

Inscape House School

Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 1JE

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	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 for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From starting points of failure and frustration in their previous schools, students make good and sometimes exceptional progress in coping with their autism and in developing their learning. Almost all students leave with brighter prospects, having achieved much of their potential. This is demonstrated by the improvement in attitudes to learning, the gaining of accreditations and examination success and by the improvements in family life.
- The dedication, expertise and teamwork of therapists, teachers and education assistants, underpin the good progress of students at all levels of the autistic spectrum. There is an increasing emphasis on academic challenge by specialist teachers, several who are new to the school. This is raising students' standards and aspirations.
- Students make good and sometimes exceptional progress in the self-management of their behaviours. Staff are expert at keeping students safe.
- The school is coming towards the end of a period of significant change. Much is new, especially within teaching. There has been a period of instability within leadership that has held back progress in teaching. However, the school is back on track. Confidence is improving. There is a good capacity for further improvement, not least in governance.
- Many students make sufficient progress to move on the sixth form college. For those remaining, the post-16 provision is good. It prepares for life beyond school very well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Following the period of instability, much remains new and not fully embedded, for example, within governance and teaching.
- With students entering with increasingly complex needs and challenging behaviour, there are too many incidents of staff being hurt in the course of their duties.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected over two days. The lead inspector was present both days; the additional inspectors were present for a day each.
- Inspectors observed 16 lessons across both sites and observed the students learning during visits to classrooms accompanied by senior staff.
- Discussions were held with staff, therapists, students and members of the governing body, including representatives of the Together Trust. Documentation provided by the school was examined, including an evaluation of the progress students were making.
- Parents' views were established by interview with a group of parents, through Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View (six responses), and by correspondence from parents addressed to the lead inspector.

Inspection team

Brian Padgett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for students with complex and severe autistic spectrum conditions. Students are admitted to the school from 14 local authorities in the Greater Manchester and surrounding areas.
- The majority of students are admitted for initial assessment as they move into secondary education at Year 7. Students may, in practice, arrive at any time during the Reception Year, Key Stages 1 to 4, or in Post 16. Students stay at the school for varying lengths of time; mostly for up to four years but a minority for much longer.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs that include reference to the autistic spectrum. Students have a very wide range of cognitive ability. Many have additional needs and a high proportion present with extremely challenging behaviours on entry to the school.
- Students come from families from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium¹ is above average and, typically, includes students in the care of a local authority as well as students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school is one of several provisions made by the Together Trust, a registered charity with a long heritage of providing residential care and education services based at the Cheadle site. Trustees and a senior officer from the Trust are represented on the Governing Body of the school.
- Since the last inspection in, May 2010, Inscape House School in Salford and the Russell Centre for post-16 students have been amalgamated with Inscape House School in Cheadle. At the time of this inspection, the Salford site remains in operation. However, from September 2013, it is the intention of the Together Trust to bring together all three provisions within extended accommodation on the Cheadle site.
- The school has achieved National Autistic Society Accreditation for Autism.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the systems of behaviour management in the light of the changes in the student population. Implement whatever is necessary to reduce the incidence of staff being hurt by students.
- Further imbed improvements in governance and in teaching by:
 - continuing to develop the range of strategies to hold senior leaders to account for the performance of the school
 - making full use of the opportunities presented by the new accommodation, for example, to introduce more specialist teaching for secondary-age students and more appropriate opportunities for the youngest children in the Reception Year and Key Stage 1.

■ ¹ The pupil premium is the government's additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children of service families.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students enter Inscape House School having had the most difficult of starts to their home and school lives. Some students have been excluded from several schools. The local authorities where they live have exhausted the resources available to them to meet the students' needs. Students, therefore, arrive with low self-esteem, often feeling frustrated with extremely negative and challenging behaviour.
- The school's records show that 90% of students make expected or better progress with their schoolwork from their starting points. Some of the students' starting points are very low, as they have additional learning needs. However, some students are very able, and have been prevented from attaining highly by their autism. The school provides different pathways for students to follow, depending on their capacity to learn independently, in a supported environment or only through close and intensive supervision. Each group makes good progress in learning and in overcoming the barriers to learning.
- Students make better progress the longer they are at the school and the earlier they join it. Some students make truly remarkable progress. The school and the students' families speak proudly of students who have learned to manage all the difficulties their condition causes to become mature, sensible young people undertaking GCSEs in mainstream schools, hopeful for the future. All students leave with qualifications, whether accreditations or with success at GCSE.
- A high proportion of students go on to sixth-form college. For lower-attaining students the post-16 provision at Inscape House provides them with courses designed to promote independence and life-long learning. The curriculum is exciting and relevant, for example, involving students in many experiences out of school, opportunities to develop enterprise skills, to develop cultural understanding and to prepare healthy meals within food technology.

The quality of teaching is good

- The dedication of senior staff, teachers, therapists and education assistants to students' welfare and learning is striking. All students are known and valued by all staff. The ethos of the school, therefore, is welcoming and positive.
- The level of knowledge and understanding of young people with autism is exceptional. Experts within the Together Trust ensure new teachers and assistants have a thorough induction and training in understanding and helping students with autism. The deployment of a large number speech therapists and occupational therapists within classes makes a huge difference to the capacity to effect improvement.
- Nearly all teaching observed was of good quality. Lessons for students on each of the pathways are well planned, emphasise literacy and numeracy skills and have learning targets for each student. Teachers have high expectations for new learning in each lesson. In each lesson, education assistants play an indispensable role in supporting the learning of each student. There are a significant number of teachers and assistants who are new to the school. Many have taught in mainstream secondary schools. They bring specialist subject knowledge and a new emphasis on academic rigour that the school leaders are keen to promote.
- The partnership with parents is at a very high level. The school works closely with parents each day, in the students' interests and to support the parents with strategies to help them at home. Almost without exception, parents rated the provision for their children as very good and, often, life-changing. They particularly rated highly the care of staff and that they kept their children safe.
- The curriculum is firmly focused on communication and to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school employs specialist teachers and has a heritage of providing opportunities for creativity through art, physical education and music. The range of enrichment activities for students that provide them with learning experiences out of school is very wide

indeed. Links with other schools, both mainstream and special schools, are well established, as are family activities during the school holidays. The school actively seeks to broaden the outlook of students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- When students enter school, at whatever age, their needs are assessed. Many are unable to manage their behaviour. They have very low self-esteem after many years of having 'failed'. During induction they are almost exclusively taught one-to-one and sometimes with two staff to each student. Behaviour can be extremely challenging. Many students have periods when they are unable to begin learning or be with other students.
- All students are set behavioural targets. Over time, with the patience, care and expert knowledge of autism possessed by staff, including strategies for dealing with extremely challenging behaviour, students progress sufficiently to cope with learning in small classes quite independently, or for others, in a supported environment. This represents good, and for some, exceptional progress, as they move onto lessons in mainstream schools with good attitudes to learning, responding in an age-appropriate manner and undertaking GCSEs.
- Every effort is made to support students cope with their autism, making whatever modifications are required to their learning environment, particularly in order to communicate and reduce frustration and anger. Students' safety is promoted very well. Staff work in tightly cohesive teams and have a thorough understanding of each students' characteristics. Confrontation is avoided.
- Staff look out for each other. Everyone, including senior staff is vigilant and aware of maintaining calm and protecting routines. Even so, as students arrive with increasingly complex needs, there are too many incidents involving a small number of students when staff get hurt. For this school, a degree of risk of harm will ever be present. However, senior staff are aware that the number of incidents of harm to staff must be reduced and they are exploring other strategies for behaviour management.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has an exceptionally clear vision and sense of direction, based firmly on the highest levels of knowledge and understanding of autism, the determination that every student shall succeed with his or her learning and that every student's family will be supported.
- The recent instability in leadership, with three headteachers in as many years, has clearly impacted negatively on improvement at a period of rapid change for the school. Aspects of sound leadership and governance lapsed, such as the monitoring of teaching quality, the holding of school leaders to account and the rigorous tracking of students' progress. Staff felt ill-supported for a time.
- The school is now back on track. Staff, including new staff, feel effectively led and supported once again and much credit for this is due to the highly-effective leadership of the current senior staff. Sound principles of leadership and management are in place, including the performance management and appraisal of staff and the tracking and evaluation of students' learning. This has been accomplished with no measureable deterioration in the school's track record of success with students, an indication of the staff's enduring commitment to students. The school has a good capacity for further improvement, particularly when the benefits of the new accommodation become available later this year.
- The school is a significant force in the promotion of equality and the fight against discrimination. The partnership with parents and links with external agencies are exceptionally strong.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has been considerably strengthened recently. It is better organised and informed,

calling on a wide range of specialist knowledge within the governing body, including that of parent governors. It is considerably better placed to hold senior leaders to account for their performance and has learned quickly from the experience of the recent past. It has yet to prove many of the new systems in practice but it is well advised and well equipped to do so. Financial affairs are managed centrally by the Trust. At present, local authorities who fund places at the school do not identify the pupil premium where this is provided by the government to individual students. The Trust and the governing body is aware of this situation and has asked the local authorities to provide the pupil premium separately in order that the school can deploy it for the benefit of those students in receipt of the premium.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134064
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	400256

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Stephenson
Headteacher	Gail Norrie (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
Telephone number	0161 2834750
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