

Stafford Hall School

Cheltenham Place, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 0AW

Inspection dates

19–21 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- A new senior leadership team has quickly and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses within the school. The actions they have taken, such as improvements to the teaching and learning, are already improving pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders have ensured that making pupils feel safe is a clear ethos of this school.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of activities, which improves their self-confidence. However, at times learning is not planned to match pupils' interests.
- Teachers receive regular training. Opportunities to receive further guidance are being planned.
- Some teachers waste valuable learning time and do not consider pupils' differing academic needs and learning styles.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development as adults know the pupils well.
- Pupils make good progress in managing their behaviour. This means that the need for physical intervention is rare.
- The levels of pupils' attainment are often low. However, their progress is good, as strong relationships with teachers enable pupils to begin learning again, often after long periods out of education.
- The proprietor is very well informed about how well the pupils are doing. He ensures that the building is very well maintained and that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school has a wealth of information on all aspects of pupils' progress. However, some of it is not yet organised so that adults can use it effectively.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - teachers' continuing professional development is improved further by giving them more opportunities for support and guidance in improving the quality of their teaching
 - improvements in the quality of the curriculum continue so that it is relevant to, and stimulates, pupils' interests
 - information on pupils' emotional and academic needs and progress is organised more effectively so that staff, senior leaders and parents and carers can use it more effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all teachers:
 - plan and evaluate learning so that it considers pupils' differing abilities and learning styles, so that teachers are better informed as to individual pupils' next steps in learning
 - are not wasting valuable learning time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy have formed a new and dynamic leadership team. They have quickly and accurately identified areas for improvement, and the actions they have taken have quickly improved pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils take part in regular activities that improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values. For example, in assemblies, pupils learn and develop an understanding about democracy in an environment where respect for the views of others is fostered well. They are given frequent opportunities to develop a growing understanding of different cultures and religions as they cook and taste foods from other countries and learn about different artists.
- The new senior leadership team has made changes to the curriculum so that it is now broader and more balanced. For example, there is a stronger emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and physical education skills and a firmer knowledge base. The positive effect on pupils' outcomes is evident.
- Leaders have also introduced the opportunity for pupils to take higher-level accredited courses so that the most able pupils' needs are better catered for, as identified at the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of activities such as swimming and visits to the local library. However, senior leaders recognise that improvements are needed in the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum, such as literacy, numeracy, history and geography, so that learning is more relevant, stimulating and interesting to pupils.
- During the inspection, teachers spoke positively of the leadership of the school and of how well they are inspired and supported in their work. For example, they receive training on improving their behaviour management skills to better meet the needs of pupils with autism or in de-escalating tactics.
- The new leadership team has begun to evaluate the quality of teaching and give teachers opportunities to evaluate and improve their own teaching. This is already having a positive effect on the quality of their teaching. However, professional development opportunities for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching, for example by discussing their planning and teaching, moderating the standard of pupils' work and observing others teach, are infrequent. This is hindering the pace at which the quality of teaching can improve.
- All adults that are involved in the care and education of the pupils meet regularly and evaluate the progress pupils are making in all aspects of their development. However, information is not clearly and concisely communicated to those who need it, for example teaching staff, parents and directors. The new leadership team has already identified this area for improvement and has introduced individual learning plans for every pupil, which give a concise picture of emotional and academic targets. They also acknowledge that more needs to be done in this respect.

Governance

- The proprietor is very knowledgeable about every aspect of school life. He receives information daily about what is happening in school.
- The proprietor holds the headteacher to account through monthly reports and meetings which detail every aspect of school life and focus on the needs and progress of every pupil.
- The proprietor is passionate about meeting the needs of these vulnerable pupils. He makes a point of visiting pupils with complex needs, who are often non-verbal, so that he can be reassured that their needs are being met and that they demonstrate that they feel safe and have good relationships with staff.
- The proprietor has ensured that financial planning is good so that the building remains very well maintained and a range of resources and opportunities for pupils to take part in an array of activities are available.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective as the ethos of ensuring that pupils feel and are safe is deeply entrenched in the school. Although there were some minor administrative errors identified and remedied during the inspection, the procedures to ensure the safety of pupils are rigorous. For example, the safeguarding policy on the school website named the previous designated safeguarding lead (DSL). However, all staff questioned knew who the current DSL is, and visitors' badges and a display board in reception had the name and a picture of the current DSL. The revised safeguarding policy is available on the school website and now shows the correct information and follows recent government guidelines.
- The safety of pupils and the need for them to feel safe is paramount to all staff. Staff to pupil ratios are high, and every effort is made to help pupils to be able to communicate any concerns they may have to staff. Each pupil has a small team of adults who they develop good relationships with should they need to share concerns, and other staff know who these people are. For those pupils who are non-verbal, staff help them to develop means of communication, such as by signing or pictures.
- All staff make detailed records of any incidents, and these are analysed and monitored to identify any possible patterns. The DSL reviews all incident reports on the day they occur. She ensures that documentation is fit for purpose and that action is taken if required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers get to know the pupils extremely well and build excellent relationships. This supports pupils in developing the confidence to re-engage in learning. The use of discussion, for example when considering the meaning of emotional language in an English lesson, is used well to help pupils develop their communication skills.
- Some teachers, as seen in an English lesson, question pupils well to help them consolidate their learning and more confidently move on to further learning.

- Teachers use a range of resources which help pupils to learn and gain a greater depth of understanding. For example, in religious education lessons, helpful videos are available, and in mathematics lessons, the use of a variety of resources helps pupils understand about the value of number digits.
- Most teachers plan lessons carefully so that pupils build on the knowledge and skills from previous lessons. However, some teachers do not do this and instead are more focused on how well pupils complete an activity, rather than the skills and knowledge to be gained and ensuring that learning is matched to ability needs. This prevents some teachers from being successful in planning the next steps of pupils' learning.
- Occasionally, a small number of pupils become disinterested in their learning. This is because at times they spend too much time waiting for lessons to begin and because their style of learning, for example visual or kinaesthetic, and differing ability needs have not been considered by the teacher.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Although it takes time, many of the pupils who are non-verbal when they join the school learn to communicate with others. This is due to the good relationships they develop with teaching staff and because staff are very aware of things that may heighten pupils' anxieties.
- Pupils learn a range of skills, as the staff support them in completing a range of accredited qualifications, for example how to be independent in a kitchen or how to cross the road. This helps them learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.
- Senior leaders work well with the local authority, and communication between them both is good. This means that pupils can take advantage of careers support from the local authority. Pupils also develop skills well as they work with local charities and take part in volunteer work.
- Pupils gain independent skills in several ways as they take responsibility for their movement around the school. For example, pupils wear wrist bands, as do adults, which allow them to open specific doors. Each wrist band is individually programmed so that it matches the pupil's ability to manage themselves in different situations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. For the majority of pupils, the number of recorded behavioural incidents and the need for physical intervention reduce after they have settled into the school, this demonstrates improvements in the pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils make very good progress in developing their attitudes to learning. For example, they quickly become willing to attend lessons and work alongside a peer group.

- The teaching staff complete detailed behaviour plans so that all those adults who support pupils know their needs, for example how best to reduce any anxieties which may lead to unwanted behaviours.
- Pupils are polite to visitors, and a large majority are very willing to engage in conversations with visitors about their work.
- Pupils who can independently access the school demonstrate good levels of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Although the attainment of pupils in the school is lower than that of other pupils of the same age nationally, they make good progress from their starting points.
- In some subjects, pupils make excellent progress, such as in music where pupils learn to play the ukulele.
- Pupils work in small groups, and the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants helps them make good progress. For example, in an English lesson during the inspection, staff were observed adapting their intervention approaches with pupils to reflect the different pace of learning required by some pupils.
- Despite having very complex needs and low starting points, half of the pupils who have left the school have moved on to other training or education. One pupil was able to return to mainstream education. This demonstrates the good progress pupils make in their learning and their ability to engage in learning again.
- Pupils read well and regularly. They are encouraged to read texts in lessons, to make use of the library corner and to become an active member of the local library. Pupils who read aloud in lessons do so with fluency.
- Evidence of the work pupils have completed in a range of subjects, including mathematics and English, shows that they study a wide range of work. In mathematics, they clearly use what they have learned in different circumstances to deepen their understanding, for example in problem-solving scenarios.
- Most pupils leave the school having gained a range of accredited units of study, preparing them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The qualification level of these accredited courses has been increased in recent years so that the most able pupils have access to higher levels of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	142324
DfE registration number	381/6016
Inspection number	10061289

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 residential special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Niall Kelly
Chair	Niall Kelly
Headteacher	Mark Wright
Annual fees (day pupils)	£161,500
Telephone number	01422 305910
Website	https://youngfoundations.com/stafford-hall-school/
Email address	Staffordhall.admin@youngfoundations.com
Date of previous inspection	28–30 June 2016

Information about this school

- Stafford Hall School accepts pupils between the ages of 11 to 19 years who have diagnoses of very complex needs, many of which include autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently has 10 pupils on roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan. Nine pupils also attend the residential setting.
- The school is a large Grade II listed building, with a purpose-built extension, set in large, self-contained grounds.
- The school does not use any other alternative education provision.

- The school received its first full standard inspection in June 2016, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy, the head of services, the proprietor and several members of staff during the inspection.
- The inspector observed lessons and looked at pupils' work in their books across a range of subjects with the headteacher.
- The inspector spoke to an independent consultant, members of the clinical therapeutic team and parents during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed behaviour throughout the school day.
- No responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, or its parent text service were received. No responses to the Ofsted staff or pupil questionnaires were received. The inspector spoke to parents and staff during the inspection. Views received were considered.
- The inspector toured the school's buildings inside and out, to check whether the relevant independent school standards are met and that pupils' welfare is considered.
- A range of documentation was examined by the inspector, including policies, the record of safeguarding checks and other safeguarding documentation. All documents relating to the independent school standards were studied and their implementation and effectiveness considered.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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