

Inspection of Peak Education – Cannock

Longford Road, Cannock WS11 0LD

Inspection dates: 6–8 July 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **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?

Peak Education staff want the very best for every pupil. They treat each pupil as a unique individual. Leaders draw up well-crafted plans that recognise pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs well. Staff use these to help pupils re-engage with education. This builds pupils' confidence and resilience. Leaders rightly focus on preparing pupils for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Staff expect pupils to behave well and work hard. They have high expectations. When pupils struggle with their behaviour, staff are patient and deal with pupils with sensitivity. This means that incidents of poor behaviour do not disrupt the day-to-day life of school. Staff help pupils learn to make better decisions, rather than simply imposing sanctions. Pupils know that staff care about them. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that staff will deal with instances of bullying swiftly.

Leaders have constructed a curriculum that meets pupils' needs. It is ambitious and blends academic study with vocational courses well. Leaders have placed numeracy and literacy at the heart of their plans. Staff work with each pupil on a curriculum that challenges and interests them. Staff celebrate pupils' successes.

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

Leaders have devised a broad curriculum. It has four distinct aspects. It is made up of an academic and vocational element, an enrichment programme and an outdoor activity programme. When a pupil joins the school, staff meet with them to build an appropriate curriculum that blends these elements together. This is based on the needs of the pupil and their interests. Leaders make sure it is suitably ambitious. The initial primary purpose is to help the pupil re-engage with education. Leaders' tailored approach with pupils is successful in doing this.

Many pupils have significant gaps in their learning. These have often been caused by extensive periods out of education. This is particularly evident in pupils' literacy and numeracy. Leaders have therefore built elements of literacy and numeracy into each subject. In mathematics, leaders have developed a detailed and well-sequenced curriculum. Teachers have the flexibility to address gaps in pupils' knowledge in the context of new learning. As a result, pupils can link their learning, rather than mathematics being an ad-hoc collection of disconnected knowledge.

In English, leaders are clear about what they want pupils to learn. The curriculum covers the essential elements, so pupils develop their reading and writing well. Staff have the appropriate knowledge and expertise, and they adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' literacy improves. However, the current curriculum does not promote a love of reading sufficiently well. It does not develop pupils' access to and understanding of a range of books from different genres, periods and authors.

The vocational curriculum is a strength. Pupils can choose from a wide range of subjects, from health and beauty to construction. Leaders adapt curriculum plans in these subjects well. This means that the curriculum meets the needs of each pupil. Pupils have access to high-quality resources that support their learning. Staff have the expertise and experience needed. Pupils' learning builds on what they know and remember. As a result, many successfully complete qualifications in these subjects that enable them to go on to further study.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of leaders' work. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is comprehensive. It strongly supports the school's ethos 'respect yourself, respect all others, respect the environment'. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful and active citizens. Inspectors visited lessons where pupils were learning about the impact of prejudice and discrimination. The wide range of outdoor activities complements this curriculum well. For instance, pupils told inspectors how these helped them learn how to work as a team.

Many staff are relatively new to the teaching profession. They are committed to the school and helping pupils learn. Teachers know their subject well. However, leaders know that some teachers need further training. This will help teachers improve their knowledge of how to teach their subject. Leaders have extensive plans in place to do this further.

Pupils' attendance remains a challenge for leaders. Much of this is rooted in pupils' previous experience of education. However, leaders are determined to improve this and are working tirelessly to do so. Staff's work to improve pupils' attendance is effective. They employ a range of strategies. This rightly remains a high priority for leaders.

Careers education is effective. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. All pupils attend weekly careers lessons. A small team of appropriately trained staff lead these lessons. Staff explore pupils' aspirations and provide practical information on different careers. Pupils also learn practical skills, such as how to write a job application letter. Many pupils complete relevant work experience. Staff work closely with pupils. They help them attend interviews and complete applications for jobs or college places. Consequently, few pupils leave without future provision in place.

There is a small number of sixth-form students. Pupils only stay on in the sixth form if they can take higher level qualifications than they did in Year 11. Sixth-form provision meets pupils' academic and wider needs well.

Inclusive education practitioners (IEPs) provide support for pupils. IEPs are well trained and know pupils well. They help pupils learn in lessons and support them with their behaviour. Pupils trust them and value their support. They make a significant contribution to pupils' education and well-being.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor holds leaders to account and challenges them to continue to improve the school. He provides effective support to leaders and acts swiftly to make sure that staff have the resources and expertise needed. All of the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. Leaders have introduced thorough procedures and training. Staff are vigilant and report all concerns promptly. Staff know pupils well, so are always alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour that could indicate that they are at risk of harm. Leaders keep a watchful eye and act on concerns swiftly. They work closely with outside agencies when appropriate.

Leaders have made sure that the school site is a safe place for pupils.

The safeguarding policy takes account of current government guidance. It is available on the school's website.

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

- In most subjects, the curriculum is well ordered and ambitious and meets the needs of pupils. This helps teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. To deliver these plans effectively, teachers must have a detailed knowledge of the subject matter being taught and the way in which pupils learn. Leaders should ensure that curriculum planning in all subjects continues to develop, while further developing teachers' subject expertise.
- Pupils develop their literacy skills well so that they are prepared for the next stage in their education or employment and training. However, many pupils do not read widely enough, nor do they read for pleasure. Leaders and staff should make sure pupils have access to, read and are exposed to books from different genres, authors and styles and promote a love of reading so that pupils read more widely.
- Many pupils start at the school having previously missed large parts of their education through high rates of absence. While at Peak Education, several pupils improve their attendance. However, there are a few pupils whose attendance is not improving. This affects their learning. Staff and leaders need to make sure the importance of good attendance is understood, and pupils' attendance improves.

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	146806
DfE registration number	860/6049
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10193304
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Ball
Headteacher	Sharon Cliff
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,000
Telephone number	01543 622461
Website	www.peakeducation.co.uk
Email address	peakeducation.cannock@peak.co.uk

Information about this school

- This was the first full standard inspection since the school was first registered to admit pupils in September 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- Most of the pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The planned curriculum includes a range of vocational programmes of study. This includes subjects such as motor vehicle maintenance, construction, catering and health and beauty. The building has been adapted to cater for these courses.
- The school is part of Peak Activity Services Limited, a registered company that owns and runs a wide range of outdoor education centres. Pupils attending the school have access to a range of outdoor activities, including climbing and canoeing.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in our evaluation.
- We met with the executive headteacher and headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, other senior leaders and the English, mathematics, PSHE education and careers leaders.
- The lead inspector met the proprietor.
- We focused on English, mathematics, PSHE education and the vocational programmes. We discussed the curriculum design with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and subject leaders, spoke to teachers about pupils' learning and visited a range of lessons in these subjects.
- We toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- We reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school. We looked at school policies, curriculum documents, health and safety documentation and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- We reviewed a range of safeguarding information, including the checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment. We checked the school's safeguarding

policy and spoke to staff about the school's safeguarding procedures. We checked staff's safeguarding training.

- There were no parent free-text comments and no responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The lead inspector considered the 51 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- We spoke informally to current pupils and pupils who had recently left the school.
- We met with staff to discuss their views about the school.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Humphries

Senior Her Majesty's 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 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 <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 2021