

Inspection of Active Wellbeing School

Phoenix House, Scotia Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6FF

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy conversations with visitors. They like the way staff look after them. They enjoy playing with their friends. Staff are skilful in supporting these friendships. Staff help pupils to sort out any niggles that arise when they are playing together. They also help pupils to know when their friends may need a little extra time and space.

Pupils work hard with their learning. Currently, they access activities that help them learn one thing at a time. However, the activities do not develop the small steps of learning well enough. They do not always build upon what has gone before.

Pupils learn to have the right words to express emotions. They can explain their feelings. Pupils told inspectors how much the weekly trips out to different places mean to them. They can share their sadness when 'the minibus is broken and is in the garage being fixed'.

Staff support pupils to know how to behave in lessons. This allows pupils to be successful learners. The personalised approach works well. Staff use their knowledge of each individual pupil's interests, likes and dislikes effectively. The short snaps of learning interspersed with time to relax and refocus are fruitful.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has recently been through some changes that have been carefully managed. The proprietor body sets a clear vision for pupils at the school to have the 'freedom to flourish', and they do. This is especially so in pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs. The inspectors enjoyed many varying chats with pupils about their life in school and their learning. Pupils often share out loud how proud they are of themselves. This is heart-warming to hear and see.

Leaders have set out schemes of work for each phase and each subject. They have thought carefully about the pathway of learning a pupil should experience. Teachers provide activities that link to an intended learning outcome. However, the school has not given sufficient thought to the very small steps that need to be in place for pupils to achieve well. Staff work hard to make adaptations to activities. They use information from checks on pupils' learning to plan the next steps. But as the steps of learning are too large, lessons do not help pupils to think and learn for themselves well enough.

The school places a strong priority on pupils being able to read. Staff help pupils to know the sounds they need to read a word. Pupils use these sounds to sound out a word. A few pupils can put the sounds together to make a word make sense. However, pupils' progress in reading is not as good as it could be. This is because adults are quick to jump in. They say the words before allowing enough time for pupils to have a go for themselves.

Pupils enjoy listening to stories and texts that link to the topics they are studying. They learn to hook into words from their reading to improve their writing. Pupils enjoy knowing and using some technical words in their writing. For example, they added descriptive words to portray a scene from the Great Fire of London.

All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The school gathers a range of information when pupils start at the school. This allows staff to set targets for each pupil and identify any further areas of need. Teachers provide pupils with specific support and coaching at an individual level. This allows pupils to know what is expected of them. It also equips them with the tools to make the right decisions and to engage more readily with their learning. However, this approach does not ensure that pupils develop the right knowledge in the right order. This slows their understanding, expects too much of them in one go or means staff sometimes offer help too quickly.

The school provides a range of training to help staff be effective in their role. This has been particularly focused on supporting certain aspects of school life. These include pupils' behaviour, understanding of safeguarding and the additional needs within the setting. Staff know how to raise, report and record incidents and concerns. They feel well looked after. There has been less focus on enhancing staff's knowledge of teaching the curriculum effectively.

Pupils gain from many varied opportunities to live and learn in the local community and beyond. Visits to the post office, supermarket and parks are not only a treat but a chance to practise life skills. Pupils can explain ways to stay safe, evacuate the building in case of fire and describe healthy foods. Leaders plan these opportunities carefully. They link them to current learning. They also provide families with familiar places and spaces to visit together.

Parents and carers spoke highly of all that the school does for their child. A common theme shared by parents was deep gratitude and appreciation to the school for all they do. A parent, sharing the view of many, stated, 'This team have been a vital part of my child's success story.'

The school has an unwavering determination to ensure that it prepares pupils well, both academically and socially. However, leaders have not broken down the curriculum into small enough steps of learning. Staff support with the best of intentions, but a lack of curriculum training means the delivery of the curriculum prevents pupils from progressing well. Therefore, the proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are securely met.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is written in line with the latest statutory guidance and is available for parents online.

The school has systems in place to ensure pupils' safety. Their checks on a few of these systems are not always thorough enough. Leaders and staff did not have a secure understanding of where some medications were kept. This was rectified during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school does not systematically check that its policy around a few aspects of safety results in secure and consistent practice. This means that leaders are not always clear enough on what is working well or what needs improving. Leaders should thoroughly review their actions and systems so that they can check that what has been put in place is happening, is effective and is keeping pupils safe.
- The curriculum is not broken down into manageable steps to secure good learning. The school has not supported staff to organise pupils' work in a way that builds systematically on what they can already do. The school should ensure that the curriculum in each subject area is broken down into smaller chunks so that pupils can learn more successfully and with increasing independence.
- The school has not helped staff to make the most appropriate teaching choices when deciding how to deliver the curriculum. Pupils struggle to complete the planned activities without significant support. The school needs to ensure that staff are supported to have the knowledge and skills to improve their subject expertise and practice. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in each subject is implemented effectively and that the independent school standards are met securely and consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	148037
DfE registration number	861/6024
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10302233
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Active Resilience Ltd
Chair	Julie Gilson
Headteacher	Kevain Parsons
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,000
Telephone number	01782 405598
Website	www.activewellbeingschool.co.uk
Email address	head@activewellbeing.school
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in October 2021 when it was judged to be good overall. In March 2022, Ofsted carried out a material change inspection to approve the proprietor's request to move the school's location and to change the age range and number of pupils the provision caters for.
- The school moved to its current location in September 2022.
- The current headteacher took up the post in September 2023.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The main area of need is communication and interaction.
- There has been a change at director level in the proprietor body. There is now one director.
- The school is registered to provide education for pupils aged four to 11 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, there were no children in the early years. The youngest pupils were in Year 1.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the director of the proprietor body.
- During the inspection, the inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and

at playtimes and lunchtimes. They spoke with pupils in lessons and around school. Inspectors considered behaviour and bullying records.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons; and
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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