

Inspection of Peak School

Buxton Road, Chinley, High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 6ES

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe at Peak School. They are happy and most enjoy attending school. Staff are caring and know their pupils and students well. Relationships are positive and built on trust and respect. Leaders are proud of their motto 'unique people, individualised approach'. They have a vision for all pupils to fulfil their potential.

Staff have high expectations of all pupils. Leaders use rewards to motivate pupils to manage their own behaviour. This works well for most pupils. Staff have training to manage complex and difficult behaviours. When these occur, staff manage them effectively.

Most pupils show positive behaviours towards staff and each other. Staff ensure that pupils have time to settle in the morning before starting to learn. Pupils enjoy choosing their own morning activities. These help them become ready to learn. When bullying happens, leaders ensure that they deal with it quickly.

The PEAK curriculum links to the four areas of education, health and care (EHC) plans. It does not yet identify the key knowledge pupils should know and when. This means that children from the early years to students in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they could.

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

The number of pupils attending this school has increased considerably in recent years. Pupils' needs have also changed. Leaders have not yet fully revised their curriculum offer to meet these changing needs.

Teachers attempt to deliver a curriculum for the diverse needs of pupils in their class, yet leaders do not provide enough detail about what they expect pupils to learn in all subjects. Pupils do not study a rich curriculum that challenges them and, for those for whom it is applicable, allows them to develop their independence. For example, some adults attempt to do the work for some pupils.

Leaders have prioritised early reading. Most staff have received training to teach phonics. Teachers track pupils' achievement in reading. They ensure that any pupils falling behind catch up. The books pupils are given to read match their phonics knowledge. Pupils say they enjoy reading. Some pupils enjoy reading so much they choose to read interactive stories during their reward time.

Leaders check what pupils know. However, teachers do not always use the information from these checks to inform their planning. For example, they do not routinely act to resolve any gaps in pupils' knowledge that the checks may identify. Overall, pupils do not build on their knowledge over time in all subjects, so limiting how well they remember what they learn.

Pupils with the most complex needs are well cared for. This includes those with such needs in the early years. The environment in the early years is calm and supports these children's sensory needs. Parents and carers are appreciative of this support.

Pupils develop their communication and language skills well. Teachers ensure that pupils engage well with technology to support their development of these skills. Leaders are proud of examples of pupils' success in becoming confident in how they communicate. Such examples include some pupils who, having started at the school with no or limited communication skills, now use picture exchange and sign language to make their needs known.

Sixth-form students have a positive attitude to their learning. However, the programme of study does not prepare them well enough. Leaders do not ensure that students gain enough careers information, advice and guidance to help them to make their own informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders ensure that pupils have access to enrichment activities. These include visits to the cinema and walking in the local community. Pupils are very proud of being a part of the pupil council. They enjoy having responsibility and helping other pupils, including by listening to them read.

Pupils have some understanding of difference. They have very little understanding of other faiths and cultures. Some pupils understand that they have a right to express their opinion. Other than this, their understanding of British values is weak. Pupils learn about their changing bodies. However, they have limited knowledge of different types of relationships. There is a policy for relationships and sex education (RSE) in place. Leaders have not yet consulted parents on this policy.

Most staff feel supported with their workload. Leaders are starting to develop middle leaders to help support the leadership team. Leaders are not prioritising or monitoring the quality of education and pupils' personal development. This limits their opportunities to identify and bring about necessary improvement.

Members of the local governing body and trustees have not ensured that leaders are driving the necessary improvements at pace.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all pupils are safe. Staff receive regular updates about safeguarding. They receive training to identify and report any pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff report all concerns, no matter how small. Leaders respond quickly. They work well with external agencies. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families have the right support they need.

Pupils know how to stay safe online. They know what to do if they are worried. Parents say their children feel safe at school and leaders communicate well with them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the key knowledge that children in the early years, pupils, and students in the sixth form need to learn and when they need to learn it in the curriculum they study. This limits the opportunities for pupils to achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that there is clarity around what knowledge pupils should learn through the curriculum, so that pupils are able to become secure in their understanding.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils have access to information about careers information, advice and guidance. This means that pupils do not receive opportunities to equip themselves well enough for their next steps after leaving the school. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive the guidance that they need to help them and their families to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Most pupils' knowledge of British values and different faiths is limited. Although they know about difference, some pupils are not as aware as they should be of what these differences may be. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the necessary knowledge and understanding of British values, difference and culture and faiths to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Some aspects of the personal, social, health education (PSHE) curriculum are not covered in sufficient depth. Pupils are not gaining as strong an understanding of equality and relationships as they could. Leaders have not consulted with parents and carers about the RSE policy. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the necessary knowledge and understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships through the study of an RSE curriculum over which parents have been consulted.
- Leaders do not systematically monitor the quality of education, including in the sixth form. As a result, they have not identified all the areas that need improvement. Leaders should ensure that their monitoring processes and the development of middle leaders are effective in helping them to improve the quality of all aspects of the school's provision.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146053
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10242246
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emly
Headteacher	John McPherson
Website	http://peak.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Peak school is a special school for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils who have communication difficulties and pupils with extremely challenging behaviour. Many pupils have associated complex special educational needs, including autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with: the headteacher; the deputy headteacher; the school improvement partner of the trust; members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors; the chair of trustees; and trust leaders, including the safeguarding lead, the director of education and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in the following subjects: reading; mathematics; design and technology; and PSHE. Inspectors met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. They visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. She met with the designated leader for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses recorded on the Ofsted Parent View survey, including free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff gathered through meetings with groups of staff and responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with members of the pupil council.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information relating to attendance and behaviour; the curriculum; and governance.

Inspection team

Anita Denman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Rooney

Ofsted Inspector

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