

Amberleigh Therapeutic School

The Oaks, Redhill, Telford, Shropshire TF2 9NZ

Inspection dates

3–5 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor's and leaders' understanding of the independent school standards is not secure. Consequently, there are several unmet standards.
- Teaching is not consistently good because it is not planned well enough to meet the needs of all pupils. Some pupils, notably the most able, find some work too easy.
- Leaders' systems for checking on the quality of teaching are considerably underdeveloped. This means that leaders do not identify and resolve weaknesses in teaching quickly enough.
- Not all pupils are given work that is matched to their ability and, as a result, they do not make good progress.
- The behaviour of a few pupils has an adverse effect on the learning of other pupils.
- Leaders have only a partial understanding about how much progress pupils are making. As a consequence, they cannot be sure that pupils are achieving their potential.
- Governors do not challenge leaders or check on the quality of education provided with sufficient rigour.
- The curriculum does not include sufficient emphasis on teaching pupils about different faiths and cultures.
- The leadership of special educational needs does not contribute well to the progress made by pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has an understanding of the challenges the school faces and has begun to take steps to address these.
- Staff work collaboratively as a team and are keen to improve their practice.
- Staff work hard to develop positive, nurturing relationships with pupils. This builds pupils' self-esteem.
- Pupils are given an active role in decision-making in the school. Their views are valued.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and governance on teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - the proprietor, leaders and members of the governing body understand and meet all of the independent school standards
 - leaders develop effective systems for establishing an accurate assessment of each pupil's attainment on entry and that their progress is tracked carefully
 - leaders use checks on teaching and pupils' progress to identify and quickly address aspects of teaching that need improvement
 - governors monitor the school's performance and rigorously hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes
 - leaders with responsibility for special educational needs and/or disabilities carefully monitor and evaluate the provision for pupils with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs
 - leaders provide teachers with training and professional development to equip them with the necessary skills to teach effectively
 - the curriculum includes well-planned opportunities to widen pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers carefully consider pupils' starting points when planning learning so that activities are appropriately challenging, especially for the most able pupils
 - all teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively so that any disruptive behaviour is quickly dealt with to prevent interruptions to pupils' learning
 - teachers' planning takes full account of any special educational needs and/or disabilities that a pupil may have, especially those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - leaders improve the quality of record-keeping for behaviour incidents, and analyse the effectiveness of sanctions and/or consequences
 - incidents of alleged bullying are accurately recorded and followed up consistently.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
 - involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time

- shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
- demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that principles are actively promoted which further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures (paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(v)).
- The proprietor must ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure that:
 - following an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, a copy of the report of the inspection (if it has been sent to the proprietor) is published and maintained on the school's internet website, and provided to the parents of each registered pupil, by any date specified by the body who conducted the inspection
 - particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language are made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate (paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor and leaders have a limited knowledge of the independent school standards. This has a negative impact on pupils' academic development. They have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher joined the school in March 2016. Since this time, she has identified and begun to address shortcomings in the school's provision, ranging from pupils' poor behaviour to a curriculum that was too narrow. The headteacher has been successful in appointing an entirely new teaching team. Leaders have started to improve behaviour and attendance, and strengthened the curriculum.
- Leaders do not have in place effective systems to lead improvements in the quality of teaching. Leaders' action plans to improve and develop teaching are too general, and do not clearly identify which aspects of teaching require improvement. Consequently, leaders do not address weaknesses in teaching quickly enough. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' progress.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of learning is not secure because leaders take insufficient account of pupils' progress from their starting points. While leaders have recently put in place new systems to track pupils' achievements, these are undeveloped. Leaders do not yet use the assessment information well to obtain an accurate analysis of pupils' outcomes.
- The school development plan lacks the necessary detail to support effective improvement in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. While the plan identifies broad priority areas, leaders do not check the school's performance systematically.
- The leadership of special educational needs is in its infancy. The leader does not have a clear oversight of the needs of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The leader does not have sufficient time to carry out her role effectively, only spending one or two days a month at the school. This means that the school does not meet the needs of these pupils as well as they should.
- In the recent past, leaders have addressed some shortcomings in the breadth of the curriculum. Pupils now experience greater diversity in the range of subjects they study. Pupils spoke favourably about computing and food technology lessons. The proprietor has invested in new resources for these subjects which support pupils' learning well.
- Leaders enrich the curriculum through planned visits and visitors that support pupils' personal and academic development. For example, pupils gained an insight into restaurant management following a visit to a local pizza company. Currently, there are no extra-curricular activities available for pupils.
- The headteacher has ambitions for what she wants to achieve. Since her appointment, the headteacher has increased the pace of change to bring about improvements to the school's provision. However, there still much to do.
- Staff are proud to work at the school. This is because the headteacher has worked hard to establish a group of teaching staff who work together well as a team, show

commitment and have developed a deep understanding of the personal and social challenges the pupils face. Staff are eager to seek feedback and improve their teaching.

- There has been a change of proprietor since the last inspection. The name on the Department for Education (DfE)'s 'Get information about schools' website does not match that of the current proprietor.

Governance of the school

- Since the headteacher's appointment, a new system of governance has been introduced. All members of the governing body are part of Amberleigh Care's senior management team, with the exception of one external consultant. However, the work of the governing body does not provide enough challenge to senior leaders about pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. There is limited scrutiny of the school's work and a lack of independent oversight. Consequently, governance of the school is not effective because governors have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Governors have a good working knowledge of some aspects of the school's work because they visit regularly. There is a termly monthly management meeting that deals mainly with operational matters. For example, governors have a knowledge of safeguarding issues because it is a standing item on the monthly agenda. The sole independent governor, a specialist adviser, meets with the headteacher termly to discuss the school's progress. Minutes of the meetings from the last two visits were not available at the time of the inspection. It is therefore difficult to judge how effective these meetings are in holding the headteacher to account for pupils' outcomes and the school's performance.
- Governors, including the proprietor, are very committed and closely involved with the day-to-day management of the school. They contribute to the school's strategic direction and have supported a review of the curriculum and an overhaul of school resources. They are working hard to develop stronger working partnerships with parents and carers that benefit the pupils' personal and academic development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy published on its website that has regard to the current government guidance. Staff implement this policy effectively to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff are clear about the procedures to follow if a pupil may be at risk of harm. They liaise particularly well with parents and carers, and other agencies, to support and protect pupils. Pupils reported to the inspector that they feel safe in school.
- Leaders carry out the appropriate checks when recruiting and appointing staff to reduce the risk of unsuitable adults working with children. For example, leaders ensure that any gaps in a prospective candidate's employment history are thoroughly checked.
- Leaders provide comprehensive safeguarding training for all staff encompassing a broad range of topics including child protection, first aid and fire safety. Staff have attended training in relation to the 'Prevent' duty that helps them to protect pupils who may be at risk of radicalisation and extremism. Staff apply their safeguarding knowledge and understanding well to keep pupils safe.

- The school building is generally well maintained and kept free from hazards. Leaders ensure that comprehensive risk assessments are completed and that they put control measures in place to reduce the risk of harm to pupils, staff and visitors. Leaders review these risk assessments at appropriate time intervals to ensure that they remain current.
- The school's admission register does not meet requirements because it does not include all the required information. For example, the register does not contain information about pupils who move schools. However, the missing information does not compromise the safety of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Weaknesses in leadership mean that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not improving quickly enough. Some teaching is very effective, captures the attention of pupils well and enables them to make good progress. However, at other times, teaching is laborious, fails to engage and slows pupils' progress. The lack of a cohesive approach to improving teaching means that effective practice is not shared with others.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are inconsistent and sometimes too low. Some pupils, particularly the most able, spend too long doing easy work that does not build on and extend their prior knowledge. At other times, pupils can select from different levels of difficulty and the work is appropriately challenging.
- Pupils who have already mastered a particular idea or topic do not have the opportunity to deepen and extend their knowledge and understanding. As a result, they make less progress and do not achieve their potential. This is particularly the case with the most able pupils.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils sometimes have too few opportunities to develop their skills of mathematical reasoning. Consequently, pupils complete a mathematical process without understanding fully what they are doing.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessments of prior learning to ensure that they match tasks to pupils' individual needs and abilities well. Consequently, some pupils do not receive the challenge they need to help them progress quickly in their learning.
- Staff do not cater for the academic needs of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan consistently well. Planning for these pupils does not take into account fully their specific needs. This means that teachers do not focus sharply enough on supporting pupils to achieve their potential.
- Sometimes, when teaching a new concept, teachers' explanations are unclear. This hampers the teacher's ability to present new knowledge to pupils in a way that they easily understand, and slows their learning.
- The quality of information parents receive about their child's education is variable. In some instances, personal education plans for children looked after are of poor quality and do not provide sufficient details about what pupils should be working towards. However, the daily dialogue between parents and school staff at the start of each school day is productive and helps ensure a smooth transition from home to school.
- All staff work extremely hard to develop warm, trusting relationships with pupils. This has a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to try to succeed.

- Where teaching is effective, teachers take time to consider the relevance of the subject being taught in relation to pupils' age and personal interests. For example, in a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lesson, the teacher skilfully explored with pupils how to be a critical consumer, using Bluetooth speaker technology and the pupils' interest in grime music to capture their interest. As a result, pupils were engaged, responded enthusiastically and worked hard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and online cyber bullying. They say that while bullying happens, it is usually dealt with effectively. The school's records of bullying incidents do not accurately reflect the number of instances, which are greater than those recorded. This prevents leaders from analysing behaviour as well as they might and therefore improving ways to reduce bullying.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well throughout the curriculum. However, pupils have a more limited awareness and understanding of different cultures and beliefs. This means that they are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be.
- Pupils receive appropriate independent and impartial careers advice and guidance that helps them to make informed decisions about the next steps in their education. For example, pupils say that helpful sessions are organised to assist them with job application forms. Pupils visit the interactive careers fair in Telford to broaden their experience and raise aspirations.
- The school's PSHE education programme is a strength of the curriculum. It is effective in helping pupils to keep themselves safe and healthy in a range of situations.
- Some pupils benefit from completing a placement at an alternative provider. As part of the Hope Initiative, pupils work towards an NVQ level 1 diploma in motor vehicle maintenance. The pupils engage well with the placement that develops their personal skills as well as their practical abilities.
- Teachers use praise well to encourage pupils to achieve. This develops pupils' self-esteem and helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning gradually. Teachers provide pupils with time for reflection and contemplation. For example, mindfulness sessions that involve listening to relaxing music bring about a sense of calm and peacefulness in pupils.
- Teachers who lead morning tutor sessions use the time well to focus pupils' minds on learning successfully. They also help pupils to broaden their knowledge of the world through activities relating to news reports and the media.
- Leaders ensure that they give pupils a real voice in decision-making within school. For example, pupils chair 'community meetings' at the start and end of the school day, where they discuss issues relating to welfare and learning. Pupils are also involved in all appointments of school staff. Pupils welcome these additional responsibilities and feel that their views are taken into account.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils behave well and settle down to learning quickly. However, some pupils report that the behaviour of a few pupils in lessons has a frequent adverse effect on their ability to learn. Sometimes pupils refuse to follow teachers' instructions and do not complete the work set. Teachers' management of this type of behaviour varies. Some manage to cajole and encourage pupils to engage, but other teachers are less successful in managing very challenging behaviour.
- Most pupils are courteous and polite. They dress smartly in their school uniform and take pride in their appearance. The majority of pupils show respect for the school environment and its resources. A few pupils show less care about their work and deface their books with graffiti.
- Leaders are beginning to record behaviour incidents more systematically. However, they are not yet using this information to track how effective their strategies are in improving pupils' behaviour.
- Teachers are effective in helping pupils to recognise and understand the effect that their behaviour has on themselves and others.
- Pupils' attendance has improved over time, although attendance rates for a few individuals remain stubbornly low. School staff work hard with parents to tackle poor attendance, with varying degrees of success.
- The school has introduced a no-exclusions policy. No pupils have been excluded.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Prior to joining the school, almost all pupils have experienced a disrupted education, often having missed several months or more of schooling. Many have social, emotional and mental health difficulties as well as significant gaps in their learning. Pupils' starting points vary, although most are below expectations for their age due to missed education.
- Leaders are currently developing a more systematic way to collect assessment information in relation to pupils' attainment and progress. However, because tracking of pupils' progress is in its infancy, it is unclear whether pupils are meeting or exceeding their academic potential. Leaders do not track the achievements of particular groups, including disadvantaged pupils, due to the very small numbers of pupils at the school.
- Evidence of work in pupils' books indicates that some pupils, but not all, are making steady progress in their learning and filling gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Progress for some pupils is hindered by their lack of ability to manage their behaviour and complete tasks that have been set.
- The most able pupils do not make good progress from their starting points in a number of subjects, including in English and mathematics, because teaching is not adapted sufficiently to challenge them.
- Leaders have a system for establishing a pupil's baseline assessment on entry. However, leaders have only a partial picture of pupils' attainment because they do not consistently obtain assessment information available from pupils' previous schools or settings.

- Pupils' progress in reading is not consistently good. While staff have set up intervention programmes, they do not monitor these carefully. As a result, pupils do not read often enough to improve their reading skills.
- As a result of wider curriculum experiences, pupils develop useful life skills and gain in independence. For example, on a daily basis, pupils prepare healthy meals from scratch, using fresh ingredients, and serve these to fellow pupils and staff at lunchtime.
- Pupils in key stage 4 successfully work towards and complete GCSE examinations, entry-level certificates or functional skills qualifications. Staff support pupils well through transition arrangements that enable some school-leavers to enrol onto post-16 courses at college.

School details

Unique reference number	138875
DfE registration number	893/6030
Inspection number	10012924

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 school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kevin Gallagher
Chair	Kevin Gallagher
Headteacher	Michelle Maguire
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,481
Telephone number	01952 619 144
Website	www.amberleighcare.co.uk
Email address	michelle.maguire@amberleighcare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- Amberleigh Therapeutic School is an independent day school that provides full-time education for boys aged 11 to 18. At the time of the previous inspection, the school catered for girls.
- There has been a change of proprietor since the previous standard inspection in October 2013. The school has not notified the DfE of this change.
- An individual proprietor owns the school. The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running and organisation of the school. Her time is equally divided between

Amberleigh Therapeutic School and another school in Wales that is part of Amberleigh Care Limited.

- This school is considerably smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider, the Hope Initiative.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in all classrooms throughout the school. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and education manager. The inspector also looked at a range of pupils' work across the curriculum and talked to pupils about their experience of school.
- The inspector held a meeting with a group of teachers to ask them about safeguarding arrangements and wider matters associated with teaching and learning.
- A meeting was held with the school's proprietor and a governor. A tour of the school was conducted to inform judgements about the building and premises.
- There were insufficient responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for the inspector to be able to draw any conclusions. The inspector considered five comments from Ofsted's free-text facility.
- The inspector considered the responses from seven staff questionnaires.
- The inspector reviewed an extensive range of documentation provided by the school including school policies, schemes of work, the school development plan, pupils' examination results and safeguarding documentation. The inspector also gathered information from the school's website.
- This was an aligned inspection with social care.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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