

# The Pace Centre

Philip Green House, Coventon Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP19 9JL

## Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2016

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <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> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and trustees are determined to maintain high standards and build on the success of this outstanding school. Consequently, all of the independent school standards are met and the school continues to improve.
- Leaders and staff of all levels are committed to 'be the best they can be' and make ongoing refinements to teaching and learning. As a result, pupils make excellent progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders, staff, parents and pupils all learn together. Everyone is supported to develop a deep understanding of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities that enables pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils make rapid progress against their individual targets. This is because teaching and continuous support from a wide range of professionals accurately meets pupils' needs.
- Pupils are extremely focused, diligent and resilient. Strong personal development ensures that pupils are well equipped to persevere and succeed.
- The care of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Staff form strong relationships with pupils that help them to feel safe and happy at school.
- The curriculum is wide ranging and highly effective. Communication, personal and physical development are prominent in all lessons. Lessons are adapted very well so that all pupils can experience a range of subjects at the right level.
- In class and around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind and caring friends to each other and very well-mannered towards staff.
- Staff use assessment very well to identify pupils' next steps accurately. This, coupled with their high expectations, ensures that work is challenging for all pupils, including the most able.
- Leaders take time to review the impact of their work and highlight where they need to make improvements to the provision. They have rightly recognised the need to strengthen further the work that they do to prepare pupils for the future.

### 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?

- Continue to develop the provision in order to enable pupils to access opportunities and take appropriate next steps towards a successful adult life.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Senior leaders have high expectations of staff, pupils and parents because they know that the school's success is the result of everyone playing their part. Therefore, a deliberate culture of collaboration and mutual support prevails. Several members of staff and parents said that the school 'feels like a family'. Consequently, everyone shares the school's aims and has a clear understanding of their roles.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a highly skilled workforce who have a very positive impact on pupils' progress. There is a thorough induction programme that prepares staff extremely well for their roles. Leaders actively encourage staff to extend their expertise so that they have a deep understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school's 'transdisciplinary' approach brings together a team of experienced professionals in each class. Together, they plan and deliver teaching that is tailored to each pupil's individual needs. Every day and in each lesson, therapists and other skilled practitioners are on hand to challenge and support pupils to take the next steps in their learning. As a result, pupils make rapid progress against the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs).
- Leadership is promoted strongly and shared widely. The staffing structure provides plenty of opportunities for career advancement. Senior leaders encourage staff at all levels to trial new ideas and make changes to further increase pupils' learning. Staff comment that in their 'transdisciplinary' teams, they often have 'healthy debates' about the best way of doing things. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders know their responsibilities well and have made sure that all of the independent school standards are met. They have ensured that the education provided meets the needs of all pupils. This includes providing extra support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. For example, they give careful consideration to how to include words particular to each family in pupils' 'podd books' for communication. The very high level of individual support for all pupils ensures that those who speak English as an additional language make similarly high rates of progress to their classmates.
- Staff appreciate and act on the helpful feedback that they receive from senior leaders. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning and use this information to plan and support further developments to the school. For example, leaders have made changes to the way that staff assess pupils so that everyone has a more accurate understanding of what pupils can do. This has ensured that work is challenging for all pupils, including the most able.
- The curriculum is adapted very well to meet the different needs of each pupil so that they all make excellent progress. Communication, physical and personal development are integrated into each lesson and throughout the school day to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met extremely well. Nevertheless, the curriculum is broad and balanced. Staff skilfully make meaningful links between subjects through exciting topics such as 'disguises and camouflage'. As a result, pupils make substantial progress across the range of subjects. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the age

range of pupils is increased to five to 16 years.

- Extra activities enrich the curriculum and provide additional support for pupils. Trips to the shops help pupils to acquire essential life skills. Horse riding, hydrotherapy and 'rebound' therapy on trampolines advance pupils' physical development.
- There is a wealth of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values. For example, some pupils recently led an assembly to share with others a visit to the community library that they planned and carried out. Here, they shared the conversations that they had with librarians, the books that they found written in other languages and how they followed the rules to be quiet in the library. Celebrations of Diwali, May Day and Thanksgiving develop pupils' understanding of a range of cultures and promote mutual tolerance and respect.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. They value the 'open door' that they have that enables them to bring ideas and ask challenging questions of leaders. Some parents spoke effusively about the progress that their child has made. One said, 'There couldn't be a better place for my child.'

## **Governance**

- The trustees know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its effectiveness. The board of trustees work closely with senior leaders and the chief executive officer to plan further improvements to the school. The chief executive officer and the trustees receive detailed reports from senior leaders and use these well to provide effective challenge and support.
- The board of trustees check the arrangements for safeguarding. For example, the trustee responsible for safeguarding recently carried out an audit with leaders and reported the finding to the board. As a result, trustees know that the systems in place are fit for purpose.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' welfare. There is a culture of vigilance as a result of the deep care that staff have for pupils. Staff receive regular updates and training that ensure they understand their responsibilities. The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website. This sets out clear guidance for staff. Consequently, staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.
- The school works closely with parents and other professionals to help keep pupils safe. Staff visit pupils' homes, build relationships with families and provide extra support where and when it is most needed. Leaders work closely with other agencies to promote pupils' welfare when necessary.

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

## **Outstanding**

- Staff have excellent knowledge of each pupil and expertise in how to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The 'transdisciplinary' teams use this knowledge, together with careful assessment of individual pupils, to provide very

effective, ongoing challenge and support to them. Consequently, pupils make rapid progress against the targets in the IEPs.

- Pupils achieve highly in all aspects of learning because staff set high expectations for their achievement. This is the case even for the youngest children who have just joined the school. For example, in the Reception and Year 1 class, staff show patience and provide equipment for children so that they can move and communicate with as much independence as possible. One child was able to use a communication book with support to show that she most certainly did want another go on the swing, time and time again!
- Throughout the school day, pupils benefit from continual opportunities to practise their communication skills, and further their physical and personal development. For example, at lunchtime three pupils, from key stages 2 and 3, used their communication aids to agree to play some parachute games. They waited patiently so that everyone could choose a bean bag animal in the best colour to throw onto the parachute. Staff supported them to throw the animals high up into the air by raising the parachute as far as possible.
- Staff provide the most able pupils with tasks that are suitably challenging. This ensures that these pupils make substantial progress. For example, in a key stage 2 phonics lesson the speech and language therapist asked one pupil to use different initial sounds to make as many words as possible with the sound 'air' in them. Once the pupil had succeeded in this task, the therapist asked the pupil to think of other words containing an 'air' sound but spelled differently.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. In a key stage 2 religious education lesson, the teacher taught pupils important vocabulary such as 'challah' and 'shabbat' to describe the loaf that Jews eat on the Sabbath. As a result, pupils make sustained progress across the range of subjects.
- In all lessons, there is a strong emphasis on communication, language and celebrating pupils' interests. Staff teach new words such as 'autobiography' to extend pupils' language and understanding. One teacher linked this word to a topic about family trees and added in photos of pupils' families to capture their interest. This personalised approach and focus on communication enables all pupils to succeed, including those who speak English as an additional language.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Care for pupils and their families is at the heart of the school's work. Parents appreciate the workshops that the school provides to help them better understand their child's needs as well as the high levels of attention their children receive. One parent said, 'The school is like a second home of people who love my child and understand him like we do.' In turn, staff speak with great enthusiasm about working with the pupils; one said, 'We light up when the children come in.'
- Staff form trusting relationships with pupils and provide them with just the right amount of support to enable them to succeed without doing too much for them. Pupils value these relationships and say that they feel safe and happy with their helpers.

- The pupils at The Pace Centre demonstrate extraordinary resilience. In each lesson and between lessons, physical activities are demanding of pupils, yet they persevere. Recently, the school held an event, The Children’s Challenge, at Stoke Mandeville Stadium. Each pupil took part in a sporting challenge such as pedalling a bicycle ‘horse’. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in this event.
- Leaders have provided key stage 3 pupils with some opportunities to think about their future and learn about the different jobs that people do. They are ambitious for pupils and rightly recognise that they can further extend their work to prepare pupils for their future employment, education and adult life.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils’ behaviour around the school is exemplary. They show great kindness to each other and are rightly proud of their friendships. As a result, there have been no incidents of poor behaviour or bullying for some time.
- In several lessons and at lunchtimes, pupils demonstrated excellent manners. For example, at the end of a religious education lesson, all of the pupils thanked the teacher. The school is a harmonious and welcoming community.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons. They are focused and work diligently to complete all set tasks.
- Pupils’ attendance is similar to that of other special schools nationally. Leaders set high expectations for pupils’ attendance and staff, including the on-site nurses, work closely with families to support pupils’ medical needs in school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- All pupils make rapid progress against their individual targets. This is because they benefit from continuous support from a range of staff with high levels of expertise.
- In all key stages and in a wide range of subjects, pupils make substantial and sustained progress. In every class and across the curriculum, pupils receive teaching that matches their individual needs closely.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates. The emphasis placed on developing pupils’ language and personalised support ensures that these pupils achieve well.
- The most able pupils make the strongest rates of progress. Staff ensure that activities are demanding for these pupils and extend their learning well.
- Pupils’ achievement in English is particularly high. In all lessons and throughout the day, pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their communication skills.
- The pupils who can read, read well and use a range of strategies to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils benefit from phonics teaching that helps them secure essential reading skills.
- Pupils make sustained progress in their writing. There are many opportunities for them to

develop their writing skills such as sharing their proudest moments in house meetings.

- Mathematics lessons provide pupils with practical activities and songs to reinforce their learning. As a result, pupils achieve very well from their varied starting points in mathematics.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 131462   |
| DfE registration number | 825/6031 |
| Inspection number       | 10006066 |

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                 | 5 to 14  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 36   |
| Number of part-time pupils          | 8  |
| Proprietor                          | The Pace Centre  |
| Chair                               | Julian Lovelock  |
| Headteacher                         | Claire Smart   |
| Annual fees (day pupils)            | £30,603–£51,005  |
| Telephone number                    | 01296 392739   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.thepacecentre.org">www.thepacecentre.org</a>                   |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:claire.smart@thepacecentre.org">claire.smart@thepacecentre.org</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 17 October 2012  |

## Information about this school

- The Pace Centre is an independent day special school for pupils aged between five and 14 years. It opened in 1997 and is located in a residential area of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The youngest pupils are based at The Pace Early Years Centre in Stoke Mandeville, near Aylesbury.
- The school was last inspected in October 2012. At this time, the school was judged to be outstanding.
- All of the pupils have statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans. All pupils have sensory motor disorders such as cerebral palsy. Pupils also



have communication difficulties and some have medical needs. Eleven local authorities fund pupils' placements at the school.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Approximately one third of the pupils come from homes where English is an additional language.
- The school has a 'positive belief in every child's ability to learn' and aims to 'ensure that they receive an education for life which enables them to be as active and independent as possible and to achieve their potential for a fulfilled life'.
- The Pace Centre approach is transdisciplinary. A team of staff collaborate to meet the individual needs of each pupil. Each class team includes teachers, conductive education experts known as conductors, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and classroom assistants.
- The Pace Charity has an early years centre, which provides a Nursery class for children aged three and four years. This is registered and inspected separately. The Pace Infant and Parent Service (PIPS) provides programmes to meet the specific needs of babies and young children with developmental delays or disabilities. The charity works with a local maintained special school, Heritage House School to provide additional provision for sixth form students.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classes jointly with a head of school to see pupils learning. In one class, the inspector heard some pupils read.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, lead therapists, middle leaders and a group of staff. A meeting was held with the chair of trustees. Sixty-seven responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were considered.
- There were two responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspector met with four parents and spoke to two parents on the telephone.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documents. This included the school's improvement planning, information about the curriculum, safeguarding documents, individual education plans and information about pupils' achievement.
- At the request of the Department for Education, the inspector also considered the school's application to increase the age range to include pupils up to 16 years.
- As there are currently only four children in the Reception Year, there is no report about this aspect of the school's provision.

## Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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