

# Northleigh House School

Five Ways Road, Hatton, Warwickshire CV35 7HZ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–14 January 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed effectively.
- Pupils make good progress because teaching and assessment are effective and work is usually well adapted to pupils' specific needs.
- The school works extremely well with parents, placing authorities and other agencies, to ensure that pupils' provision is carefully evaluated and adapted so that it is even more effective.
- The curriculum really motivates pupils to learn. In some subjects, despite lower starting points on entry, pupils achieve as well as, or better than, others of their age.
- The proprietor and trustees are highly supportive of the work of the school. They and senior leaders have an ambitious vision for all pupils.
- Sixth formers make good progress because the work that they do builds carefully on what they have achieved previously. Staff ensure that pupils achieve as much independence and the highest qualifications possible.
- Excellent pastoral care systems help transform pupils' attitudes to learning and keep them very safe. Staff are very skilled at helping pupils manage their anxieties so that pupils have more confidence in themselves and their abilities. Pupils feel safe, despite the high levels of anxiety that have previously deterred them from attending school.
- Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They make great strides in their personal and social development and have a good understanding of the values of modern Britain.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in other subjects. Occasionally, tasks provided and guidance from teachers do not focus sufficiently on the things that will help that pupil to improve further.
- Systems for using information about pupils' progress, to hold staff to account, and to identify whole-school targets for improvement, are too recent to have had their full impact. Inconsistencies in pupils' performance are not always picked up quickly enough.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 as amended 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the ways in which the school checks on and monitors its work so that:
  - teachers in all subjects follow the school's guidance about how to record and evaluate pupils' progress
  - the information gained by leaders is used to improve teaching and learning in subjects and year groups.
  
- Ensure that all teachers understand pupils' strengths and identified needs in writing so that any guidance and writing opportunities they provide take even better account of these.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The proprietor, headteacher and other senior leaders have established a culture of high expectations to which staff, pupils and parents all respond. In almost everything it does the school strikes just the right balance of nurturing pupils' self-confidence and challenging them to achieve even more. The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all independent school standards are met, for example, checking carefully that the legal requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs and education, health and care plans are met.
- The size of the school means that every pupil and their specific needs are extremely well known to leaders. Teaching and learning are checked effectively, both formally and informally. Frequent meetings carefully examine pupils' progress in subjects and in their emotional well-being. Learning programmes are swiftly changed where necessary. Systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress are still relatively new in some subjects. This means leaders, including subject leaders, though highly focused on checking how well individuals are doing, have only just started to use this information to identify whole-school priorities. This weakness has meant that inconsistencies in a few pupils' progress have not been spotted early so that they can be rectified quickly.
- A policy of appointing more subject specialists means that staff have good subject knowledge and expertise. Consequently, the curriculum and standards have improved as staff are clear about the next steps in learning in their subjects. Staff are expert in providing emotional support and helping pupils to deal with their anxiety. They are extremely well deployed so that when pupils are feeling anxious there is always someone to support them and help them to manage their feelings. As a result, pupils attend school rather than stay at home because they have confidence and trust in staff to help them overcome their difficulties.
- Systems for checking pupils' progress and learning programmes have improved considerably since the last inspection. These are strongest in the core subjects, which in this school are English; mathematics; science; personal, social, health and economic education; and computing. Staff record how well pupils are doing emotionally on a daily basis. Frequent staff meetings discuss the day-to-day progress of all pupils. This means that any problems or concerns are picked up quickly. Termly reviews formally check how well pupils are performing towards the targets set. However, not all staff follow the school's agreed way of assessing pupils' attainment levels. This makes comparisons of progress between subjects or within aspects of a subject more difficult.
- The curriculum is highly individualised to meet pupils' specific needs and interests. Leaders check carefully that the school is providing all of the learning experiences that it should. All staff know each pupil very well and so are quick to identify areas of strength or where the pupil might be stumbling. The school buys in additional specialists or provides other learning opportunities to develop individual's particular talents or interests.
- Early entry to examinations is used particularly well to help some pupils deal with their anxieties about examinations and to build their self-belief. For example, some pupils who took examinations early gained higher GCSE grades in photography or in mathematics in Years 9 and 10. Individuals are quick to say how achieving good grades early in their schooling gives them confidence for when they take other examinations in other subjects.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders have the right development priorities. For example, they have extended the range of qualifications and courses that learners can take in the sixth form, as well as elsewhere in the school. These now include GCSE work at foundation and higher levels in photography, art and design, psychology, history and philosophy as well as in the core subjects. Sixth formers are on target to improve their English and mathematics skills in Year 11.
- Good quality careers guidance and careful working with pupils, families, placing authorities and other agencies ensure that all pupils are well prepared for life after school. Careers education and work experience are very carefully planned and pupils have access to good quality impartial support and advice. The school has much local support from businesses and visitors that enables pupils to understand the different employment opportunities that are available, and their requirements.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection. British values, together with acceptance, understanding and tolerance of difference and diversity, underpin the school's values. These values are modelled very well by all staff. Visits, visitors and carefully chosen themes and topics challenge pupils and enrich learning. Pupils who were fearful and used to hide away are now starting to enjoy meeting others and learning from new experiences.

An excellent project called 'healing cities', for example, helped the whole school consider the experiences and devastation that war can bring and how people can reach out to each other in times of difficulty.

- The nature of pupil's' special educational needs and their vulnerability means that the school is highly focused not only on ensuring pupils are safe, but also that they feel safe. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet all statutory requirements. All policies and procedures are updated regularly and are implemented effectively. Staff are ever vigilant and are well trained, particularly in child protection. At the time of the inspection they were due to have further training on issues relating to extremism, to build on earlier training and to develop the school's planning further. Preventing radicalisation and issues relating to sexual exploitation, e-safety and personal safety are already carefully interwoven into the school's curriculum to keep pupils safe from harm.
- Placing authorities and parents are hugely positive about the school's work and the difference it has made to pupil's lives. They praise the flow of communication between the school and home and the availability of the headteacher and the pastoral manager to listen to their concerns. A particular strength is the way in which the school works with other agencies at times of transition whether into or out of school to ensure that pupils do not fall back into withdrawing from the world. The fact that all pupils who have left the school to date are successfully maintaining their college or apprenticeship course is testament to the quality of education provided.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance of the school rests with the proprietor and a small group of trustees. They are highly involved in the school. The proprietor, in particular, has daily involvement in the school through her oversight of its administration, including involvement with admissions. This means the Trustees know the school's work very well, including the progress and achievements of every pupil. They are determined to provide the resources that are needed to enable every pupil to succeed and look carefully to see how well pupils succeed in their next placements to inform their measure of such success.
  - Trustees have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and of the quality of teaching and learning. Systems for checking formally on these and for holding staff to account for their areas of responsibility are relatively new. Until recently, the school was very small and some teaching was done by volunteers. The strengthening of assessment and progress measures has helped leaders to check on the impact of teaching on learning and to more rigorously overview the performance management of staff. The proprietor, other trustees and senior leaders are rightly focused on developing these aspects of their work further.
  - The proprietor and trustees ensure that staff have access to the training that they need and have fostered excellent relationships with the local community and the local authority to support the school's work. They have ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met and that pupils have the required provision identified in their education, health and care plans or statements of special educational needs. They are quick to provide additional support such as speech and language therapy, equine therapy and counselling for pupils, working hard to raise the funds to do so.
  - The proprietor and trustees have ensured that that the school has access to specialist advice to improve pupil outcomes.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Learning is good because teaching and assessment are now good. Programmes of learning are well tailored to ensure pupils make at least good progress both personally and academically. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and expertise and an enthusiasm for their subjects, such as in psychology, art and photography, that arouses pupils' interest and curiosity to find out more.
- Good working practices with placing authorities, families and previous schools, in addition to the school's own checks on entry, mean that staff generally have the necessary information to inform their planning. The strengthening of the school's own assessment systems means that work is usually well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. However, occasionally teachers plan too cautiously and the work is too easy. This is usually because of the need to support pupils' self-image, confidence and to help combat their anxiety. However, when pupils are engaging well and are more settled not all teachers adjust the level of challenge sufficiently and particularly in writing. This slows the progress of a few.
- Occasionally, staff do not record pupils' attainment levels in the agreed way, preferring to use their own system. This makes comparisons of progress between and within subjects difficult for parents and the pupils. The school is strengthening this aspect of its work through more regular checks on the consistency of feedback and assessment, including checking on the work in pupils' books.

- There is a good emphasis on ensuring that pupils can apply their mathematical and reading skills in different situations and subjects. Good opportunities are provided for this, for example when researching different topics in art or in enterprise activities. Teachers are particularly skilled in helping pupils to problem solve for themselves, as seen in a Key Stage 4 and sixth form computing lesson. Skilled questioning enabled pupils to draw on what they already knew to define key terms and to discover answers for themselves. Pupils not only improved their understanding of computing language, but the activity also improved their confidence and their ability to speak in front of others, ask questions and work collaboratively.
- Teaching and learning of reading and writing are good. Some aspects, such as the identification of pupils' individual learning needs, and the promotion of pupils' social use of language, are outstanding. Detailed individualised support is provided for any pupil found to have reading difficulties or a reading delay, and many opportunities are provided for reading skills to be developed across the curriculum. Pupils read with expression and enjoyment and their reading fluency is developing well. They study a wide range of texts in their courses and can identify a good range of favourite authors with enthusiasm.
- Although pupils' progress in writing is good overall, a few lack confidence when writing and are more reluctant to write at length. This improves over time, but the guidance and support they are given is not always accurately targeted on the most important things that should develop next in their writing. In line with the school's policies, teachers provide positive feedback to pupils, both verbally and in writing, as to how well they are doing. However, some are more expert at helping pupils to understand what is good about what they have written or said. For example, identifying that they have used particular language well or why an idea is good. This approach spurs the pupil to build on their ideas further or to use a similarly productive approach next time.
- The teaching of mathematics is good because teachers teach concepts securely, provide strong explanations and draw answers out of pupils so that they consolidate and extend their learning. Any weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills are carefully identified and gaps in learning are remedied quickly. Activities are designed to help pupils succeed. Teachers are good at building pupils' confidence in the subject and developing their mathematical skills.
- Staff are expert at providing for the needs of pupils with high anxiety levels, including those linked to autism. They adapt their teaching to take account of individuals' preferred learning style. Staff form highly productive relationships with pupils. This enables pupils to ask questions and to share what it is about a situation that means they are not coping. Staff follow the pupil's agreed learning plan closely. As a result, time is used wisely, learning is adapted rather than interrupted and little time for learning is lost. Staff are extremely skilled at refocusing pupils on their work. Work is designed to grab the pupil's attention and interest, while ensuring that pupils acquire the necessary academic and personal skills for life.
- Pupils have intensive one-to-one or small group support. This accelerates their learning well so that they make up lost ground. Staff are very aware of the need to promote pupils' independent learning and tasks are well chosen to do so. Staffing levels for each pupil are high but staff time is well focused on ensuring pupils have confidence in their own ability and have resilience.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is ever conscious of pupils' personal needs. It is currently developing targets and ways to evaluate progress in their personal qualities. Parents and pupils praise the way in which pupils' personal development is promoted in all lessons.
- Staff are ever vigilant and enable pupils to live life to the full while avoiding risk. Pupils feel very safe. They trust their teachers and have excellent relationships with them. They move safely and confidently around the school and also when outside in the local community.
- Careful risk assessments before any visits, work placements or college courses mean that pupils are kept very safe for both on- and off-site activities. Pupils' safety and well-being is paramount and the school is meticulous when admitting new pupils to ensure they take account of other pupils' needs. A trained counsellor and a highly skilled pastoral care manager are available to support and advise pupils at all times. Pupils and parents speak highly of the ways in which this support enables pupils to develop strategies to manage their own anxiety.
- There is excellent support for pupils' transition into school through good working relationships with parents, previous placements, social care, local authority officers and the pupils themselves. This ensures that pupils'

needs are assessed accurately and quickly on entry, and that they rapidly establish positive relationships with key staff.

- Pupils are actively encouraged and supported to be more outgoing and self-reflective. As their anxieties reduce, they become more involved in school life and the local community and take a greater interest in the outside world. As a result, pupils' social skills and willingness to work with others have improved. For some, this means that they consider careers in mental health or social work, or express a desire to work with others. The school supports such development well. For example, pupils took part in work experience during the inspection, shadowing and supporting a sports coach as he worked with children from a local primary school on Northleigh's sports pitch.
- Staff are ever alert to any safeguarding concerns that might arise, because they have been well trained to look out for issues including those that might relate to e-safety, child sexual exploitation and exposure to extremist views.
- All the required health and safety regulations are met, including those relating to fire, water and risk assessments. Robust checks are carried out on staff to confirm their suitability to work with children and all of the necessary checks are recorded on the single central register. All safer recruitment requirements are met.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a calm and highly supportive learning environment. Records show that there have been no serious behavioural incidents or outbursts of poor behaviour since the last inspection. Pupils' anxieties and needs can mean that they withdraw themselves from learning to the sitting room. However, the school records such incidents carefully and it is noticeable that as pupils settle into school, they stay in class and take a more active part in lessons.
- There are no recorded incidents of bullying and pupils confirm this to be the case. Pupils have a deep understanding of different forms of bullying and when and where they might encounter harassment. They have a very strong sense of fairness and of right and wrong and demonstrate empathy for each other and for others less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils say that the school is more like a family and that everyone supports each other. There are occasional 'fallings out' but they really value the friendships they have made since attending the school. Pupils who have previously hidden away from the world now feel confident to go out with friends sometimes and to engage in work experience and charitable events.
- Despite many pupils being poor- or non-attenders because of their anxieties prior to entering this school, almost all now attend as well or better than others of their age. There have been rare instances where the school has not been able to quickly re-engage pupils with full-time education. Where this has been the case, the school works with the local authority well to arrange suitable part-time support for the family or find alternative solutions.
- Pupils' behaviour and cooperation have improved because staff have such high expectations of them, whilst being sensitive to their needs. Personalised learning plans and analyses of pupils' emotional well-being and involvement are used very well by staff. They monitor when pupils might be unduly anxious in order to give them extra support when needed. Pupils can choose, for example, to take a mentor into a lesson with them. This means that pupils stay in lessons rather than choosing to withdraw.

### Outcomes for pupils

**are good**

- Pupils enter school with wide ranging attainment. For almost all, their attainment is not where it should be – often because of their previous poor attendance and anxiety. They make good progress from their starting points. Gaps in attainment between pupils in this school and their peers nationally are closing quickly. This is particularly noticeable for those who have been in school over a long period of time. This good progress is the result of the intensive and effective one-to-one provision, improved attendance and good teaching.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics, science and English is good. Individual pupils achieve the higher GCSE levels in mathematics in particular and almost all pupils achieve functional skills' qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Pupils usually take the lower levels of these awards when they arrive to give them confidence in taking examinations and controlled assessments. This means that by Year 11 they have more confidence in their abilities and techniques for supporting themselves in examinations.

- Pupils' work and progress in English is more variable than in mathematics. This is because a few do not move forward as quickly in their writing skills as they do in their mathematical understanding. Teachers are skilled at providing explanations in mathematics and at drawing solutions out of pupils. Although speaking, listening and reading skills are promoted very well in English and other subjects, writing is less consistently extended.
- Pupils study practical subjects such as art and photography and gain good grades in these subjects by the end of Year 11. All pupils who took GCSE photography gained either an A or B grade last year including those in Years 9 and 10.
- For many pupils, progress from entry is slower in the first few months, but accelerates quickly as they work through the barriers linked to their high anxiety levels. As they move through the school, their willingness to try more challenging work is noticeable. Staff are very skilled at encouraging pupils to have a go whilst monitoring their stress levels. For this group of pupils, an important outcome of their learning is their readiness for their next stage of learning. It is a particular success of the school that the few students who have left in Year 11 or the sixth form have successfully transferred to college.
- All pupils leave the school with a range of skills and qualifications, however short their time at Northleigh. These include entry level qualifications, functional skills and GCSE qualifications in history, religious education, psychology, and skills for life, as well as core skills. An increasing number of qualifications, including higher level qualifications, have been made available in response to pupils' unfolding talents and aspirations.
- Younger pupils make at least good progress by the end of Key Stage 3 in the subjects that they study. They benefit from opportunities to study alongside older pupils working at similar levels. This means that a few take their qualifications early and are very proud to have gained them. The school is very careful to ensure that pupils only take qualifications when they are emotionally ready to.
- Good teamwork and communication between the special educational needs coordinator and other staff means that pupils' additional learning needs are met effectively. For example, support and resources provided for pupils who have dyslexia, enable them to not only improve their English skills and attainment but also their grades in other subjects.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements. They and their parents say that the school has really turned around their learning so that they can now achieve qualifications and improve the range of choices available to them in the future.

## Sixth form provision

is good

- Provision in the sixth form is good. A very small number of learners stay on until age 18. They do so if the school, parents, sixth former and placing authority feel that they are not yet ready to transfer to a further education setting or to employment. The school is highly focused on enabling learners to improve their academic grades and their emotional well-being.
- Sixth formers are taught individually or alongside small groups of other learners taking similar courses or of similar ability. This works well because it enables learners to be stretched, challenged and to make good progress both academically and in their personal development.
- Leaders are careful to ensure that learners are taking courses that are matched to their capabilities and aspirations. For example, providing access to AS level and GCSE courses in photography and psychology where applicable. Leaders draw well on external support and staff expertise to ensure that sixth formers have expert tuition during their studies.
- Leaders have provided many opportunities that help pupils develop effective strategies and more confidence for dealing with unfamiliar situations. For example, some sixth formers took part in a school journey to Italy where they and Key Stage 4 pupils talked with citizens about the experiences in a city during the war. They compiled a high quality film comparing British and Italian experiences.
- Good opportunities are provided for internal and external work experience. Effective support and guidance enables learners to make the right choices for their next step in life.
- Staff are highly focused on equipping learners with a range of skills and strategies to use in broader society. The very strong personal, social, health and economic education and pastoral support programme ensures that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of sixth formers is particularly strong. Provision ensures that they have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and what British values mean by the time they leave.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136510
<b>Inspection number</b>	10006024
<b>DfE registration number</b>	937/6108

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	16
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	2
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	4
<b>Proprietor</b>	Viv Morgan
<b>Chair</b>	Viv Morgan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Cornfield
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26,100
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 484203
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.northleigh.co.uk">www.northleigh.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:jill.cornfield@northleigh.co.uk">jill.cornfield@northleigh.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 September 2012

## Information about this school

- Northleigh House School is a small independent special school located near Hatton in Warwickshire. It is located in a former hotel that has been suitably adapted for educational purposes. It specialises in meeting the needs of pupils who have very high anxiety levels which have prevented them from attending school regularly. Many are identified as having school phobias. A high proportion of pupils have additional special educational needs such as autistic spectrum conditions, speech, language and communication needs or dyslexia.
- Pupils enter the school at any point during their secondary school career and sometimes as late as Year 11.
- The school is registered for up to 20 pupils aged 11 to 18 years. At the time of this inspection there were 16 pupils on roll, including four pupils who attend part time as part of an agreed transition and integration programme. These pupils are also supported by Warwickshire local authority integrated disability team or their local school for the rest of their education. Three other pupils, on the rolls of other schools, were attending on assessment places.

- Pupils are taught in one-to-one sessions or in mixed-aged groups according to ability and need. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. All pupils are funded by their local authorities. None are looked after children. The school does not receive pupil premium funding. All pupils are White British.
- The school opened in May 2011 and admitted its first pupils in September 2011. In January 2012, it had its first standard inspection and the quality of education was judged satisfactory. However, a number of independent school standards were not met. A progress monitoring inspection was conducted in September 2012 to check if unmet standards were met or not.
- The current sole proprietor took control of the school in July 2012, and prior to the progress monitoring inspection. The proprietor lives on-site and overviews the business aspects of the school. She is also Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- The school does not use alternative providers but does use local businesses and colleges, as appropriate, to support their work.
- The school and proprietor have received many awards for their work, including a Pride of Britain award in 2015.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at one day's notice.
- The inspector visited lessons and observed pupils' learning, sometimes accompanied by the headteacher. In addition she scrutinised pupils' current and past work to further ascertain their progress in subjects.
- The inspector examined a range of school policies and other documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan and its health and safety procedures, including its compliance with fire regulations. The school's policies and practices for safeguarding were evaluated and records relating to these examined.
- Not enough responses were received to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire for analysis to occur. However, two parents did leave comments which the lead inspector evaluated. She also talked with parents and a local authority representative to gain their views of the school and on pupils' achievement and progress.
- The inspector considered the evidence and held discussions with school leaders as to how they checked on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and managed the performance of staff. She had discussions with the proprietor as to aspects of governance and how the proprietor and Board of Trustees held the school to account.
- The inspector talked with pupils about their work and their view of the school. The views expressed by staff through eight questionnaires were also considered.

## Inspection team

Susan Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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