

Inspection of Peak Education - Audley

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

Inspection dates: 15–17 June 2021

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?

The school's core purpose is to re-engage pupils with their learning. Leaders achieve this through a blend of outdoor activities and classroom-based learning. The outdoor activity curriculum builds pupils' self-esteem, raises their confidence and improves their social skills. Pupils rise to the challenges presented to them in their learning.

Pupils enjoy school and they say that they feel safe. Leaders and staff place pupils at the heart of all that they do. Staff are determined that all pupils should succeed and make sure they do. Pupils say, 'School is brilliant because the teachers look after us'.

Pupils understand the consequences of their behaviour, both positive and negative. Pupils' behaviour can be challenging at times. Leaders and staff manage challenging behaviour well. This helps to calm pupils and re-engage them in learning.

Incidents of bullying are not common, but they do occur. Pupils have confidence in staff and say that issues are sorted out straight away.

When pupils join the school, they have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Teachers pinpoint where these gaps are. They make the most of every opportunity to fill them so that pupils know and remember more.

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

The school's curriculum has two strands: classroom-based learning and the outdoor activities element. Pupils enjoy the outdoor activities, including kayaking and rock climbing. Leaders use the outdoor activities to help pupils to be more successful and engaged in the classroom. However, leaders are yet to check if the two aspects of the curriculum are linked closely enough and are achieving the intended outcomes.

A wide range of subjects are taught in school-based lessons. Curriculum plans are in place. Some of these plans, such as mathematics, are based on published schemes. In other subjects, leaders and teachers have worked together to create their own curriculum plans. These plans are well ordered and map out what pupils will learn. Lessons build on what pupils have learned before. In most cases, the plans are clear, specific and support teachers in the planning of lessons. However, some plans in subjects other than English and mathematics are in the early stages of being used. Leaders do not have a detailed overview of whether the plans are fully effective yet.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. It is at the centre of the curriculum. Pupils in the primary phase are taught phonics daily. Staff teach phonics well and match reading books to pupils' phonic ability. Pupils are well supported with their reading. Leaders have built the English curriculum around a range of high-quality texts. This helps older pupils to improve their reading comprehension skills. Teachers work hard to develop pupils' love of reading, as this is a challenge for many pupils.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These are linked to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. In many instances, this means that pupils have large gaps in their knowledge and skills. When pupils start at the school, teachers check what they know and what they do not know. External agencies support this process when required. This information is used well to develop teaching plans.

Teachers explain new ideas in a clear way that pupils can follow. Teachers ask questions to explore what pupils know and what they have learned. Teachers use this information to adapt their explanations and teaching. This supports pupils' learning effectively and helps them to make progress.

Every pupil has a keyworker. Keyworkers help pupils to stay focused and engaged in their learning. They do this well. Keyworkers also support pupils with their social and emotional needs. A strong sense of pastoral care exists throughout the school. This helps to support pupils' social and emotional needs.

Staff work successfully with pupils to prepare them for the next stage of their education. This includes preparations for Year 10 in other settings and opportunities to explore future career choices.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school, but some pupils do not attend often enough. Despite their best efforts, leaders are aware that, for some pupils, they need to rethink their actions to try and encourage these pupils to attend school regularly.

Pupils are very accepting of the different types of families and relationships that exist in society. In fact, pupils struggle to understand why some people would see difference as a problem. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when working online. Pupils' understanding of democracy and other religions, beliefs and cultures is more limited. Their understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle is less developed. However, some pupils have only been attending the school for a short period of time and have not had the opportunity to experience the school's full curriculum.

The proprietor and leaders have a detailed understanding of the independent school standards. Leaders support staff, but they also carry out checks to make sure that everyone is doing their job properly. Leaders at all levels, supported by staff, are determined to improve the school further. They are doing this successfully.

Staff value the support they receive from leaders and they enjoy working at the school. Teachers and keyworkers are well trained. This helps them to do their jobs better. Staff say that workload is manageable and that leaders are considerate of their well-being.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school considers and plans for the needs of pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a whole-school priority. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received relevant training. As a result, staff are very aware of what they need to do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. All staff take safeguarding seriously. Pupils feel safe in the school. They say this is because the staff look after them. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school. When required, the school works with external agencies to provide additional support for pupils.

The safeguarding policy meets current government guidance and is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, other than English and mathematics, new curriculum plans were introduced at the start of this academic year. This means that leaders and teachers have not yet had the chance to review their effectiveness, including how well they link to the outdoor activities curriculum. Leaders need to review the curriculum plans, including whether the outdoor learning activities support pupils' class-based learning effectively, to ensure that they are helping pupils to make strong progress in their learning across the curriculum.
- Leaders are working hard to improve attendance across the school. However, for some pupils, leaders' efforts are having limited success. Some pupils are not attending school as often as they should. Leaders need to review the effectiveness of their actions to improve attendance, and further develop them, so that all pupils 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	146078
DfE registration number	860/6048
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10193311
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	14
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Paul Ball
Headteacher	Jonathan Gillie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85 to £295 per day
Telephone number	01782 284329
Website	www.peakeducation.co.uk
Email address	peakeducation.audley@peak.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first full standard inspection. The school was registered by the DfE on 10 December 2018.
- The school undertook a material change inspection on 16 October 2019 to change the age range from 7 to 11 to 7 to 14. The school now caters for boys and girls from Year 3 to Year 9.
- Most pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The headteacher is also the headteacher of Peak Education – Stoke.
- The school makes use of registered alternative provision provided by The Beechfield School and In-tuition Holistic Education. Ofsted separately inspects these two providers.
- The school makes use of unregistered alternative provision provided by Alpha Learning Staffordshire. Ofsted does not inspect this provision.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- The lead inspector held regular meetings with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the education manager, the special educational needs coordinator and the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and careers.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors focused on reading, mathematics, geography and personal, social, health and economic education. They met with groups of pupils, the curriculum leader and teachers to talk about the quality of education at the school.
- Inspectors made visits to classrooms.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences at school. They looked at pupils' work in a range of different subjects to see how well the curriculum is applied.

- The lead inspector met with a group of keyworkers to discuss their views about the school.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. Inspectors checked that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively across the school.
- A member of the inspection team visited the unregistered alternative provider that the school uses.
- The lead inspector considered the two free-text responses received during the inspection. There was a limited response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which meant it could not be accessed.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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