

Inspection of Healey Learning Centre

Unit 16, Hollow Works, Shawclough Road, Rochdale OL12 6LN

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 April 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Positive relationships and mutual respect are at the heart of everything that this school does. Pupils appreciate that staff take the time to get to know them. Pupils develop a trusting rapport with staff which helps them to feel happy and safe.

Despite disrupted and often negative experiences of education previously, pupils flourish here. Their attendance typically improves considerably when they join this school. This helps pupils to meet the school's high expectations for their achievement.

Pupils benefit from the meticulous thought that is given to promoting their personal development. The school's ethos, the 'Apex way', prioritises supporting and inspiring pupils to flourish and succeed. This ethos is threaded through every aspect of school life. It informs a carefully tailored programme that helps pupils to rapidly develop their self-esteem and resilience. Parents and carers said that this school has given their children a new lease of life. Many described it as 'a lifeline'.

As pupils grow in confidence, they begin to recognise and celebrate their successes, big and small. Pupils quickly come to take pride in behaving and learning well. Class rewards encourage them to champion the positive behaviour of their peers. Pupils are delighted to add their 'catch me being good' cards to the class collection.

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

The school's high-quality education draws on a thorough understanding of pupils as individuals. Beginning during the induction process, the school builds a comprehensive picture of pupils' starting points and any barriers to learning that they might have. The school is similarly swift to identify any previously undiagnosed special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive useful information about each pupil. Staff are adept at using this information to inform their interactions with pupils and to support them to learn well.

The curriculum is highly ambitious. Pupils in key stage 4 complete a range of nationally accredited qualifications including, where appropriate, GCSEs. In addition, the school provides pupils with an array of information about possible careers, including through visits to different workplaces. Staff work closely with pupils to ensure that they secure appropriate pathways into education, employment or training.

In most subjects, the school has carefully identified what pupils will learn. Staff explain difficult concepts clearly. Frequent checks on learning help to ensure that any misunderstandings are quickly rectified. Pupils learn well in these subjects. However, in a few subjects, the school has not clearly identified the most important information that pupils should learn. This makes it difficult for staff to emphasise this knowledge when designing learning activities and checking what pupils know. This hinders how securely pupils build their knowledge of these subjects.

The school is tenacious in its efforts to help pupils appreciate the joy of reading. Staff's creative approaches to engage pupils in reading are beginning to bear fruit. This is underpinned by the school successfully identifying and addressing any gaps in pupils' reading knowledge.

Morning meetings between pupils and their key workers provide staff with valuable information about how pupils are feeling each day. Staff use this to identify any additional support that pupils might need. This helps to ensure that the atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful.

Pupils benefit from an exceedingly extensive personal development programme which includes trips to enrich the curriculum and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In addition, pupils thrive during activities that are deliberately designed to provide knowledge or experiences linked to their individual needs and starting points. For instance, escape room activities help some pupils to develop teamwork, while performing in 'Apex has talent' encourages others to build resilience and confidence.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared to be confident and successful citizens in modern Britain. They develop a deep understanding across a vast array of topics, including what it means to live in a democracy, how to keep themselves safe online and a multitude of skills to prepare them for independent living. Pupils also learn the benefits and responsibilities that come with being part of a community. Members of the school council are particularly proud of their role in helping to review and improve the school experience for their peers.

The proprietor has established a highly-organised and rigorous approach to ensuring that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. For example, the school premises are well maintained and the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor has a strong vision for the high-quality education that the school provides. This is shared by staff and leaders. A formidable programme of professional development helps to ensure that staff have the expertise needed to help deliver this vision. Staff are overwhelmingly happy and proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, the school has not clearly defined the important knowledge that it wants pupils to know and remember. This makes it difficult for teachers to emphasise this knowledge when they design learning activities and make checks on pupils' learning. The school should clarify the essential knowledge that pupils

should acquire in these subjects so that teachers can help pupils to build a secure body of knowledge over time.

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	150845
DfE registration number	354/6044
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10375151
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Proprietor	Apex Specialist Education Ltd
Chair	Matthew McCann
Headteacher	Robert Cochrane
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,733 to £80,204
Telephone number	07915 269720
Website	www.apex-specialisteducation.com
Email address	info@apex-specialisteducation.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is located at Unit 16, Hollow Works, Shawclough Road, Rochdale OL12 6LN.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 1 July 2024. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND. Pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. The school aims to re-engage pupils who struggle to cope in mainstream schools.
- The school is operating outside of its registration agreement. It is registered to admit up to 13 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 pupils attending the school. The proprietor has written to the Department for Education to request a change to its registration agreement to reflect the growing number of pupils in the school.
- The school uses three unregistered and one registered alternative provision for pupils.
- The proprietor is Apex Specialist Education Ltd. There are two directors.
- The proprietor has appointed a governing body. The chair of governors is a director of Apex Specialist Education Ltd. The proprietor is currently arranging for external educational professionals to join its governing body to add challenge and accountability.
- The headteacher has been in place since September 2024.
- The proprietor also operates an unregistered alternative provision on the same site. This operates separately to the school.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the proprietor body, the chair of governors, the headteacher, other leaders and staff.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history and music. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including those relating to the standards and the curriculum.
- 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 considered the free-text comments shared through Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, in lessons and around the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises to check the suitability of the premises and accommodation against the relevant standards.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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