

# Inspection of Fell House School

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Inspection dates: 11–13 February 2020

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Fell House School cares for and nurtures its pupils well. It is a place where pupils feel safe and loved. The school helps pupils to set aside the traumatic life experiences they have previously undergone and start afresh. Pupils overcome their individual barriers to learning. They achieve well personally and academically.

The school's motto, 'Choose kindness and laugh often', hangs on the dining room wall. It describes the school well. Pupils feel at ease with adults and each other. A renewed sense of belonging gives pupils the confidence to enjoy school once again. We saw happy pupils who were engaging in lessons during our time at the school.

Pupils are keen to learn, some for the first time in their lives. This is because teachers know pupils well and they make sure that lessons are interesting. Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their very best and they do.

Pupils typically behave well. The pupils that we spoke with told us how their behaviour has improved. Bullying is very rare. Adults quickly and expertly handle any situations that do arise.

Pupils regularly make trips and visits to the local area and further afield. They are keen, active members of the local community. For example, they litter pick on the beach and take part in the annual lantern procession.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious and that it brings out the best in pupils. They have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and the order in which to teach topics and concepts. The carefully planned curriculum helps pupils to experience success both personally and academically.

Pupils have had very negative personal experiences in the past. Some pupils have had huge gaps in their education before joining this school. Leaders are well aware of this. They have created a curriculum to address these gaps and repair pupils' faith in learning. Consequently, the curriculum prepares pupils well for their futures.

Teachers know their pupils well. They are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They plan interesting activities for pupils. Activities include chances for pupils to acquire knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, for example through practical activities.

Teachers help pupils to see connections in their learning. They enable pupils to understand how different topics and concepts fit together. Pupils gain confidence across the curriculum. In mathematics, for example, new work builds logically over time. However, across other subjects, some teachers do not always offer enough

opportunities for pupils to revisit their prior learning and consolidate new learning. Very occasionally, some teachers do not explain things clearly enough for pupils.

Pupils often start Fell House School with poor reading skills. Previously, they have had very little interest in books. Their views of reading and books are quickly transformed. This is because the importance of reading is a prominent feature of school life. Adults inspire a love of reading. Good-quality books are everywhere. Pupils enjoy regularly hearing an adult share a story with them. Key stage 2 pupils are proud to talk about the books they read. Teachers are quick to pick up any pupils that struggle to read. These pupils have daily activities to help them learn their letters and sounds in a systematic way. This helps pupils to catch up quickly. Once pupils are able to read, teachers talk to them about what they are reading. However, they do not routinely build up pupils' deeper understanding of the books that they read.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many have social, emotional and mental health needs. Teachers meet the range of pupils' needs successfully. Pupils said they were now happier, felt good about themselves and were proud about being able to read, write stories and solve mathematical problems.

The trust between pupils and adults helps to ensure that pupils' behaviour is usually good. When pupils struggle with their behaviour, adults expertly calm a situation down. Pupils soon settle and return to their learning. Pupils are keen to come to school. Attendance is well above the national average.

Pupils learn about people's differences. For example, in personal, social and health education (PSHE) pupils learn about the importance of respect for and tolerance of different cultures and religions.

Pupils visit places such as museums and sports events. They take part in performances alongside other local schools. This contributes to developing pupils' positive mental health. 'I feel good about myself now' and 'I get to do what other children do and I cope', were typical sentiments from pupils.

Pupils also benefit from an extensive outdoor curriculum. They learn to build dens, climb trees and cook food on an open fire. Through these activities and more, pupils learn to work as a team, solve problems and build their confidence and self-esteem.

The building is well maintained, clean and well resourced. There is outdoor space for pupils to get fresh air at breaktimes. Leaders are aware that there is limited outdoor space for physical education (PE). However, leaders ensure that pupils access PE twice a week away from the school building.

Leaders ensure that they follow all health and safety requirements, including fire regulations and risk assessments. Leaders keep carers well informed about the work of the school. Policies are available to carers and others. The complaints policy is

fully compliant. The school has a suitable plan that describes how pupils with a disability can fully take part in the school's curriculum.

Appletree Treatment Centre acts as the proprietor. The principal and members of the advisory panel ensure that all of the independent school standards are met. School leaders and members are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an extremely caring and nurturing ethos in the school. Staff are effective in keeping pupils safe. The safeguarding and protection of pupils are important to them. They make sure that all their policies and procedures are in place and that everyone knows them.

Leaders work well with other agencies and therapists to support pupils. Adults in school also make sure that pupils are well looked after. They act quickly if they have concerns.

Pupils learn how to stay safe and behave responsibly in different situations, particularly when using the internet.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Pupils achieve well. However, some opportunities are missed to help pupils to revisit previous learning and to consolidate new learning. Most pupils already join the school with gaps in their learning. Many struggle to remember things over time. Leaders and teachers should review their strategies for helping pupils to recall and remember the most important knowledge in different subjects.
- Occasionally, teachers' explanations of curriculum concepts and activities lack clarity. Very occasionally, pupils can be overloaded with information or confused about what they should be doing. Teachers need to be clear about exactly what they are teaching in a lesson or activity, and what they require pupils to do.
- Pupils enjoy reading, but they are not taught systematically how to increase their comprehension of what they read. As a result, pupils lack a deeper understanding of the books that they read. Leaders need to explore ways to support pupils to develop their reading comprehension skills.

## **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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133346
<b>DfE registration number</b>	909/6051
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	10112068
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	8
<b>Proprietor</b>	Appletree Treatment Centre Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Clair Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob Davies
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£161,291 (including therapy and boarding)
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 535 926
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.appletreetreatmentcentre.co.uk">www.appletreetreatmentcentre.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:clair.davies@appletreetc.co.uk">clair.davies@appletreetc.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7–9 March 2017

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with learning difficulties and emotional, social and mental health issues.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## 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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about their work, school life and the books that they like to read. We spoke with the headteacher, the senior teacher and members of staff. In addition, we held discussions with staff which focused on safeguarding.
- We spoke with a member of the advisory panel and the principal who acts as chair and representative of the proprietorship.
- We reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to the independent school standards, the curriculum, school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- We spoke with parents and carers and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- We also considered six responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We looked in detail at reading, mathematics, PSHE and outdoor education. For each of these subjects, we held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils. We also considered other subjects across the curriculum.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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