

Inspection of Peak Education

The Old School House, Watling Street, Gailey, Cannock, Staffordshire ST19 5PR

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school get another chance to succeed in education after previous negative experiences. Pupils' needs are accurately identified through a thorough admissions and induction process. Together with pupils, leaders explore what helps pupils to learn and what they find challenging. Staff use this information to plan an appropriate curriculum. This includes tailored support for each pupil.

Pupils' personal development is at the centre of this curriculum. Staff start by establishing positive relationships. This helps pupils to re-engage in learning. The wide and varied range of opportunities help to build pupils' confidence. They also learn how to work together collaboratively during their outdoor learning experiences.

There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour and learning. These are clear and simple. This helps pupils to know what they need to do to succeed. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve considerably over time. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. They are justifiably proud of their successes.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times and show respect to staff. Bullying does not happen often. If there are any incidents between pupils, staff are quick to respond to and resolve issues. Pupils feel safe at school.

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

Leaders, including the proprietor body, are ambitious for all pupils. They are determined to re-engage pupils in education and prepare them for a successful next stage in their education journey. This happens for most pupils at the school. For some, the school transforms their experience of school entirely.

Leaders' work to support pupils' behaviour is highly successful. Staff understand how to meet pupils' emotional needs because of the effective training they have completed. Many pupils secure long-lasting changes to their behaviour. Leaders analyse any behaviour incidents and identify patterns. They use this information to decide if additional support is needed to help pupils manage their own behaviour. This means lessons are not interrupted and learning can take place. Pupils work together and support each other to maintain a high level of interest in their schoolwork.

The curriculum is designed to both interest pupils and ensure that they learn what is most important in the core areas of the curriculum. Initial assessments help teachers to identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. These gaps become the targets that pupils work on throughout lessons. Staff use ongoing assessment strategies to continuously review the progress pupils make. They use the information gained to adjust pupils' targets and curriculum accordingly.

Central to this curriculum is reading. Staff use high-quality and age-appropriate texts to widen pupils' vocabulary and explore a range of topical issues. Leaders have

ensured that all staff receive training to understand phonics. This means all staff can successfully support those pupils at the early stages of reading. This happens throughout the curriculum and not just in phonics lessons. Staff read to pupils and pupils read in lessons on a regular basis. The progress pupils make in this area of the curriculum is strong.

Pupils also make good progress in subjects such as English and mathematics. In these subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. Staff ensure that there is regular practice and revisiting of key knowledge. This helps pupils to know and remember what they need to. In some subjects, such as history, however, staff choose how they sequence the content. This means that pupils do not always learn the most important knowledge. On occasion, the activities provided for pupils are more about gaining the pupils' interest than learning about what is most important.

Staff's knowledge of how to meet some of the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. In lessons, teachers carefully adapt their explanations or the resources they use to support learning. This enables all pupils to follow the same curriculum. Staff also use practical activities both to engage pupils' interest and to help them to understand important concepts.

Pupils' personal development is at the centre of the curriculum and the heart of the school's work. The curriculum and wider opportunities help to develop pupils' character in an extensive variety of ways. The personal, social and health education curriculum, including relationships education, has been carefully developed. Leaders have adopted a recognised scheme which they supplement with theme days and visits. Pupils work towards an accreditation which they are very proud of. Pupils respect and accept others' differences, including those related to the protected characteristics. They know about the fundamental British values such as democracy. Leaders ensure that they successfully build on pupils' talents and interests. This can involve paying for specialist support, such as individual tuition in singing or dance.

Leaders engage well with staff. They ensure that they consider both the workload and well-being of all staff. Staff say they are well supported by leaders.

The members of the proprietor body understand and carry out their role effectively. They are well informed about the school's work. They hold leaders to account and make sure that they focus well on continuously improving the school. They ensure that spending decisions are made in pupils' best interests. The safeguarding policy is published on the school website. Leaders, including the proprietor body, have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and all staff understand the additional vulnerabilities their pupils may have. All staff have had a wide range of safeguarding training. They understand the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. There are clear systems in place for staff to report anything of concern. Leaders are vigilant and respond quickly to any issues that arise. Staff work closely with relevant agencies to ensure that pupils stay safe.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about how to stay safe online and while out in the community. They know who to speak to in school if they are worried about anything.

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

- In some subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about the important knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. As a result, pupils' knowledge in some subjects does not build as well as it could from year to year. Leaders should ensure that all subject areas identify the most important knowledge for pupils to learn and ensure that it builds progressively over time.
- Staff subject knowledge and pedagogy in some subjects is not as secure as it could be. As a result, some of the work pupils are given does not focus sufficiently on the most important learning. Leaders should ensure that staff are supported to develop their expertise across all subjects in the curriculum that they teach.

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	137956
DfE registration number	860/6039
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10283148
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The keys group
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Sharon Cliff
Annual fees (day pupils)	£82,875
Telephone number	01902 790385
Website	www.peakeducation.co.uk
Email address	Sharon.cliff@keys-group.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 12 December 2019

Information about this school

- Peak Education is a small independent special school situated in Gailey. It is now part of a larger group of schools run by the Keys Group.
- Leaders provide full-time education for boys and girls aged eight to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The last full standard inspection was in December 2019. A material change inspection took place in March 2021. This material change related to the age range of pupils the school catered for.
- Leaders do not use any alternative providers.

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 full standard inspection 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 met with senior leaders, including the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the education manager. They also met with the regional manager and the director of education for the Keys Group.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector toured the premises with the leaders to ensure that the school provides an appropriate environment for pupils. The lead inspector examined health and safety documentation.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of the checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and considered the responses to the staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

Caroline Hoddinott

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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