

ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre

Town Hall Chambers, Market Place, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3EB

Inspection dates

13–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has made a strong start in establishing arrangements and activities which engage and interest pupils. Pupils enjoy attending school.
- School leaders and staff share high aspirations for what pupils may achieve. They regularly review communication between staff to maintain their shared ambitions.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have established suitable policies and procedures to guide the work of this new school. Excellent cooperation between the staff ensures that policies are implemented effectively.
- A major strength of the school is the personalised curriculum based on a detailed understanding of each pupil's learning needs.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Pupils, who have previously experienced a range of barriers to their learning, make good progress from a variety of starting points.
- Pupils make strong progress in their emotional development and the confidence to try new experiences. Staff are very successful in building pupils' emotional resilience in small steps.
- Staff have established strong and effective working relationships with parents and carers. This cooperation enables them to respond well to pupils' changing needs.
- Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Pupils are safe in school and confident that staff care about their well-being.
- The proprietor has established appropriate arrangements for independent review and identification of priorities for further improvement.
- Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress are not implemented consistently. This restricts senior leaders' evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- Arrangements for systematic support and challenge for the headteacher are at an early stage of development.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to increase opportunities for social interaction between pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

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?

- Strengthen the arrangements for monitoring the work of the school to ensure that:
 - pupils' progress in all subjects is assessed and recorded consistently
 - the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on pupils' progress is regularly reviewed.
- Strengthen governance to ensure regular support and professional challenge for the headteacher.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in working together.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, has quickly established a shared vision and commitment to the well-being and progress of pupils who have a variety of individual, and often complex, needs. She has ensured that the school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards.
- Staff demonstrate high levels of respect for the pupils with whom they work. Pupils value the individual care they receive and have settled quickly into the positive experiences the school offers.
- Staff state, in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, that the school successfully meets the different needs of individual learners. They are proud to be members of staff at this school. Parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, agree overwhelmingly that the school meets the needs of their children.
- The school provides very successful individual teaching for each pupil. Staff understand very well the learning characteristics, strengths and interests of each pupil. Pupils have quickly developed strong trust and cooperation with the staff and learning is effective.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have a particularly good understanding of the impact of the school's work on the personal development of each pupil. Teaching and personal support for pupils develop their confidence and willingness to try new experiences.
- The headteacher has developed an ambitious programme for the monitoring and review of all aspects of the school's work. This is well supported by audit visits from an external educational partner, representatives of the placing local authority and autism education specialists.
- The headteacher works effectively with senior staff colleagues to ensure that priorities are addressed. The school has established appropriate arrangements for the review of the performance and training needs for staff. These are at an early stage of implementation, but staff are aware of their personal targets and how they may further develop their contribution to the success of the school.
- The school provides an appropriate programme of staff training, including training in a wide range of aspects of safeguarding. Staff have the opportunity to improve their professional qualifications and to attend training events which meet identified whole-school needs.
- The school provides a broad and flexible curriculum. Pupils have access to external examinations at a variety of levels, including functional skills and GCSE examinations. Arrangements are made to provide individual pupils with access to specialised examinations of their choice, together with the core subjects that underpin their preparation for adult life.
- Staff promote British values well within the context of strong arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has an inclusive ethos and takes positive steps to enable pupils to overcome any barriers to their individual success.
- Senior leaders are aware of the need to provide more opportunities to build pupils' confidence in engaging and working with others. Pupils come together informally during

the lunch break, but have limited opportunities at present to work, or plan and tackle practical challenges, together.

- School leaders' ability to monitor precisely pupils' progress is limited by teachers' inconsistent implementation of the school's assessment and recording system.
- School leaders have made an effective start to the development of a successful school. They demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

Governance

- The proprietor is in the process of setting up formal arrangements for a governing body. The school already draws on a variety of support and advice from external partners. The headteacher uses this support well to inform her improvement planning.
- At present, the headteacher has no formal arrangements in place to provide regular support and challenge to the school's leaders. The school has made a successful start, but the headteacher recognises the need for more systematic external support and appraisal of her work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has produced an effective policy that has regard to the latest government guidance and the requirements of the local safeguarding children board. This policy is available to parents and carers and others on the school's website.
- All members of staff take part in a continuous programme of training in all aspects of safeguarding. This training starts at the point of staff induction and is supported well by a programme of additional online training. The school's two designated leads also regularly update staff awareness of new developments and priorities in all aspects of safeguarding.
- Staff ensure that parents are aware of the safeguarding risks to which their children may be exposed, including online. The curriculum ensures that pupils are well informed about e-safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers work very effectively with individual pupils. They have a good understanding of pupils' starting points and of the progress required to help pupils fill gaps in their previous learning.
- Pupils have typically been unable to cope with the environment and social relationships in previous, often larger, settings. The school provides an individual, safe study space for each individual pupil. Pupils are helped to address individual difficulties, for example, self-regulation, noise sensitivity and anxiety. Pupils state that they are happy and enjoy school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand how to present information and encourage pupils' deeper understanding. They establish strong, trusting relationships with pupils, which enable pupils to take risks and try new experiences.
- Teachers plan effective learning experiences. They set clear learning objectives for each

lesson and discuss these with pupils. The most able pupils are skilled in identifying the progress they have made to meet their objectives. Teachers are experienced at recognising when a pupil requires additional time to process, review and consolidate their learning.

- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. Pupils sustain their concentration and demonstrate the desire to succeed. Teachers question pupils frequently, increasing the level of challenge and deepening pupils' ability to interpret, reason and draw conclusions.
- Staff provide oral feedback regularly to pupils, identifying next steps and building pupils' confidence to think and act independently. Staff are still building a secure understanding about when to intervene or to provide independent learning time. They are aware of the significant differences in learning styles that are best suited to individual pupils.
- All staff focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Their sensitive individualised approach contributes to pupils' confidence to take risks in their calculations, spelling and grammar, knowing they will be helped to address any mistakes.
- Particular highlights in learning observed included mathematics, where pupils measured combined cuboids and calculated their volume, and where individual pupils developed oral communication through conversation with the speech and language therapist, while enjoying practical craft tasks. Pupils demonstrated pride in their achievements, for example when recognising improvements in their own spelling and punctuation while using a computer.
- Similarly, pupils in Years 10 and 11 maintained excellent dialogue with their teachers while comparing the contrasting rhythm, rhyme and tone of two poems or analysing osmosis through a semi-permeable membrane. In each case, they used the technical vocabulary of the subject confidently and demonstrated the ability to ask suitable questions and clarify their understanding of ideas.
- Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to understand and answer accurately a variety of examination questions. Pupils recognise the anxieties that may affect their own performance in examinations and welcome the opportunity to gain this experience.
- The school has developed an effective working relationship with a local secondary academy. This link enables pupils to visit the academy's specialist science facilities to complete the practical experiments required for examinations.
- Staff have an accurate understanding of how well their pupils are progressing in each subject. They use this information effectively to plan future learning and to report in detail to parents about their children's progress and achievement. However, they do not record assessment information consistently in line with the school's agreed procedure.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils make strong progress in managing their personal anxieties and emotional barriers to learning.
- A number of pupils have had long periods out of education or severely disrupted previous learning. The quality of individual care and strong personal relationships within the school enable them to develop confidence in themselves and in their ability to succeed. For a minority of pupils, this is a slow process requiring considerable patience and sensitive support from staff.
- Pupils respond positively to the individual teaching arrangements. They develop the ability to learn successfully and are proud of their achievements. The most able pupils, in particular, demonstrate increasing ability to work independently and to recognise when they need help.
- Staff place an appropriate emphasis on planning for the future at a pace that is sensitive to each pupil's emotional readiness. Pupils are encouraged to take an interest in opportunities beyond their immediate environment and to explore alternatives, such as swimming, baking, climbing or aspects of outdoor education.
- Pupils show respect for the staff and for each other in the common areas of the school and during lunch breaks. The headteacher is aware of the need to provide increased opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Some pupils have demonstrated the ability to plan and work together on a group project, but to date, such opportunities have been limited.
- High levels of individual supervision contribute effectively to pupils' safety. The school is a secure environment in which all adults place a very high priority on pupils' well-being. Teachers and teaching assistants work continuously to improve pupils' awareness of e-safety and risks within the wider community.
- Pupils learn about safe and healthy lifestyles. They discuss what they eat and drink and develop an awareness of the features of a healthy diet and the benefits of regular exercise.
- The school pays particular attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through an effective programme of personal, social and health education. This enables pupils to achieve external awards for their research and learning in a variety of personal and social activities. Their successful projects have included fund-raising for a variety of charitable events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They settle well in lessons and cooperate effectively with the staff with whom they work. They sustain their concentration and complete tasks and activities well.
- Pupils take their learning seriously. They enjoy what they do and are positive about learning. They learn to increasingly self-regulate their responses and behaviour and make appropriate independent decisions.
- The school is an orderly environment in which the behaviour of individuals rarely has a

negative impact on the learning of others. Occasional, individual incidents, mostly arising from anxiety or frustration, are managed very well by staff. There have been no reported incidents of bullying since the school opened.

- Parents and staff who completed inspection questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive about how the school manages and improves pupils' behaviour.
- Attendance is above the national average. There is no unauthorised or persistent absence. School leaders manage medical absences well in communicating with parents. Senior staff have a very good understanding of the factors that influence pupils' readiness to attend and benefit fully from learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is mostly below that expected for their age. This is largely as a result of previous periods of missed education or emotional and mental health barriers to effective learning. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge.
- Once they have settled into the expectations of the school and developed secure relationships with staff, pupils make consistently strong progress across all areas of learning. Some pupils experience peaks and troughs in their progress, but the overall trend of progress is upwards.
- Pupils learn how to sustain their concentration in a sensitive and supportive environment. They develop knowledge, understanding and skills that enable them to manage new learning successfully.
- All pupils make good progress in English and mathematics from their various starting points. They close gaps in their knowledge, and the majority are making secure progress towards external accreditation, including functional skills and GCSE examinations.
- Pupils make strong progress with their reading, including the ability of the most able to understand and discuss deeper meanings and symbolism in writing. All pupils are required to read at levels appropriate to their individual stage of development. The most able pupils read fluently and with expression.
- Pupils state that they enjoy reading and the majority read for pleasure. This has a positive impact on their ability to analyse text and to draw conclusions about the writers' intentions.
- No pupils have yet entered for external examinations. The most able pupils are studying for GCSE examinations in English language and literature, mathematics and sciences. Individual pupils also have access to specialised GCSE courses of their choice, including media studies and accountancy. Staff have the expertise and experience to support pupils effectively in these subjects and pupils are making good progress.
- Staff understand pupils' need to develop social and emotional independence. In addition to their preparation for academic examinations, pupils have the opportunity to complete accreditation, nationally validated, in a wide range of personal and social education themes.
- To date, no pupils have completed their years of compulsory education or moved on to further education or employment. The school has a suitable programme of careers education, including impartial advice from the local careers service, to assist them to

manage the transition to adult responsibilities.

School details

Unique reference number	142779
DfE registration number	855/6037
Inspection number	10043803

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	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Vivienne Boulton
Headteacher	Vivienne Boulton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000
Telephone number	01509 269441
Website	www.aspirelifefskills.co.uk
Email address	aspirelifefskills@hotmail.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre is located in Loughborough town centre. The premises have been refurbished to admit pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, with a primary need of autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school was registered to admit pupils in the age range of 11 to 19 years in March 2017. It commenced its first school year of full-time education for pupils in September 2017. This is the first standard Ofsted inspection of the school.
- There are currently seven girls and boys on the school roll, aged 13 to 17 years, all of whom have an education, care and health plan. The school provides an individualised curriculum for each pupil. There is no separate sixth form.

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning with the majority of pupils, each taught individually. He discussed samples of their work with teaching staff, including the arrangements for the assessment of their progress.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, and additional members of staff, including those with leadership and management responsibilities. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire submitted by 20 members of staff.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents, including those who had completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and those with whom he had conversations. He also had conversations with the majority of pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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