

Alderwasley Hall School

Alderwasley, Belper, DE56 2SR

Inspection dates

1–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness

Good

2

Achievement of pupils

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Good

2

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

2

Leadership and management

Good

2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students' achievement is good; the proportions making or exceeding expected rates of progress in both English and mathematics are close to the national averages.
- The achievement of sixth-form students is good and they are prepared well for leaving school.
- The quality of teaching is good and ensures that students make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Students' attitudes to learning improve over time and make a positive contribution to their academic progress and personal development.
- Arrangements for safeguarding students are good; the school provides a safe and secure environment for students.
- The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels in the school and is having an increasingly strong impact on the quality of teaching and outcomes for students.
- The school's leaders and managers have introduced effective arrangements for checking how well the school is doing and identifying areas for further action. As a result, teaching and students' achievement have improved since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Overall, from their various starting points, students do not make outstanding progress.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding to ensure that students make consistently rapid and sustained progress.
- Some aspects of the marking of students' work, including attention to handwriting, grammar and spelling, and setting targets for improvement are not used consistently well to improve learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Most of these were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors held discussions with a number of members of staff and attended a meeting of the school council. Questionnaire responses from 36 members of staff were considered, together with 16 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- A number of school documents were scrutinised, including policies and procedures, students’ progress data, samples of students’ work, individual student case reviews, and copies of the school’s self-evaluation and development plan.
- An inspection of the welfare provision of the children’s home at the sixth-form centre took place at the same time as this inspection. A separate report on this provision will be published.
- Following the inspection on 1-3 July 2014, Her Majesty’s Inspectors identified that some additional inspection evidence was required to confirm the inspection judgements. Jeremy Spencer Her Majesty’s Inspector and Clive Moss Her Majesty’s Inspector visited the school on 16 September 2014 to gather the additional evidence.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Clive Moss

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alderwasley Hall School is a part of the SENAD group of schools and is also a registered children's home. The school is located on two sites. The Alderwasley Hall site accommodates students up to 16 years of age. The Alderwasley Sixth-Form Centre provides the education and residence for students who are post-16. There is further residential accommodation for students who are preparing for independent living.
- The school currently provides education for boys and girls aged six to 19 years, although it is registered for pupils from five years of age.
- The school caters for pupils who have complex speech, language and communication needs. Many also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger's syndrome.
- There are currently 97 students on roll, of whom four attend part-time. Thirty seven students currently live at the school while the remainder attend as day students. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school's main aim is to ensure that everyone 'works together to create a happy and caring environment which enables students to learn and communicate with confidence and grow as valued members of society'. It intends to achieve this 'through high quality education and therapeutic interventions in a caring and supportive environment'.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall effectiveness of the school by:
 - increasing the proportion of students achieving or exceeding nationally expected rates of progress
 - ensuring that the evaluation of the quality of teaching focuses more consistently on the quality of students' learning
 - ensuring greater consistency in the marking of students' work and setting precise targets for improvement
 - ensuring a consistent, whole-school approach to the improvement of students' handwriting, grammar and spelling across all subjects taught.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- The achievement of students is good across the full age range of the school.
- The majority make or exceed expected rates of progress in English and mathematics as a result of good teaching, strong therapeutic support for individual students, and a range of learning tasks and activities well matched to students' needs.
- Students in the primary department and at Key Stage 3 make good progress in managing their anxiety and adjusting to the expectations of the classroom. Their differentiated learning plans identify suitable arrangements to enable them to manage relationships and focus on learning; these arrangements are mostly implemented well.
- On entry to the school, individual students' starting points are clearly identified. A number of students are working at levels below those expected for their age as a result of disruptions in their earlier educational experiences. The majority of students begin to make good progress after a period of settling in to the expectations of the school.
- Students who are looked after by their local authorities, and those entitled to free school meals, make progress over time which is above the average for the school.
- Students who enter the school with higher levels of previous attainment also make good progress as the barriers to their learning are identified and addressed, including through effective work by the school's therapists. Teaching staff plan effectively to ensure that the needs of students with varying starting points are suitably challenged to fulfil their potential.
- Students develop effective learning skills as they progress through the school. Those in Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 provision achieve good results in GCSE, BTEC and AS level accredited courses. Their results in these accredited courses are often in excess of expectations based on their attainment on entry to the school.
- The success achieved by students extends across a wide range of subjects, including success in AS level courses, for example in science, art and psychology.
- The rate of progress for the majority of students accelerates as they progress into Key Stage 4 and post-16 courses. Students are helped, particularly during their early years in the school, to develop suitable strategies to manage their own anxieties and to focus on learning. As a result, they are able to develop effective communication and social skills to enable them to learn well in later years.
- Those students for whom the rigour of externally accredited courses is too challenging are supported well to develop appropriate life skills, for example in cooking or managing money, to enable them to achieve appropriate independence in adult life.
- The majority of students progress to suitable courses in further education or training as a result of the strong foundations for learning established at the school.

Quality of teaching

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on students' achievement.
- All members of staff are well briefed about the individual learning needs of students. Good account is taken of the requirements set out in students' statements of special educational needs. Teachers' planning for lessons takes account of the different learning needs and levels of attainment in the teaching group.
- Each student has an individual placement and transition plan which is central to the school's planning to meet individual needs. The team of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists makes an outstanding contribution to the provision for students. The pathway for each student is individually planned, kept under continuous review, and takes equal account of the students' emotional and therapeutic needs, together with arrangements for learning.

- The school also has a variety of effective relationships with external agencies, such as the mental health service, and the input from a clinical psychologist and two psychotherapists. The development of life skills within all areas of the curriculum is given an appropriately high profile alongside the school's arrangements for academic subjects and external accreditation.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together in many lessons. Teachers' planning follows a school policy of identifying a core of learning for all students, together with more challenging activities and concepts to meet the needs of the more-able students. These arrangements are mostly implemented effectively.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively and students make good progress in the development and application of these essential skills.
- Teaching assistants develop good working relationships with students and, through encouragement and effective questioning, ensure that they remain focused and engaged in their learning. Occasionally, particularly with the younger students, teaching assistants are inclined to do a little too much for them rather than encouraging students' independence.
- Teachers listen well and the quality of their questioning and the manner in which students are challenged to deepen and extend their oral responses, is often outstanding. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the capabilities of each student and are skilled at ensuring that each is enabled to take an active part in learning at an appropriate level.
- The range of subjects and experiences provided, takes full account of the interests and skills of individual students. As a result, work of exceptional quality is achieved, for example in art, by students whose individual talents are identified and developed.
- Students' work is mostly assessed thoroughly and regularly. A whole-school approach to assessment ensures that students are aware of the level at which they are working and their next steps for improvement. Occasionally, the targets for improvement in teachers' marking are not precise enough to ensure that students know what to do next to move on to a higher level.
- The coordination of assessment information by middle and senior leaders is effective. The quality of assessment data enables the progress of each individual student to be measured. As a result, senior leaders have a secure understanding of the extent of students' progress over time.
- The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is not linked consistently with the quality of learning in individual lessons.
- Teachers use an excellent range of practical and visual resources to support students' learning. Similarly, students present their work in a variety of ways which demonstrate high levels of skill in the use of information technology for presentation and communication.
- The quality of students' handwriting, grammar and spelling is very variable. There is not sufficient consistency in the extent to which teachers support students with the development of these essential skills in their written work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils**Good**

- The behaviour of students is good and develops positively as they progress through the school. Attendance is good and for many students shows a strong improvement on their previous attendance.
- Many students enter the school with negative previous experiences of relationships with their peers and anxiety about attending school. The integrated work of the teaching staff and therapeutic team enables students to develop positive relationships and to enjoy their learning. Students quickly learn to cooperate with the expectations of the staff; disruptions to learning are rare.
- Students learn to work effectively in groups and teams. There are incidents of disagreement and some bullying, particularly among younger students who are new to the school. However, the expert work of the staff enables students to develop appropriate relationships, to better understand the impact of their words and behaviour, and to resolve their

differences.

- The student council considers bullying as an agenda item in its regular meetings. They acknowledge that relationships among students develop and improve over time. By the time they enter Key Stage 4, such incidents rarely occur.
- The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Within a relatively short time, students develop self-confidence and begin to understand how to relate to others. Students in the post-16 provision often demonstrate mature, adult relationships and the ability to take responsibility for shaping their future lives.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All aspects of safeguarding are given a high priority, including for example, arrangements for the recruitment of staff, the assessment of risk, arrangements for fire safety and the training of staff to the required levels in child protection and first aid.
- The school's arrangements for the development of students' life skills, working towards independence in adult life, are exemplary. Excellent arrangements for students' transition to further education or employment are skilfully managed with an emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual.
- Students are provided with good opportunities to understand their responsibilities and rights as citizens, for example through visits to the town hall and to a trial at the criminal court. Sixth-form students are involved in the assessment of risk for any life skills trips and activities off the school site.
- Work in citizenship includes the study of immigration and the work of foreign embassies. Older students learn about how to access services in the community such as the health service, social care and housing. Staff are acutely aware of the challenges for students as they move on from the school and there is a strong emphasis on the development of skills for independent living.
- A number of themes in the programme of personal and social education encourage students to develop understanding and respect for the variety of cultures and beliefs in Britain and the wider community. An effective link has been established with a school in an urban area of cultural diversity. Visitors from different religious communities and themed days about life in contrasting countries help to broaden students' awareness of diversity.
- The school's senior leaders ensure that a balanced and non-partisan approach is taken to the consideration of any controversial political issues.

Leadership and management

Good

- The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher, together with senior and middle managers, conveys high expectations for what students can achieve. The staff demonstrate energy and commitment to meeting the school's aims.
- The school's senior leaders have a good understanding of the work of their colleagues. This is informed by regular observations of classroom practice, together with detailed analysis of the progress made by students. However, the link between the quality of teaching and students' progress is not explored consistently.
- Middle leaders make an effective contribution to the success of the school. They monitor the work of subject staff and provide regular reports on the outcomes achieved by students.
- The work of the therapeutic team is outstanding in helping to create a learning environment which is sensitive to the diverse learning, emotional and social needs of students. This is further enhanced by effective working with external agencies and with parents. A large majority of the parents who responded to the online Parent View questionnaire are fully supportive of the work of the school and the progress made by their children in both their academic and personal development.
- A programme of high-quality training, together with effective planning and teamwork, ensures that staff across all disciplines and areas of responsibility work as an effective team. The staff, in responses to the inspection questionnaire, are unanimous in their views about

the high quality of care and education provided for the students. All staff stated that they are proud to be members of the school.

- The proprietors, through the work of the Chief Operations Officer, provide robust challenge to the school's leaders. Arrangements to ensure the accountability of staff at all levels are good, including the management of staff performance and attention to their training needs.
- The school's leaders, together with the proprietor's representatives, have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for further improvement. Leaders have developed effective arrangements for the involvement of all staff in planning for the school's development. However, school improvement plans do not always make clear who will be checking that each action has been completed, and who will be responsible for evaluating the impact of the action.
- The range of subjects and examination courses available for students has increased since the last inspection and the school's leaders are constantly seeking additional ways to widen opportunities for students.
- The school's leaders have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met and that the premises provide an effective environment for learning. All requirements for health and safety are rigorously implemented.
- Students make good progress with their learning and an increasing number experience success with external accreditations as a result of the high quality of planning and review by the school's leaders and managers.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	113021
Social care unique reference number	SC020129
Inspection number	446380
DfE registration number	830/6016

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special school for speech, language and communication difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorders
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Number of part time pupils	4
Proprietor	SENAD Group Ltd.
Chair	Brian Jones
Headteacher	Angela Findlay
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,326–£77,453
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