

Inspection of Peak Education Stoke

60 Snowhill, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 4LY

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 April 2022

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 Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are positive about their experiences at this school. They say that they learn more because it is calmer and quieter than their previous schools. The proprietor and all staff are determined to help pupils achieve, grow and learn. They work together effectively to help re-engage pupils with their learning.

Prior to starting at the school, most pupils have experienced disruption to their education. Staff help pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning. They take time to explain in lessons so that pupils know what to do. They help pupils develop the ability to express themselves clearly. Staff support pupils to gain appropriate qualifications for the future.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well and follow the agreed rules. Pupils' behaviour can be challenging at times. Staff skilfully de-escalate situations of conflict. They work patiently with individual pupils to help them make better choices. Records show that any bullying is swiftly dealt with.

Many pupils enjoy adventurous activities, such as the climbing wall, kayaking and archery. They develop confidence and improve their social skills. Pupils say that staff know them well. They make time for pupils to talk about anything that causes anxiety. Pupils appreciate the 'chill and chat' sessions.

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

Leaders are deeply committed to helping all pupils to do well personally and academically. Many pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff assess individual pupils carefully to identify gaps in their knowledge and skills. They identify pupils' barriers to learning and behaviour needs. They use this information effectively to design a bespoke curriculum for each pupil.

Since the previous inspection, it is now more typical that pupils join the school in Year 11. Leaders keep the curriculum as broad as possible, despite the short period of time that many pupils are at the school. Pupils study a range of subjects, including art and computing. Regular opportunities for outdoor adventurous learning are built in. Leaders and staff help pupils gain the best qualifications they can in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. They work hard to prepare pupils for further education, training or employment.

Pupils' personal development has a high priority in the school. Leaders put personal, social and health education (PSHE) at the core of the curriculum. Staff teach PSHE well and skilfully thread it into every aspect of the school. Leaders ensure that relationships and sex education is taught effectively. Staff help pupils learn about issues such as consent and healthy relationships. Pupils value these lessons and engage well in the discussions.

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They sequence the learning carefully, so that pupils build on what they can already do. Staff check pupils' understanding to make sure that new concepts are remembered. They teach pupils subject-specific vocabulary. This helps pupils to talk about what they are learning with increasing accuracy.

Leaders support pupils to develop a love of reading, as well as improving their reading skills. Regular reading opportunities are built into the timetable. Staff choose texts that engage and interest pupils as well as challenging them. Pupils talk confidently about Gothic novels they have read, such as 'Frankenstein' and 'The woman in black'. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. For the first time, a group of pupils are studying for a GCSE in English literature. Staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils at the early stages of learning to read. They provide good encouragement. However, some staff require further training in how best to support these pupils in learning to read.

All pupils receive appropriate careers guidance provided by a specially trained adviser. Staff work hard to raise aspirations and ambition in all pupils. Leaders make effective use of alternative providers and local colleges. These settings provide wider opportunities for pupils, including those students in the sixth form. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their college days or what they learn in food technology or music. Sixth-form students continue to benefit from a highly bespoke curriculum. Carefully designed study programmes support leaders' ambition for every pupil to achieve success.

For the most part, the school is calm and well ordered. Staff make their expectations for behaviour clear. Pupils settle quickly to work in lessons. Adults deal with any disruption calmly and sensitively. They understand the reasons why pupils behave the way they do. Leaders have recently introduced a more therapeutic approach to supporting pupils' individual behaviour needs. This is working well. High-quality support and high levels of supervision help pupils understand and manage their emotions more effectively.

Leaders carefully consider how to help pupils understand their role as a citizen. Visits to the theatre, participation in laying a wreath at the war memorial and engaging in National Braille day deepen pupils' awareness of the wider world. During the inspection, pupils showed great empathy at mealtimes for those staff fasting for Ramadan.

Attendance rates remain stubbornly low, despite leaders' best efforts to work with pupils. The attendance of most pupils improves significantly once they join the school. This includes pupils who were previously out of education for some time. Staff quickly follow up any absence, but leaders know that more work is needed to help pupils attend more regularly.

The new proprietor is committed to the further improvement of the school. Leaders ensure that the school consistently meets the independent school standards. A programme of enhancement and refurbishment following a recent fire risk

assessment has started. The buildings provide suitable spaces for learning and socialising. Appropriate resources are available to support pupils' learning. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A strong safeguarding culture exists in the school. The safeguarding policy reflects current government guidance. It is available on the school's website. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and understand the risks that pupils face in their day-to-day lives. Staff use every opportunity to talk with pupils and help them learn how to keep themselves safe. The whole staff team is alert for any signs of concern. Leaders act quickly when a concern is reported. They work closely with external agencies, such as the police and youth offending team, to ensure that pupils get appropriate support.

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

- Not all staff have the right skills to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. This means that at times, the most vulnerable readers are not supported well enough. Leaders should ensure that all staff know how to teach phonics and support early readers effectively.
- Pupils' attendance remains low. Many pupils continue to have gaps in their learning and therefore the ability to catch up is limited due to their poor attendance. Leaders should continue to find ways to improve the attendance of those pupils whose attendance is poor.
- Many pupils join the school towards the end of their secondary education and have limited time to experience a broad curriculum. Leaders should continue to work to ensure that all pupils study a broad curriculum for as long as possible.

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.

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	143653
DfE registration number	861/6013
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10220086
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	13
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	Keys Group
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Jonathan Gillie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,525
Telephone number	01782 284329
Website	www.peakededucation.co.uk
Email address	peakededucation.stoke@peak.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 March 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has changed from Paul Ball to Keys Group. The Department for Education was notified that this change took effect from 22 March 2022.
- The school is registered to provide full- and part-time education of boys and girls aged five to 18. At present, there are no pupils in Year 1 to Year 8. Only a small number of pupils join the sixth form each year.
- The school provides education for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Nearly half the pupils have an EHC plan. Most have been excluded or were at high risk of being excluded from their previous school.
- The school also offers alternative education to pupils from other schools on a part-time basis.
- The headteacher is also the headteacher of Peak Education Audley.
- The school makes use of registered alternative provision provided by Stoke-on-Trent College and W2A. Ofsted inspects these settings separately. The school works with 11 unregistered alternative providers.
- The school's previous full standard inspection took place from 6 to 8 March 2018.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 executive headteacher, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and subject leaders. The lead inspector spoke with those responsible for governance, including the chief executive officer and the regional manager.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, science, computing and PSHE. For each deep dive, these included discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and talked about the books they were reading.

- Inspectors also talked to pupils more generally about their experiences in school. They observed pupils at breaktimes, spoke to them at the start of the school day and saw them at work in a range of lessons.
- Inspectors talked with staff to discuss how they are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, curriculum documents and the school's website.
- Inspectors visited three of the alternative providers.
- In checking safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised documentation, and looked at the school's processes for reporting concerns and the employment checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment.
- Checks were made relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- The lead inspector considered responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Mel Ford	Her Majesty's Inspector

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