

Inspection of Stafford Hall School

Cheltenham Place, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 0AW

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Familiar staff greet pupils warmly as they arrive at school. Pupils respond well to the routine of being registered and then independently walking to their classrooms. These well-established actions enable staff to check on how pupils are feeling and to tailor start-of-the-day activities to individual pupils' emotional needs. Pupils are able to make the transition between home and school calmly and so learning starts on time.

Both leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils who attend the school. Individual learning plans are put in place; these closely match pupils' capabilities and wide-ranging needs. Pupils experience success, making progress socially, emotionally and academically during their time in school.

Not all pupils find it easy to manage their behaviour when they first start at the school. Gradually, they learn to trust staff, and this helps them to begin to regulate their feelings and emotions. Over time, the behaviour of individual pupils improves.

Pupils feel safe in school. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that bullying is not a problem in this school. They said that this is because staff would sort out any bullying should it happen.

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

Staff know pupils well, focusing on pupils' abilities not disabilities. They have put together a curriculum that meets the needs of each pupil. This helps pupils to overcome their fears and tackle new things. For example, this year some older pupils have gained, or are working towards, functional skills accreditations in mathematics and English. This is a first for the school, and both staff and pupils are justifiably pleased with this achievement.

Some pupils are non-verbal. Staff are experts in helping these pupils to learn in a nurturing environment. For example, pupils and staff will often start the day with physical activity. This calms and settles pupils for the day ahead. The use of alternative communication such as the sign language, Makaton, helps pupils to communicate with others and enables them to understand when an activity finishes and another starts.

The academic curriculum is delivered each morning. Leaders make sure that pupils have the opportunity to study all areas of the curriculum. The mathematics curriculum is well planned and sequenced to ensure pupils can build on previous learning. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that pupils are provided with learning which stretches and challenges them.

English is planned and taught effectively. Improving pupils' reading has become a recent focus for the school. Leaders have purchased a commercial scheme designed to improve the gaps in pupils' understanding of the sounds letters make. However,

although a small group of pupils are receiving phonics support from trained teachers, other pupils are not supported as effectively. For example, pupils were observed reading to staff who used incorrect letter sounds when trying to help pupils to read a difficult word. This incorrect practice is likely to slow pupils' reading skills, rather than support them to read better.

Teachers are good at identifying gaps in pupils' learning across the curriculum. For example, in science, the teacher starts each topic with a less challenging starter in order to identify any missing learning. Time is also put aside in the afternoon to help pupils catch up. The physical education curriculum develops pupils' social skills and ability to cope in a range of different places including a gym and a public sports facility.

Pupils have a wide range of needs which is reflected in their behaviour. Pupils become dysregulated at times. Records show that this becomes more infrequent the longer pupils remain with the school. The strong relationships that pupils have with staff are key to the respectful culture seen in school.

Staff understand the importance of consistency and routines to pupils. They will often go the extra mile to make sure pupils do not become upset if their routines are disturbed. Despite their very high levels of need, most pupils attend school regularly and usually arrive on time eager to learn.

The school curriculum is enriched with trips to a variety of different places including museums, art galleries and an aquarium. Pupils have opportunities to try a wide range of other experiences. For example, pupils go horse riding, bowling, mountain biking, swimming and walking.

The school promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils and teaches pupils the importance of groups protected by the Equality Act 2010. However, the opportunities that pupils have to develop an understanding of people from different cultures and religions than those reflected in the school community are currently limited. In the past, school leaders ensured that visitors from other religions and cultures visited the school, and pupils also went and visited a range of different places of worship. However, following the distribution caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these visits have stopped. This has reduced pupils' understanding of other faiths and religions.

Staff say they feel valued and happy in their current roles. They say that leaders are appreciative of the job they do and are approachable and caring. Staff said that their workload was manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead, know pupils and their families well. This has enabled them to identify pupils who need extra support. Incidents are appropriately recorded. These records show that leaders work closely

with external agencies when needed.

Staff receive regular safeguarding updates from leaders about issues within the locality of the school. This enables them to be knowledgeable and vigilant when working with vulnerable pupils.

The school's comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe both online and when out in the community. This includes ensuring pupils are aware of dangers such as sexual harassment and alcohol and drug abuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- School leaders have recognised that pupils with the cognitive capacity to read have often missed out on learning phonics in the past. A phonics scheme has been purchased, but too few staff have received the specialist training required to support emerging readers. Phonics training needs to be expanded so that more pupils benefit and improve their reading skills.
- In the past, pupils had greater opportunity to develop an understanding of other faiths and cultures through visits to a range of different places of worship. Visitors from other faiths have also visited the school. During the global pandemic, these visits were stopped. While visits to other places are now being re-established, so far school leaders have been slow to re-establish and develop these community links. Leaders need to do more to ensure that current pupils are given opportunities to develop their understanding of all groups protected by the Equality Act 2010.

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	142324
DfE registration number	381/6016
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10270117
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Young Foundations Ltd
Chair	Niall Kelly
Headteacher	Amran Suleman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,425 to £75,075
Telephone number	01244 740041
Website	https://staffordhallschool.com/
Email address	amran.suleman@youngfoundations.com
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 September 2021

Information about this school

- The school is led by an executive headteacher and head of school.
- There is increased stability in the staff and leadership in comparison with that reported at the time of the previous inspection.
- A board of trustees is now in place and a director of education has been appointed.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. All have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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.

Inspectors discussed any continued 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 head of school and leaders for the quality of education, behaviour and special educational needs. They also met the PSHE lead teacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, physical education and science.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and scrutinised safeguarding documentation. Inspectors reviewed the single central record for the checks made on staff employed at the school.
- A meeting was also held with the proprietor's director of education.
- Telephone meetings were held with the school's improvement partner and the school's consultant educational psychologist.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Penny	Ofsted Inspector

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