

Peak Education

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

Inspection dates

16–18 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The quality of teaching is not yet good. Gaps in teachers' subject knowledge mean that teaching does not consistently challenge pupils to achieve well.
- The standards reached by some pupils, especially the most able pupils, are not as high as they could be.
- Despite the school's efforts, the attendance of some pupils is of concern because they fail to attend school regularly.
- Teachers do not adapt learning tasks promptly when pupils either need more support or greater challenge. This slows progress.
- The school development plan does not identify specifically enough which aspects of teaching need to be improved, nor the measurable milestones for leaders to check on progress.

The school has the following strengths

- More recently, leaders and the proprietor have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. This includes the recruitment of qualified teachers.
- The curriculum is personalised to engage the interests of individual pupils. Their personal development is particularly well promoted.
- There are trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are positive about school.
- The curriculum in the sixth form helps students to achieve functional skills which prepare them well for the next stage in work or college.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils are looked after well and report that they feel safe.
- The teaching of outdoor adventurous activities is a strength. This helps to develop pupils' resilience and positive self-esteem effectively.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make better progress in their learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers receive high-quality training and professional development to enhance their subject knowledge, especially in relation to academic subjects
 - all pupils' work is well planned and carefully matched to their needs and capabilities
 - teachers provide opportunities to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding so that the most able pupils make faster progress and attain higher standards
 - teachers check pupils' understanding more frequently during lessons and adapt their teaching input quickly as and when necessary.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that the school development plan includes specific areas for improvement related to teaching, with clear actions for improvement and measurable success criteria.
- Implement further strategies to increase pupils' overall attendance so that all pupils attend school regularly.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not ensured that teaching enables all pupils to make good progress. Consequently, some of the independent school standards relating to the quality of education provided at the school are not met.
- The school development plan sets out broadly what leaders aim to achieve in order to improve the school's overall provision. However, it does not go far enough in identifying which aspects of teaching need improving. As a result, some of the common issues with teaching, such as limited challenge for the most able pupils, are not rectified as quickly as they could be.
- The proprietor invests in staff training and development. A comprehensive induction programme for all staff ensures that they are initially well prepared for their roles. More recently, in response to the need to improve teaching, several staff have been enrolled on an accredited teaching and learning course. Nevertheless, not all staff have the full range of skills and knowledge yet to support pupils effectively in particular subjects.
- The executive headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders recognise the weaknesses in the quality of teaching and have already implemented an effective plan to begin to address shortfalls. Early indicators suggest that this work is having an increasingly positive impact on teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The proprietor has a comprehensive understanding of the school's performance and a clear, ambitious vision for its future. He is kept fully informed of the school's progress through weekly meetings with the executive headteacher. The proprietor uses this information well to shape the future direction of the school.
- Over the last 12 months, leaders and managers have raised their expectations of staff. Leaders now hold teachers to account rigorously for their performance. They monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely, and provide helpful feedback to teachers to improve their practice. Most act on this advice promptly, which is leading to better teaching and learning.
- The education managers have an in-depth understanding of what is needed to support each pupil's personal development. Before pupils start at the school, they carry out home visits to gather useful information which assists with the smooth transition process. They work closely with teachers and other external agencies to ensure that their needs are catered for effectively. This approach contributes well to sustainable improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- The school's broad curriculum is tailored carefully to pupils' individual needs and interests. For example, one pupil with a passion for art studied the work of various famous artists then produced a quality drawing based on the work of Lowry. There is, rightly, an emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in English, mathematics and information technology, which helps to prepare them adequately for the workplace or the next stage of their education.
- Pupils experience a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including horse riding, golf and mountain biking. Staff plan these sessions well and pupils are able to articulate

clearly what they have learned. These experiences, combined with visits to places of interest, contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Staff have established positive relationships with parents and carers, who speak favourably about what the school offers their children and the progress they are making. They report that their children are happy at school and show more encouraging attitudes towards learning.
- The proprietor has commissioned the support of an external educational adviser to provide an independent view of the school's work and help validate leaders' judgements. Leaders have responded quickly and positively to any suggestions for improvement, implementing them without delay.
- The information about the school's age range and school capacity is currently incorrect on the Department for Education's 'Get information about schools' (GIAS) website.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are ever vigilant to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. When they do have any concerns, they act promptly and report their observations to the relevant statutory agencies. Those responsible for leading safeguarding are appropriately trained. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding about a wide range of child protection issues. Record-keeping is thorough and stored securely.
- The school has a detailed and appropriate safeguarding policy which takes into account the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. While the school does not have a website, the policy is made available to parents on request.
- Staff work closely with a range of other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the best support and provision to meet their needs. One representative from an external agency spoke to an inspector very positively about the work of the school in supporting vulnerable pupils. Pupils are kept safe through the rigour of leaders' actions.
- Leaders and the proprietor have completed safer recruitment training. They ensure that the appointment process for all new staff is thorough. Leaders are rigorous in carrying out all pre-employment checks to satisfy themselves that all staff are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable and not yet consistently good. It is dependent on the skills and expertise of the individual teacher. Where the teacher's subject knowledge is strong, teaching is typically more effective and pupils make better progress.
- Teachers' planning is less well developed for academic subjects compared to outdoor adventurous activities. Sometimes, teachers do not take sufficiently into account pupils' prior achievements, or plan with a clear progression in mind. In some instances, pupils complete a series of low-level worksheets which provide little in terms of challenge.

- Most teachers are unqualified. Their lack of specific subject knowledge in academic subjects sometimes holds back pupils from achieving well. For example, an overemphasis on teaching written methods in mathematics results in pupils not developing their mental calculation skills sufficiently well.
- Pupils complete regular tests which are used to identify aspects of learning they are having difficulty with. Usually, teachers use this information effectively to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding. At other times, teachers set work which is not as well matched to pupils' needs. This is especially true of the most able pupils, who are often asked to complete work which is too easy.
- During lessons, teachers' guidance to pupils is of variable quality. Too few teachers adapt the learning task rapidly enough in response to pupils' answers or questions. This hinders pupils from making good progress in some subjects.
- The teaching of writing is improving. Pupils write for a range of purposes and show basic skills in sentence construction, grammar and the use of correct punctuation. Pupils write imaginatively. For example, pupils created their own horror stories and demonstrated a good awareness of audience.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read and support them well with developing their understanding of words. All pupils sign up to the local library and make use of this facility to borrow books. Most pupils show positive attitudes towards reading.
- Staff work hard to try and make pupils' learning purposeful and engaging. Work in English, geography, history and art is often linked to pupils' personal interests. This helps to keep pupils focused and achieve well. For example, a pupil developed his reading skills, following a set of instructions accurately to build a model of a Japanese fighter plane.
- The teaching of outdoor pursuits, such as climbing and archery, is a strength because staff have the necessary accredited knowledge and expertise to teach these activities. Sessions are well planned and enable pupils to develop new skills and build resilience. Teachers also help pupils to practise and develop their numeracy skills through outdoor activities, such as totalling a score card in golf.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Many pupils enter the school with poor attitudes to learning and low self-esteem. Staff work hard to help pupils identify their strengths, develop confidence and recognise the value of education. This has a positive effect on their engagement with school and learning.
- Pupils participate in an extensive range of activities and visits which strengthen their personal development. For example, pupils work towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, learn new physical activities and take part in community volunteering.
- The school's comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education enables pupils to learn effectively about how to make healthy choices, recognise risky behaviours and understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- Staff invest time in getting to know pupils really well. They nurture and encourage pupils

during sessions to enable them to succeed. Over time, pupils gain the skills to learn independently and face challenges positively.

- Pupils report that bullying is rare. They have a good understanding about the different forms bullying can take and know how to protect themselves when online.
- Pupils spoke to inspectors, with conviction, about how staff help them to realise that they can be successful, that education is important, and that adhering to rules and laws are imperative if one is to make a positive contribution to society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Many pupils start at the school with very low levels of attendance. For some pupils, their attendance improves over time. However, for others, despite the efforts of staff to encourage them to attend regularly, levels of persistent absence remain high.
- While pupils' books show that they engage with their tasks well, a few pupils are sometimes careless in the way they present their work. However, staff remind pupils about presenting work neatly.
- Leaders track pupils' behaviour closely and agree short-term behaviour targets which pupils work towards achieving. This system is effective and supports pupils to improve their behaviour over time. The majority of pupils settle quickly to tasks and focus on their work, requiring few prompts from staff to keep on track.
- There is usually a calm, purposeful atmosphere in the school building. Pupils are appropriately supervised and behave well in lessons and during less structured times, such as breaktime. Staff manage any infringements of the school's behaviour policy well. They use good behaviour management strategies to reduce the risk of a situation escalating.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils join the school, often part way through the academic year, after a prolonged period of disrupted education. On entry to the school, many pupils, although not all, have low attainment compared to others nationally of similar ages. Outcomes are not consistently good because the quality of teaching is too variable.
- While leaders make every attempt to collect pupils' assessment information from placing schools, the information is often patchy because pupils have missed a lot of education. Staff carry out baseline assessments in English, mathematics and information technology on entry to the school to establish clear starting points.
- Leaders use initial assessment information to determine the most appropriate learning pathway. Many pupils undertake and achieve functional skills qualifications. The school has recently introduced GCSE courses in English and mathematics.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that some pupils make good progress over time. These are usually pupils with the lowest levels of attainment. The most able pupils do not make enough progress because teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils' social and emotional well-being is effectively supported, which promotes good

levels of confidence and self-esteem. This enables pupils to continue into the next stage of their education or enter the world of work successfully.

- Pupils achieve well in outdoor adventurous activities because of effective teaching sessions taught by well-qualified staff. These activities help to enhance pupils' team-working skills and their determination to succeed. Many pupils go on to achieve nationally accredited awards for these physical pursuits.
- Staff help pupils to recognise the importance of reading for a purpose. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to reading and are able to talk about their favourite books. Leaders are in the process of developing the school's approach to reading to make it more structured and effective.

Sixth form provision

Requires improvement

- Only a very small number of students join the sixth form each year. Students' outcomes and behaviour are not reported as this could potentially identify students.
- In line with the leadership of the rest of the school, leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. This is because the quality of teaching is not yet good. However, leaders show determination to provide learning experiences for students, appropriate to their individual needs, which will prepare them well for their next steps in life.
- Sixth-form students follow a similar curriculum to pupils in the rest of the school, with programmes focusing on essential skills in English, mathematics and information technology. This supports students well in developing their wider employability skills and helps them secure the necessary confidence to make informed decisions about their future.
- The school has recently registered to offer vocational courses, including the level 3 BTEC in outdoor adventure.
- Students receive good, independent careers guidance and advice. Staff ensure that students are supported well to make the transition to the workplace or college.

School details

Unique reference number	137956
DfE registration number	860/6039
Inspection number	10041366

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Paul Ball
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Andrew McCreedy
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,525
Telephone number	01902 790385
Website	N/A
Email address	andrew.mccreedy@peakpursuits.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–3 March 2016

Information about this school

- Peak Education is a small independent special school situated in Gailey, close to Cannock in Staffordshire. It provides full-time and part-time education for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. Most have been excluded or were at high risk of being excluded from their previous school.

- The school is part of Peak Activity Services, a company which specialises in outdoor education and alternative provision for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- An individual proprietor owns the school. The executive headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running and organisation of the school, supported by two education managers. The executive headteacher divides his time between overseeing Peak Education and Peak Education Stoke, which is a separate, registered independent school.
- Since the school's last inspection, pupils are no longer based at the second site in Audley. This building is used for administration purposes only.
- There is no governing body, although the proprietor draws on the expertise of an educational consultant to advise on matters.
- The school does not have a website.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school's last standard inspection was 1–3 March 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed several lessons. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work from subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their experiences of school. Inspectors heard a few pupils read, either in lessons or individually. Inspectors asked pupils about their reading habits.
- An inspector held a meeting with a group of staff to ask them about safeguarding arrangements and the support they received for their professional development.
- An inspector conducted a tour of the school site to look at the building and premises.
- The lead inspector met with the school's proprietor.
- There were insufficient comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, in order to make an evaluation. Inspectors considered three comments from Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation provided by the headteacher, including school policies, schemes of work, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, and pupils' examination results.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Maybank

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school:
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 children looked after, 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 www.gov.uk/ofsted.

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 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018