

Inspection of Aidenwood School

48 Parson Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4ED

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Aidenswood School is a nurturing and happy place to learn. Pupils arrive at the school having experienced significant disruption to their education. They see Aidenswood School as a fresh start. They are encouraged to 'Aspire, Achieve and Succeed' during their time at the school.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. It is ambitious for its pupils and committed to improving their life chances. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), experience a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs. They are typically successful in achieving the qualifications that they need to go on to their next step when they leave the school.

Pupils feel listened to and valued. They quickly develop positive relationships with staff. Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and help them with any worries that they may have. During their time at the school, pupils are taught to understand and manage their emotions. As a result of the school's approach, pupils are well supported to reengage with their education. Pupils value the points and rewards that they can earn for good behaviour. This helps pupils to take pride in their learning and achievements.

Pupils are provided with opportunities to learn beyond the academic curriculum. For example, pupils benefit from regular workshops with the police about a range of aspects of personal safety. Pupils enjoy weekly physical education sessions at a local community centre. They also benefit from visits to the local area, for example, a local country park, linked to their current learning.

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

The school is ambitious for its pupils. This is reflected in the school's curriculum offer which provides a broad range of subjects and fulfils the requirements of the independent school standards ('the standards'). The school has considered pupils' interests and needs in its curriculum design.

In many subjects, the school has thought carefully about what pupils should know and be able to do by the time that they leave the school. These curriculums ensure that pupils build their knowledge in a logical order. In these subjects, the curriculums contain the information that teachers need to be able to deliver the curriculum well. Staffs' knowledge of these subjects is strong. This ensures that pupils learn the essential knowledge that leaders have identified for them. Pupils are well supported to gain qualifications which help them in the next stage of their education or employment.

In a few subjects, the specific knowledge that pupils should be taught and the order that this knowledge should be taught in has not been made clear. As a result, some important knowledge and skills are not taught or revisited in a logical order.

Consequently, pupils' knowledge does not build as securely as it should in these subjects.

There are effective systems in place to enable staff to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. The school trains staff to help them to spot the additional needs which pupils may have. When required, the school involves specialist staff to support this process. The school works well with a range of other professionals, including social workers, to develop individualised plans for each pupil. This effective partnership work helps to ensure that pupils have their needs met effectively.

The school prioritises the teaching of reading. Many pupils have negative views about reading when they join the school. Staff work to improve pupils' perceptions of reading quickly. They ensure that pupils read high-quality texts. Pupils receive effective support from staff to improve their reading skills. As a result, pupils become more confident readers.

Pupils engage well with staff and each other in lessons and at breaktimes. The school is a calm and harmonious place to learn. Where pupils' attendance falls below the school's high expectations, the reasons for absence are identified and effective action taken to provide support in a timely manner. This action includes close working with external agencies and parents and carers to develop individual plans to remove any barriers to attendance.

The school's provision for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is well-thought-out. For example, leaders provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to learn about relationships and sex education in accordance with statutory guidance. Staff ensure that pupils learn to respect those with backgrounds different from their own.

Pupils access appropriate impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance. They learn about different careers and the pathways into them. This helps pupils to prepare successfully for their next steps in education or training. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their experience of leadership through taking on roles or responsibilities within school. Pupils are not supported to make a meaningful contribution to their school or wider community.

The proprietor has created roles and responsibilities that provide effective challenge and support to the school. The proprietor knows the school well. It has a secure understanding of its responsibilities. It has ensured that effective systems are in place to hold the school to account for the quality of its work.

The proprietor meets all of its statutory obligations. It ensures that the school consistently meets the standards. For example, the school meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. There are suitable risk assessments in place for a range of activities. The building is in a good state of repair and classrooms are bright and well ventilated. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The staff team is very small in number. However, the school has prioritised the workload and well-being of staff. This enables staff to put their focus on teaching. The school also engages successfully with carers and with local authorities responsible for placing pupils at the school to further support pupils' education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, the school has not considered in enough depth what they expect pupils to learn in each year group. This means that pupils do not learn some important knowledge in a progressive and sequenced manner. Consequently, pupils' acquisition of knowledge is not as strong as it should be in these subjects. The school should ensure that it is clear about what knowledge pupils will be taught and when it will be taught in these subjects. This will help to ensure that pupils' knowledge builds logically over time.
- Some aspects of the school's personal development programme are underdeveloped. This means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to build their character and confidence. The school should further clarify and strengthen its personal development programme so that pupils have carefully ordered opportunities to promote their personal development during their time at the school.

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	125814
DfE registration number	895/6000
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10299173
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Hexagon Care Services Limited
Chair	Caroline Ashdown
Headteacher	Stewart Davies
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £67,000
Telephone number	01260 297495
Website	www.hexagoncare.com
Email address	aidenswood.headteacher@hexagoncare.com
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 June 2019

Information about this school

- The school is located at 48 Parson Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4ED.
- The school is one of 14 schools located across the country. Hexagon Care Services Limited is the proprietor body. The chair of the proprietor body has changed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not have its own website. The proprietor body publishes general information about its schools and services on the company's website. It provides further information about this school in the school's prospectus.
- A new headteacher was appointed in May 2023.
- A significant number of teaching and support staff joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils usually join the school with significant gaps in their learning. Many have suffered traumatic experiences and have not engaged in education for a long period of time prior to joining this school.
- The school does not offer a post-16 curriculum. The very small number of students over the age of 16 continue to follow a key stage 4 curriculum because of the previous gaps in their education.
- All pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school received its previous standard inspection 18 to 20 June 2019.

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 first routine inspection that the school has 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 the headteacher, the education service manager, staff and the chair of the proprietor body.

- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with representatives of local authorities responsible for placing pupils at the school.
- Inspectors checked the school site for school's compliance with the standards. As part of these checks, the lead inspector toured the school premises, accompanied by a school leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and PSHE education. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with other leaders and staff, including those responsible for SEND, pupils' behaviour and attendance, and personal development.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of the school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included documentation and information relating to the standards and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Rebecca Jewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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