

Inspection of Balance Alternative Provision

The White Building, Lock Hill, Ferrybridge, Knottingley, West Yorkshire WF11 8NE

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 March 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at the school. Staff show genuine care and commitment to pupils. They know and understand pupils' needs and interests. Furthermore, staff develop trusting relationships with pupils, parents and carers. The school is effective in building pupils' confidence and self-esteem. It gives pupils every opportunity to succeed, both in school and in preparation for a return to full-time mainstream education.

The school has high aspirations for what pupils can achieve. It expects pupils to work hard in lessons. Most pupils respond well and show positive attitudes to their learning. The school consolidates and extends the learning that pupils receive in their mainstream schools.

Pupils behave in a calm and sensible manner. They show respect and kindness to others. The school deals effectively with occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour. It works with pupils to help them manage their own behaviour.

The school gives pupils opportunities to gain new experiences. Pupils enjoy educational visits to places of local historical and cultural interest. They also visit local employers and learn about public services. Pupils engage in activities such as climbing, outdoor learning and art therapy. The school makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.

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

The school has established a well-sequenced curriculum for all pupils. In English, and mathematics, pupils build their knowledge and skills in a logical and coherent way. The curriculum in these subjects consolidates and extends what pupils have learned before. It provides pupils with appropriate continuity in their learning. It also prepares pupils well for transition back to full-time mainstream education. For Year 11 pupils, there is a central focus on the knowledge and skills they need for their GCSE examinations. Year 11 pupils follow more personalised programmes of study. This helps them to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding and prepare for their examinations.

Pupils also study the school's 'inspire curriculum'. This curriculum takes a cross-curricular approach to pupils' learning across a wide range of subjects. Pupils engage in practical tasks and experiences that support subject specific learning. However, at key stage 4, this curriculum does not provide pupils with a deep and coherent enough body of subject knowledge and skills.

The school has designed its provision to cater for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has developed a well-structured school day. This helps pupils to focus on their learning and regulate their behaviour. Pupils learn in small classes from qualified teachers, with support from additional adults.

The school identifies pupils' needs well. It also ensures that it meets pupils' needs, including the needs of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils at an early stage of reading get the extra help they need. Also, in lessons pupils read often. This helps to ensure that pupils return to their mainstream schools as more confident and fluent readers.

Teachers have a secure subject knowledge. They explain new information with clarity and build on what pupils have learned before. However, sometimes at key stage 3, teachers do not check pupils' understanding with enough rigour. They move on to the next stage of learning before pupils are ready.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. It has established a clear set of daily routines. The school does not tolerate disruption to learning. Staff remove pupils from lessons when pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Indeed, staff are skilful in providing individual pupils with the support they need to regulate their behaviour. They use a range of appropriate strategies and have access to additional spaces such as a sensory room.

Many pupils join the school with high levels of absence in education. The school works with pupils and their families to address individual barriers to regular attendance. This has significant impact in improving pupils' attendance.

Pupils benefit from an age-appropriate personal development programme. They receive relationships education that is appropriate for their stage of development. Pupils learn about equality and diversity and about the importance of physical and mental health. They also learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The school provides pupils with appropriate careers education and guidance. This helps pupils to make informed decisions about their next steps. The school also provides pupils with opportunities to discuss and debate the spiritual and moral issues that affect their lives.

The school is providing a high-quality education for pupils that meets their specific needs. It is effective in supporting pupils to make successful returns to full-time mainstream education. The school ensures that staff workload is manageable and prioritises staff well-being. Staff enjoy working at the school. The chair of the proprietor body carries out their role and responsibilities with appropriate rigour.

The school meets all the independent school standards and fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor has the capacity to meet the independent school standards (the standards) consistently over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The school's cross-curricular 'inspire curriculum' does not provide pupils with a coherent and progressive body of disciplinary subject knowledge. This means that sometimes, key stage 4 pupils do not gain a depth of knowledge appropriate to their stage of education. The school should ensure that it further develops its 'inspire curriculum' so that it provides pupils with the disciplinary subject knowledge they need to prepare them for the next stage of their education.
- At key stage 3, sometimes teachers do not check pupils' understanding with sufficient rigour before moving on to the next stage of learning. This means that pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and find it difficult to apply what they have been taught. The school should ensure that it provides teachers with the professional development they need to adapt teaching in lessons so that they secure pupils' essential knowledge and understanding with greater consistency.

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	150171
DfE registration number	384/6014
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10342218
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Number of part-time pupils	19
Proprietor	Balance AP Ltd
Chair	Lucy Greaves
Headteacher	Andrew Dean
Annual fees (day pupils)	£135 to £165 per day
Telephone number	07930033667
Website	www.balanceap.co.uk
Email address	info@balanceap.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the DfE on 27 February 2024. This was the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school uses no providers of alternative provision.
- The school operates from The White Building, Lock Hill, Ferrybridge, Knottingley, West Yorkshire, WF11 8NE.
- The school caters for pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils who attend the school are dual registered with their mainstream secondary school. Most pupils attend the school on short term placements. Some pupils attend the school as part of local authority approved education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) provision. The school supports pupils to return, full-time, to mainstream 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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, and science. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in other subjects.
- 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 toured the school site and scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence to check on the statutory requirements of the standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s surveys for pupils and staff. They also considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey for parents.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstone, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jessica McKay

His Majesty's Inspector

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