

Inspection of Cheshire Alternative Provision School

Units 1 & 2, Ground Floor, Lower Park Street Mill, Lower Park Street CW12 1EH

Inspection dates: 29 June–1 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe in this small school. Pupils are helped to overcome past difficulties due to the effective care and support they receive from staff. Pupils are expected to work hard and build positive attitudes to learning. Pupils, typically, rise to this challenge, learn well, and rejoin mainstream schools.

Pupils usually stay at the school for about 12 weeks, although some stay longer. While at the school, pupils are provided with a wide choice of subjects to learn. Pupils know that leaders want them to achieve as highly as they can. However, in some subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they could. This is because leaders have not structured the curriculum clearly enough.

Pupils increase their attendance over time because leaders help them in different ways. Pupils' behaviour improves when they come to this school. This is because leaders manage behaviour effectively. Pupils are confident about how well leaders will deal with bullying if it happens.

Pupils take part in activities outside the classroom. However, leaders have had to hold off on some of these events during the pandemic. Outdoor walks and hill-climbs help pupils to keep fit and understand the benefits of regular exercise. Pupils enjoy being members of the school council, which gives them experience and understanding of decision-making and democracy.

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

The curriculum contains all the subjects that pupils need to learn. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. For example, leaders encourage some pupils to sit GCSE examinations, where appropriate. Pupils do well in these examinations, considering their starting points when they first come into the school.

For some subjects, for example English, leaders plan the content in a suitable order and relate it to the national curriculum. However, pupils do not build their knowledge as securely as they could. This is because, in some areas of the curriculum, teachers do not consistently stick to the agreed curriculum order when they plan their lessons.

In other subjects, leaders have not organised the curriculum clearly enough. Pupils do not develop their knowledge strongly because they do not learn the content in the right order. Furthermore, staff do not use assessment effectively enough. This means that they do not identify where pupils' gaps in learning exist.

Leaders have effective systems in place to assess pupils' needs and abilities when they start at the school. Staff use this information to work out where pupils' gaps in knowledge are, particularly in English and mathematics. They focus on getting pupils' attitudes to learning right first. However, in some other subjects, staff are less clear about what knowledge is missing.

Leaders have a well-organised programme to support pupils who need help with reading. This is effective in increasing reading confidence and fluency, and according to pupils' different needs and abilities. However, there is less support for reading in subjects other than English.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils' behaviour improves as they spend more time at the school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, but the pandemic has had a negative effect recently.

Year 11 pupils have now left the school. This follows the actions of leaders at the various 'home schools' who placed pupils at Cheshire Alternative Provision School.

Staff adapt learning to support pupils, who are all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, sometimes they do not do this as effectively as they could. This is because there are times when teachers do not match pupils' work closely enough to their needs.

Pupils typically take part in a suitable range of activities outside the classroom. These include opportunities to go cycling or develop musical talents. Pupils get helpful advice about careers. Through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, staff teach pupils about a wide range of topics. For example, they help pupils to understand the importance of respecting others, no matter what their characteristics are.

Leaders are very supportive of staff's welfare and workload. However, they do not pay enough attention to improving teachers' knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This hinders pupils in progressing through the curriculum.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards (the standards). Leaders maintain the premises to a level that ensures the safety of pupils. Pupils can have drinking water whenever they need it. The school has suitable toilets and washing facilities for them. There is also a room for staff to look after pupils if they are unwell.

There is no outside space on site for pupils to play in or to take part in physical education (PE). However, leaders take pupils to an outdoor area and a leisure centre that are within walking distance. Leaders have worked out the risks involved in these and other activities. They have suitable plans for managing these risks.

Leaders have a suitable safeguarding policy in place. There are other policies that support this, such as how the school protects pupils when using the internet. Leaders have published these policies on the school's website.

Leaders have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that pupils with disabilities can access the school. For instance, leaders provide an accessible toilet and there are ramps at entrances to the building.

The proprietor has an effective system to enable checks on her work as headteacher. The chair of governors meets with her frequently. He challenges her about aspects of her work, such as how she is ensuring that the school consistently meets the standards.

Leaders have all the required documents in place. These include policies for health and safety and first aid. Some members of staff are trained first-aiders. Leaders regularly monitor the systems to keep people safe in case of a fire.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders train staff effectively to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of abuse. Leaders carry out the necessary checks to see whether adults are suitable to work with pupils. They keep appropriate records of these checks.

Leaders and staff know pupils' needs because they watch them carefully and look after them effectively. Staff record any unusual comments or behaviour, in case these could indicate more serious issues. Leaders are currently changing the paper-based system of keeping a record of these issues to keeping electronic records.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that staff look after them well. They trust adults to deal effectively with any worries that they may have. Relationships between everyone at the school are positive.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There is inconsistency in the sequencing and coherence of the curriculum. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge securely across some subjects, such as history. Leaders should ensure that all subjects have well-sequenced content to enable all pupils to know more and remember more.
- In some subjects, the sequence of learning is well organised, but the teaching does not follow the intended structure. This leads to gaps in learning that make it hard for pupils to progress through the curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that teaching follows the agreed plan in order to embed all pupils' learning more effectively.
- Staff do not assess pupils' knowledge precisely enough in some subjects. This means that they do not pinpoint missing previous knowledge, which makes it hard for pupils to learn new content. Leaders need to develop an efficient and consistent method of ongoing assessment to ensure that all pupils acquire key knowledge effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

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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

Unique reference number	143930
DfE registration number	895/6004
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10193242
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Lana Wild
Headteacher	Lana Wild
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,600
Telephone number	01260 289391
Website	www.caps.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	lwild@caps.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–21 June 2018

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was from 19 to 21 June 2018. An emergency inspection was conducted on 14 March 2019.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection that the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

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

- Inspectors spoke with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, and the chair of the governing body, who is its sole member. Inspectors held telephone discussions with a representative of one of the local authorities that places pupils at the school, leaders of local secondary schools that send pupils to the school, and two parents and carers.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE education and history. For each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning wherever possible.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils. They looked at a range of other policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They talked with staff about safeguarding matters, pupils' personal development, and their behaviour and attitudes. They looked at pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- There were no responses to any of Ofsted's online surveys.

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alyson Middlemass

Her Majesty's Inspector

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