

Inspection of Peak Education – Audley

2 Castle Hill, Nantwich Road, Audley, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST7 8DH

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small, nurturing school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The staff care deeply about the pupils they teach. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils know that staff care for them and this helps pupils feel safe in school.

The school is determined to provide pupils with an ambitious curriculum that prepares them well for key stage 4. However, pupils do not receive or do not consistently receive an education that consistently meets the ambitious intentions of leaders. This is because the school is changing the curriculum and assessment procedures to achieve this ambition and these changes are at an early stage of development.

Often, pupils have not had positive experiences in previous schools. They have developed patterns of inappropriate behaviour and poor attendance. The school knows this so has created a motivating outdoor education curriculum that builds pupils' self-confidence and resilience. As a result, pupils try hard to behave in class and they are developing more positive attitudes towards learning. However, too many pupils still do not come to school regularly enough.

The school wants pupils to have positive experiences and a role in their community. Staff plan regular trips and activities to help pupils achieve this goal.

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

A committed and compassionate team of leaders leads this school. The governing body and proprietorship provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. They check that the school meets the independent school standards and that its duties under the Equality Act are met.

The school regularly listens to the views of pupils, families, staff and other stakeholders. It considers how to adapt its practice in response to views gathered. However, there is some variation in how well staff feel supported and valued. Some say the school helps them to manage their workload. Others say more could be done to support them.

The school often checks what is working well and where further improvement is needed. This is achieved through internal and external monitoring processes. However, the school does not accurately identify the most important areas for improvement. As a result, plans to improve the school are not always focused on the right things.

The school understands pupils' special educational needs well. At the initial assessment, the school identifies what support pupils need. This information informs the plans provided for staff. Staff review these plans at least once a term.

The school is in the process of developing a subject-based curriculum that is ambitious for all learners. Some subjects are further along this process than others. In some subjects, the school has thought carefully about what pupils need to know and learn in relation to their age and how to help them be ready for key stage. However, the school has not identified the precise content pupils needs in other subjects. It has not paid sufficient attention to the key stage 3 national curriculum requirements.

Staff value the training and support they receive to plan sequences of lessons that help pupils learn more and remember more. However, on occasion, the choice of activities does not promote enough depth and challenge for more able pupils.

The school has devised a system for assessing how well pupils learn the curriculum. Assessment statements guide staff on what to look for in the curriculum areas that have been completed. However, these assessment statements are not yet in place in all subjects and there are significantly more to write. As a result, the school has a limited understanding of what pupils know and can do over time across all subjects.

Helping pupils to learn to read is a priority for the school. Pupils have many daily opportunities to read from a broad range of texts. Staff have recently had phonics training so that they can help those pupils who struggle to read. However, teachers do not use their phonics assessments to ensure that pupils read books that match their phonetical skills. Books are often too difficult. As a result, pupils in the early stages of reading are not supported as well as they could be to improve their reading skills.

The school monitors behaviour well. Well-thought-through plans provide guidance for staff on how to respond if a pupil's behaviour escalates. Where difficulties arise, staff help pupils sort out their differences with the other person and think about how to behave differently next time. Pupils learn about bullying and are confident to report any concerns. The school takes all reports of bullying seriously. Effective action is taken to prevent it continuing.

The school monitors attendance well. It uses a range of interventions, support, rewards and consequences to improve attendance. For example, staff transport pupils to and from school. While many pupils do improve their attendance from their starting points, these improvements are too slow. As a result, too many pupils miss important schooling.

The well-planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education and health education supports pupils in developing the personal and social skills that they need. For example, pupils learn about different faiths, cultures, democracy and myths around sexual relationships.

There is an appropriate careers programme in school that helps pupils plan for the future. Independent careers advice is provided for pupils in Year 8. This guidance and support helps them plan for their future.

As part of pupils' personal development, the school encourages pupils to participate in exciting activities to generate and build fond memories of school. Pupils are allocated an allowance to 'spend' on trips or activities that they want to do to help pupils achieve this goal. Go-karting and special meals out are some of the most popular activities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school does not accurately identify the most important areas for development. This includes ensuring that the curriculum is ambitious and sets out what the school wants pupils to know and be able to do in all subjects beyond the current term. As a result, pupils do not receive a well-designed curriculum that prepares them for the next step in their education. The school should ensure that curriculum content is fully completed in all subjects and reflects the national curriculum expectations for key stage 3.
- The school has not finalised an approach to assessment for all units of work, because the curriculum is still incomplete. As a result, staff have a limited understanding of what pupils know and can do. The school should ensure that there are comprehensive assessment statements and systems in place for all subjects.
- Pupils at the earliest stages of reading are not provided with suitably well-matched reading books. This means that pupils are not supported as well as they should be to develop their reading fluency and confidence. The school should ensure that pupils regularly read books which are well matched to the sounds they know and can read.
- Too many pupils continue to be persistently absent from school. They are missing important learning opportunities, which impacts on the progress they make. Leaders need to continue to focus on improving pupils' attendance so that they attend school regularly.

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	146078
DfE registration number	860/6048
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10310192
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keys Group
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Jonathan Gillie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£250 to £450 a day
Telephone number	01782 284 329
Website	https://education.keyschildren.co.uk/school/audley-school/
Email address	peakeducation.audley@keys-group.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 17 June 2021

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 10 December 2018.
- The school caters for pupils with SEMH.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second 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.
- Inspectors met with members of the proprietor body and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also met with teachers, teaching assistants and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the school's curriculum documentation, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their wider experiences of school.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, risk assessments, attendance information and behaviour logs.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Inspection team

Amanda Green, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024