

Inspection of Alderwasley Hall School

Higg Lane, Alderwasley, Belper, Derbyshire, Derbyshire DE56 2SR

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school. They study an ambitious curriculum. They benefit from an extensive range of therapeutic support. They appreciate the wide choice of enrichment experiences available. As one parent typically explained, 'Alderwasley Hall School has given my child a future.'

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils always have someone to talk to if they have a concern. They know that staff have confidence in them and want them to be successful. The therapy team helps pupils get to know themselves better. Pupils learn to understand what makes them anxious and how they can manage their emotions and feelings. This support is exceptional.

Expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Routines in and around the school are well established. Pupils are generally courteous and respectful. Staff make sure that pupils understand why they are asked to do things. 'Movement breaks' help pupils stay engaged with their learning. Bullying is uncommon. Almost all pupils say that staff are good at resolving it when it happens.

Pupils enjoy taking part in new activities. During 'creative day', they learn to play the steel drums, to weave willow and to dance. These opportunities help develop pupils' character and widen their horizons.

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

Staff treat pupils as individuals. Education and therapy teams work together seamlessly to address every aspect of a pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. Parents and carers play a key role in drawing up programmes to support their children's learning. This approach means that pupils follow curriculums that are well suited to their particular needs.

Pupils in the early stages of learning to read get the bespoke help they need. Teachers focus closely on closing gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Pupils who need help to catch up, do so quickly. Reading books are precisely chosen to match what pupils know. There are many opportunities for pupils to read across the curriculum. Teachers make sure that pupils understand and can explain any unfamiliar vocabulary. Pupils become increasingly confident and fluent readers. They like choosing their own reading books from the school's book vending machines. Post-16 students enjoy visiting a local shop to buy a book that interests them.

Leaders are very enthusiastic to undertake their roles well. They plan the curriculum in each subject meticulously. They give careful thought to what they want pupils to know and when. Teachers check pupils' starting points carefully. They use appropriate strategies to teach pupils new knowledge. Teachers remind pupils frequently to remember what they have learned before. In mathematics, pupils can recall the names of two-dimensional shapes, the characteristics of a prime number

and how to read a bearing. In art, pupils can explain the 'building blocks' used to create their final pieces.

Teachers precisely track what pupils know and can do. They identify the most important information that pupils need to revisit. They pick up any errors in pupils' understanding quickly before learning moves on. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge very effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. They challenge pupils to do well. In art, pupils value the expert guidance of their teachers. Pupils explain enthusiastically and very clearly how their work has improved over time. They know exactly what they need to do to get even better.

The post-16 provision focuses closely on students' aspirations and interests. Students secure the numeracy and literacy skills they need for their next steps. They enjoy weekly enrichment activities. Some students study courses offered by local educational partners. Others value work placements nearby. Attending these different providers helps students interact confidently with new people. Students are socially responsible. They are currently involved in plans to re-wild the school's post-16 site. The 'pathways' programme prepares students very well to 'exist in the real world'. Students practise travelling independently and learn how to budget their finances.

Pupils who have struggled to cope previously in an educational setting learn to manage their behaviour well. They appreciate how staff help them to have a positive attitude. For most pupils, the longer they come to this school, the better they attend. A small number of pupils follow part-time programmes. Many of these pupils also improve their attendance on site over time.

Pupils enjoy an extensive range of experiences and activities. For instance, pupils can learn to play a musical instrument, practise their climbing skills, visit art exhibitions or enjoy a residential ski trip. Pupils know how to keep physically and mentally healthy. They appreciate that they should be tolerant and respectful of others. They learn what makes relationships positive and fulfilling. A highly comprehensive careers programme ensures that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage. Pupils aspire to be, for example, engineers, photographers or forensic scientists.

Staff are extremely positive about working at the school. They feel very well supported by leaders. A comprehensive training offer helps staff improve their practice.

The members of the proprietorial board are uncompromising in their commitment to pupils and staff. They know exactly what is working well and how the board can support leaders to make the school even better. Their actions are focused sharply on ensuring that pupils can contribute fully to society in the future.

The proprietorial board has ensured that the independent school standards are met. Regular health and safety checks help keep the premises at each site maintained to a good standard. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Policies are up to date and reflect the latest statutory guidance. The safeguarding and relationships and sex education policies are available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained. They understand the risks that may cause pupils potential harm. Pupils' safeguarding records are comprehensive. The records detail leaders' timely actions to safeguard pupils. Leaders engage readily with external agencies to get pupils the right support.

Staff understand their responsibilities for the safeguarding of pupils. They follow clear procedures to report any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare. They know what to do if they are worried about an adult's behaviour towards a pupil.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Their individual risk assessments and support plans are thorough and up to date.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 113021 |
| DfE registration number | 830/6016 |
| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 10232341 |
| Type of school | Other Independent Special School |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 20 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 118 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 43 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 17 |
| Proprietor | The SENAD Group Limited |
| Chair | Brian Jones |
| Headteacher | Sara Forsyth |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £70,300 to £120,666 |
| Telephone number | 01629 822586 |
| Website | senadgroup.com/alderwasley |
| Email address | alderwasley.info@senadgroup.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 to 12 July 2018 |

Information about this school

- Alderwasley Hall School is an independent special school.
- The school provides education for pupils aged between five and 20 years. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils on roll under the age of seven years.
- The school is situated on two sites. Pupils in key stages 1, 2 and 3 and pupils in Year 10 attend the site at the registered address. Pupils in Year 11 and post-16 students attend the site located at Derby Road, Wirksworth, Derbyshire DE4 4BN.
- The designated safeguarding leader took up the role in June 2022.
- Pupils who attend the school have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Most pupils have social, emotional or mental health needs. Many have speech, language and communication needs. Almost all pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils travel to the school from over 25 local authorities. The majority of pupils are placed at the school by nearby local authorities, including Derbyshire, Derby City and Nottinghamshire.
- Students who are above the compulsory age for education pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, including preparing them for adulthood.
- The school uses five registered alternative providers for pupils to receive some of their education. The school also uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 10 to 12 July 2018.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with safeguarding leaders to examine safeguarding records, the school's system for recruiting staff and the school's single central record. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors did deep dives in four subjects: reading, mathematics, creative, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with

curriculum leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with pupils about their learning.

- Inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils during social times and spoke with groups of pupils from different key stages.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietorial board and the chief operating officer of The SENAD Group, who is also the school's chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone with representatives of one of the school's alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans, a variety of school policies, information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, examples of pupils' EHC plans, and individual risk assessments and support plans for a sample of pupils.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They also noted responses to the staff survey and the pupil survey.
- In order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors reviewed facilities at both sites and considered relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

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Ofsted Inspector

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