

Inspection of Hartwell School

Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham TS18 3TN

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this school. For many, Hartwell School is the first positive experience they have had of education. One pupil said, 'I really look forward to coming to school in the morning and for me, that's a first.' Parents and carers are grateful for the support they receive and how, in turn, this has improved family life. One parent said, 'I feel much less on edge now I know my daughter is enjoying school.'

Pupils behave well. They are keen to do their best in lessons and please their teachers. They respond well to praise. They enjoy collecting their 'Hartwell Hearts' for making positive choices in their behaviour and for doing good work. Pupils say bullying is rare and if anything worries them, they feel comfortable talking to an adult in school.

Pupils achieve well. This is because of pupils' enjoyment of their work and teachers' dedication and commitment. Pupils who struggle with basic reading or mathematics receive support. This makes them improve, gain in confidence and enjoy their new-found success. Leaders are working to improve the curriculum further so that pupils' achievement improves further.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher has put reading as top priority. Phonics is taught daily to young children and in a logical order. Pupils are not moved on until they have mastered the sounds they should have learned. Any who fall behind are helped to catch up. The books that pupils read are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge. This ensures that they practise their reading effectively. However, pupils cannot take books home. This means that they are not able to practise their reading at weekends or during holidays. Pupils in primary are read stories daily. This helps them develop a love for reading. Primary phase staff are well trained in phonics, but there are gaps in secondary phase teachers' training. This means that phonics and reading is more developed in the primary than in the secondary phase.

Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Young pupils learn their times tables. They know how to solve problems using their mathematics skills. All pupils are regularly assessed to make sure the work they are given is neither too difficult nor too easy. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics. However, curriculum plans are not as precise as they might be. This makes it difficult for teachers, who are not mathematics specialists, to support pupils and measure their small steps of progress.

The play-based curriculum for the youngest children helps them to read, write and do simple mathematics. However, because there is no outdoor area, there are limits on the curriculum. For example, pupils are not able to practise their mathematics, reading and writing outdoors.

Pupils' artwork is impressive. Pupils say they love art. They are proud to show their

print making, sculptures and impressive drawings.

Personal, social and health education is of a high quality in the school. Pupils are helped to make positive life choices, to avoid behaviour that might put them at risk; rather, choices and behaviour that lead to healthy, active lifestyles. Pupils are taught to take responsibility for their actions and to support and listen to others who might be experiencing problems.

Pupils behave well. Most pupils are polite and considerate to each other and to adults. Some pupils say that at their previous school, their behaviour was 'a nightmare', but they have settled well now that their needs are being met.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. The training staff receive is particularly effective. They receive expert advice from the specialist staff who are on site.

The headteacher, governors and the senior team know the school well. They know what is strong and what needs further development. Staff morale is high. The curriculum is improving and adapting well as the school increases in size.

The site is safe and secure. All relevant policies are in place to ensure that health and safety are of the highest priority in the school. Leaders ensure that there are regular fire drills and that all fire equipment is in good working order.

Leaders have ensured that important information and policies are either available on the school's website or in the school. This ensures that parents have all the information they need, including how to make a complaint, should the need arise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a good culture of safeguarding in the school. Teachers, lunchtime staff and office staff all know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Records are detailed. Any concerns are followed up straight away by consulting with parents or outside agencies if necessary.

Specialist staff are on hand to support pupils to manage their feelings and emotions. Staff understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupil absences are followed up immediately so that no pupils are put at risk. Pupils know how to keep safe, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils improve their reading but sometimes forget the phonics they have learned. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the opportunity to take books home to practise their reading, particularly during weekends and school holidays. Many pupils arrive at the school with poor reading skills. Staff who teach primary-aged pupils have good training to help pupils read and spell. Leaders should now ensure that staff who teach secondary-aged pupils have similar training.
- Mathematics is taught well. However, curriculum plans lack clarity. This makes it difficult for non-specialist teachers to support pupils and measure the small steps in progress that pupils with SEND can make. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are precise about what mathematical knowledge and concepts are taught, the logical order in which they are taught and how small steps in progress are measured.
- The youngest pupils in the school appropriately follow an early years curriculum. The lack of an outdoor learning space means that pupils' learning is not as effective as it might be. Leaders should ensure that outdoor learning supplements what is currently available indoors. This includes opportunities to read, write and use mathematics in play-based situations outdoors.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	146733
DfE registration number	808/6005
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10110732
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Limited
Chair	Howard Tennant
Headteacher	Peter Ewart
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,480 to £79,475
Telephone number	01539 566081
Website	https://witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	peter.ewart@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Hartwell School meets the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues and for those with autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- At the time of the inspection, the youngest pupil was six and the eldest 14.
- The school does not make use of alternative education providers.
- The school is part of the Witherslack Group.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- We held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. We spoke to one member of the governing body, a proprietor and several groups of pupils. We also met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector spoke to a group of parents.
- We spoke to lunchtime supervisors, office staff, teachers and teaching assistants about the actions that they take to keep pupils safe.
- We agreed with the headteacher to look in detail at mathematics, reading, art and personal, social, health and economic education. We talked to leaders about their curriculum plans. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and discussed this with them. We also talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects.
- We looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding documents and information on the school's website. The lead inspector toured the site together with the headteacher to check the school's compliance with part 5 of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Suzette Garland-Grimes	Ofsted Inspector

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