

Mackworth House School

305a Prince Charles Avenue, Derby, DE22 4LL

Inspection dates	16–17 September 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.

- From very exceptionally low levels of attainment, attendance and behaviour in previous schools, pupils make good and sometimes rapid progress in each of these areas.
- Teaching is good and is well focused on developing pupils' communication skills, and personal, social and emotional needs. As a result, progress and learning are good.
- The curriculum is flexible and changes in response to the interest, needs and abilities of individual pupils. This secures pupils' engagement and enjoyment in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and has improved significantly over a short period of time. Staff are skilled in observing and analysing behaviour. They are able to de-escalate potential problems swiftly. They make sure that pupil's well-being and safety are paramount.
- The headteacher, who is well supported by the curriculum manager, has high expectations and ambition for pupils and staff. Both continually seek ways to improve the school further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The role of the teaching assistants is not yet fully developed and as a result pupils' progress is not outstanding.
- The quality of teaching is not monitored regularly enough. Staff, including the headteacher, do not have targets to improve their teaching or leadership skills. They have not had precise training and support to improve their effectiveness further.
- Adults do not always adapt activities to make sure that the work is consistently pitched at the right level of difficulty.
- Planning and teaching sometimes misses opportunities to identify and develop several skills that pupils could learn and practise within the same activity.

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

- The school was inspected with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed the impact of teaching in three lessons taught by several members of staff. A range of school documentation, including policies, schemes of work and pupils' files, was scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with the proprietors and senior leaders, a parent, and informally with pupils and members of staff.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's Parent View to be reported. The inspector looked at the school's own parental survey. Thirteen staff questionnaires were taken into account.
- At the request of the Department for Education, a request for a material change to increase the number of pupils 18 to 32 was considered. The school's request to deregister from residential provision is currently being considered by Ofsted. At the time of the inspection, the proprietors had taken the decision not to admit any residential pupils; this has created additional classrooms.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mackworth House is an independent special day school located in refurbished premises on the outskirts of the City of Derby.
- The school is registered to admit up to 18 full-time boys and girls in the age range six to 19 years.
- There are currently four pupils on roll, aged between 6 and 12 years. All pupils have autism with associated complex special educational needs. This includes either no or limited communication skills.
- Pupils have had significant disruption to their education with a history of poor attendance. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. None are looked after by a local authority.
- The school aims to secure 'high quality personalised education and support for children and young people with autism' through a range of individualised curriculum pathways.
- The school was led by an interim headteacher until September 2014 when the substantive headteacher returned following maternity leave.
- This is the school's first Ofsted inspection since it was registered as an independent school in May 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupil achievement so that more is outstanding by:
 - using ongoing assessments in lessons more effectively to make sure that activities are neither too easy nor too hard to secure pupils' rapid progress
 - maximising learning by planning and teaching a number of key skills in an activity, particularly in literacy, mathematics and pupils' personal development
 - providing tailored training and support for teaching assistants so that they are better equipped to support the teacher and pupils' learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - making more regular checks on the school's work, including the quality of teaching, and pin-pointing precisely what staff need to do to improve their performance further
 - using this information to reward good performance and to set challenging targets based on pupil outcomes through an annual cycle of appraisal, linked to the school's priorities
 - securing external support and challenge for leaders, so that skills are honed in order to achieve rapid progress towards outstanding provision.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- Pupils have very low levels of attainment. They make at least good progress from their starting points. In a very short space of time, the school has secured good achievement and significant improvements in pupils' personal development. Pupils have been successfully integrated back into education.
- Staff are diligent in fostering a highly effective partnership with parents so that they have a comprehensive understanding of pupils' interests, strengths and areas for development. Staff use this information, as well as in-depth assessments when pupils enter the school, to devise individualised programmes for their education. This, together with good teaching, usually secures pupils' confidence and engagement in their learning.
- Staff are acutely aware of the need to develop pupils' language skills, and take every opportunity to initiate and extend their communication and understanding. They support pupils' learning by the use of communication aids, such as visual pictorial cues, verbal prompts and gesturing. They also immerse pupils in spoken language by continually explaining what they are doing, and paraphrasing and extending pupils' responses.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are developed in meaningful contexts, often in physical education or cooking activities. Pupils benefit from a range of sensory experiences which motivate them to explore and to engage in play activities. For example, staff initiate games of hide and seek using materials which 'crinkle', successfully securing pupils' attention and involvement.
- Those pupils who are more able also achieve well. As with other pupils, activities are planned to capture their interest. With intensive adult support, the curriculum is extended so that early reading, writing and mathematical skills are developed through a more structured timetable.
- A love of reading is successfully promoted. For example, pupils enjoy sharing stories with their teacher. Teachers skilfully engage pupils in the story using intonation and gestures to focus their attention. This results in pupils spontaneously turning the pages, and sometimes pointing accurately to words and the associated pictures.
- Pupils achieve well in other subjects, such as science and in art, through cooking and painting. Good use is made of computers, particularly tablets, so that pupils can represent their ideas and aspects of their work. Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is consistently promoted in all activities, and through the strong relationships between pupils and staff.
- The school ensures that pupils' individual educational plans are integrated effectively into activities, particularly in relation to their literacy, numeracy and personal development.
- Staff work well with other professionals, including a speech therapist, occupational therapist and clinical psychologist. Together they plan programmes of work to help pupils with their specific learning difficulties, which include communication, sensory integration, and gross and fine motor co-ordination.
- As the school is in its first year of operation, no pupils have been in the school long enough to progress to Key Stage 4 or beyond.

Quality of teaching**Good**

- The curriculum manager has driven the development of a broad and relevant curriculum with well-thought-out schemes of work. These inform individualised programmes to meet the very distinct and differing needs of pupils. Staff provide intensive support, which promotes good learning and progress, particularly in pupils' communication and literacy skills.
- Teachers lead by example and model excellent practice. For example, when asking pupils to undertake tasks they give clear and direct instructions, and provide timely and effective verbal feedback to praise pupils for their work and behaviour. Teaching assistants work diligently and patiently. While they support pupils' learning effectively, there are times when they do not provide further reinforcement of skills and consolidate learning more.
- Teaching also promotes good behaviour and has been instrumental in reducing the amount of challenging and often disturbing behaviours that pupils first exhibit when they join the school. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning have improved immeasurably.
- The school's culture of respect and tolerance pervades all relationships and every aspect of its work. All staff use every opportunity to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development by modelling appropriate language, manners and emphasising what is right and wrong. They make sure that pupils understand what is acceptable by spelling out clearly boundaries and potential consequences.
- Lessons are organised into short 20 minute sessions where pupils are able to sustain their concentration and make small but vital steps in their learning.
- Planning makes it clear to adults what they will be teaching the pupils and there are well thought out activities to develop specific individual skills. Nevertheless, planning sometimes misses opportunities for adults to teach several different skills within one activity in different areas of learning, which diminishes the chance to practise and consolidate pupils' skills.
- Although staff accurately assess pupils' progress regularly, including in lessons, they do not always adapt activities to make sure that the work is pitched at the right level of challenge. This slows learning down.

Behaviour and safety of pupils**Good**

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Staff have successfully focused on reducing the number of incidents of inappropriate and sometimes very challenging behaviour. Simultaneously, they have worked to increase pupils' ability to sustain their concentration.
- Inspection observations and school records show that pupils are usually able to focus sufficiently to complete their work. If pupils become distracted, staff are proficient in re-engaging them in their learning. There have been marked improvements in pupils' behaviour since they joined the school.
- Nevertheless, all pupils have the potential for extreme behaviours which have the possibility to disrupt their own learning and that of others. As a consequence, pupils usually learn on a one-to-one basis in their own classroom or in a specialist room, such as the sensory room. Sometimes pupils are supported by two adults.

- Pupils attend regularly because they enjoy their learning. They show positive attitudes to their work and gain great satisfaction when they are praised, which reinforces their good behaviour. Staff describe how pupils are beginning to show an awareness of other pupils' feelings, and that they are more tolerant of each other. Incidents of bullying are rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. School leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding of pupils. Arrangements for the recruitment of staff and appropriate training, for example in child protection and first aid, are robust.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their work and behaviour. For example, they use their visual timetables to check if they have completed their activities or if they need to go to the toilet.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Strong relationships enable pupils to experience and develop a sense of respect, self-confidence and cooperation. Pupils are developing some awareness of different cultures and religions, for example through painting African animals and celebrating different religious festivals. Pupils are beginning to understand public institutions and services through visits to the library and post office.

Leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including the proprietors, have ensured that all the required regulations for independent schools have been met.
- Despite the changes in the school's organisation and in leadership since the school opened, staff morale is high. They have maintained a united front to make sure that pupils achieve what they are capable of academically and personally.
- The leadership team's top priority has been to ensure that the school creates a very positive and caring ethos where personal development is nurtured successfully. The headteacher has high expectations and has the full backing of all staff. As a result, the school is a very effective specialist school for pupils with autism.
- Leaders, including the curriculum manager, have made sure that the quality of teaching is never less than good. Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously and information is used well to inform their personal plans. Challenging targets are set which are compared against the national norms. As a consequence, pupils make good progress and there have been dramatic improvements in their personal development.
- Although there have been some checks on the quality of teaching, this has not been systematically undertaken. Furthermore, staff, including the headteacher, do not have targets in order to develop their practice further through a formal appraisal cycle, linked to the school's priorities for improvement.
- The headteacher has significant experience and an excellent understanding of how best to meet the complex needs of the pupils. She has quickly identified what the school needs to do to improve further and is keen to secure further success. The interim headteacher was supported by external advisers, who checked the accuracy of some of the school's judgements. As yet the headteacher, who has most of the leadership responsibilities, does not have external support and challenge in order to hone her leadership skills still further.
- The proprietors have ensured that all aspects of safeguarding and pupils' welfare meet

requirements. They have a sound understanding of the school's effectiveness.

- It is recommended that the school's request for a material change to admit up to 32 pupils is not approved. Although the accommodation is well maintained, and there is more space as a result of the residential provision being closed, the premises are not large enough for the revised number of pupils sought.

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	139787
Inspection number	446396
DfE registration number	831/6012

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 day school for pupils with autism
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Christopher Antoniadous
Headteacher	Kirsten Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,048
Telephone number	01332 606202
Email address	info@mackworthhouse.com

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