. They are acutely aware of grooming and matters relating to child exploitation. Through their studies, pupils learn about the potential dangers of social networking and contacting strangers. Pupils' access to the internet while in school is limited and closely monitored.
- Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and engage in regular exercise. They learn about nutrition and healthy relationships through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum, as well as the dangers associated with smoking, drinking alcohol and taking illegal drugs. Pupils engage in a wide range of sports, including football and enjoy boxing and judo.
- Pupils have regular access to careers advice, some of which is independent. Pupils learn about the skills and experience needed for different jobs, including in the military. Staff help pupils to write personal statements. Mock interviews are conducted, which help to hone pupils' interview techniques and strengthen the likelihood of their success in accessing education, training and employment. All such initiatives and activities equip pupils well with the social skills needed to be successful in the world of work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire indicated that behaviour is good most of the time. Pupils acknowledge that there are occasions when their peers have 'meltdowns'. However, the likelihood and severity of such events decreases over time.
- All parents who contacted the inspector and submitted text messages were highly positive about the improvements to their children's behaviour. Typically, parents indicated that their children had been bullied in previous schools due to their differences and their special educational needs. However, parents speak of their children's behaviour being transformed at Weston Point, indicating that, '...my child is very happy, he used to dread going to school. His behaviour has improved dramatically.'
- All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that they felt well supported in managing pupils' behaviour, which they said was good. Staff also said that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently and that professional development and training in dealing with poor behaviour is highly effective.
- The school records exclusions on a pupil-by-pupil basis and has never permanently

excluded a pupil. Inspection evidence, including discussions with staff, parents, pupils and stakeholders, indicates that pupils' behaviour is typically good. However, the information the school holds on pupils' behaviour is not collated or systematically analysed, which makes it difficult for leaders to evidence precisely the effective work the school does to improve pupils' behaviour.

- Attendance is good and for some outstanding. As soon as pupils start at the school, their attendance improves significantly. Pupils rarely miss a day at school because they enjoy learning and value the strong bonds they have with staff and their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, a far wider range of qualifications is available for pupils. In addition, the school has enhanced its register of work-based learning providers and offers all Year 11 pupils work experience with different companies in and around Halton.
- The school's own assessment information shows that pupils enter the school with weak skills in most areas of learning, including reading, writing, calculation and verbal communication. Most pupils have gaps in their learning, often having spent significant periods not in education.
- The strong bonds that pupils form with teachers and instructors and the interesting ways in which teachers engage pupils in learning, ensure that most pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English, science, mathematics, citizenship and art.
- Pupils make strong progress in science, as seen in their workbooks. At GCSE level pupils engage in various investigations and independent research activities related to issues such as the environment, conservation, evolution and heritage.
- Workbooks show that most pupils make good progress in acquiring the basic calculation skills needed for the next stage of their development after leaving school. However, except for a few high-attaining pupils, pupils' writing is somewhat limited, both in English and in other subjects.
- Some pupils are avid readers, with exceptionally well-developed reading skills. Such pupils make excellent progress in developing their reading skills and are familiar with the writing of authors specialised in areas such as science fiction and fantasy. Pupils also appreciate and are familiar with more tradition authors, such as Shakespeare, and have studied plays including 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'King Lear'.
- All pupils at Weston Point have EHC plans. The school's own records show that pupils routinely meet their personal targets. Most develop strong speaking, listening, reading and calculation skills. In addition, pupils make good progress in a wide range of other subjects, especially art and citizenship.
- In their desire to meet pupils' individual learning needs, senior leaders are constantly searching for new courses, qualifications and work-based learning opportunities. For example, pupils gain 'unit awards' and 'open awards' in areas such as, badminton, golf, boxing, gardening, 'bush craft', and painting and decorating.
- Pupils gain awards through the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). For example, in 2018 pupils made good progress and were successful in acquiring BTEC awards in construction. The school is keen to develop pupils' skills for life, as such most

pupils gain certificates in recognition of their knowledge and skills in electric circuitry, first aid, cookery, using public transport, using kitchen appliances and dining etiquette.

- Pupils' art books, papier mâché masks, volcanos and model rockets indicate strong progress. Pupils produce good and outstanding pieces of artwork which demonstrate their skills in using various shading techniques, as seen in their skilfully produced artwork in the style of Georges Seurat.
- Pupils enjoy work experience, which is available to all in Years 9, 10 and 11. Leaders have worked closely with pupils, their parents and carers and local employers and colleges to develop an ever-increasing suite of interesting placements including: dog grooming, motorcycle maintenance, joinery, construction and motor vehicle engineering.
- By the end of Year 11, most pupils gain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at both levels 1 and 2. At the end of Year 11 in 2018, some pupils gained a range of GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science, history, art, citizenship and religious studies (RS). These qualifications helped to ensure that pupils were well prepared for the next stage of their learning. School records indicate at all Year 11 pupils went into either further education, employment or training after leaving school in 2018.

School details

Unique reference number	135749
DfE registration number	876/6013
Inspection number	10103999

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	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bridge 4 Learning
Chair	Christopher Brannan
Headteacher	Timothy Whittle
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,487 to 48,599
Telephone number	01928 574667
Website	www.bridge4learning.org
Email address	irene@bridge4learning.org
Date of previous inspection	9–11 May 2017

Information about this school

- Weston Point College is an independent special school registered to provide education for pupils and students aged 11 to 18 years, who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils over the age of 16 attending the school.
- The school is owned by Bridge 4 Learning, which aims to: 'Provide high-quality education placements for students with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties whose needs cannot be met within traditional local authority provision. All students can expect to be treated with the utmost respect and this is extended to their families and carers.'

- In January 2018 a material change inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine the suitability of the school's proposed new premises and consider the school's request to increase its maximum number of pupils on roll from 30 to 36. The material change was granted.
- The school is currently located at three sites in Runcorn. The main site is Weston Point College, which caters for boys with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural problems. The second site, known as the LEAP 1 centre, currently caters for a small number of vulnerable girls. The new centre, LEAP 2, currently caters for vulnerable boys with emotional and mental health difficulties and specific learning difficulties such as autism.
- There are currently 17 pupils on roll, all of whom are of White British heritage. All students have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by different local authorities in the North West region, often having missed long periods of education. Each is provided with a personalised curriculum.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff appointments, including two teachers and 'instructors', who usually teach and assist class teachers.
- At the time of the inspection a number of staff, including teachers and a senior leader, were not in school.
- The school works with a number of external providers for work experience and placement purposes. During the inspection pupils were on work placements at Tracs UK Ltd, bicycle maintenance based in Delamere Forest, Cornerstones Vocational Training Ltd, based in Warrington, and STAR–SLA motorcycle maintenance and repair, based in Liverpool.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a range of subjects, including English, history, art and photography. Pupils' work and assessment folders were scrutinised during observations and separately.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspector met with staff and held informal discussions with pupils throughout the course of the inspection. The inspector met with the school's three proprietors.
- The inspector took account of 15 staff and five pupil responses to questionnaires completed during the inspection. There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to be considered. The inspector sampled parents' views through telephone discussions, informal meetings and text messages submitted during the inspection.
- The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included pupils' EHC plans, checks on the quality of teaching and teachers' performance, and safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's development plans and reviews of its own performance.
- The inspector checked various records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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