

Inspection of Kiora Hall

Ragpath Lane, Roseworth, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 9JS

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school. Pupils are happy and safe. Staff understand each pupil's needs and interests. Pupils enjoy their lessons and make progress quickly. Many pupils who join this school have missed a lot of education. Some have been highly anxious about going into any school. Once settled at Kiora Hall, however, pupils attend very well.

The school is highly ambitious for pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to take a range of recognised qualifications. These include skills-based unit awards and entry-level certificates.

Pupils are considerate of others. Bullying is extremely rare. Staff address pupils' occasional worries promptly and effectively. Pupils build positive relationships with staff. Pupils are confident that staff will help them when they need it.

Pupils learn how to communicate in a range of situations. Pupils do many activities in their local community. These include going shopping, swimming and horse-riding. Pupils learn how to be more independent from the time they join the school.

Parents and carers speak highly of the school. For example, one parent said, 'My child is fully appreciated here and encouraged in absolutely everything they do, even things they find very difficult.' Another parent said, 'My child is finally happy in education after years of anxiety about school.'

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

There are well-organised long- and medium-term subject plans for each subject. These plans are precise and detailed. The essential building blocks of learning for each subject are described on what the school calls 'progression maps'. These are linked to national curriculum levels. Some pupils join the school at a stage below the start of the national curriculum. In recognition of this, leaders have developed milestones for each subject in the curriculum. Staff use the progression maps or the milestones to keep a detailed record of what each pupil knows and can do. Staff use this information to plan future learning for pupils.

Staff implement most subject plans well. However, there are occasions, in a small number of subjects, when staff do not address pupils' misconceptions as quickly as they could. This is more likely to happen when staff are delivering a subject outside their subject specialism. The school is providing staff with more subject training. It is too early to see the impact of this training on pupils' outcomes.

Each pupil has a highly detailed support plan. Staff implement these plans well. The school's occupational therapists and physiotherapists contribute regularly to reviews of these support plans. Staff are skilled at using strategies that support pupils' sensory and communication needs.

Phonics is taught daily to pupils who need this. Leaders have also introduced programmes to teach reading for meaning. This work is still at an early stage. Some staff are yet to be trained in the school's preferred approaches to phonics and reading for meaning. This means that some pupils are not developing their reading and comprehension skills as effectively as they could.

Pupils behave well. There are clear routines and expectations around behaviour and attendance. Staff respond promptly and confidently when pupils are unsettled or distressed.

There is a well-designed personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils learn how to manage their feelings and how to stay safe and healthy. The school's teaching of relationships and sex education and health education complies with statutory requirements. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures in religious education lessons. There is also a rich calendar of cultural events. For example, pupils mark Diwali, Sukkot, Ramadan and Chinese New Year.

Preparation for adulthood is a strong aspect of the school's work. Pupils learn to explore and enjoy the world around them. This aspect of pupils' personal development begins with regular trips into the local community. Over time, all pupils learn how to become increasingly independent. Pupils learn about the world of work. Older pupils are provided with independent advice about further education and employment.

The proprietor has a clear vision for the school. This is to 'inspire, support, celebrate and equip autistic and neurodivergent people to fulfil their potential in life'. All staff fully support this ambitious vision.

The proprietor knows the school's strengths and areas for further development well. The proprietor's trustees and directors maintain robust oversight of the school. The proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards (the standards) are met. All required policies are in place and easily accessible from the school's website. The proprietor is rightly proud of the school's policies and protocols around equality, diversity and inclusion. There is a comprehensive accessibility plan in place. This plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The school ensures that staff are knowledgeable about child protection and wider safeguarding, such as health and safety. All staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. The school provides appropriate support for early careers teachers. All staff are well trained in the nature of each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities. They know how to meet these needs.

The proprietor is considerate of staff workload. Staff appreciate the support they get from leaders for their well-being. The school has built positive working relationships with all stakeholders, including parents and representatives from the local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some staff are not as knowledgeable about some of the subjects they teach as they need to be. This is limiting staff's ability, in a small number of subjects, to identify and address pupils' misconceptions as quickly and effectively as they need to. The school should promptly review the training available to staff to ensure that teachers have the subject-specialist knowledge they need to meet the needs of pupils consistently.
- Programmes to teach phonics and reading for meaning are not fully embedded. Some pupils are not making the progress in reading of which they are capable. The school should ensure that the training to support the teaching of reading in the school is rolled out to all staff as soon as possible in order to embed the school's reading strategy.

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 (DfE) has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	148935
DfE registration number	808/6009
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10286482
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	North East Autism Society
Chair	Rakesh Chopra
Headteacher	Tracey Train
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,307 to £130,197
Telephone number	01642 054227
Website	www.ne-as.org.uk/kiora-hall
Email address	tracey.train@ne-as.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the North East Autism Society (NEAS). NEAS is a registered charity that works with children and adults with autism and their families. NEAS runs several other independent special schools.
- This school was registered by the DfE on 1 September 2022 and opened to pupils later that same month. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- There has been a new headteacher and a new chair of the proprietor body since the school opened. The current headteacher has been in post since February 2023. The change to the chair of proprietor body was notified to the DfE in July 2023.
- The school caters for pupils with autism and other neurodevelopmental needs, learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Some pupils also have multiple sensory impairments and speech, language and communication needs. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils do not have to have an EHC plan to be considered for admission to the school.
- The school is registered to take pupils aged from five to 19 years. At the time of this inspection, there were no children in early years provision or post-16 students on the school's roll.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 senior leaders and the proprietor. They also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school and visited the classrooms, social areas and other facilities. They checked the school buildings and grounds against the standards.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (including reading) and communication, mathematics, science and PSHE. The deep dive for each subject included a meeting with curriculum leaders and a review of subject documents and plans. The deep dive also involved lesson visits, scrutiny of pupils' work and meetings with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the curriculum plans of all other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school throughout the day, including at breaktimes and in lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of the school.
- 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' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included checking the school's safeguarding systems and the single central record of staff recruitment checks, meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, and speaking with staff and pupils about safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke to the local authority designated officer.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and surveys completed by staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke to representatives of the local authorities that commission places at the school.

Inspection team

Patricia Head, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mary Cook

His Majesty's Inspector

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