

High Peak School

Mudhurst Lane, Higher Disley, Stockport SK12 2AP

Inspection dates	22–24 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, well supported by the proprietor, other leaders and staff, provides strong and resilient leadership for the school.
- The school is a calm and purposeful place where staff regularly 'go the extra mile' for their pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and valued. Parents and carers speak enthusiastically about the positive difference the school makes for their children.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding, enabling them to re-engage in learning and work with others. Staff systematically promote British values and pupils are well prepared for adult life.
- Pupils make good progress in managing their own behaviour and they attend school regularly.
- From their different and often low starting points, pupils make good progress in learning. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy helps them to make up previously lost ground.
- The most-able pupils are well challenged. Many discover and develop particular strengths in art, technology or physical education.
- Leaders ensure that teaching is consistently good. Strong subject knowledge and a clear understanding of pupils' prior learning, informed by good assessment systems, enable teachers to plan well for pupils' next steps in learning.
- The proprietor knows the school well and ensures that all the independent school standards are met. Leaders are held robustly to account for pupils' outcomes.
- The school makes good use of a team of well-qualified and experienced specialists and consultants to support pupils' behaviour and learning. They guide and challenge leaders and staff to improve the school's work.
- Managers ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and that the excellent on-site facilities are maintained to a high standard.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is ready for its first intake of learners to the sixth form in September 2016.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Adults do not make enough use of challenging questions and problem-solving tasks to increase pupils' confidence in learning.
- Many pupils' capacity to apply and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in different subjects and contexts is at an early stage of development.

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?

- Further improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - strengthening pupils' capacity to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in different subjects and contexts
 - making greater use of challenging questions and problem-solving tasks.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The principal's insightful leadership has ensured the school's successful development since its opening in October 2014, including the rapid expansion in pupil numbers during the last three terms. He has a clear vision for the school's future that is shared by staff, and there is a strong commitment to providing the very best for pupils.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the school's priorities for development are known and shared by staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The creation of a strong culture of care, respect and tolerance positively supports the well-being and progress of all pupils in the school. In particular, the formation of a pupil council and the election, by their peers, of pupil ambassadors have ensured that pupils are involved in the school's day-to-day operation and future development.
- The principal and other leaders provide a clear lead in setting high expectations of behaviour, courtesy and hard work. Consequently, behaviour is managed effectively by staff and pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal and social skills are developed well. Parents comment on the life-changing effect the school's culture and ethos have on their children. High expectations of pupils' conduct are well supported by a carefully devised system of rewards and sanctions. Instances of serious misbehaviour have declined significantly since the school opened. Leaders analyse robustly the frequency and nature of incidents, and the incentives that support good behaviour. Pupils thrive on the public recognition in assemblies of their achievements.
- The appointment of senior and middle leaders during the past year has strengthened the staff team and provided the capacity for the school to continue to expand to reach its registered number on roll. These leaders have grown quickly and successfully into their new roles, establishing and promoting systems for collating and analysing information about pupils, their needs and the progress they make in their academic and personal development. The school's planning for its sixth-form provision is well advanced and being managed effectively.
- The leadership of special educational needs and disability is good. The coordinator has developed an information management system that provides an accurate and concise summary of pupils' needs and targets for them to meet. This draws together the contributions of specialists, consultants and advisers so that staff know how to develop and support pupils' learning in the most effective ways. Alongside this, the school tracks pupils' personal and emotional development, drawing on information from lessons and other activities. Together, these systems provide staff and leaders with a valuable picture of pupils' needs and progress.
- The school's arrangements for recording and tracking pupils' achievements ensure a clear and accessible picture of each individual's progress over time and across the curriculum. Leaders set targets and monitor pupils' progress in achieving these. As a result, staff have easily accessible information on which to base their plans for pupils' next steps in learning and preparation for the next stage of pupils' education or training. Crucially, leaders are able to see immediately whether pupils are starting to fall behind and respond to this with additional assistance or specialist support.
- Leaders regularly monitor teaching and learning, and provide individuals with support and guidance for improvement and development. Performance targets for staff include both personal and school-wide priorities. Through this, leaders are ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good and has the capacity to improve further.
- The proprietor and school leaders accurately evaluate how well the school is doing and are innovative in their response to where improvements can be made. For example, the development and successful impact of a nurture unit for younger pupils have highlighted how changes in the layout of teaching rooms can successfully improve the learning for older pupils.
- The school's curriculum reflects the individual requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. A wide range of activities outside the classroom, including sports and outdoor education, provide pupils with opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding and develop their skills. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to enjoy a wide range of classroom-based and practical learning experiences.
- As part of the school's planned sixth-form provision, the school has established formal links with local colleges of further education to provide specialist courses. Learners will remain on the school roll and follow a full-time programme of study. They will attend sessions at college, with adult support where required, and supplement this with academic and vocational studies back at the school.

- Leaders' strong focus on pupils' personal development is pivotal in re-engaging pupils with education. This provision is a strength of the school. Pupils are well supported in building their self-esteem and self-confidence in an atmosphere of mutual respect and safety; they respond well, developing positive attitudes and behaviours. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs, public institutions, the role of government and the rule of law, and that they are aware of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and able to make a positive contribution to their local and wider communities.
- The school makes rigorous risk assessments of day-to-day activities and visits out of school, and puts in place proportionate measures to reduce risks to pupils. Close links with parents and carers help to continue the school's work to keep pupils safe outside school hours. Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe and well cared for, and that there is always someone to turn to if they are worried or have a problem. Attendance is carefully monitored and any absences are promptly followed up.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governance of the school is good. The proprietor maintains a visible presence in the school, ensuring that all the independent school standards and associated requirements are met, and that the school meets its aims.
 - The proprietor undertakes a regular analysis of data and holds frequent face-to-face meetings with school leaders. These provide the checks and balances to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education, together with a rich range of opportunities for their personal development. Trends in behaviour and leaders' responses are regularly evaluated.
 - The proprietor has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning, and ensures that the performance management of the principal and staff is rigorously undertaken.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has robust systems in place for checking and recording the suitability of adults to work with pupils. A number of senior staff are trained at the higher level in safeguarding procedures, ensuring cover at all times. All staff have received training in safeguarding matters, including child protection and the Prevent duty. A suitable number of staff are trained in first aid and in dealing with fire evacuations of the premises. Systems are in place to ensure that staff attend refresher training at the required intervals.
- The school makes all the required policies and information available to parents and others through its website. The school's safeguarding policy is published in full on the website; it reflects the latest statutory guidance provided in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (July 2015) and the reporting requirements effective from 31 October 2015. Regular checks are made on the premises, and leaders are rigorous in their implementation of health and safety procedures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Inspection evidence confirms the findings of leaders' regular observations of teaching and monitoring of pupils' learning. Over time, leaders have acted incisively to eradicate any teaching that is less than good, and to identify and develop outstanding practice.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and understand how to support their pupils in accessing education. Staff know their pupils well and are skilled in integrating new pupils into classes effectively. Teachers foster a business-like approach and waste no time in starting lessons. Pupils respond well to this and settle down to learning quickly.
- Staff challenge any stereotypical views and immediately address pupils' use of inappropriate language; as a result, such incidents are infrequent.
- Teachers make good use of the school's information about what pupils know and can do to plan learning that is relevant, interesting and well matched to pupils' needs. They make good use of high-quality learning resources and work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that, where necessary, the next stages in pupils' learning are broken down into a series of small and manageable steps.
- Staff recognise the potential of the most-able pupils, and provide stimulus and support for these pupils. In lessons, teachers ensure that, from the outset, the most-able pupils are given work that challenges them.
- Regular reports to parents, carers and commissioning bodies focus well on each pupil's progress, how they compare with the standards expected and what they need to do to improve. In discussion, parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the quality of the information they receive on a regular basis. Similarly, a local authority officer commented that the school's reporting was 'exemplary'.

- Teachers ensure that pupils know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to set out their work neatly and check what they have done. Sometimes pupils are given short tasks, such as correcting spelling mistakes, to consolidate their learning. Pupils know that they are expected to respond and do so promptly.
- Homework is used well to extend pupils' learning and the school's range of extra-curricular activities build well on classroom learning. Staff are successfully developing the use of the school grounds to take learning out of the classroom setting.
- Staff encourage pupils to listen carefully and speak clearly, and teachers provide regular opportunities for reading, writing and mathematics in lessons. This is because they recognise that many pupils are at an early stage in developing their confidence and ability to use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in different subjects and contexts. For example, in science, pupils were recording and presenting data about their pulse rates, and in physical education, pupils were acting as time-keepers and scorers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to identify and support those pupils who need help to understand and complete their tasks. When pupils are confident in what they are doing and taking successful steps in learning, staff often further increase pupils' resilience by asking challenging questions and setting problem-solving tasks. However, such practice to secure pupils' faster progress is not consistent across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Nearly all pupils arrive at High Peak having been excluded from one or more previous schools. Many have been on the roll of a number of schools in a short period of time, but their placements have invariably broken down. Pupils joining this school have often missed a significant amount of education and have little enthusiasm for learning; many are angry and distrustful of adults, and have low self-esteem.
- Pupils' poor attitudes and lack of self-confidence are rapidly transformed so that they attend regularly and develop respect for themselves and others. They make significant gains in the quality of their relationships with adults and other pupils, and increasingly enjoy learning. The school rightly regards the personal development and welfare of pupils as the foundation for their academic progress and preparation for the next stage of their education, training and employment. School leaders rightly aim to enable pupils to return to mainstream education, wherever possible.
- As they arrive at the start of each day, pupils are welcomed individually by staff, including senior leaders, into the calm and orderly school environment. Routines are carefully established and consistently adhered to; any changes – however minor – are flagged up and discussed with pupils in advance. For example, staff announced that the reward points system was being adjusted to take account of the shortened last week of term; this instantly reassured pupils who were aiming for prestigious awards.
- Pupils proudly wear their school uniform and aspire to achieve the high aspirations that leaders and staff promote. They value the opportunities available at High Peak, not only in terms of the excellent facilities but also the high level of support and guidance they receive from staff. Pupils feel safe and trust adults to keep them safe. They learn to avoid confrontational situations where they and others may be at risk. Pupils increasingly look out for others as well as themselves. For example, in fewer than two terms, pupils who joined the school as non-swimmers have thrived in the pool and successfully achieved qualifications in life-saving.
- Pupils successfully learn to show greater consideration for others and to be more tolerant of ideas and opinions that vary from their own. The school's systems of rewards encourage pupils to aim for success in all aspects of school life. Sharing and celebrating pupils' positive achievements are the bedrock of the school's culture; practised by staff and pupils alike, these extend beyond the classroom so that pupils feel valued and know that they are valued. As a result, they develop their care for other people and property. During the inspection, a member of the school council made a point of checking that the principal was 'getting along OK' and that the inspector was being looked after.

- The school ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to participate in the local community and learn about the customs, beliefs and opinions of those in the wider area. These opportunities, including visits to learn about different religions, successfully help to dispel pupils' sometimes narrow views of the world and very effectively promote their tolerance and understanding. Recent visits to a mosque and a Jewish museum are particularly memorable for pupils. As a result, pupils are developing a more balanced view of British society and institutions, and gaining first-hand experience of British values in action. Pupils' awareness and understanding of extremism and radicalisation are raised effectively by trained staff.
- The school provides high-quality careers education as part of its programme. This includes the services of an independent careers adviser who gives one-to-one advice and guidance. One pupil has recently completed a taster session at a local college of further education and another has successfully undertaken a work placement within the school. As the number on roll increases and with the forthcoming opening of the sixth form, the school is developing its links with local businesses and providers to provide a range of different 'next steps' experiences.
- The school makes excellent provision for promoting pupils' healthy eating and fitness. Pupils make regular use of the indoor and outdoor sporting facilities in timetabled lessons and as their chosen additional activities. The school council meets regularly with the school chef to plan menus, and pupils are encouraged to try new dishes in the school restaurant. As part of the sixth-form provision, a self-contained flat is being created in the school where learners can develop their independent living skills.
- The arrangements for supporting pupils' emotional and mental well-being are outstanding. Trained staff are on site throughout the school day to counsel and guide pupils, and a team of well-qualified specialists and consultants visit the school on a regular basis. As a result, first-class arrangements are in place to ensure that all those involved in working with pupils are aware of their needs and the support they receive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils settle quickly into the school routines and, over time, make great strides in learning to manage and control their behaviour. Staff and parents alike point to how pupils' behaviour has improved tremendously.
- Staff are quick to learn from incidents; they also evaluate what works best for their pupils. As a result, classrooms are being remodelled to provide different working arrangements.
- On occasions when pupils' behaviour falls short of what is expected, adults deal with incidents calmly and quickly. The number of serious incidents, including those requiring some form of physical restraint, has dropped significantly as the school's culture has become embedded. There have been no permanent exclusions since the school opened.
- While most pupils make good progress in recognising the triggers and taking appropriate action themselves, such as a few minutes out of the classroom, there are occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Typically, these are quickly over and staff are adept at defusing such situations calmly and effectively. This ensures that pupils' learning is not seriously disrupted.
- Pupils report that there is rarely bullying of any description in the school. They are aware of the different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, name-calling and physical intimidation, and are confident that staff will deal with such incidents swiftly. Any tendency for pupils to use derogatory or aggressive language quickly evaporates once they join the school. Incidents of swearing also reduce dramatically because staff and fellow pupils do not tolerate it.
- From when they start at the school, nearly all pupils improve their attendance rapidly. Absences are broadly in line with the national averages for mainstream schools and reducing. Some pupils' attendance is adversely affected by their medical conditions, but the school works closely with health professionals to mitigate such situations. One parent commented that, after many years of her son finding every excuse not to go to school, he insisted on attending even when suffering from a heavy cold.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Nearly all pupils join the school following periods of disruption to their education. Some have not learned alongside others for a considerable time and therefore have to readjust to working with others in the classroom. The school's outstanding provision for pupils' personal development is pivotal in enabling them to re-engage with learning and make good progress in subjects across the curriculum.

- The school's focus on preparing pupils for their next step in education, training or employment, whether this is imminent or in the future, drives the quest for each individual to achieve the best possible outcomes. Even those who have only recently joined the school are established on a pathway that leads to the recognition of their academic and vocational skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The school's first group of pupils to take public examinations sat their functional skills papers in English and mathematics at the end of the spring term. Further examinations, include GCSE, will be taken by pupils during the summer term.
- On joining the school, most pupils have significant gaps in their prior learning. Their often piecemeal skills, knowledge and understanding present a barrier to improvement. Pupils respond well to the tailored programmes that staff devise, particularly in English and mathematics, to close these gaps.
- From their typically very low starting points, pupils often make rapid progress in a short period of time as their gaps in learning start to be filled. This enables them to sustain a good rate of progress over time as they encounter work that is more appropriate to their ages and interests.
- The most-able pupils make good progress, notably in subjects such as art, computer programming, technology and physical education.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well as they are increasingly involved in discussions and responding to questions in front of others. Pupils make good gains in reading, increasing their fluency and understanding. They tackle an increasingly wide range of texts in different contexts beyond reading books, including recipes and other instructions, magazine articles, notices and wall-mounted displays of their own and other's work.
- Pupils' writing also improves as they widen their vocabulary and develop their capacity to write at length. They respond positively to teachers' objective marking and focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils' handwriting and presentation also show improvement over time, with some older pupils developing a fluent and consistent style.
- Regular practical opportunities for calculating and applying number in everyday situations are helping pupils to improve their mathematical skills. For example, in assembly, pupils work out how many bonus points they need to earn to reach a certain level of reward; the 'double points' for Wednesday in the last week of term provided the extra challenge of multiplication as well as addition and subtraction.
- Over time, improvements in English and mathematics impact positively on pupils' progress in other subjects, such as science, where they start to build their capacity to apply and develop their skills in different contexts. The school's leaders acknowledge that, for many pupils, this is at an early stage of development.

School details

Unique reference number	141502
Inspection number	10006313
DfE registration number	895/6001

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	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Schools Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Principal	David Glaves
Annual fees (day pupils)	from £55,000
Telephone number	01633 721731
Website	www.highpeakschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@highpeakschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- High Peak is an independent, special day school for boys and girls between the ages of nine and 18 years. Nearly all pupils have social, emotional or mental health difficulties, and many have additional learning needs, such as communication difficulties or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Nearly all pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Most pupils have either been assessed or are being treated by the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS).
- The school opened in October 2015 with two pupils. There are now 29 pupils on roll aged between nine and 16 years, with more boys than girls.
- Pupils typically join the school in key stage 2 or key stage 3 but, exceptionally in its early days, some joined in key stage 4. The sixth form is due to admit its first learners in September 2016.
- The school aims to 'overcome the disadvantaged start that many young people have received through highly intensive programmes of care and education in the hope that they become more resilient in their everyday approach to life and learning'.
- Pupils come from the local area and adjoining local authority areas. All are placed at the school by their local authorities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- A much higher than average proportion of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, 12 pupils are looked after by their local authority. The school does not receive additional government funding for any of its pupils.
- Currently, the school does not use any alternative provision or run any off-site units.
- This is the school's first Ofsted inspection since its registration by the Department for Education in October 2015. The school is currently registered to take up to 40 pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted by one inspector over two days. The school was given a day's notice of the inspection and the inspector spent some preparation time meeting senior leaders at the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the principal, senior leaders and the proprietor's representatives to learn about how well they safeguard pupils, check on the quality of teaching and ensure the welfare of pupils. He also examined how well pupils learn and make progress, through observations in lessons (all conducted jointly with the principal), and scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and assessment information. Through this and scrutiny of a range of documents, compliance with the independent school standards was checked.
- Discussions were also held with school leaders about their planned provision for the sixth form, which opens in September 2016.
- Pupils were observed in assemblies, at break- and lunchtimes, and when moving around the school. The inspector sought the views of pupils informally and in discussions to gather their views and find out what it is like to be a pupil in the school, and whether they feel safe and well cared for.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were scrutinised, including the school's single central register of the checks made and recorded on the suitability of adults to work with children and young people.
- The inspector talked in person or by telephone with two parents and two local authority officers. He also held discussions with the school's educational psychologist and the school improvement partner.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered, but other information provided by the school was examined.
- The inspector considered 20 responses to the staff questionnaire and held discussions with a number of members of staff.

Inspection team

Michael Best, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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