

Inspection of High Peak School

Mudhurst Lane, Higher Disley, Stockport, Cheshire SK12 2AP

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 November 2022

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

Pupils feel safe at High Peak School and benefit from being educated there. They enjoy warm and positive relationships with staff. Pupils said that their teachers look after them well and help them to keep safe.

Pupils explained that learning gets better for them after they have joined the school. They know that leaders expect a great deal from them. Leaders and teachers want pupils to work hard and do as well as they can. Pupils are typically successful in meeting these expectations. They achieve the qualifications that they need to go on to their next step when they leave the school.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils fully understand this. Pupils sometimes have difficulties with their behaviour because of their needs. This can stop some pupils, especially those who have not been in the school long, from learning properly. Staff are skilled at helping pupils when this happens. They make sure that pupils calm down and settle back to their work. Staff also deal quickly and effectively with any bullying that may happen.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences beyond the classroom. During enrichment time each week, for example, there are opportunities for horse-riding or boxing. Pupils can also take on a role of responsibility, such as becoming a school councillor or anti-bullying ambassador.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. This is reflected in a curriculum that has a broad range of subjects, which fulfils the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders have considered pupils' interests and needs in the curriculum design. It is clear what pupils will learn and when they will learn it.

Many teachers have strong subject knowledge. Leaders have a well-designed programme of training to support teachers in improving and maintaining that knowledge. Teachers have a useful range of methods to find out how much pupils can remember. For example, there are periodic formal tests and daily checks on the previous day's learning. In most subjects, teachers clearly explain what pupils are learning and help them to remember it well. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not enable pupils to keep their learning as securely as possible in their long-term memory.

Across most of the curriculum, pupils achieve well. Their attitudes to learning improve while they are at the school, which contributes to the secure progress that they make through the curriculum. By the time they leave the school, pupils have useful qualifications to support them in the next phase of their education, training or employment.

Leaders make sure that reading is a priority. When pupils first arrive at the school, leaders assess how well they can read. This includes finding out how strong pupils' knowledge of phonics is.

Leaders have a well-organised phonics scheme in place. They provide regular lessons in phonics to those pupils who need them. Consequently, most pupils develop fluency and accuracy in reading as they progress through the school, which helps them in accessing the curriculum. However, some pupils in key stage 4 who find reading difficult have reading books which are a little too hard for them. This is because teachers have not assessed accurately enough what sounds pupils know. Consequently, these pupils do not read as fluently as they could because their reading books do not match their phonics knowledge.

There are effective systems in place to enable staff to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders train staff well to help them to spot the additional needs which pupils may have. Leaders have a range of specialist support to enable pupils to access the curriculum, which they can call upon from within the wider school group. They also bring in external help when it is needed.

Leaders train staff effectively to enable them to manage pupils' behaviour well. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils' behaviour typically improves with time at the school. Leaders ensure that there is an orderly and calm atmosphere in the classroom and around the school.

Leaders cater well for pupils' wider development beyond the curriculum. For example, leaders support pupils' mental and physical health effectively. They do this through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and opportunities such as outdoor education activities. Some pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which supports their character development. Pupils from Year 7 onward receive well-planned careers guidance to help them to decide about their next steps when they have left the school.

Members of staff told inspectors that leaders support them well and are approachable. Leaders are effective at looking after staff's well-being and helping them to manage their workload.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Representatives of the proprietor body know the school well and have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. They have effective systems in place to hold school leaders to account for the quality of their work.

Leaders have put a detailed policy in place about relationships and sex education, which reflects the statutory guidance. The programme of learning successfully teaches pupils about relevant themes, including healthy relationships and consent. Teachers consider pupils' ages and experiences when delivering the programme.

Leaders have a suitable action plan in place to support pupils with disabilities who may attend the school. Actions include providing alternative ways to present information, depending on the nature of pupils' disabilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and members of staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. Leaders have strong systems for reporting and recording any concerns that they may have about pupils' welfare. They respond swiftly to concerns and provide pupils with the help that they need. Leaders involve outside agencies, such as social care, when required.

Leaders have a detailed and current safeguarding policy. They publish this on the school's website.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils know how to avoid harm when using the internet.

Leaders fully understand the process for responding to allegations against members of staff, if any were to occur.

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

- Some pupils in key stage 4, who have difficulties with reading, are provided with reading books which they find hard to read with fluency. This is because teachers have not assessed pupils' reading precisely enough and have given them reading books which do not match their knowledge of phonics. Leaders should ensure that teachers carefully assess the reading skills that these pupils have and provide reading books that enable them to develop fluency and confidence in their reading.
- In a few subjects, some pupils are not able to retain knowledge as effectively as they should. This means that these pupils do not build their knowledge as securely as possible. Leaders should ensure that teachers develop more effective ways of enabling these pupils to embed knowledge in their long-term memory, so that they make the strongest possible progress across the whole curriculum.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141502
DfE registration number	895/6001
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10216296
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Principal	Rachel Boylan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,476
Telephone number	01663 721731
Website	www.kedlestongroup.com/our-schools-homes/residential-schools/high-peak-school/home
Email address	m.rathmill@kedlestongroup.com
Date of previous inspection	29 to 31 January 2019

Information about this school

- A new principal and a new head of education have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school's previous standard inspection was 29 to 31 January 2019.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders use one registered alternative provision. A small number of pupils attend this on a full-time basis.
- There are very few pupils who are aged over 16. Any who are over 16 are pupils who are already on the school's roll and are continuing their studies from key stage 4 because of their specific needs.

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) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the proprietor body, the headteacher, the head of education and other school leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, design and technology and PSHE. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading to members of staff. He also examined the curriculum structure in some other subjects and spoke with groups of pupils about their learning in these subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They looked at a range of other policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises to check for compliance against the relevant independent school standards.

- The lead inspector analysed responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. The proprietor body requested a change to the school's maximum capacity from 60 to 90 pupils. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is that the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- This is the first material change inspection that the school has received in respect of the change that the proprietor body has applied to make.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Schelene Ferris

Ofsted Inspector

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