

# Mountwood Academy

Ribchester, Preston, Lancashire PR3 3YB

## Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Until the appointment of the new headteacher, the proprietor and the governing advisory body had an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness.
- Until recently, the proprietor and the governing advisory body did not have the necessary skills to challenge leaders to improve the quality of education at the necessary pace.
- Although improving, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not plan lessons that routinely stretch and challenge pupils to excel.
- Teachers' ongoing training is not rigorous enough so as to make a sustainable difference to the overall quality of teaching.
- Leaders' system for assessing pupils' progress is new. It is not sufficiently informing learning and progress.
- The curriculum is not well matched to pupils' future career plans or aspirations.
- Opportunities for students in the sixth form to develop employability skills through work-related learning or work experience are limited.
- Although the range of qualifications on offer across the school has been reviewed, it is not tailored sufficiently well to pupils' needs.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher leads with moral purpose, drive and determination. She has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, she has put the school on a course of rapid improvement.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She will not rest until the school is the best that it can be.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent. Leaders have effective strategies in place to re-engage disaffected pupils with their education.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe in school and bullying is extremely rare.
- The quality of care and support provided by the school's staff is excellent. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution across the school.

### 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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - reviewing and strengthening the role of governors so that they hold leaders astutely to account for the quality of education that pupils receive
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels are accurate in their self-evaluation
  - reviewing the appropriateness of the school’s curriculum so that it meets pupils’ needs, enables them to excel in their learning and supports their future career plans and aspirations
  - ensuring that the programme of ongoing staff training enhances the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - embedding the new assessment system so teachers routinely use the information to inform their planning and pupils’ future learning
  - increasing the level of stretch and challenge in lessons so that pupils reach their potential.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that they make more rapid and sustained progress across their subjects.
- Improve the school’s sixth-form provision by:
  - enhancing the curriculum and qualifications on offer post-16 so that they best meet students’ needs and aspirations
  - ensuring that students have more opportunities to develop employability skills through appropriate work-related learning and work experience.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Until the appointment of the new headteacher, the proprietor and leaders had an overgenerous view of the quality of education that the school provided. This was because self-evaluation was not robust or accurate.
- Leaders and governors acknowledged the issues the headteacher identified and appropriate improvement plans were put in place. These improvement plans are already making a difference to the overall quality of education.
- Currently, some teachers do not have sufficiently high enough expectations of what their pupils can and should achieve. The headteacher is in the process of reviewing the target-setting system.
- Historically leaders have not been held to account. However, leaders have introduced new procedures to ensure that improvements to teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes are a priority. This has been welcomed by teachers. That said, the system is in its infancy.
- New, robust systems to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have been introduced. Leaders have an accurate understanding of how to improve teaching, learning and assessment. However, this is not reflected fully in the current ongoing programme of staff training. Leaders are in the process of revising the staff training programme to ensure that there is a balance between improving the care that pupils receive and improving the quality of teaching.
- The proprietor and headteacher have appointed a new senior leadership team who bring with them credible experience. Alongside new senior leaders is a range of new middle leaders. Together, they have the drive and determination to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for the school's pupils.
- The curriculum provision has been overhauled and is adequate. However, the curriculum does not meet the needs of the school's pupils as well as it could. Teachers and leaders do not take full advantage of the opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to their abilities or future career aspirations. The headteacher recognises this and has plans in place to improve the curriculum offer further.
- Leaders have undertaken a review of qualifications so that they better match pupils' abilities and starting points. However, some of the school's most-able pupils remain underchallenged.
- Leaders have set a clear vision for the school. It is now on a course of rapid improvement.
- Staff value the resources that the proprietor has afforded the school. The new building is already inspiring pupils to work together and to collaborate. Staff appreciate leaders' support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The senior leader responsible for the creative curriculum is seizing opportunities for pupils to explore the wider curriculum, for example through art and music.
- Pupils learn about British values, for example different religions and the importance of

tolerance and respect in our society. Equality is promoted at every opportunity. Without doubt, pupils' differences are highly valued among their peers. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about diversity and respect through 'green card football', for example.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils value the support of their teachers and other adults in the school.
- The leadership and management of behaviour is a key strength. Staff see behavioural issues as communication. Staff collaborate well to ensure that they address pupils' behavioural issues together. The tracking of behaviour incidents is thorough and an evaluation of what works well for each individual pupil is shared among staff.
- As part of the inspection, the DfE has asked Ofsted to consider a material change. The school has already moved to new premises. There is also a request to increase the planned admission number from 10 to 34. For the purposes of the request, the school is likely to meet all of the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor has strengthened governance because historically it had an overgenerous view of the quality of education that the school provides. In the past, governance did not have the necessary skills to improve educational outcomes for pupils.
- Following the proprietor's internal review of governance, there is now an equal emphasis placed on improving the quality of education to match the excellent quality of pastoral care. Nonetheless, there is still some way to go.
- The proprietor has implemented training to support her governing education advisors with the task of continuous school improvement.
- The governing education advisory body is committed to improving the standard of education that the school provides. They have strengthened their resolve to hold to leaders at all levels more fully to account so that standards do not slip again.
- The proprietor and governors have taken difficult decisions to address historic leadership issues. They have also replaced ineffective teachers.
- Following a review of safeguarding procedures with the headteacher, the proprietor now meets the statutory duties to safeguard pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet all the statutory requirements.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils are safe and feel safe. A full audit of the school's safeguarding procedures and practices has been undertaken and they have been improved where needed.
- All adults in the school receive appropriate training in order to keep pupils safe. They know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are clear what to do if they have any concerns.

- Leaders and other staff liaise appropriately with outside agencies.
- Leaders publish the safeguarding policy on the school's website. It meets statutory requirements.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- Some teachers do not routinely plan lessons that support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. This is because they do not challenge pupils sufficiently well, particularly those who are the most able.
- Teachers do not exploit the activities that they plan to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Sometimes they do not make appropriate links for pupils to their career plans and aspirations.
- Teachers have generally secure subject knowledge. However, it is not always secure enough to reflect the demands of the new GCSE specifications and qualifications.
- Teachers help pupils to develop resilience to their learning. However, teachers do not use this resilience as a springboard to achieve better outcomes.
- Teachers and other adults have well-developed strategies to support pupils with autism. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning in lessons and during social time. Other adults can at times over-support pupils. This can lead to an over-reliance on support and impede pupils' independence in learning.
- A new assessment system has been introduced which focuses on pupils' academic progress, not just their personal development. Teachers are developing confidence in using this information to inform planning.
- Teachers and other adults expect pupils to work well and promote positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy the lessons that their teachers plan. Teachers and other adults foster respectful relationships.
- Teachers use the rewards system to promote engagement and progress in lessons. There is excellent use of praise. This helps pupils to stay focused and have pride in their work.
- Teachers' questioning skills are well developed. They help pupils to think and explain their answers. Teachers' questioning also helps to develop pupils' oracy skills (the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech).

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils receive appropriate training about how to keep themselves safe online and in their everyday lives. The school's personal, social, and health education (PSHE) programme is very effective in helping pupils to stay safe.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and want to succeed at school. Pupils are inquisitive when visitors come to their school and they engage well with them. Teachers help pupils to develop in their self-confidence.

- Pupils have plentiful opportunities to learn right from wrong. Staff skilfully help pupils to understand their feelings and emotions. This creates a culture of harmony and calmness. Pupils show respect for others in their school.
- Bullying and racism are extremely rare.
- Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pupils are welcomed into the school community and feel valued, safe and secure.
- Pupils take pride in their uniform and appearance.
- Recently, pupils have undertaken a project on London. Pupils learned about different buildings in the capital city, for example the Palace of Westminster. Leaders ensure that there are plentiful opportunities for pupils to explore the world around them.
- Careers advice and guidance is appropriate. However, there are more opportunities for pupils to explore employment opportunities through the wider curriculum.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Adults have high expectations of their pupils. Where pupils go off task, adults work patiently with pupils to bring them back to their learning.
- All adults know each individual pupil well. Where issues with behaviour may arise, staff know exactly how best to approach the situation. Pupils are quickly encouraged to re-engage.
- The school is an orderly environment and pupils enjoy the facilities and space afforded to them. They respect their safe school environment.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are very good. Pupils join the school at different times in the year. For those pupils who have had attendance issues, leaders have highly effective strategies in place to ensure that pupils attend Mountwood Academy regularly. This is a significant strength.
- Some pupils do not yet have the skills to regulate their behaviour independently of the teacher. This can slow their learning and progress in lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils begin the school at different times in the year with differing abilities. However, historic outcomes have not been good enough in relation to pupils' starting points. The progress that pupils have made has been too slow.
- In the past, pupils have not been entered for qualifications that are appropriate to their ability. This has hindered learning and progress. Some of the qualifications that pupils have taken were too easy.
- Historically, leaders have not planned effectively to ensure that some pupils have necessary qualifications, knowledge, skills and understanding to progress on to appropriate post-16 programmes of study, employment or training. Leaders now think carefully about pupils' progression throughout the school.
- Current pupils make stronger progress because teaching is improving. Leaders have a sharp focus on improving pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils' progress is tracked with

rigour. That said, the most able pupils still do not achieve as well as they should.

- Leaders have effective plans in place to improve outcomes for pupils. The overall provision in English and mathematics is improving. Literacy is now being taught as a discrete subject.
- Teachers and other adults encourage pupils to develop their reading and oracy skills well.
- Pupils' progress meetings are held regularly. These are now sharply focused on improving attainment and progress for pupils.

### **Sixth form provision**

### **Requires improvement**

- In the past, leaders have not paid enough attention to developing programmes of study that enable students to develop appropriate employability skills. There have not been sufficient opportunities for work experience or work-related learning that meet students' needs.
- Historically, some of the qualifications and courses taught post-16 did not meet students' needs. Where appropriate, they were not closely matched to students' career or employment choices. Too much focus was given to developing independent living skills at the expense of academic or vocational qualifications. Leaders have now addressed this imbalance.
- Careers advice and guidance in the sixth form is improving. There is an independent careers adviser. Leaders have plans to develop their new premises to provide different courses that cater more effectively for students' interests and needs. Where appropriate, these courses are to align with students' career plans.
- Although teaching in the sixth form is improving quickly, it still does not promote consistently good progress in learning, especially for the most able. Teachers recognise that they need to challenge students by planning lessons that raise aspirations and drive more-rapid progress.
- That said, current students in the sixth form now make stronger progress than in previous years. This is because leaders have sourced more appropriate qualifications and teachers' planning for those qualifications is much sharper. However, there is still some way to go until students achieve outcomes that help them to flourish in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have appropriate plans in place to improve the quality of education and rapid improvements in provision can already be seen.
- Students behave well in the sixth-form provision. They see it as a continuity in their learning. Students enjoy their lessons. They feel safe.

## School details

Unique reference number	136069
DfE registration number	888/6056
Inspection number	10038930

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 residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Roc Northwest Ltd
Headteacher	Emily Haddock
Annual fees	£45,000–71,000
Telephone number	01772 200551
Website	<a href="http://mountwoodacademy.lancs.sch.uk">http://mountwoodacademy.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@mountwoodacademy.co.uk">admin@mountwoodacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–25 September 2014

## Information about this school

- Mountwood Academy is an independent special school. It is also registered as a children's home. It caters for young people with autism. They require residential provision for up to 52 weeks per year.
- A new headteacher was appointed in June 2017. The headteacher is supported by a new senior leadership team and she has replaced nearly all of the school's staff since the previous inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school's pupils have moved to a new, much larger, rural site.

It is located on the outskirts of Preston. The school caters for boys and girls aged between eight and 19 years.

- There are currently 10 pupils on roll, four of whom are in the school's sixth form. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school was previously inspected in September 2014 at its former site.
- An inspection of the care provision took place at the same time as the education inspection and is reported separately.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the school site accompanied by the headteacher.
- The inspector observed a range of lessons, across subjects and across classes. Pupils' work was reviewed during lessons. A formal work scrutiny was also undertaken.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector spoke with the vast majority of the school's pupils about their experience of school and their learning.
- The inspector met with senior leaders and a group of teachers. Also, the inspector spoke with other staff informally around the site. Additionally, the inspector met with the proprietor and a member of the governing education advisory board.
- As part of this inspection, the inspector considered 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. A phone call was also held with a carer. There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of documentation to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide wider inspection evidence. This included: the school's own self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of the governing body meetings; school policies and procedures; and the school's own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was scrutinised, including behaviour and attendance records and bullying logs.
- As part of this standard inspection, the DfE commissioned Ofsted to consider the proprietor's application for a material change. The proprietor has moved the school to new premises. There is also a request to increase the number of pupils admitted to the school from 10 to 34.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Smart, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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