

# Fairfield House School

57–59 Warburton Lane, Partington, Manchester M31 4NL

## Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and leaders have fully addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. There has been a rapid turnaround. The school now complies with the independent school standards.
- Leaders are successful in delivering their ambitious vision for the school. The lead teacher, strongly supported by the proprietor, are fully committed to reducing any barriers to learning so that every pupil achieves well.
- All pupils have significant and complex physical, learning and behavioural needs. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils enable pupils to grow in self-esteem, confidence and in their ability to interact with others.
- Pupils behave very well and their attendance levels are high.
- Provision for post-16 students is good. They are provided with numerous opportunities to increase their independence in line with their individual plans. Their confidence grows rapidly as they experience and understand the local community.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good across the full age range of the school. Staff provide an exciting curriculum. It enables pupils to enjoy their learning and make strong progress.
- The school provides a secure setting where pupils feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding and welfare are implemented rigorously.
- Assessment systems and records of pupils' progress contain a wealth of information. They are not easy to access for staff who are new to working with the pupils.
- Staff, including the lead teacher, have insufficient opportunities to share best practice in the school or to observe practice in other schools or settings
- Priorities for improvement are not always closely enough linked to pupils' outcomes. This makes it difficult for leaders to check how successful they have been.

### 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 of the school by:
  - ensuring that the development plan makes it clear how the school will judge its success in relation to pupils' achievements
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - all staff, including the lead teacher, share best practice in the school and observe high-quality teaching and learning in other schools and settings
  - records of pupils' progress can be easily accessed by all staff.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- At the last inspection leadership and management was judged to be inadequate. The leaders and proprietor, supported by an external consultant, have addressed the weaknesses in policies and procedures. They have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Effective leadership from the lead teacher within the school, together with an appropriate level of challenge from the proprietor and external consultant, have guided the school through a period of rapid improvement and consolidation.
- Leaders are ambitious for all the pupils at the school. There is an ongoing commitment to providing pupils with the very best opportunities to grow and develop emotionally and academically within a safe and secure environment. The school is successful in meeting these aspirations.
- The lead teacher provides good levels of support and challenge for other staff within the school. He observes learning support assistants teach, scrutinises their planning and provides constructive feedback. This has resulted in better outcomes for pupils. The same level of support for his own professional development has been lacking because he is the only teacher within the school and has a heavy teaching commitment. Consequently, there are too few opportunities for him or other staff to share best practice or observe teaching and learning in other schools or settings.
- The proprietor and leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan focuses on the right priorities but, in its present form, does not provide enough information on how leaders will know that they have been successful in achieving their goals, such as improved outcomes for pupils or better teaching across the school.
- Parents and staff speak positively about the quality of relationships that exist within the school. Many pupils arrive at the school after experiencing difficulties in their previous mainstream or special school, often with extended periods of absence. 'My child has thrived since arriving at Fairfield. She has come on in leaps and bounds' is typical of the comments made by parents to the inspector.
- The curriculum is designed in a bespoke way to meet the complex, individual needs of the pupils. It prioritises filling the gaps in pupils' previous experiences as well as developing their social, emotional, communication and life skills. The school uses visual and pictorial cues to communicate with many of the pupils who find communication difficult. The curriculum is well planned and covers all the required areas but with a strong focus on practical activities and developing pupils' independence.
- Because most pupils find classroom-based learning difficult, much of the learning and activities they undertake are arranged off-site. Visits to shops, museums, galleries and the Fairfield Farm project feature regularly in pupils' weekly timetable. This enables pupils to experience the demands of living within the local community, such as queuing in shops, catching a bus and communicating with strangers for the first time.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The activities that they undertake have a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example,

the school's curriculum celebrates different beliefs and cultures as well as promoting equality of opportunity and diversity.

- Pupil premium funding is well used to provide additional support and resources for each eligible pupil at the school. For example, sensory equipment was purchased following a multi-agency discussion that took account of parents' views. Local authorities who fund pupils' places hold the school to account for how this funding is used and to ensure that it is making a difference for pupils.

## **Governance**

- The school's proprietor has improved the provision for governance. It is effective in both supporting the school and holding it to account.
- Governor numbers are increasing and the proprietor is recruiting governors who bring additional expertise. For example, the most recent addition is a former headteacher of an outstanding school.
- Governors have an accurate picture of what needs to be improved. They are well supported by an external consultant who has a good understanding of independent school standards and expectations.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils communicate, either verbally or non-verbally, that they feel safe and are well looked after. Parents agree that this is the case.
- A safeguarding culture is at the heart of the school's work. Most of the activities undertaken by pupils occur off-site and great care is taken to ensure that risk assessments associated with these visits are regularly reviewed. 'We leave nothing to chance here' is how one staff member described the safeguarding regime.
- Pupils' specific needs mean that they always receive at least one-to-one support. Consequently, they are kept safe online because they are always supervised by an adult.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are detailed and meet the current government requirements. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and regularly updated. It is based on the Secretary of State's latest guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education 2016'. All staff know this guidance and follow the internally agreed procedures.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Activities for pupils are individually designed to meet their complex learning and emotional needs. Most activities are undertaken on a one-to-one basis, although some pupils require even more support. Small steps in learning are planned and tasks are accurately matched to pupils' specific needs. As a result, pupils with low starting points make good progress in their learning and in their emotional and social development.
- Excellent relationships at all levels enable pupils to feel confident and safe in trying out new challenges and sticking at a task. For some pupils, this is new experience because

their previous experiences of school have been negative. Some older pupils successfully complete minor building and construction projects such as stacking bricks or designing bird boxes. They are proud to show their work to visitors.

- The lead teacher and learning support assistants work very effectively together to plan an inspirational and imaginative curriculum that holds pupils' interests and keeps them engaged. They are very skilled at repeating and reinforcing learning for non-verbal pupils. Staff want the very best for pupils and know how each of them is likely to respond in different circumstances. They are patient and encouraging as they work with pupils who are often reluctant learners.
- Most of the teaching activities take place off-site. Pupils enjoy opportunities to travel by train or bus and to shop for food in the local shops. Pupils with very limited communication skills learn very effectively how to identify their purchases, to pay for them and to accept the change. This emphasis on developing life skills is a strong feature of the school and results in increasing levels of independence within the different capabilities of pupils.
- The school is nurturing and calm. Education staff work effectively to improve pupils' communication and mathematical skills and are realistic about the small steps in learning that are likely to be achieved. Progress is celebrated and encouraged with an extensive range of evidence retained in pupils' individual record folders.
- Parents are provided with comprehensive and detailed written information about how well their children are progressing. Parents are complimentary about how well staff keep them aware of pupils' progress, and how they can contribute to the next stage in their children's development and learning.
- Staff management of pupils' behaviour is very effective. They are skilled at defusing situations and keeping pupils calm. Parents report that their ability to manage their children's behaviour at home has improved since they arrived at Fairfield.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment on entry to school have improved. They are accurate and enable staff to track progress over time. A wealth of information about each pupil is collected as they move through the school. These include daily checks on behaviour, steps in learning in different subjects and pupils' emotional and social well-being. Some of these records are not easily accessed and do not provide a clear enough overview that explains briefly how well a pupil is progressing and at what level. Consequently, when staff are new to the school or 'step in' to support a pupil, the information that they need is not readily available.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Through their preferred means of communication, pupils are clear about their growing confidence and improved self-esteem. They are proud of the school and of what they have achieved at Fairfield House. In some instances, these comments come from pupils who have arrived only recently. Pupils quickly show improvements in their self-confidence and a growing maturity. This enables them to become less dependent and begin to access the full range of activities that the school offers.

- Pupils benefit from the skills of a multi-agency team. The excellent relationships between education and care staff mean that pupils experience a consistent approach as they are helped to develop strategies to cope with anger, stress and anxiety.
- Staff are always on the alert for changes in pupils' behaviour or emotional well-being. Pupils successfully share their feelings and concerns. For example, policies that might affect them, including how raise a concern or complaint, are available pictorially with facial images to reflect how they feel. The school's success in picking up any concerns can be illustrated by the continued improvements in pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.
- Pupils learn how to keep safe and are aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter. There is no evidence of bullying in any form in the school.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school has excellent strategies in place that celebrate positive behaviour. Some pupils demonstrated challenging behaviour in their previous schools or settings. The school's nurturing approach and intensive support has resulted in a remarkable turnaround in most instances.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff are well trained and experienced in calming situations quickly. Records of any incidents are kept meticulously and include any follow up actions that might be necessary. There have been no permanent or fixed-term exclusions since the last inspection in 2015.
- Attendance levels are high, including for those pupils who arrive at the school with poor attendance records. They say they enjoy school and are reluctant to stay at home even when they are unwell.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite and well mannered. They were keen to communicate with the inspector and happy to share what they were doing.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Outcomes for pupils are good.
- Most pupils arrive at the school with significant gaps in their education and having experienced difficulties in their previous schools. All pupils have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs as well as delays in their learning. Pupils' starting points are generally well below those typical for their age.
- On entry to school, pupils' attainment is checked to confirm his or her starting points in subjects including English and mathematics. Pupils' social, emotional and behavioural starting points are also identified. Using this assessment information, staff devise an individual plan of action that is designed to meet pupils' specific needs. For all pupils, this includes 'life skills' courses that prepare them well for independent living. Currently, no pupils are engaged in courses that lead to external qualifications.
- From their starting points, pupils generally make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics. The steps they make are small ones but they are significantly greater the longer they remain at Fairfield House.

- The number of pupils in the school are too small to identify trends in terms of different groups represented in the school. Pupils' overall good rates of progress are confirmed by meeting with pupils, checking on work that they complete and by looking at the records that the school retains.
- Pupils are successfully prepared for each stage of their education, training or living arrangements. They receive good guidance. For most pupils, transition between any activity or stage of learning, even from one day to the next, can create stress and anxiety. Staff work hard to ease these pressures and improve pupils' coping strategies. Consequently, pupils and their parents report that pupils are better able to deal with change, whether it is planned or unplanned. For example, if the usual member of staff is unable to support a pupil, it is no longer such a traumatic experience for the pupils involved.

### **Sixth form provision**

**Good**

- Few students remain at the school post-16 and none have been able to pursue formal qualifications or vocational courses in the past. This remains the position with the current cohort. Nevertheless, students make good gains in their ability to live independently because of the training and support that the school gives to this part of the curriculum. Students behave well, with increasing levels of maturity evident.
- Staff make individual arrangements for students to pursue activities that meet their needs and interests. As found in other parts of the school, good teaching in post-16 provision ensures that activities are carefully adjusted and adapted for each student.
- Leaders are effective in managing the post-16 provision. They ensure that careers advice and guidance is incorporated into the ongoing discussions that staff have with students. In some cases, it is possible for students to follow their interests and aspirations within the community. For example, students' experiences of helping in a shoe store have enabled them to understand the demands of retail work and how they need to continue to work on their communication skills. Once more, students' self-confidence and self-esteem grows as they interact more often with members of the public.

## School details

Unique reference number	136239
DfE registration number	358/6019
Inspection number	10034046

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	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Mrs Tzaraine Cope
Chair	Mrs Tzaraine Cope
Headteacher	Mr Matthew Hudson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,500
Telephone number	0161 776 2827
Website	<a href="http://www.fairfieldresidential.co.uk">www.fairfieldresidential.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:management@fairfieldresidential.co.uk">management@fairfieldresidential.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

## Information about this school

- Fairfield House is a small special school for pupils with autism, severe learning difficulties, complex health needs and challenging behaviours. It is located in north-west England.
- The school is housed in purpose-built premises. The premises also include a children's home which is owned and run by Fairfield Residential.
- The school uses the Fairfield Farm project for off-site provision for pupils. The farm is



located approximately six miles away from the school and is owned and run by Fairfield Residential.

- The school is registered for up to five pupils between the ages of eight and 19 years.
- There are currently five pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2015.
- The school received an Ofsted progress monitoring visit in February 2016.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in several sessions, including at the off-site provision. The off-site provision was jointly visited with the lead teacher.
- Meetings were held with the service manager at Fairfield House Residential, the lead teacher, the school's external consultant and a range of other professionals. A telephone call was made to the proprietor and to three parents.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He looked at their work and at the school's records of their progress.
- The inspector received one free-text response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The inspector took into account two Ofsted questionnaires that were completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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