

Inspection of Howard House School

Netherton Colliery, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 6BB

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

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 at Howard House School value the support of their teachers. They appreciate how staff listen to them and respond to their needs. Staff build positive relationships with pupils. Staff develop curriculum plans to meet the individual needs of pupils. For many pupils, Howard House has restored their interest in education.

Staff help pupils to manage their behaviour and their emotions. They make them aware of what acceptable standards of behaviour look like. This enables the majority of pupils to behave well. Incidents of bullying are rare. Staff encourage pupils to work positively and respect others.

Pupils are helped to balance their academic work with wider experiences. They access trips and visits that widen their horizons. Staff eat and talk with pupils in the recently refurbished dining area. Pupils are encouraged to talk to adults. These opportunities build pupils' self-confidence and their social skills.

All pupils have seen significant improvements in their attendance since arriving at Howard House School. This is because they feel secure and enjoy their learning.

The parents and carers who inspectors talked to value the difference Howard House has made to their children's education. They believe staff have removed previous barriers to learning.

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

Leaders have worked with staff to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils arrive at school at different times of the year and with different starting points. Many have experienced significant disruption to their previous learning. Teachers promptly assess pupils' needs. They build a curriculum that prioritises what pupils need to know in the subjects they study.

Leaders provide support for pupils who need help with their reading. They use a reading programme to help pupils to read more fluently. Staff and pupils read regularly in tutor periods and English lessons. Leaders have recently purchased books that match pupils' reading interests and abilities. Staff's phonics training to help them to support pupils in the early stages of reading is less well embedded.

Leaders have developed the curriculum well in a number of areas. In physical education (PE), the curriculum matches the precise needs of pupils. They use the PE curriculum to engage all pupils and promote their personal development. In science, teachers engage pupils through clear explanations of key ideas. Pupils are enthused by their science work and can recall key vocabulary and concepts. In mathematics, pupils follow a planned curriculum that is adapted to their needs. On occasions, teachers' questioning does not check pupils' understanding with sufficient depth.

In creative and technological subjects, pupils gain experience in painting and working with wood and other materials. They have built outdoor seating benches and worked on projects with street artists. However, this work is less developed, and pupils' experience varies. Leaders recognise this and have recently launched a programme to improve pupils' experience of these subjects. This includes the use of a newly refurbished creative and vocational area.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum teaches pupils about important aspects of relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about equality and respect. Visitors to the school talk to pupils about policing and the law. Teachers plan visits to museums and galleries to build pupils' cultural capital. Pupils visit country parks to exercise and experience nature. These planned experiences build pupils' interests and their self-esteem. Individual pupils work with counsellors and therapists to further support their personal development.

Leaders provide pupils with appropriate careers education. Year 11 pupils have regular meetings with independent careers advisers. In 2021, all Year 11 pupils progressed to further education or training.

For many pupils, Howard House represents their first positive experience of education. Pupils feel that their emotional needs are now being met. Pupils want to attend school and achieve positive outcomes in the subjects they study. All pupils have shown significant improvements in their attendance since joining the school. Pupils typically behave well. Pupils talked to inspectors in insightful ways. They could explain how staff had helped them to behave better.

Leaders support staff well in working with young people with complex social and emotional needs. They help staff to manage the additional demands this can bring. Leaders work with staff to build their expertise. They have paired less experienced staff with mentors in nearby schools. Leaders have developed an approved programme to support teachers in the early stages of their careers. Teachers value the support they receive.

The proprietor has appointed an education lead to provide regular feedback on school performance. An advisory board provides further scrutiny of the quality of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate training. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that staff are aware of pupils' welfare needs. Staff know what action to take if they have concerns over pupils' safety. Staff work with external partners to support pupils' safety and well-being.

Staff teach pupils about safety and well-being through the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils know about local safeguarding risks and how to manage them.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school. The education business manager ensures that safeguarding is always considered in her regular meetings with the proprietor.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- During lessons, teachers do not check pupils' understanding of what they have been taught deeply enough. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are not consistently identified. Leaders should work with teachers to ensure that they make regular and accurate checks on pupils' understanding during lessons.
- The phonics programme to support pupils at the early stages of reading is new. Leaders have not securely embedded phonics training. This can mean that pupils who arrive with significant reading needs do not get the help they need to catch up. Leaders should provide further phonics training for staff so that pupils get the extra help they need to catch up.
- Although pupils take part in activities in creative and technological subjects, the curriculum in these areas is less developed than in others. Leaders should ensure that plans to develop these curriculum areas are implemented promptly and effectively. This will add further breadth to the curriculum and provide additional ways to capture pupils' interests and talents.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	132855
DfE registration number	929/6046
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10212943
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Young Foundations Ltd
Chair	Niall Kelly
Headteacher	Amran Suleman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000 to £45,000
Telephone number	01670 339156
Website	www.howardhouseschool.com
Email address	amran.suleman@youngfoundations.com
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 March 2019

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a change in ownership. The school is now owned and run by Young Foundations Ltd.
- The majority of staff are new to the school since its previous inspection.
- The school teaches four pupils at its sports academy, using facilities at Ellington Juniors Football Club. All learning at the sports academy is delivered by Howard House staff. Howard House staff and pupils have exclusive use of the facilities when they are based at the sports academy.
- The head of school supports another school in the Young Foundations group for approximately one day per week.
- Young Foundations Ltd appointed an education business manager in January 2022 to provide external assurance of school performance.
- A new chair of the school advisory board has been appointed since the previous inspection.

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.

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

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

- Inspectors held several discussions with the head of school and members of staff. They also talked to staff about the curriculum and wider aspects of school life.
- Inspectors looked in detail into the curriculum in English, mathematics, physical education and science. They talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. They also talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects. They looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- The lead inspector talked to the chief executive officer of Young Foundations Ltd to find out how school leaders are supported and challenged. The lead inspector held several meetings with the Young Foundations Ltd education lead to discuss how she reviews school performance on behalf of the proprietor.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding arrangements. They looked at the school's work to make staff and pupils aware of safeguarding issues. They also looked at safeguarding records to see how concerns over pupils' safety are recorded and

followed up. They looked at the checks made on the suitability of staff working at the school.

- Inspectors considered two free-text responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They also held telephone calls with four parents and carers. Inspectors considered 14 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors talked to pupils to gather their views on school life.
- An inspector visited the sports academy to visit lessons and talk to pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

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