

# Options Trent Acres School

Alrewas Road, Kings Bromley, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE13 7HR

## Inspection dates

16–18 October 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors have made significant improvements to the quality of education since the previous standard inspection. The school provides a rich and rewarding educational experience for all pupils.
- Led by an inspirational headteacher who has the highest aspirations for pupils, committed staff are relentless and successful in their drive to improve the life chances for all pupils.
- Staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils' needs. They use this information to devise individual programmes of work that enable pupils to develop socially, emotionally and academically.
- Consistently strong teaching and assessment, carefully tailored to individual needs, enable pupils to make rapid gains in their learning across almost all subjects.
- Teachers work in close partnership with other professionals from health and social care to provide pupils with an exceptional quality of guidance and support.
- Skilful teachers quickly re-engage pupils in school and help them to recognise the value of education. Pupils respond well, change their behaviour for the better and benefit immensely from this 'fresh start'.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education prepares them extremely well for the future, helping them to make informed healthy lifestyle choices.
- Students flourish in the sixth-form provision because of outstanding teaching and personal guidance and support.
- Pupils profit from a wide-ranging, exciting curriculum that is highly effective in supporting the development of a broad range of skills and building their self-esteem.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their reading comprehension skills, although some are more reluctant to read for pleasure.
- The school meets fully all of the independent school standards.

### 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?**

- Further promote reading for pleasure so that pupils develop greater enjoyment and fluency in reading.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher has addressed fully all of the previous areas for improvement that were identified at the time of the previous inspection. Due to outstanding leadership, the school has improved greatly.
- Everything about the school is pupil-focused. The headteacher's strong and determined leadership has created an incredibly positive learning culture, centred on pupils experiencing success and achieving their potential. All staff buy into the school's ethos of being fully inclusive and a safe place where all pupils are supported to overcome their, often immense, barriers to learning. Staff never give up. If one approach does not work for a pupil, they keep working until they find another that does.
- Following the temporary closure of the school to pupils during the autumn term 2017, leaders ensured that staff were well prepared for the new arrival of pupils with a different range of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders arranged training that equipped staff very well to carry out their roles successfully. Staff have put into practice their new knowledge and skills and secured the best possible teaching and learning for pupils. Teachers are responsive and adapt their practice as necessary to meet the needs of all pupils successfully.
- Leaders are modest in their evaluation of the school's performance. This is because they look continually for ways to improve. Leaders never rest on their laurels, but instead regularly consider what more can they do to provide for the needs of pupils. The headteacher has very high expectations of everyone. She is rigorous in identifying areas for further improvement, then acts on these promptly so that pupils are not disadvantaged in any way.
- Pupils experience a relevant, broad and balanced curriculum that supports the wider development of their skills and knowledge most effectively. Pupils study a range of subjects, such as music, art and geography. In addition, they develop their vocational skills through, for example, equine studies and animal care. The curriculum is supplemented by a range of after-school enrichment activities, including horse-riding, textiles and homework clubs. Pupils eagerly attend these activities and learn new skills.
- Staff take every opportunity to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, and weave in fundamental British values across the curriculum. This work is especially strong in PSHE education and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- A culture of 'no excuses' exists at Trent Acres. Leaders are sympathetic to where pupils have come from and the many challenges they face. However, they maintain high and realistic expectations about what pupils should achieve. The passion and commitment to do the very best in the interests of the pupils are shared by all staff.
- Leaders keep close checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They provide staff with precise and constructive feedback to help them improve their practice further. Staff take heed of this advice and speedily implement any recommendations. This means that the quality of teaching goes from strength to strength.
- The school is successful in building effective and trusting relationships with parents and carers. Leaders seek feedback from parents on a half-termly basis and act on this to

improve provision for pupils. Similarly, leaders regularly ascertain the views of pupils and, where appropriate, take action to adapt their school experience for the better.

## **Governance**

- Since the time of the previous inspection, the proprietor has put in place an effective governance structure that ensures the headteacher and other leaders are rigorously held to account for the school's performance. The chair of the governing body regularly spends time with pupils, listening to their views and discussing with leaders practical ways to provide an even better experience for pupils. Pupils' views really matter.
- Governors have an astute understanding of the school's day-to-day operations and the direct impact this has on pupils' welfare, learning, and personal and social development. They challenge leaders rigorously and expect a quick response to any issues they raise. Committed leaders complete actions without delay.
- Governors share the headteacher's ambition to improve continually and make decisions in the best interests of the pupils. Governors have a clear oversight of the school's work and contribute effectively to its strategic direction.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that measures to protect pupils from harm are an integral part of the school's day-to-day work. They take safeguarding seriously and invest time and resources into ensuring that all staff are well informed about safeguarding matters. Consequently, staff remain vigilant and immediately report any concerns about pupils' welfare to the appropriate persons within school. Safeguarding leaders take prompt action, and involve external agencies when necessary, to get the right support for the pupil.
- Leaders carefully consider local safeguarding issues that may affect pupils, such as gang involvement, drugs and 'county lines', domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation. They ensure that these topics are discussed openly with pupils through weekly 'keeping children safe' workshops. This provides pupils with important information, so they can make informed decisions and keep themselves safe.
- Leaders appoint new staff using appropriate safer recruitment practices. This helps to reduce the risk of unsuitable adults working with pupils. Everyone, pupils and staff alike, is very clear about how to report any concerns about adults whose behaviour may pose a risk to pupils.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Outstanding**

- Without doubt, all staff expect the best from pupils. Because of teachers' shared high expectations, pupils almost always rise to the occasion and try their hardest. Typically, pupils participate very well in purposeful, well-planned activities, that enable them to move forward quickly in their learning.
- All staff have a deep understanding of each pupil's specific personal and academic needs. They use this knowledge and other assessment information exceptionally well to plan and provide bespoke sequences of learning that engage, motivate and challenge all pupils. This includes setting suitably demanding tasks for the most able pupils. Teachers gently

encourage pupils to attempt activities and then persevere until they succeed. They offer pupils timely support, which prevents frustration and maintains the momentum of learning.

- Teachers regularly and effectively monitor pupils' responses during lessons, check their understanding and give immediate, helpful feedback. Teachers adapt their teaching accordingly to meet the needs of pupils. This enables pupils to overcome any difficulties and make strong progress. For example, in science, the teacher used analogy very effectively to help pupils understand the concept of diffusion. Teachers are especially skilled in pinpointing and addressing gaps in pupils' understanding or misconceptions.
- Teachers successfully ensure that all pupils are equipped with the prerequisite knowledge to understand new concepts. For example, in religious education in the sixth form, the teacher ensured that students understood what a pilgrimage was before presenting a more complex task about why some people choose to embark on religious pilgrimages. Staff use probing questions skilfully to explore pupils' understanding and help them to think deeply about a topic.
- Pupils write for a wide range of purposes across the curriculum. Writing tasks are well matched to pupils' interests. For example, pupils wrote an effective, persuasive leaflet about a rap studio business. Those who find writing difficult show a growing confidence in writing independently. This is because teachers help pupils to develop their writing in small incremental steps so they achieve success. Teachers celebrate pupils' writing achievements in various ways, including the 'star writer board'. This builds pupils' self-confidence very well.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about art and keen to share their work, which is of a high standard. Teachers support pupils to express their emotions through art. They also encourage pupils to reflect on their work, for example their choice of colour or media, and explain decisions for their chosen techniques.
- Teachers select and use high-quality classroom resources to help pupils learn very well, particularly when pupils struggle to make sense of abstract concepts. An abundance of attractive displays around the school serves both as a celebration of pupils' achievements and a purposeful aid to support pupils.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Teachers find opportunities for pupils to read aloud to others, and most pupils read with a reasonable degree of fluency. Staff devote a significant amount of time to widening pupils' vocabulary. This supports the good development of their comprehension skills. Teachers do not promote reading for pleasure well enough. Therefore, some pupils do not practise reading with enough regularity to help them consolidate skills and develop a love of reading.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and what they accomplish. They are eager to share their achievements and attribute their success to the excellent support they receive from staff. Pupils recognise the high expectations staff have of them. This is reflected in

pupils' comments, such as, 'Staff try and work you towards coming out of school with the best qualifications you can get.'

- The care, guidance and support that pupils receive, including those in the sixth form, are second to none. Staff work collaboratively with other health and social care professionals to identify and provide the best possible provision to meet pupils' needs. They monitor closely and adapt as necessary to ensure that any support has the maximum benefit for pupils' personal development and well-being.
- Staff work exceptionally hard to reduce pupils' anxieties. They provide a safe and secure environment and adopt a personalised, yet consistent approach to managing pupils' emotions. As a result, pupils show a growing confidence in their own abilities, recognise their personal successes and develop self-belief.
- The school's PSHE curriculum is extensive and covers a wide range of highly relevant, and sometimes sensitive, topics, such as body confidence, transgender issues, personal hygiene and animal cruelty. Staff teach these topics very effectively, enabling pupils to make outstanding progress in this area. In addition, pupils make a positive contribution to society through various organised activities, such as sponsored charity events to raise money for good causes.
- Pupils play a genuine central role in the everyday running of the school. They take on a range of special responsibilities, such as head boy and head girl, eco leader and pupil librarians. They take these roles very seriously and are proactive in their duties. For example, the eco leader undertakes an 'eco site walk' followed by actions to reduce the school's energy usage. It is strikingly evident that the pupils' voice is welcomed, considered and acted upon.
- There have been no reported incidents of bullying in school. Despite this, staff still ensure that pupils are very clear about what constitutes bullying and who to talk to if it occurs. Pupils are safe in school. They have a trusted adult to whom they can talk if they need help to resolve issues.
- All pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive high-quality independent careers advice and guidance that help them to make sensible decisions about their futures. Teachers support pupils to find out what they need to do if they wish to pursue a chosen career path or work interest.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils, all of whom have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs, typically settle down to tasks promptly and work very hard. Staff manage any episodes of challenging behaviour exceptionally well, enabling pupils to return quickly to their learning following an incident. Nurturing staff are constantly alert to any subtle changes in a pupil's behaviour. They respond quickly and sensitively to maintain positive well-being.
- Prior to arriving at Trent Acres, pupils have usually been out of school for an extended period of time. Supportive relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel secure in their new environment. Consequently, pupils develop positive attitudes to school and want to be there. For most, this signifies a complete turnaround compared to their previous encounters with school and education.

- Pupils' attendance rates vastly improve, in contrast to their previous school attendance, once they have started at Trent Acres. Leaders tackle any emerging attendance issues promptly to ensure that all pupils attend regularly and on time.
- Staff have a very clear understanding about any triggers that may lead to inappropriate pupil behaviour. They use this information very well to devise and implement effective strategies to reduce the likelihood of these behaviours occurring. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves rapidly. Pupils use their time wisely to learn and make good progress.
- Pupils understand the school's reward system and enjoy earning points for positive behaviour, which they accumulate to purchase items such as gift cards. Pupils recognise, and can articulate, their own improvements in behaviour since starting at the school. They understand that staff make the demands they do because they care deeply about their progress and well-being.
- Leaders have created a welcoming, calm atmosphere in the school. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are relaxed social occasions, characterised by staff and pupils coming together to chat, eat or play games. Staff understand that pupils' behaviour is a form of communication. They use their expert knowledge to provide pupils with strategies to manage their behaviour more successfully.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Outstanding

- Most pupils enter school disillusioned with education because they have spent a significant amount of time out of their previous school. As a result, they often have large gaps in their knowledge and understanding. From their often low starting points, current pupils, including those in the sixth form, make outstanding progress across a broad range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Within a short time of arriving at the school, pupils' progress accelerates rapidly. Previously, some refused to engage with learning and rejected teachers' requests to complete work. However, due to highly effective teaching and a nurturing approach, this mindset quickly becomes a thing of the past. Teachers help pupils to realise that they can achieve.
- Pupils' achievements in mathematics, art, PSHE and science are particularly noteworthy. Teachers challenge them very well and they produce work of exceptional quality for their ability. In addition, literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well across the curriculum. As a result, pupils build successfully on the knowledge they have acquired and apply it to other subjects well. This helps pupils to make more sense of their learning and gain confidence in its application.
- All pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. They make strong progress against the objectives in their education, health and care plans because these are carefully embedded into their individual learning plans. Teachers ensure that the work and activities for pupils pay close attention to these objectives.
- Pupils, including those in the sixth form, are prepared well for the next stage of their education, employment or training because teachers support them to work towards appropriate qualifications. Pupils embark on a variety of courses, and work towards a wide range of qualifications suited to their abilities and interests, including BTEC,

functional skills and GCSEs. While the first cohort of pupils has not yet achieved any qualifications, the progress evident in workbooks towards these is impressive.

- All pupils are developing essential core literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge, at pace, to enable them to succeed now and in the future. Leaders also place an important emphasis on developing pupils' employability skills. As a result, pupils are rapidly gaining ground in building their personal resilience, ability to work as a team and express themselves clearly and confidently.
- Pupils read with reasonable fluency given the previous gaps in their knowledge. Their reading is improving well because teachers focus on helping them to develop their comprehension skills and understanding. Pupils' fluency and expression would be enhanced if they practised their reading more frequently.
- Pupils succeed very well in vocational subjects, such as equine studies, because teaching is carefully structured. For example, pupils demonstrated their excellent skills in horse riding, acquired over time, in the indoor riding arena.

### **Sixth form provision**

### **Outstanding**

- The sixth form has a very small number of students. Their achievements and behaviour match those in the rest of the school.
- Consistent with the leadership of the wider school, leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. The quality of teaching is very strong because the same principles and ethos apply as for the rest of the school. Leaders do everything possible to ensure that students are thoroughly prepared for their next steps, whether that be in education, training or employment.
- Leaders have, with input from students, created a useful independent living space equipped with a washing machine and other utilities. This provides students with experiences to learn essential life skills so they can cope well in the future.
- The school has developed good links with further education providers and organises suitable careers fairs that students attend. Students value the high-quality independent careers advice that they receive. They have high aspirations for their futures and a clear understanding of pathways to achieve success.

## School details

Unique reference number	131004
DfE registration number	860/6029
Inspection number	10041364

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 school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Options Autism (4) Limited
Chair	Mark Williams
Headteacher	Melanie Callaghan-Lewis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,682.25
Telephone number	01543 473 772
Website	<a href="http://www.optionsautism.co.uk/school_home/options-trent-acres/">www.optionsautism.co.uk/school_home/options-trent-acres/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:melanie.callaghan-lewis@hillcrestcs.co.uk">melanie.callaghan-lewis@hillcrestcs.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26–28 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Options Trent Acres is a small, special independent day school located in the rural village of Kings Bromley, Staffordshire. It is part of the Options Autism (4) Group, a subsidiary of the parent company, Outcomes First. The Department for Education's (DfE) 'Get Information about Schools' website does not record the name of a proprietor. However, the inspector saw evidence that the DfE had acknowledged the change of the proprietor

to 'Options for Autism (4) Ltd.' in an email communication received from the DfE in August 2017.

- Since the time of the last standard inspection, the school has changed its name from Hillcrest Oaklands College to Option Trent Acres.
- The school is housed in refurbished former farm buildings with access via security gates. The premises consist of several well-appointed small classrooms, a science laboratory, an art room, a medical room, an independent living (room) space, toilets and a small indoor assembly hall. There is an outdoor gym and extensive grounds, including equestrian facilities, gardens and an animal husbandry area.
- At the time of the last standard inspection, the school was offering integrated care, education and clinical services to girls aged between 12 and 19 with a range of learning and social needs. All pupils left the school during the summer term 2017. The school was closed to pupils for just over a term before reopening in January 2018. This followed a material change when the school changed its age range and became co-educational. The school also changed in terms of the type of pupils' needs that it catered for. Now, pupils admitted include those with autism spectrum disorder, complex needs and learning difficulties.
- Pupils are placed at the school by a range of local authorities.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in January 2016. The school had an unannounced progress monitoring inspection in September 2016. The school was last inspected in December 2017 for a material change to the school's age range to eight to 18 years, and to become co-educational.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching across a variety of lessons, including vocational subjects, such as equine studies. Several observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector reviewed an extensive range of pupils' work from every subject and talked to pupils about their experiences of school. The inspector listened alongside when pupils read aloud to staff, and also asked pupils about their reading interests.
- The inspector talked to different staff to ask them about safeguarding arrangements and how leaders support them with their work.
- The inspector conducted a tour of the school site to look at the building and premises.
- The inspector met with the proprietor's representative, who is also the chair of the governing body.
- There were insufficient comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to make an evaluation. The inspector spoke to parents and carers.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation provided by the headteacher, including school policies, schemes of work, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.

## Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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