

Impact Independent School

The Millennium Centre, Friar Park Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 0JS

Inspection dates

3–5 May 2017

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders are not thinking strategically about the improvements they have identified. As a result, improvement planning and monitoring is not leading to quick improvements to teaching and to outcomes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable across subjects and across year groups. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in all subjects.
- Work for pupils is not always challenging enough, particularly for most-able pupils. As a result some pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of.
- Teaching in mathematics does not consistently enable pupils to develop a deeper mathematical understanding. This restricts their ability to think and reason mathematically for themselves.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning does not focus sufficiently on the progress made by pupils in the short term and over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Pupils' personal development is very well promoted and they make good gains in developing their self-esteem.
- Pupils' behaviour is well managed and a positive learning environment has been established throughout the school.
- The school works well with a range of agencies to provide pupils with highly effective care and welfare support. Promoting good attendance is a priority and, as a result, pupils attend regularly.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and value the support they are given.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values and they demonstrate respect and courtesy.

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?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing an effective system that enables leaders to be held to account for pupils' outcomes and for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - developing a rigorous system of school evaluation and improvement planning that clearly identifies key priorities and links them to outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that improvement planning makes it clear how the impact of actions designed to bring about improvements will be monitored and evaluated
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning focuses sufficiently on the progress made by pupils so that teachers' professional development can be carefully focused on how to improve pupils' progress.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - pupils gain deeper understanding in mathematics and develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning abilities
 - activities are matched to the individual needs of pupils, particularly the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. However, they have not yet done enough to ensure that teaching and academic outcomes for pupils are good.
- Leaders are still getting to grips with newly introduced systems for monitoring and evaluating school performance. Consequently, improvement planning is not as well informed as it might be. The school's self-evaluation process is not evaluative and it does not clearly identify improvement priorities. There is currently no link between improvement priorities and pupils' progress so it is not clear how proposed improvements will improve outcomes for pupils. The current system does not enable leaders to hold each other robustly to account or to evaluate the impact of actions that leaders have taken.
- The school has recently implemented a system of appraisal for teachers that enables appropriate training needs to be identified. However, as this is still in its early stages, leaders have not yet evaluated how well the actions identified for teachers' professional development contribute to overall school improvement or outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have recently established a system of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. However, leaders are only just beginning to link the areas for improvement identified for teachers to the progress made by pupils. Consequently, teaching is not yet consistently good across all year groups and across all subjects.
- While all pupils make good improvements in their attitudes to learning and their self-confidence, there is still more the school can do to boost academic progress. The school's assessment system shows that while the majority of pupils are making adequate progress, this progress is not rapid enough to ensure that enough pupils, including the most able, will achieve the targets set for them by the school.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils and staff. They have established a clear vision for the school, to transform the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people through education, and they have ensured that this vision is shared by all staff. Currently, though, this vision has not been fully realised in practice.
- Leaders have rightly focused on re-engaging pupils with learning and developing their self-esteem and self-confidence. This has been very effective. Nearly all pupils have improved on their attendance in their previous schools significantly and now attend this school regularly. Leaders have high aspirations for pupils' outcomes. For example, every pupil in Years 10 and 11 is encouraged to take up to eight GCSEs and to continue in education, employment or training after leaving the school.
- The broad and engaging curriculum has ensured that pupils are offered a wide range of experiences. For example the school offers a compulsory core provision of GCSE English, mathematics, English literature, science and citizenship. It also offers optional GCSEs in history, art, religious studies, health and social care and a BTEC in sport plus horticulture, personal, social and health education and award programmes.

- Pupils are particularly proud of their allotment. They study horticulture and grow a large amount of produce, which they share with the local community. They also keep chickens. Pupils are able to complete an award programme that develops their interpersonal and life skills.
- Staff challenge stereotypes and the curriculum helps pupils to understand a range of cultures. The school is committed to ensuring that pupils develop a secure understanding of British values. Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and equality. They demonstrate respect for individuals. Pupils unanimously agree that 'our differences are not a barrier to friendship.'

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietors of the school, who are also the headteachers, are responsible for governance.
- The methods leaders use to hold each other to account are not clear and the school's improvement planning is not sufficiently robust. This means that appropriate priorities are not always identified and addressed rapidly enough to have an impact on outcomes for pupils. It also means that the impact of actions taken by leaders cannot be accurately evaluated.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school does not have a website. However, the safeguarding policy is readily available to parents. The policy meets current government requirements regarding safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Adults in school have a very good understanding of the potential risks pupils face. For example, staff are aware of the recent changes in guidance for keeping children safe, and have received training in the 'Prevent' duty so that they know how to spot the signs of radicalisation.
- Leaders make sure pupils know how to keep themselves safe from a wide range of potential dangers. The school implements its policies relating to anti-bullying, behaviour management, risk assessment and safer recruitment effectively to ensure pupils are safe. Pupils say they feel safe.
- The designated safeguarding lead works well with other professionals and agencies to ensure that appropriate support is provided to potentially vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects
- Although the questioning skills of teachers have improved as a result of staff training, teaching does not currently support pupils to think and reason for themselves sufficiently, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, not all pupils are able to reach the targets set for them because they have not developed the skills or acquired the knowledge to enable them to complete assessments independently.

- In mathematics, the progress of pupils is sometimes limited because teachers do not effectively explain some mathematical terms or support pupils to be able to solve mathematical problems for themselves. For example, a teacher was unable to explain to pupils what a triangular number was or how to find them, and answers were provided to the pupils without any explanation. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils are not given opportunities to solve problems for themselves or develop their mathematical reasoning skills. This is reflected in the outcomes for pupils in mathematics.
- Leaders recognise that the teaching of mathematics is not as effective as it might be. This is partly because of difficulties the school has had in recruiting a teacher with the specialist knowledge to teach mathematics. Although leaders have taken steps to limit the impact of this on outcomes for pupils, progress in mathematics is falling behind progress in English and other subjects.
- Teachers are aware of what pupils can do and use this knowledge to plan lessons that are well matched to most pupils' needs. Less able pupils are well supported by teaching assistants or by the provision of additional materials. However, some tasks do not challenge individual pupils, particularly the most able, so some pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have developed an effective assessment system. It allows teachers to check pupils' skills on entry to the school and to set challenging targets for them. Half-termly assessment activities are then carried out to monitor how well pupils are progressing towards achieving these targets. This information is used to identify pupils who may need further support or interventions.
- The rates of progress seen in books match the rates of progress shown in the school's assessment information. Pupils make best progress in English and science because teaching is stronger in these subjects. For example, teachers' questioning in these subjects encourages pupils to think more deeply about their learning and explain their answers carefully.
- Teaching assistants usually provide effective support, including keeping pupils on task and ensuring that they maintain positive attitudes to learning. However, in some cases teaching assistants provide too much support for pupils, resulting in some pupils making limited progress in lessons.
- Teachers usually have relevant subject knowledge and effective questioning skills, which result in pupils strengthening their understanding of the subject being taught. For example, pupils learned about the features of English language and were able to clearly explain terms such as simile, metaphor, personification and imagery.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to school and their learning as a result of the respect and support they receive from staff. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is very well nurtured by adults in school. Staff know the pupils well and have a very good understanding of their individual needs.

- The vast majority of pupils who attend Impact Independent School had not previously attended school regularly. Attendance and punctuality are regarded as a priority by the school. As a result of actions taken by leaders the majority of pupils' attendance now exceeds 90%.
- For most of the pupils whose attendance is still low, leaders know reasons for this and make every effort to work with pupils and their families to improve attendance.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of impartial careers advice. Pupils value this and say they feel well prepared for life beyond school. All the pupils spoken to had high aspirations for their future careers. They feel that the careers advice they are given is relevant and useful. The school's destination information shows that all Year 11 pupils have secured a place at a local college in order to further their education.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe from a wide range of potential dangers. For example, pupils demonstrated a secure understanding of a range of types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe online. They are aware of the potential risks they face and know whom to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. They are confident that school keeps them safe, including beyond the school day.
- Pupils learn in a variety of ways about being responsible citizens. The produce they grow at the allotment is shared with the local community and pupils taking GCSE health and social care also engage with members of the local community at various times throughout the school year. Pupils have raised money for a range of charities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say the behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Comments made by pupils show that they value the smaller teaching groups. Conduct in lessons and around the school throughout the day is good.
- Behaviour logs show that inappropriate behaviour is quickly responded to. There are few examples of repeated inappropriate behaviour by individual pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning in lessons and listen respectfully to teachers and each other. They behave responsibly around school, when moving between lessons, at lunchtime and when making their own snacks and drinks in the kitchen provided for them. They are polite and courteous to visitors.
- Most of the pupils at the school were either at risk of exclusion from their previous schools because of their behaviour, or their behaviour was creating a barrier to their learning. Their conduct at Impact Independent School therefore demonstrates a significant improvement in behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils are improving but they are not yet good because pupils are not making consistently strong progress and are not developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in aspects of mathematics.

- The progress of most-able pupils is often not as strong as it might be because the work they are given is not always challenging enough. Pupils who complete tasks quickly often have to wait for other pupils to finish before they can continue with the learning.
- School assessment information and work in pupils' books shows that nearly all pupils are making steady progress, particularly in English and science. Some pupils make rapid progress over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make rates of progress similar to other pupils. This is because of the effective support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants during lessons. However, these pupils also do not make good progress.
- When pupils arrive at the school they have significant gaps in their learning and their attitudes to learning are largely negative. Initially, the school rightly concentrates on improving pupils' attitudes to learning, self-confidence and behaviour. The school does this very effectively. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and in their ability to manage their own behaviour.
- By the time pupils leave Impact Independent School they have developed the interpersonal skills and positive attitudes to learning that they need to successfully undertake the next stage of their education or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	141560
DfE registration number	333/6008
Inspection number	10006308

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Impact Education & Training Ltd
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Jo Blackhouse
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65 per day
Telephone number	0121 502 2645
Website	N/A
Email address	joblackhouse@impactededucation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Impact Independent School is on a single site in Sandwell, West Midlands. It is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to provide full-time education for up to 60 pupils.
- This was the school's first standard inspection since it became registered with the DfE in November 2014. The inspection was carried out by one inspector over three days.
- The school is used as alternative provision by secondary schools in the local area. Pupils remain on roll with their mainstream school but receive their full-time education at Impact Independent school.

- The school does not use any other site or provision.
- The school admits pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 who are at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream school. These pupils may be underachieving, or need social and emotional support, and there are some for whom mainstream school is not an appropriate setting.
- The aim of the school is to 'transform the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people through the fundamental building block that is education'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across all year groups and looked at a range of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science. The observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at assessment information for individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteachers and senior leaders. The inspector also spoke with a group of pupils from Years 10 and 11.
- Questionnaires submitted by 14 members of staff were scrutinised as well as letters sent to the school by local secondary schools.
- A range of documents and policies were looked at including, health and safety checks, records of observations of teaching, safeguarding documentation and records of attendance.
- There were no responses to the Parent View questionnaire and the school has not routinely collected parents' views.
- A check of the premises was also carried out including the facilities provided for pupils.

Inspection team

Janet Satchwell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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