

Inspection of Hurworth House School Aspris Children's services

Westfield Drive, Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2AD

Inspection dates:

8 to 10 April 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

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 at this school receive high-quality care and education. All aspire for pupils to achieve their potential. Staff are dedicated. They provide pupils with skilled support. The school's determined approach to 'creatively coaching character' shines through the school's aspirational curriculum. It is promoted through the positive approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Curriculum 'pathways' are adapted and designed to meet the needs of pupils well. Pupils thrive and benefit from carefully considered therapeutic and counselling support.

Highly successful routines in and around the school help pupils understand and do what is expected of them. They learn to behave well. Pupils show respect and courtesy to staff and visitors alike. When pupils find things difficult, adults provide them with the space, time and guidance to help them succeed. Pupils develop their resilience. They learn how to manage their emotions and regulate their behaviour effectively.

Staff build strong, trusting relationships with pupils. They understand the challenges pupils have faced and respond with patience and empathy. Pupils are kept safe. They develop skills to equip them well for life beyond school. Pupils participate in various enrichment activities such as fishing, cooking, sports and chess. They enjoy residential opportunities and take part in work experience.

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

The way the school assesses and identifies pupils' individual needs and requirements is exceptional. Staff gain a thorough knowledge of their pupils. They link learning and support precisely to the outcomes stated in pupils' individual education, health and care plans (EHC plan). The curriculum is tailored to pupils' specific EHC targets. It is broad, ambitious and well sequenced. Pupils build their knowledge and skills logically. Any gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified quickly. Learning is revisited to help pupils remember.

Leaders have a wealth of expertise to support teaching and learning. They are tenacious in their approach to making sure the school can meet pupils' needs successfully. Staff provide precise and timely support for pupils. Themes of learning help pupils to make connections across curriculum subjects. Pupils practise and develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills in different curriculum subjects. For example, in art and design, pupils develop their inference skills when discussing the work of a diverse range of artists. Pupils become competent mathematicians and read and write with increasing fluency and confidence as they progress through the school. Pupils rise to the school's high aspirations and achieve well.

Reading is the school's highest priority. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented a new approach to teaching phonics. Staff are trained to teach phonics well. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read receive highly effective support to develop their early reading skills. Staff promote reading for pleasure and for

information. Pupils enjoy a calm start to the school day, listening to their teachers reading the class text. Teachers provide prompt support for pupils who struggle to read. This includes extra reading practice and phonics support when necessary.

Pupils engage well in lessons. The school is remarkably successful in meeting pupils' learning, behavioural and personal development requirements. When pupils need more help, leaders provide specific and targeted support. Pupils receive highly effective support for their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Attendance is a high priority for the school. Most pupils have missed long periods of education or have disengaged entirely from previous schools. The school works proactively and successfully with families, therapy specialists and external professionals to engage pupils in school life and improve their attendance.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything the school does. It is exemplary. There is a tangible focus on shaping them for life beyond school. Leaders make sure that pupils understand and recognise their potential. Pupils develop their resilience and strength of character. They learn to understand and value diversity. They develop leadership skills through their roles as school councillors. Pupils support people in Hurworth with charity fundraising activities and enjoy being part of the local community. Pupils develop respect for religious beliefs and different types of relationships. They learn about potential risks and how to stay safe.

Pupils benefit from experiences which broaden their understanding of the world and support their mental and physical health. These include visits to the theatre, museums and outdoor education activities such as climbing and canoeing. Pupils receive high-quality independent advice and guidance about further education, employment and training.

Staff morale is high. The school provides appropriate support for their workload and welfare. Staff develop a high level of expertise and enjoy being part of the close-knit team. Parents and carers typically praise the school because of the friendly and willing staff who help their children thrive.

The proprietor body and governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They ensure that the school meets the independent school standards. The proprietor maintains frequent and thorough checks on the education, health, safety and welfare of pupils. Pupils are appropriately supervised at different times across the school's site throughout the school day. Strategies and policies for dealing with behaviour, health and safety are appropriate. The school's safeguarding policy, which reflects the latest guidance, is available on the school's website. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	137511
DfE registration number	841/6006
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10342076
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Service Ltd
Chair	Nancy O'Regan
Headteacher	Claire Blackett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£71,881.68 to £89,437.40
Telephone number	01325729080
Website	www.aspris.co.uk
Email address	adminhurworthhouse@aspris.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school is an independent special school for pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. It is located in Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 2AD.
- The school is registered to admit up to 80 pupils.
- All pupils have EHC plans.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils below the age of seven years.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- An additional inspection of the school took place in June 2024.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the head of teaching and learning, members of the safeguarding team, including the designated safeguarding lead, the school business manager, several middle leaders and the school's counselling psychologist.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the proprietor body, including the chair, and the regional director for the proprietor who is also the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with a representative from North Yorkshire local authority and a representative from Stockton local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with leaders for the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the school's approach to teaching

history and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with some pupils and staff and spoke on the telephone with some parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Suzette Garland-Grimes

Ofsted Inspector

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