

Talbot House Trust

Hexham Road, Walbottle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE15 8HW

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Significant staffing turbulence has slowed school improvement. Middle leaders and some subject leaders are relatively new and do not have a thorough enough understanding of the requirements of their post.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in some subject areas, including in English and mathematics.
- Governors provide some challenge, but it is not sharp enough. They do not have the skills required to provide a high level of challenge to leaders.
- Assessment processes do not enable teachers and leaders to capture a precise view of the progress made by pupils over time.
- At times, staff expectations of what pupils can do are too low and pupils receive too much support. Occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning are not always positive and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The quality of teaching is variable throughout the school, across different year groups, subjects and phases.
- Teaching and learning are not consistently matched well to the needs and abilities of pupils. Most-able pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently well in their learning.
- Absence and persistent absence, although reducing, remain above the national averages.

The school has the following strengths

- The highly ambitious new headteacher, with the support of the trust, is starting to bring about the necessary changes.
- Staff are positive about the changes and are well supported by the headteacher. This is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils to learn. Pupils feel safe.
- Effective support is provided to ensure that pupils' well-being and mental health needs are met. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils enjoy school as a result. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons when the work they are asked to complete meets their needs and interests.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - providing middle leaders with training so that they can make an effective contribution to the areas they lead
 - further developing the curriculum to ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge across a range of subjects, particularly in English and mathematics
 - improving the system for assessing pupils' knowledge and skills on entry to the school so that leaders can accurately evaluate pupils' progress over time
 - building on the steps already taken to further improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
 - making sure that all staff have a shared understanding of school improvement priorities
 - ensuring that governors have the skills needed to challenge leaders appropriately.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make good progress in all key stages by ensuring that:
 - teaching meets pupils' different needs and abilities
 - teaching is consistently challenging for all pupils, especially the most able
 - expectations of what pupils can achieve, including their attitudes and personal development, are raised and are consistently high
 - support staff provide consistently effective support to all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Staffing turbulence has hindered the school's improvement, particularly in the primary phase. Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked with governors to appoint several key members of staff. This is resulting in positive improvements. However, new initiatives, policies and procedures are not fully embedded so that the true impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes can be seen.
- Some staff are not fully aware of the areas for development that leaders have planned. They do not focus sharply enough on what they need to do to improve.
- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the pupils and the school. She has a deep understanding of the difficulties pupils face and their barriers to learning. Funding provides opportunities for pupils to develop their social and communication skills, preparing them for life outside school.
- Staff provide significant support to pupils to ensure that their well-being and mental health needs are met. Often, this support is prioritised over pupils' academic progress even when pupils are settled and can engage in their learning. Due to this, some pupils' academic progress can slow, particularly the most able pupils.
- The recent appointment of a dynamic and knowledgeable primary phase leader has added renewed focus. Newly appointed primary teachers have implemented significant changes which enable pupils to make better progress.
- Staff are positive about the school's new leadership and the direction it is heading. Staff feel their mental health and well-being are positively supported by school leaders. Leaders ensure that they provide relevant and timely professional development for all staff. However, teaching still requires improvement.
- Middle leaders have good knowledge of their subjects. Some leaders are new to the role and are still becoming established. Some middle leaders require further professional development in order to support the headteacher effectively. A lack of management knowledge impacts on their work and, as a result, they do not make an effective contribution to school improvement.
- Leaders ensure that a broad range of subjects are available for pupils to study. However, the curriculum does not currently allow sufficient time for pupils to practise the skills and knowledge that they have learned, particularly in English and mathematics. This is because much time each day is used for enrichment activities. During this time, the vast majority of pupils are off site. Although some of the activities provided promote teamwork, social skills and communication, there is a lack of organisation to ensure that pupils engage in activities that meet their particular needs.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils receive independent and wide-ranging careers advice and guidance. Pupils have opportunities to visit places of work and further education colleges. Older pupils take part in work placement activities.
- The newly appointed, part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is highly knowledgeable and experienced. She is ensuring that all legal requirements for the annual review of education, health and care (EHC) plans are up to date.

Governance of the school

- Governors demonstrate dedication and commitment to the school. They regularly attend meetings and training. They visit the school frequently and are keen for improvement. They know pupils well and are aware of the work that must be done to help them with their difficulties.
- Governors provide some challenge to leaders. However, this challenge is not rigorous enough. Often, evidence and/or data are not requested to check on information given to them by leaders. Governors recognise this and are aware they must improve their skills and understanding in this area.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, staff and governors understand the need for high-quality safeguarding policies and practices. Staff receive regular training and are knowledgeable about how to recognise signs of neglect and abuse.
- Systems are in place to ensure that referrals are made in a timely manner. Positive communication with parents, carers and external agencies enables effective support to be provided for pupils and their families.
- Pupils say they feel very safe while at school. They learn how to stay safe online and when they are out and about. They know that there are adults to talk to if they have concerns.
- Leaders take immediate positive action to resolve any issues that arise around the health and safety of pupils and staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across subjects and year groups. Weaknesses in teaching mean that not enough pupils make good progress.
- Teachers and other staff do not have high enough expectations for pupils. Some staff have low expectations of how much pupils can achieve; this limits pupils' progress.
- Pupils' learning is not matched to their skills and abilities. Often, it does not provide enough challenge. This is particularly true for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of phonics is having an increasingly positive impact. Pupils use their phonics knowledge to help them to read and spell. Classes now have library corners which contain books of interest to the pupils. This is supporting the development of positive reading habits.
- The teaching of writing in the primary phase is improving. Measures are in place to ensure that pupils understand the importance of the structure of their sentences and the content of their writing. However, pupils have limited opportunities to practise, apply and extend their skills in this area.
- Typically, teaching is stronger in the secondary phase. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to engage and motivate pupils. Some lessons, for example in

science and physical education, are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils. Pupils say that the practical aspects of the lesson enable them to learn well.

- Support staff provide a varying level of support to pupils. Some encourage pupils in their learning, stepping back and enabling pupils to think for themselves. However, too often, staff provide too much support.
- Long-term targets contained in pupils' EHC plans are broken down into smaller, more achievable targets which then form the pupils' individual education plans. Teachers use the individual education plans to support them when they are planning lessons and activities for pupils. As a result, pupils can make smaller steps of progress which help them work towards their long-term goals.
- Pupils in the nurture group are very well supported. Their complex needs are understood by all staff working with them. A wide range of activities are on offer which engage and promote learning. The designated outdoor space is used productively to provide further learning experiences.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Good progress is made by pupils in improving their personal development and well-being due to the strong and positive emotional support provided by staff. They understand the complex needs of the pupils and ensure that their well-being needs are met.
- Pupils enjoy their time at school. They report that they enjoy most of their learning and they have positive relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy receiving the rewards that are available to them for positive behaviour and good work.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and are confident that should any bullying occur, they could speak to someone about it and it would be addressed.
- The school's provision for pupils' emotional well-being is strong. Pupils have many opportunities to work individually with trained staff. Very occasionally, resilience or independence is not built quickly enough for some pupils.
- Leaders provide impartial careers advice and guidance to enable pupils to make informed choices about their future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have put additional support and behaviour management strategies in place which allow pupils to take more control of their own behaviour. A system of rewards encourages pupils to present positive behaviour around school and in lessons.
- Behaviour in the majority of lessons is managed well by staff. Occasionally, low-level disruption occurs. For most of the time, this does not disrupt the learning of others.

- Physical intervention is used occasionally to remove volatile pupils from situations where they could cause harm to themselves or others. This is used appropriately, and pupils are counselled by skilled staff so that they can quickly return to learning alongside their peers.
- Most pupils who have had significant attendance issues in previous schools now have attendance rates much higher than in the past. Although leaders are doing all they can to increase the attendance of all pupils and decrease the persistent absence of some pupils, attendance remains below average.
- Fixed-term exclusions before the headteacher's arrival at the school were above the national average. Current data shows a marked decrease as additional support and new behaviour practices are embedded throughout the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The wide range of social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils mean that many have missed significant periods of schooling. Pupils' starting points, on entry to the school, are typically very low.
- Across the school, pupils' rates of progress over time are variable between subjects and key stages. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is low compared to that seen nationally.
- Pupils' skills and knowledge require improvement because the quality of teaching is not consistently good. Pupils are given too little time to practise their skills, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Weaknesses in the school's arrangements to assess pupils' skills and knowledge when they start at the school has resulted in an unreliable starting point on which to measure how much progress pupils make over time. As a result, the school's pupil progress information is an unreliable indicator of pupils' outcomes. However, inspection evidence, including from reviewing pupils' work in their books, shows that pupils' progress is variable and, overall, requires improvement.
- Over time, there have been too few pupils in Year 6 to report on attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2. No pupils currently sit the end of key stage 2 tests and assessments. In key stage 2, pupils' progress is now improving. This is because the quality of teaching is strengthening.
- Pupils in the secondary phase are offered a range of external accreditation. These include entry-level certificates, functional skills certificates and GCSE exams. School information showing pupils' rates of progress between Years 7 and 11 indicates that pupils' progress requires improvement. Current pupils in the secondary phase make stronger progress than pupils in the primary phase.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their non-disadvantaged peers. However, the progress of the most able pupils is held back because teachers' expectations of what these pupils can do are too low and their work lacks the challenge needed.
- All Year 11 pupils move on to further education, employment or training, including apprenticeships. This results from the effective careers advice and guidance provided.

School details

Unique reference number	133779
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10087555

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 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Matthews
Headteacher	Christine Smiles
Telephone number	01912 290111
Website	www.talbothoustrust.co.uk
Email address	office@talbothoustrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 February 2017

Information about this school

- Talbot House Trust was last inspected in 2017 and was judged to require improvement. It received a monitoring visit in September 2018. Since the monitoring visit, there have been several changes to staffing and leadership, including the headteacher.
- The school makes provision for pupils with social, emotional or mental health needs. Pupils arrive at the school at varying times of the year and into varying year groups. The number of pupils on roll has almost doubled since the time of the last inspection.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. There is a proportion of pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school provides breakfast for pupils.
- One pupil is currently placed in alternative provision with Nacro. Several pupils receive tuition via the school's outreach service due to complex social, emotional or mental health needs.

- Most pupils are White British, and the large majority are boys.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is considerably higher than the national average.
- There are currently no pupils in key stage 1 or post-sixteen provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. All observations were carried out jointly with school staff, including the headteacher. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct on arrival and leaving school, at breaktime and in lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils formally in meetings and informally during the school day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, including the SENCo, a group of governors, the local authority school improvement officer and staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of information provided by the school, including behaviour and attendance documentation, procedures for safeguarding, governing body minutes and the school's own evaluation of their work.
- Inspectors considered the two responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). There were no responses submitted to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils or staff. Inspectors considered the school's own internal surveys of parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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