

ASD Midlands - Leicester

Unit D, Troon Way Business Centre, Leicester, LE4 9HA

Inspection dates	14–16 January 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils, who have previously disengaged from learning, make rapid progress in their willingness to learn.
- The school's safeguarding procedures and high levels of supervision ensure that pupils are safe at all times.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership in the development of learning and the management of pupils' behaviour.
- The school's proprietors and leaders have established secure arrangements for monitoring and reviewing teaching and learning, and for ensuring that pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils quickly learn how to behave and to relate well to adults and other pupils.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Tutors, who lead pupils' learning, are still developing their understanding of how to provide consistent challenge and expectations for pupils' progress.
- The school's arrangements for the assessment and recording of reliable information about pupils' progress are at an early stage of development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with one day's notice.
- The work of six tutors, working individually with six students, was observed. Additional observations were made of these pupils during learning walks around the school.
- Discussions were held with individual pupils and members of staff, the headteacher, one parent, a senior representative of the placing authority, the proprietor and the school's external consultants.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school policy documents and samples of pupils' work, together with the school's accommodation at two sites and arrangements for health and safety.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's 'Parent View' questionnaire for these to be evaluated.
- During the inspection, permission was received from the Department for Education to extend the age range temporarily to accommodate one pupil up to the age of 16 years. This included permission to make use of additional premises on the site of a local secondary school.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- ASD Learning - Midlands is based in refurbished premises on a small industrial estate on the northern side of the City of Leicester.
- The pupils who attend the school have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders or related conditions and all have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. They have all been referred by local education authorities and schools because they have been permanently excluded or are at risk of being permanently excluded.
- The school is registered to admit up to ten pupils aged between six and 13 years. There are currently nine pupils on roll, including one pupil aged 15 years. All have statements of special educational needs.
- Placements at the school vary according to pupils' needs, and the majority are relatively short-term placements of between six weeks and 12 months. The majority attend full-time until they are ready to return to mainstream schools.
- The school was registered with the Department for Education in December 2012 and this is its first full Ofsted inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that information about pupils' learning and personal development is recorded and tracked systematically in order to provide an accurate account of the progress made by individual pupils.
- Further develop consistency in the school's strategies and approaches to pupils' learning.
- Create a school self-review document and improvement plan to ensure a systematic response to the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Ensure that the school's website provides easy access for parents and others to accurate and specific information about the school's policies and provision.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils make good progress with their learning, mostly starting from levels well below average for their age. All pupils have experienced difficulties with relationships and the ability to settle into school in previous placements. On entry to the school they make rapid progress in their readiness to learn. The staff demonstrate good awareness of the uniqueness of each individual pupil. They are successful in identifying appropriate strategies which enable each pupil to enjoy school and to overcome their barriers to learning. Tutors demonstrate a rapidly increasing understanding of what pupils can do and how to extend this, resulting in improvements in communication and the development of motor skills and control.

Pupils are provided with a rich range of experiences and the opportunity to make appropriate choices within the structure of their daily timetables. Starting from a variety of different levels, they make good progress with their reading and interest in books, the use and application of numbers, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) at appropriate levels. Pupils' responses to creative and expressive activities, in particular, enable them to manage their emotions and to respond with greater calmness and self-discipline. The small number of pupils who are working at levels appropriate to their age demonstrate good ability to research and manage their own areas of interest. The school has not yet been in operation for long enough for any pupils to have completed any externally accredited courses.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils make good progress in the management of their behaviour and their personal development. They are placed at the school because they have been unable to settle to productive learning in previous schools; most have been excluded or experienced significant disruption to their education. The school enables them to develop self-esteem and confidence as a result of patient and sensitive identification of their individual barriers to learning, and the development of strategies which work for the individual pupil. They demonstrate a reduction in their anxiety together with the ability to function effectively in the community of the school and to interact with new people. For some, progress is gradual while others demonstrate an unexpected and rapid improvement in their emotional and social well-being.

Good provision is made for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. All pupils have good attendance and a desire to be at school, resulting in significant periods of calm and productive learning. There is a measurable reduction in incidents of inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. The school prepares pupils well for life in the wider community, for example through visits to local shops, the bank or library to undertake tasks related to their work. Pupils develop a clear understanding of the law and the way in which public services and institutions support everyday life in modern Britain. The school is active in helping older pupils begin their preparation for life after school, through relevant work experience or introductions to wider educational facilities. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to encounter and celebrate diversity in cultures and beliefs, through the mixed community of the school and the celebration of a variety of festivals and multicultural events. A major strength of the school's provision is the way in which pupils are enabled to relate to others, to respect and comply with the expectations of staff, and to begin to develop relationships with each other.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress in their response to the school's expectations and to the learning opportunities provided. All members of staff demonstrate

excellent relationships with their pupils, often in very challenging circumstances; individual pupils are often supported by two adults. High expectations are communicated with patience and sensitivity, and staff recognise that expectations of behaviour and response must be appropriate to the individual pupil's stage of development. The learning programme for each pupil is entirely individual, based on good planning with flexibility in the daily timetable and its implementation. The headteacher acts as an excellent role-model for the tutors, and provides continuous support and advice as they develop their expertise and adapt their planning in response to the changing moods and anxieties of the pupils. Tutors use well-structured approaches to communication, including the use of visual resources, picture exchange and activity trays, to enable pupils to understand and cooperate with classroom expectations. Activities start appropriately at the point of each pupil's current readiness. The staff make very good use of suitable questioning strategies and conversation. The tutors are mostly new to the school's way of working and are continuously improving their expertise and consistency in the implementation of the school's policies.

Key skills in speaking, communication, reading, writing, and the use of number are at the heart of learning activities. Pupils have very well-managed access to computers to ensure that their personal obsessions do not distract from the planned sequence of learning. Lessons are consistently well-paced and make effective use of time. Tutors convey high expectations of pupils' conformity with the school's agreed routines. They make imaginative use of resources and provide a wide range of activities which develop pupils' practical skills, together with the development of their emotional and sensory needs. The staff have a good knowledge of what pupils can do and have access to appropriate descriptors to support their assessment of the progress which pupils are making and the setting of appropriate targets to move their learning forward. New software has recently been purchased to support a more systematic and consistent approach to the recording and evaluation of the extent of pupils' progress over time; this is an area for further development. The good quality of teaching enables pupils to make good progress.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The school provides a good, individualised curriculum for each pupil. There is suitable flexibility in the length of placements, in careful liaison with the placing authority. The primary aim of the school is, where possible, to prepare pupils for a managed return to mainstream education; the curriculum for each pupil is carefully monitored to ensure that suitable progress is being made. The headteacher continuously monitors the provision for each individual pupil and introduces adjustments to the timetable where these will accelerate social integration or the level of challenge in the work set. The staff have prepared a suitably equipped and welcoming environment with individual classrooms for each pupil. A good balance has been achieved between activities taught to individual pupils and opportunities to work in small groups. Lunchtimes are used effectively to encourage pupils to eat and interact together. The breadth of experiences and constant review of individual timetables ensures that all the required areas of learning are covered.

The school places an appropriate emphasis on the development of key skills throughout the curriculum. For some students this is provided through pre-reading activities or practical activities, such as counting pennies to exchange at the local bank. More established readers are provided with good opportunities to choose their books and to research information from the internet, for example, about the care of rats and degus. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in practical lessons, for example in cooking, art and music. The use of off-site and enrichment activities, where appropriate, are well managed including the use of appropriate risk assessments. The school provides suitable vocational opportunities for the small number of older pupils and prepares them well for the challenges of transition towards leaving school. The curriculum ensures that all pupils are challenged continuously to take the next steps agreed in their personal targets.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good and all the independent school standards are met. A range of appropriate policies have been produced and are implemented consistently. Policies, including those for safeguarding pupils, the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying, place a strong emphasis on consistent expectations and a shared ethos. The school has robust arrangements for the recruitment of staff; all the required checks are completed and the details are entered in a suitable single central register. Staff, including the designated persons for child protection, are trained at an appropriate level and within the required timescales. The school has a strong relationship with, and a flexible response to, parents and carers, ensuring that pupils' needs are understood. Pupils are safe and well supervised at all times. Arrangements and staff training for first aid meet the regulatory requirements. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged through physical activities and in the daily meals provided. Good use is made of risk assessments of individual pupils, for off-site visits, and for the premises and accommodation. Routine maintenance and safety procedures, including fire safety, are implemented thoroughly and appropriately documented. All premises and accommodation regulations are met.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good, based on shared values, and valued by the staff and parents. The school's vision is communicated well by the proprietor and school leaders. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She demonstrates an extensive understanding of the challenges presented by the pupils and how these may be overcome to ensure effective learning. The staff have confidence in the school's leadership and welcome the opportunities provided for them to develop and extend their expertise. All leaders and staff are ambitious for the pupils, and in the relatively short time since the school opened, have created a curriculum and learning environment in which pupils feel comfortable and safe. The premises, including the additional site at a local secondary school, provide safe and suitable accommodation.

The proprietor, headteacher and the school's external consultants work together as a management committee. They have implemented good arrangements for oversight and monitoring of the school's provision and all regulatory requirements are met. There is a clear sense of direction and awareness by the headteacher of what needs to be done next. Developments are well-paced; ambitious without being unrealistic. The outcomes from continuous monitoring and the school's priorities for improvement have not yet been set out in a systematic self-evaluation document or development plan. The headteacher has prioritised the establishment of a systematic and consistent approach to the recording and evaluation of pupils' progress with their learning and personal development; new software has been purchased to move this priority forward. Appropriate information is available for parents and carers and for placing authorities, including access to a suitable complaints procedure. The layout of the school's website does not provide easy access to specific policies and information about this school. The management committee has set up appropriate and sensitive accountability at all levels, including good opportunities for staff development and training. Responses to the staff questionnaire express unanimous support for the leadership and provision of the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	139559
Inspection number	429468
DfE registration number	856/6025

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Day special school for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions.
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	6–13 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ray Waring
Chair	n/a
Headteacher	Jenny Coates
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Weekly fees (day pupils)	£750–£1,125
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