

Walton Hall School

Stafford Road, Eccleshall, Stafford, ST21 6JR

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Adequate	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- School governors have not held the school to account for its performance in recent years. They have not challenged school leaders about the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils, including those for whom the school receives additional government funding through the pupil premium.
- Improvements in teaching have been too slow and not enough teaching is good or better. The current strengths in teaching are not being used effectively to support teachers to improve their work.
- Achievement requires improvement, particularly the progress pupils make in developing their reading skills. The systems for monitoring pupils' progress have, until recently, not been fit for purpose.
- The curriculum is hindered by the lack of subject leadership. Some areas of the school, although well resourced, are underused.
- Relationships between a large proportion of staff in the school, including some middle managers, and the headteacher are strained. This has impeded the introduction of systems and procedures to support improvements in teaching. Communication across the staff has also been poor and this has contributed to the slow progress in making improvements.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour and safety are good as pupils feel safe and behaviour is now managed consistently well across the school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in lessons and around the school.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The residential experience impacts significantly on pupils' development. Their quality of life is improved and it expands their experience.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was scheduled as a result of concerns raised around pupils' safety. The local authority issued a Performance Standards and Safety Warning Notice, as set out in Section 60 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, on 15 February 2013, related to concerns around safeguarding, standards, leadership and governance. At the time of this inspection, an acting Chair of the Governing Body had been in post for three days and was due to be replaced imminently by a local authority governor.
- Inspectors observed seven lessons, including four which were joint observations with members of the school's leadership team. Observations included a range of subjects across key stages, covering all abilities. Pupils were also observed around the school at break and lunch times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, several groups of staff, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire which had been completed by a majority of the school's staff.
- Inspectors took account of Parent View, where 26 responses were received. A telephone interview was also held with a parent who requested to talk to an inspector during the inspection.
- Various documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and school improvement plan, data, and minutes from meetings of the governing body, were scrutinised during the inspection. Inspectors also closely scrutinised documents related to child protection and safeguarding.
- The social care regulatory inspectors spent time with pupils in the residence in the evening and early morning. They also held a range of meetings with members of the care staff.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Trevor Hall

Social Care Inspector

Susan Aldridge

Additional Inspector

Julian Mason

Social Care Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average residential special school for pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. Some pupils also have autistic spectrum disorder and some have behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils are housed in three school departments, one for each key stage, and three residential blocks. The sixth form is taught in part of the residential accommodation separate from the main school. The school has the capacity for up to 26 boarders per night. However, boarders generally stay for a maximum of two nights per week.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above the national average. This is extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school serves the whole of Staffordshire. Most pupils are White British.
- The governing body has recently been dissolved and will be reconvened imminently with support from the local authority. There is currently a temporary Chair of the Governing Body in place following the recent resignation of the long-standing Chair.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers receive training and individual feedback on their teaching so that they understand how to make learning in their lessons good or better
 - teachers have a clear understanding of the levels that pupils are working at and know how to use this information to set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils
 - teachers have clear targets for improvement with timescales which reflect the urgency of the school's situation and that these are reviewed regularly for impact on pupils' achievement
 - the outstanding teachers in the school are used to coach and model best practice for other teachers so that all aspire to provide high quality teaching.
- Improve achievement by making sure that:
 - systems for monitoring the progress made by pupils are fully developed so that the school's data is always compared to national data and the school can assess whether pupils are making required progress
 - daily reading sessions continue to be embedded to help pupils improve their reading skills.
- Improve the impact of leaders in the school, by:
 - reviewing the current management structure and establishing a leadership team which meets the needs of the school, including the reintroduction of subject leaders so that all subject areas can be developed fully
 - establishing a system to check pupils' progress accurately over time so that teachers can use

the information to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of all pupils

- reviewing the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met effectively through suitable courses in school or, where appropriate, from external providers
- ensuring that the members of the new governing body understand their role in holding school leaders to account for their work and set leaders clear targets for improving the education provided in the school.

As a result of the inspection of the residence, the following good practice recommendations have been made to improve the residential provision:

- ensure that impact risk assessments of young people made prior to their admission are specific to the residential setting and are updated as new risks emerge
- ensure that all residential staff are provided with additional training in respect of sexually harmful behaviour and emerging sexuality in adolescents, particularly those with learning difficulties
- ensure that all young people's care plans are kept up to date and are reviewed regularly.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Until recently pupils did not make enough progress given their starting points. The most recent data show that the majority of pupils now make or exceed the progress expected of them.
- The school has recently started to compare the progress made by the pupils at Walton Hall with pupils nationally. The school's assessment information shows that pupils make better progress in science and mathematics than in English, and that improvements are required, particularly in reading.
- The progress that pupils make in lessons is very variable. Although improving, this requires improvement to ensure all pupils achieve well. In the sixth form, outstanding progress is being made in some lessons.
- Some of the pupil premium funding has been spent on providing more support for pupils in developing their reading skills. Regular reading sessions have been implemented.
- Pupils' attitudes to reading are positive and, from the few lessons observed, pupils are beginning to make better progress. However, the impact of the use of additional funding has not been formally evaluated by leaders.
- Pupils are able to gain a range of accreditation, including GCSE and vocational options through BTEC qualifications in subjects such as horticulture, motor vehicle technology and music technology. Most pupils achieve qualifications at Entry Level or Level 1, with a very small minority gaining a Level 2 qualification in English and mathematics.
- Communication and numeracy require improvement and this is supported by the evidence from the emerging data and the lessons seen during the inspection.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not good enough across the school, which means that the progress that pupils make in lessons requires improvement. During this inspection the quality of teaching observed ranged from inadequate to outstanding. This reflects the view of teaching held by leaders. Nevertheless, leaders do not use the best teaching in the school to show other teachers what outstanding teaching looks like, so that they can improve.
- Teaching requires improvement because, until recently, too many teachers were not provided with clear guidance on how to improve their lessons. In addition, data is not used properly to allow them to target their teaching effectively. Where teaching is inadequate, teachers do not ensure that tasks and activities are set at the right level for all pupils. In some cases, pupils are disengaged as resources are not used effectively to keep them interested and on task.
- Where teaching is better, the teacher has a clear understanding of what levels the pupils are working at and what they need to do to make progress to the next level. Learning in these lessons is strongly linked to previous lessons and what needs to be learnt next. As a result of this continuity, pupils have positive attitudes to learning as they can clearly see the progress they are making.

- There has not been a coordinated approach to teaching literacy and numeracy or to enabling pupils to practise these skills through other subjects. This means that the teaching of these skills is variable and too reliant on individual teachers levels of skill and knowledge. A significant cause of this is that there are no coordinators for subjects, including for literacy and numeracy, across the school.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is variable. In the best examples, they play an extremely valuable and active part in supporting learning by working with individual pupils or groups, improving communication and assessing pupils' work to help teachers with their planning. However, in a small minority of lessons, some do not support learning as effectively as they might and they are not sufficiently involved in helping to assess the work that pupils are doing. As a result, progress is slower in these lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they have very positive attitudes to their learning and their time in the school and residence. They say that they feel safe in the school and the residence. Pupils show consideration and respect for each other and relationships between pupils and staff are good.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is evident in many aspects of the school's work. During their time in the school pupils increasingly understand the difference between right and wrong, and what types of behaviour are acceptable. The signing choir which performed in assembly shows the inclusive approach that the school has to its pupils.
- It is unusual to see disruption to learning in the school and this is shown by the low numbers of recorded incidents of poor behaviour over time. Records show that incidents of racism or other prejudice-based bullying rarely happen in the school and, when they have happened, they have been tackled well by staff.
- Awareness of individuality and the needs and rights of others is actively promoted. Diversity and difference are explored by the regular celebration of cultural events from different sectors of society. This ensures that the young people recognise and learn to value people's right to individual beliefs and values.
- Responses on Parent View show that there is a significant minority of parents who have negative views of the school's work. However, the majority, nearly 80% agree that their child is safe in the school.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, improvements have been minimal. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have not done enough to tackle teaching that is less than good or achievement that requires improvement. This weak track record of improvement has been further aggravated by deteriorating relationships between a significant proportion of staff and senior leaders.
- Staff enjoy working in the school, but there are severe tensions in relationships which have the potential to compromise the quality of the provision. While all staff who responded to the questionnaire said that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school, over one third of replies were negative about how well the school is led and managed.

- Middle managers, who have been allocated new roles, say that they have not received sufficient support and are not confident in carrying out their new responsibilities. As a result, progress has been too slow in developing what the school offers pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The provision in post-16 meets the needs of pupils well. However, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is suppressed by whole-school issues with leadership and management.
- The leadership and management of the residential provision have been improved by the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced head of care who has been in post since January 2013.
- Child protection and staffing arrangements have been improved following a number of referrals to the local children's safeguarding team, in line with recommendations made. This has improved young people's safety and the way in which the service assesses risk. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and know how to report concerns should they arise. As a result of this, the safeguarding concerns which triggered this inspection were found to have been handled effectively by the school and no further concerns remain.
- Self-evaluation activities have not been strong enough or well enough targeted for areas for improvement to be tackled effectively and speedily. Until recently, teachers have received minimal guidance on how to improve their teaching so that the needs of the pupils are met well. Many teachers have lost sight of what makes good teaching. There has also been some resistance by staff to changes implemented by senior leaders which has minimised their impact.
- Recent appointments to the leadership team have started to address areas where improvements are needed. The headteacher's work with the National Leader for Education has already started to show some impact on the plans for improvement that the school now has in place.
- Recent changes to systems are showing some early impact. The new systems for monitoring the progress made by pupils are now fit for purpose, but more data is needed to allow effective monitoring over time of individuals and groups of pupils, including those for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding. The school has provided some recent training for teachers about better teaching, although it is too early to see the impact of this.
- The range of subjects taught is based on the National Curriculum. Some pupils are provided with good quality opportunities to learn vocational subjects in Key Stage 4. These courses have helped to engage pupils, but their effectiveness has not been evaluated sufficiently by leaders over time. Not enough consideration has been given to how the curriculum can better provide clear progression for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. In these key stages, pupils develop some basic skills of numeracy, literacy and communication in other subjects. However, the school recognises that there needs to be more work to develop these areas. Some training has been provided to support pupils in developing their communication skills. The lack of coordinators for subjects has been a significant obstacle to developing the subject areas.
- The school is now more inclusive than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with more complex needs are now educated alongside their peers. This is one example of how the school promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils. However, the school's data does not yet allow sufficient analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Although the school can identify what the pupil premium funding is spent on, in many areas of expenditure there is no evidence that this funding has made a difference to pupils. For example,

pupil premium funds allocated to the development of a more inclusive curriculum for pupils with more complex needs, has neither been evaluated nor has it specifically focused on pupils for whom that school receives the money.

- The local authority has raised concerns with the school in the form of the warning notice. As a result of these concerns, the governing body has been reorganised and the school now has the support of a National Leader for Education. Due to these actions, leaders and managers recognise that urgent action is required if the school is to improve, including providing the quality of leadership and management which meets the school’s needs.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has not held the school to account for its performance in recent years. Its lack of competence has led to the local authority issuing the statutory warning notice and, as a result, it has been reconstituted as a smaller body. It is clear from discussions with the temporary Chair of Governing Body that this is a reasonable course of action. The governing body has not undertaken its statutory duty to monitor the performance of staff, including the headteacher, effectively. The lack of intervention with regard to the deteriorating relationships in the school has been a key factor in the lack of improvement in the school since the previous inspection. The school currently meets requirements with regard to safeguarding. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are good
Quality of residential provision and care	is adequate
Residential pupils’ safety	is adequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is adequate

- Pupils enjoy their time in Walton Hall’s residential provision. Their experiences impact significantly on their development and their quality of life is improved; the provision expands their experience and encourages positive social interaction.
- Young people’s care needs are well known, but written information is not always updated with adequate frequency or to include changing or emerging needs. Care plans for young people who are not looked after by the local authority do not have a clear reviewing process which is consistently followed.
- Pupils enjoy a focused service that effectively supports them to achieve as well as have an enjoyable and social stay. Staff are suitably qualified, competent and caring. However, additional training needs, particularly in respect of sexually harmful behaviour and emerging sexuality, have been identified as necessary. This training has not yet been delivered.
- While in residence, young people experience an inclusive environment where staff actively promote social engagement and interaction. This means that young people enjoy high quality relationships while undertaking a variety of social and domestic routines. Staff skilfully adjust their communication and engagement to ensure that each young person is encouraged to participate.
- Staff comment favourably on the recent appointment of a new head of care. In particular, they value the positive impact this has had on their ability to provide the young people with a safe, caring and enjoyable residential experience.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	124507
Social care unique reference number	SC038732
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406249

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	40
Number of boarders on roll	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Westwood
Headteacher	Duncan Gorwood
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2011
Telephone number	01785 850420
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Email address	office@waltonhallschool.net

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