

Inspection of Amberleigh Therapeutic School

The Oaks, Redhill, Telford, Shropshire TF2 9NZ

Inspection dates:

24 to 26 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive here. Throughout the school, there is a calm, nurturing environment. Before joining the school, pupils experienced difficulties in their social lives and struggled to build healthy relationships. However, the care from the school's therapeutic community helps pupils to overcome these challenges quickly. As a result, pupils build strong positive relationships with their peers and staff. Interactions with staff are warm and positive. Pupils value this. They know who to turn to if they have a concern. Pupils are confident any concerns will be resolved quickly.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They know that many pupils have, in the past, struggled to manage their own behaviours. Leaders do not use this as an excuse. They set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour as well as their academic success. Pupils strive to meet leaders' high expectations. If pupils misbehave, staff and their peers challenge this in a calm, caring way. Pupils' behaviour rapidly improves during their time at the school.

Pupils benefit from an extensive range of opportunities to enhance their wider personal development. The sense of community here is palpable. For example, each day, pupils cook lunch for the entire school community. Pupils take full responsibility for this work and approach this with pride.

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

Leaders have created a culture here where both academic achievement and personal growth are celebrated. Leaders have the highest expectations for pupils. Their resolve to ensure that pupils receive both an education and the therapeutic care that supports them to contribute positively to society is clear to see.

Across most subjects, leaders have planned the curriculum carefully. They make sure that the things pupils learn build upon the things they already know. This helps pupils to make strong progress. For example, in food technology, pupils have a secure knowledge of the processes involved in safe food preparation. They frequently cook complex meals and rapidly develop a passion for cooking. However, the small steps that pupils need to take to be successful have not been outlined in all subjects. Because of this, the things pupils learn do not always build upon the things they have been taught before, and teachers are at times unclear about precisely what to teach. Consequently, the activities chosen by teachers do not always support pupils to learn the intended curriculum. At times, this holds pupils back.

When pupils join the school, leaders work with a range of external agencies to build a clear and comprehensive picture of pupils' therapeutic needs, including the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Through this work, leaders often identify a range of previously undiagnosed needs. Leaders adapt their curriculum skilfully to support these pupils, developing bespoke curriculum

pathways if needed. As a result, pupils with SEND do very well here. The school also uses a range of subject-specific assessments to understand pupils' starting points. However, these assessments do little to build a clear picture of the gaps in pupils' previous learning. Because of this, some pupils have gaps in knowledge and they harbour misconceptions for too long, which hinders their progress.

Reading takes a central role in pupils' lives. Pupils frequently use the school library and read a range of engaging and appropriate texts. During their time here, pupils become avid readers.

The school's work to enhance pupils' social interactions and their wider personal development is profound. It is part of the fabric of the school. This, as well as the bespoke therapeutic care pupils receive, supports pupils to build appropriate and positive relationships with others. Consequently, despite having previously struggled to manage their own behaviours, pupils frequently model the positive behaviours expected of them.

The school makes sure that pupils benefit from a wide range of high-quality, meaningful encounters with the world of work. The qualifications that pupils study are well matched to their future career ambitions. The school is relentless in its drive to provide all pupils with the most interesting and varied opportunities to support their personal growth. Nothing is left to chance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not defined the precise knowledge that pupils will learn. Where this happens, teachers are not clear about the knowledge pupils are expected to learn, and do not always design lessons that support the aims of the curriculum. This holds pupils back. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is equally well planned across all subjects so that the knowledge to be taught is clearly defined.
- Teachers' use of assessment is not always as precise as it ought to be. They do not always identify gaps in pupils' knowledge when they join the school or identify gaps in knowledge as pupils progress through the curriculum. This is a barrier to learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment skilfully to accurately identify pupils' starting points and carefully monitor their progress through the 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	138875
DfE registration number	893/6030
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10299220
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Proprietor	Kevin Gallagher
Headteacher	Natalie Dixon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,906 to £64,240
Telephone number	01952 619144
Website	www.amberleighcare.co.uk
Email address	Enquiries@amberleighcare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 October 2019

Information about this school

- Many pupils at the school have SEND, including social, emotional and mental health needs, related conditions and attachment disorders. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- Due to the very small numbers of post-16 pupils, a separate judgment about this provision has not been made.
- There are currently 11 pupils on roll at the school. However, the school is registered to admit 14 pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, design technology and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parent free-text responses.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Hinton

Ofsted Inspector

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