

Alderwasley Hall School

Alderwasley, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 2SR

Inspection dates

10–12 July 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for their pupils, and they have high expectations of the quality of teaching and support that pupils receive.
- Regular checks on the quality of teaching ensure that senior leaders act quickly when they identify that teaching is not of a high-enough standard.
- Pupils make at least good progress due to at least good teaching.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics due to the effective support that they receive to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Pupils receive first-class therapy to improve their communication skills. This is helping to speed up the progress that they make in English.
- Well-targeted support helps pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal development.
- All staff benefit from highly effective training.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Staff work closely with pupils to ensure that they attend regularly.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour rapidly reduce because pupils receive effective support to help them to manage their behaviour.
- Comprehensive support ensures that pupils feel safe and know how to be safe.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because of the good teaching and careful support that they receive.
- The proprietor has a precise understanding of the quality of the school's provision and provides effective support and challenge. He and leaders ensure that the school fully meets the independent school standards.
- While progress in science is improving, too few pupils make strong progress.
- Not all learning support workers (adults who support pupils in their learning) are fully effective.
- Occasionally, teachers set work which lacks the necessary challenge to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress.

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) (English) (Amendment) regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging to enable greater proportions of pupils to make strong progress, particularly in science.
- Ensure that all learning support workers provide pupils with the highest level of support.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Senior leaders know the school comprehensively, and are highly ambitious for pupils. They are determined to ensure that pupils receive the very highest levels of support, care and teaching to ensure that they make consistently strong progress, both academically and in their personal development.
- Senior leaders are uncompromising in this ambition. They take effective action to bring about rapid improvement where the quality of the school's provision does not meet their high standards. In so doing, they are extremely mindful of the well-being of staff.
- Senior leaders have an unrelenting focus on ensuring that pupils receive highly effective, well-targeted support that caters for their additional needs and helps them to engage with their learning. Comprehensive therapy, and high levels of care, ensure that pupils adopt positive attitudes and make outstanding progress in their personal development.
- Close monitoring of pupils' behaviour ensures that senior leaders understand the factors which cause pupils to engage in challenging behaviour. Leaders ensure that all staff take timely and effective action to support pupils to manage their behaviour. Occasions when pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour reduce significantly because of this support.
- Senior leaders work well with pupils, who previously have had sustained periods of absence from education, to ensure that their attendance rapidly improves. Through attending more regularly, these pupils make rapid progress from what are often very low starting points, both academically and in their personal development.
- Senior leaders set very high expectations in relation to the quality of teaching. Through their regular checks on teaching, they quickly identify when teaching is not of the very highest standard. Senior leaders use this information sharply to put into place effective support to secure timely improvement where it is necessary. As a result, teaching, which is not yet of the highest standard, is rapidly improving to match that of the very best.
- To this end, senior leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training, including regular opportunities to share best practice and to receive externally provided training. These ensure that staff are reflective practitioners, keen to provide the very-highest levels of practice in their teaching and in the care they provide.
- Senior leaders ensure that staff have a precise understanding of the quality of the school's provision and that they contribute to the plans for improvement. As a result, staff feel senior leaders value them and their opinions highly. All staff who expressed a view said that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school.
- The headteacher quickly responds to any concerns that parents and carers may have about how the school is caring for their child. She monitors the issues over which parents raise concerns, to put in place effective solutions that benefit all. The very large majority of parents who expressed a view said that leaders respond well to any concerns they may have.
- In their determination that all pupils should achieve highly, senior leaders regularly check

the progress that pupils make. They quickly identify those who are not making sufficient progress and put into place effective support. This helps pupils to catch up, often from very low starting points, and make at least good progress across a range of subjects, with pupils making even faster progress in some subjects, including mathematics.

- Senior leaders regularly review pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, to ensure that the subjects that pupils study, and the support they receive, enable them to meet the targets contained within the plans. Leaders communicate very effectively with local authorities when they conduct these reviews.
- The well-designed curriculum for the primary provision enables pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. They regularly use these skills in other subjects, including science, history, geography and the creative subjects.
- Senior leaders have designed the secondary provision's curriculum to match pupils' needs, aptitudes and interests well. Pupils study from the full range of subjects, with the opportunity to complete accredited qualifications at the appropriate level when ready.
- Enrichment and extra-curricular activities enhance the primary and secondary curricula well. Educational visits, including in the local area and abroad, for example, provide pupils with effective opportunities to develop their learning beyond the classroom.
- Providing pupils with wide-ranging opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is at the very centre of all staff's work to ensure that pupils understand the need to respect all people. Visits to places of religious worship ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of different religious beliefs. The regular 'global days', when pupils learn about other countries' history, language and culture, ensure that pupils understand cultural differences and value diversity within British society and societies around the world.
- Senior leaders have rightly identified that some learning support workers are not as effective as the very best in the support that they provide for pupils. Senior leaders have taken swift action to resolve this. Their work is bringing about the necessary, rapid improvement in the practice of these learning support workers.

Governance

- The proprietor is very clear and forthright in his aim for the school. It is his intention that all pupils should receive high levels of support and teaching to enable them to make strong progress, prepare effectively for adulthood, and move into mainstream education when they are ready.
- Monthly reports from the headteacher provide the proprietor with a precise insight into the quality of the school's provision. The proprietor checks the accuracy of these reports through his own visits to the school, and through the checks he commissions from a senior leader within the company, an education adviser and an external organisation.
- All such checks are both regular and rigorous. Professionals who lead the checks observe learning and look at pupils' books. They also consider the effectiveness of senior leaders' systems for monitoring pupils' attendance, behaviour, welfare and safety.
- The proprietor rightly recognises the need for senior leaders to work closely with leaders from other schools to develop their leadership skills and to learn from the practice of others. Through this, he ensures that senior leaders receive effective support.

- The proprietor's approach to ensuring that pupils are safe is meticulous. He has a firm understanding of his duty to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy, which is available on the school's website, reflects the latest guidance.
- Safeguarding leaders provide comprehensive support for pupils about whose welfare they have a concern. They maintain detailed records which demonstrate the timely, thorough action that they take when they have a safeguarding concern.
- Safeguarding leaders work closely with pupils' parents and with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure that pupils receive the right level of support. In this, safeguarding leaders are tenacious. They regularly check that pupils feel supported.
- All staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are highly vigilant of pupils' welfare and are quick to report any concerns that they may have.
- Staff receive regular training about keeping pupils safe. This training focuses particularly on those issues which are particular concerns to pupils' welfare. For example, staff have received thorough training on preventing radicalisation and extremism to ensure that they can support any pupils who express discriminatory opinions.
- Staff undertake comprehensive assessments of risk, including for any off-site trips. These assessments ensure that staff accommodate any risk that they may have identified.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the school. They say that they have adults to whom they can speak if they have a concern, including the learning support workers. They are confident that all staff will take effective action to help resolve their concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use information about pupils' prior attainment and additional needs effectively to plan lessons which enable pupils to engage well with their learning.
- Staff have good subject knowledge which they use well when planning lessons.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and ensure that pupils engage well with their learning. Teachers and learning support workers are quick to ensure that pupils focus on their work should their attention wander.
- Through careful questioning, teachers check that pupils are secure in their learning and encourage pupils to discuss their ideas. In a key stage 3 English lesson, the teacher led a detailed discussion about the literary devices authors use to engage readers with their novels. Pupils engaged well in this discussion, using examples from books that they had read.
- Teachers are sensitive to pupils' anxieties. They quickly adapt tasks to accommodate any worries that pupils may have about the task that teachers have asked them to complete.
- When teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, they are quick to provide effective support to ensure that pupils are secure in their learning.

- In line with the school's policy, teachers provide detailed feedback to help pupils understand how they can improve their work and become secure in their understanding. Pupils respond well to this feedback.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers encourage pupils to try out their own ideas to arrive at a secure understanding. In a technology lesson, the teacher allowed pupils to try different construction methods to find out for themselves which was the most effective.
- On occasions, the work that teachers set pupils lacks sufficient challenge. When this is the case, pupils do not make rapid enough progress and do not attain as highly as they could.
- Some learning support workers do not provide pupils with the right level of support to ensure that pupils develop their skills and understanding independently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The well-targeted care and attention that staff show towards pupils enables pupils to quickly adopt positive attitudes to their learning and engage well in lessons. This includes pupils who, prior to joining the school, did not engage well with education.
- Comprehensive therapy and effective support helps pupils to make rapid progress in developing their communication skills and managing their anxieties. This, in turn, helps pupils to become increasingly confident and resilient. Through this, pupils engage well with the learning and develop effective relationships with staff and with other pupils.
- Where this support is most effective, pupils come to rely less on the adults, who are there to support them, and are able to act independently, including in lessons.
- Through the 'Pathways' programme that they study, pupils receive highly effective support to prepare for adulthood. They learn about personal finances, food preparation and personal care. They also learn how to independently use public transport.
- Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, class discussion of the weekly collective thought and therapy, pupils learn to consider other people's feelings. Pupils receive effective help to understand how their actions and their words may affect other people.
- Pupils in the secondary provision receive effective careers advice and guidance, including the opportunity to complete work experience placements in Year 11. Senior leaders check that the guidance that pupils receive is appropriate to their career aspirations.
- Pupils learn how to be safe, including when online and when out in the local community. Visits to the local community help pupils practise how to be safe.
- Pupils understand that there are different forms of bullying. They say that bullying at the school is rare and, when it does occur, staff deal with it effectively. The school's records confirm this to be the case.
- Pupils learn about how to live healthy lives, including through diet and exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Most pupils join the school with a poor record of attendance. For many, this poor attendance has included sustained periods of absence. The well-targeted support that pupils receive ensures that their attendance rapidly improves. Overall attendance at the school is rapidly improving towards that of similar schools.
- Pupils receive effective support to manage their anxieties and behaviour. The number of occasions when pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour reduces significantly over time
- When incidents of challenging behaviour do occur, staff are quick to review the causes of the incident and the effectiveness of their response to it. This ensures that staff can better support the pupil in future.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school site, including at breaktime and lunchtime. Adult supervision is sufficient to ensure that pupils are safe and that pupils interact with each other and with adults well.
- Within lessons, pupils engage well with their learning. Through the support that they receive from teachers and learning support workers, pupils focus positively on their work and make at least good progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically arrive at the school attaining standards well below those expected for their age and stage of education, both academically and in terms of their personal development. Senior leaders are quick to identify each pupil's starting point and their additional needs to ensure that they receive appropriate support to catch up quickly.
- Due to the well-targeted, comprehensive therapy that they receive, pupils make rapid progress in developing their numeracy and their communication skills, particularly their ability to communicate verbally. The longer pupils are at the school, the more rapid the progress that they make in developing these skills.
- Pupils who attained GCSE mathematics in 2017 made rapid progress from their different starting points.
- Across the school, current pupils continue to make rapid progress in mathematics due to the well-targeted support that they receive to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Pupils who attained GCSE English in 2017 made good progress.
- Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are making faster progress in English than that seen previously, partly due to the support that they receive to develop their communication skills.
- Pupils currently in key stage 2, who are not making rapid-enough progress in their writing, are receiving well-targeted support to enable them to make faster progress.
- Pupils in the secondary provision make good and often faster progress across a range of subjects, including history, art and music. This is because teachers ensure that the tasks they set in these subjects engage well with pupils' interests.

- Pupils make rapid progress in their personal development, including their preparation for adulthood. This is due to the effective teaching that they receive in the PSHE education programme and through the 'Pathways' programme.
- All pupils who finished key stage 4 in 2017 continued with their studies in the school's sixth-form provision. In so doing, they continued to study qualifications at an appropriate level, including in English and mathematics, as well as preparing for adulthood.
- While greater proportions of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are now making the progress that they should in science, too few make rapid enough progress.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Leaders of the sixth form have ensured that the curriculum caters for the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of the students. As well as studying English and mathematics, students study subjects that interest them, and prepare them well for their next steps.
- All students who left the school's sixth form provision in 2017 moved on to sustained places of education, work with training or apprenticeships. Almost all who moved on to places of education did so at mainstream colleges and universities.
- As with the main school, leaders undertake regular checks on the quality of teaching, to ensure that it is of a high-enough standard and to ensure that students make at least good progress. Leaders provide teachers with effective support, where it is necessary.
- Students attend some of their education at other educational settings, including mainstream colleges. Leaders undertake regular checks on the attendance, welfare and progress of students who complete their studies elsewhere.
- Through the PSHE and 'Pathways' programme, students learn how to be safe, including when online, when undertaking independent travel, and when out in the local community.
- Leaders support students well to ensure that they attend school regularly. Students who are absent for health reasons receive effective support so they do not fall behind.
- Students behave well. They receive effective support to ensure that they can manage their behaviour and develop positive relationships with other students and with staff.
- Leaders undertake regular checks on students' progress. They put into place timely support for those students who they identify as not making sufficient progress.
- Students receive impartial careers advice, which helps them to learn about the world of work. When appropriate, students undertake work-experience placements. Leaders check that these experiences are appropriate to students' career aspirations.
- Students learn about how to live healthy lives, and how to manage risk. They understand the consequences that may come about from making poor choices.
- Students make good progress in the academic and work-related subjects that they study due to the good-quality teaching and the well-targeted support that they receive. They complete qualifications at the appropriate level.

School details

Unique reference number	113021
DfE registration number	830/6016
Inspection number	10039178

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	5 to 20
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Brian Jones - the SENAD Group
Chair	Mark Flynn
Headteacher	Sara Forsyth
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,417–£65,241
Telephone number	01629 822 586
Website	https://senadgroup.com/alderwasley/
Email address	alderwasley.info@senadgroup.com
Date of previous inspection	1–3 July 2014

Information about this school

- Alderwasley Hall School is a part of the SENAD group of schools. The school is on two sites. The Alderwasley Hall School site accommodates pupils up to 16 years of age. The Alderwasley Sixth Form, which is located near to Wirksworth, provides education for students who are above the age of compulsory education.
- Some pupils and students are residents of the children's homes located at both school

sites. These children's homes are part of the SENAD group. Ofsted inspects these homes separately to the school.

- The school is registered to provide education for pupils aged five to 20 years.
- The school caters for pupils who have complex speech, language and communication needs. Many have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and Asperger's syndrome.
- All pupils and students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils and students have an EHC plan.
- The school uses three colleges to provide part of the education of some of their sixth-form students. These colleges are: Derby College in Derby; Nottingham Central College in Nottingham; and Confetti Creative Arts College in Nottingham.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher both took up their respective posts in September 2016.
- The school's aims are four-fold: to fulfil social and communication potential; to fulfil academic potential; to provide a memorable and enjoyable school experience for all; and to fulfil independence potential.
- The school's last standard inspection took place on 1–3 July 2014. An emergency inspection of the school took place on 20 April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning on 13 occasions. On a further occasion, an inspector visited all lessons taking place in key stages 2 and 3, during a tour of the Alderwasley Hall School site. All visits to lessons took place jointly with senior leaders.
- The lead inspector checked the school's facilities against Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books across a range of subjects from key stages 2 and 3, both in lessons and as a separate activity.
- Inspectors held meetings with: the headteacher; the proprietor and the chief operating officer (COO) of the SENAD group; senior leaders; middle leaders; and a selection of the teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. They also met formally with a selection of pupils and students.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone with a member of the local authority's team of officers who are responsible for safeguarding. He also spoke with a representative of one of the colleges that provides students with education away from the school site.
- Inspectors took into account the 55 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, and the 42 responses to the free-text service. An inspector met with parents when they arrived to drop their children off at school on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the 41 responses to the staff survey.
- There were no responses to the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's provision, including: self-evaluation and improvement planning; achievement; behaviour and attendance; external reports on the quality of the school's provision; governance; and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector took into account complaints made against the school, including those made to Ofsted.
- The lead inspector checked the school's single central register and the school's system for recruiting staff.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Aileen King

Ofsted Inspector

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