

LPW Independent School

Princess Street, Bedminster, Bristol, Bristol BS3 4AG

Inspection dates

11–13 April 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have raised academic expectations of pupils in English and mathematics.
- Staff have successfully nurtured a caring, inclusive school ethos.
- Staff provide a high level of support for pupils. Many of these pupils have high-level needs, are vulnerable and have been excluded from other schools.
- Pupils value the range of courses they study at alternative providers. They make good progress as a result.
- Strategies to reduce smoking are having limited impact because they are not always implemented with conviction.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable in all their subjects.
- Leaders know their school well. They have a clear understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because staff have made good use of bespoke training opportunities.
- Pupils behave well. They respect staff and each other, the school environment and the work they produce.
- Staff have established positive relationships with external partners and parents.
- Pupils make good progress in some subjects, including English and mathematics. This is particularly notable given the limited time pupils have in the school.
- In other subjects, such as science, humanities and physical education, pupils are not making strong progress. This is because staff do not use sufficiently robust assessment information to monitor pupils' progress in these subjects.
- Academic rigour and expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high in some subjects as they are in English and mathematics.
- Overall attendance is too low despite the committed efforts of staff to reduce absence.

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?

- Develop the curriculum by leaders ensuring that the academic rigour and high expectations evident in English and mathematics are replicated in other subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - the robust assessment system used to monitor pupils' progress in mathematics and English is used for science, humanities subjects and physical education
 - the most able pupils are consistently challenged by work that is suitably demanding in all their subjects.
- Improve personal development, welfare and behaviour by ensuring that:
 - staff are more proactive and determined in their efforts to help pupils give up smoking
 - leaders continue to use all means at their disposal to improve pupils' attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have worked hard, and successfully, to move the school forward since the previous inspection. Their approach has been characterised by persistence and determination. Despite the difficulties staff face in engaging pupils in their school experience, leaders do not make excuses. They, and the wider staff, continually strive to do better for the benefit of pupils.
- Leaders know their school well. They take an honest, objective and accurate view of their work. This enables them to comply with the various independent school standards. Furthermore, leaders' perceptive self-evaluation enables them to identify clearly the key areas for improvement. Consequently, leaders tackle weaknesses quickly and decisively.
- The headteacher has been instrumental in raising the academic expectations of staff and pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. He has acted on the understanding that academic qualifications are vital to securing better opportunities for pupils in later life.
- Senior leadership has strengthened since the previous inspection. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers. These leaders are clear about their well-defined roles, and carry them out purposefully. In turn, they support other staff to be effective in their roles. All staff who responded to the survey issued during the inspection agree that they are proud to be members of staff at the school. They also agree that the school is well led and managed.
- Many, if not all, of the pupils at the school have had negative prior experiences of education and have missed a lot of their schooling. Many pupils are vulnerable for a variety of reasons. They have complex needs and some face considerable difficulties outside of school. Pupils arrive at different points during the school year, often because they have been permanently excluded from previous schools. Staff do their best to re-engage pupils with education and provide them with qualifications. This is made more difficult because of the limited time many pupils have in school. Nevertheless, despite these issues, staff never give up on pupils. Staff care about them deeply because they know that, for many pupils, LPW is their last opportunity to stay in education.
- School leaders are well supported by the wider LPW company. The chief executive and trust members work with the headteacher in an open and constructive way. Consequently, appropriate resources are made available to the school as and when necessary. The chief executive shares, and holds the headteacher to account for, his drive to improve academic standards.
- Parents who engage with the school hold it in high regard. Communication between school and home is frequent and regular. For example, key workers call home at the end of every day to provide a report on the day's events and on how pupils have fared. One parent who spoke with an inspector said, 'My child has thrived at this school.'
- Communication and partnership working is also strong with the local authority and other agencies and alternative providers.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum since the previous inspection. The quality of English and mathematics provision has improved and is reflected in higher outcomes. Furthermore, there is a wider range of alternative provision on offer. This offsite provision

offers accreditation in a range of vocational courses, such as construction, car mechanics and animal welfare.

- However, the academic rigour and high quality of teaching evident in English and mathematics is not yet evident in other non-core subjects, such as science and humanities. This is because expectations of staff and pupils are not yet high enough in these subjects.

Governance

- Governors are wholly committed to, and actively promote, the school's vision to support vulnerable young people. They share leaders' belief that the school plays a crucial role in equipping pupils for life after school and helping them to become good citizens.
- Governors know the school well because leaders provide them with detailed and comprehensive information. This information is corroborated with information from other sources. Furthermore, governors use their relevant backgrounds and skills, such as education and social care, to ask probing questions of leaders and hold them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Designated safeguarding staff take their responsibilities seriously and liaise closely with each other over the two school sites. This ensures that a consistent approach is taken towards the training of staff and the way child protection issues are dealt with.
- Staff are appropriately trained, and checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children are up to date and comprehensive. Staff are guided by the school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the website. The policy is written in accordance with the latest guidance and contains all necessary information.
- The new online referral system is helping designated staff to monitor individual complex cases more effectively. This is because it clearly records the chronology of events and the actions taken by staff to resolve issues. Staff know the importance of reporting anything they are concerned about, however small.
- Leaders actively involve external partners to help them improve their work. For example, they recently commissioned an external audit of safeguarding provision, which provided them with useful insights to improve provision further. They have acted promptly on these recommendations.
- The importance of safeguarding threads throughout the wider LPW organisation. A safeguarding committee sits alongside the school governance committee. This board oversees safeguarding across the company, including the school. It ensures that governors and representatives of the company have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and hold school leaders to account effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The standard of teaching in the school has improved in the last couple of years. This is because leaders have decisively tackled key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in some subjects, including English and mathematics. It is also because staff

have benefited from bespoke professional development, which has had a positive impact in the classroom. They now more regularly share best practice and moderate each other's work.

- Teachers' expectations of pupils in English and mathematics are now much higher. Most pupils are set work which challenges them and deepens their thinking. It is pitched at a level which enables many pupils to achieve GCSE qualifications.
- Pupils benefit from positive relationships with teachers and supporting adults. These relationships are a significant strength, considering pupils' high levels of disengagement and disinterest when they start at the school. Pupils trust staff because they are treated with patience, tolerance and respect. This has a very positive impact on their learning.
- Staff now consistently provide useful feedback in line with the school's policy, across different subjects. Pupils use this feedback to spot their mistakes and improve their work.
- Teachers and supporting adults help pupils in their understanding by asking appropriate, well-constructed questions. These questions encourage pupils to think around the subject and consider different viewpoints. Consequently, pupils are drawn into the subject matter, engage with their learning and deepen their thinking.
- A new assessment system is helping teachers to better track pupils' progress in English and mathematics. As a result, teachers have a clearer understanding of how well pupils are acquiring skills and knowledge at any given time. However, this more robust system is not being used in science, humanities and physical education. Consequently, pupils' progress is not monitored as well in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Much of the school's work supports pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. During morning 'Start Right' sessions, pupils might reflect on their emotional readiness for learning or consider topical world events. Throughout the school day, pupils participate in activities that teach them the value of teamwork, persistence and self-reliance. In citizenship, pupils learn about the features of democracy and the rule of law. In one piece of work, pupils considered the question, 'What does it mean to be a member of a community, a country and the world?'
- Pupils are well looked after by staff, who have their best interests at heart. Pupils, who can be wary of placing their trust in adults because of negative past experiences, speak highly of staff at the school. They know that staff work hard for them.
- Pupils are provided with support to meet their social, emotional and behavioural needs. For example, the 'Thrive' programme and other therapies help pupils to reflect on how they feel and find solutions to problems.
- Pupils receive good guidance to help them with their next steps after school. Staff understand how important it is for pupils to have goals to aim for and realistic plans once they leave school. Staff ensure that guidance matches pupils' aspirations and abilities. Those pupils who take up college places after they leave school continue to be assisted by

school staff until Christmas of the following academic year. This continued assistance helps ensure that pupils settle in well and reduces their chances of dropping out.

- In many respects, pupils are successfully encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. For example, pupils frequently prepare their own healthy food for lunch and accept that fizzy drinks are not tolerated in school.
- However, leaders have not been as proactive and sure footed in their efforts to help pupils stop smoking. Such a challenge should not be underestimated, as some pupils have entrenched nicotine addictions because they have been smoking for many years. Moreover, their attendance could be negatively affected if staff dealt with their habits in a heavy-handed way. Nevertheless, staff need to do more to apply the school's policy of aiming to reduce smoking.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that there is very little bullying in the school and if it does happen 'it's sorted out quickly'. Partly as a result of this safe culture, pupils feel comfortable and free to express their individuality. This helps build their confidence and self-esteem.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved around school. They show respect for each other, staff and the fabric of the school building. No vandalism or graffiti was seen by inspectors. Every part of the school building on both sites is clean and looked after.
- The school has a clear behaviour policy in place, which staff apply consistently. It carefully balances a range of rewards and sanctions in an effort to get the best from pupils. As a result, the school is a calm, orderly place for the most part. When incidents of poor behaviour do occur, they are dealt with appropriately, in accordance with the policy. Staff always endeavour to be fair, humane and restorative in their dealings concerning poor behaviour.
- Staff are determined in their efforts to reduce absence. They use various means, such as working with outreach workers and the educational welfare officer, to improve attendance. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance in different ways. Conversely, staff are not afraid to apply sanctions when necessary, such as penalty fines. They have to work hard to combat the impact of pupils' poor attendance at previous schools. All the same, attendance is still too low. Leaders acknowledge that they could more effectively target certain pupils whose attendance they would be more likely to be successful in improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, pupils made good progress in English and mathematics, with most pupils achieving GCSE or functional skills qualifications. The majority of these pupils secured apprenticeships, college places or other training positions.
- Current pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, are making good progress in English and mathematics because of the quality of teaching they are receiving. The focus on these skills is helping pupils' communication skills and assisting their progress across the

wider curriculum. They are also making good progress towards achieving BTEC accreditation in various vocational subjects, including animal care, childcare and construction.

- Less-able pupils, and those who require additional support for behavioural reasons, are helped by teachers and other adults to make strong progress. Pupils benefit from intensive and frequent support, underpinned by effective questioning. Consequently, pupils are more engaged with their learning than they otherwise would be.
- The most able pupils, though few in number, do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders' drive for higher academic standards has raised expectations for all. However, teachers' monitoring and planning are not yet leading to the setting of work that sufficiently stretches the most able pupils.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because support is tailored to need on an individual, bespoke basis. However, staff are not helped by the limited information about pupils' needs available to them when pupils join the school. This lack of information means that it takes longer to identify and fully understand pupils' needs. The funding available to support pupils' needs is also limited because pupils join the school at different times of the school year. Nevertheless, the special educational needs coordinator knows the pupils well. He liaises effectively with other staff to allocate resources and secure external support, such as speech and language therapy. This range of support ensures that pupils make strong pastoral and academic progress.
- Pupils take pride in their work, particularly in English, mathematics and their BTEC vocational subjects. Work is neat and correctly set out. The sense of achievement pupils derive from succeeding in these subjects is reflected in the quality of presentation.
- Some pupils lack basic social skills when they join the school. During the short time they are at the school, staff successfully teach pupils to become better citizens and make a contribution to wider society. Pupils learn to become more tolerant, understanding and respectful of others' differences. They understand the importance of achieving qualifications to help them secure work.
- Pupils are not yet making strong progress in some subjects, such as science and humanities. This is because the academic rigour and sharp assessment evident in English and mathematics is not yet well developed in these other subjects. Leaders have correctly identified that this is an area for improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	137583
DfE registration number	801/6029
Inspection number	10041379

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	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Proprietor	Learning Partnership West
Chair	John Savage
Headteacher	David Simons
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,500 per annum
Telephone number	0117 987 3700
Website	www.lpw.org.uk/school
Email address	enquiries@lpw.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–3 March 2016

Information about this school

- The proprietor is a community interest company. It is funded by commissioning local authorities, academies and schools. The company delegates most of the operational activities to the school governance committee.
- Admission to the school is by referral from commissioning schools who go through the Bristol inclusion panel.
- The school is based on two sites. The main school site is in Bedminster, which also acts as the LPW company head office. The other site, City Learning Centre, is in another central Bristol location.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers. These include Urban Pursuit (outdoor

education), Rocksteady Training (construction), Re-Work (café, workshop, gardens and shop), The Park (child development, animal care and land-based studies), The Wheels Project (mechanics), City of Bristol College (catering, hair and beauty) and The Studio (music production and performance).

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and two assistant headteachers have been appointed. The previous headteacher is now the deputy headteacher.
- Pupils join the school throughout the year, with few starting at the beginning of Year 10 and finishing at the end of Year 11. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are more than twice as many boys as girls this year. Three-quarters of pupils on roll are eligible for pupil premium funding. Three pupils are looked after by their local authority. Currently no pupils have education, health and care plans, although three applications are pending.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Some observations were jointly conducted with school staff. Inspectors also visited a number of alternative providers to observe learning.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of pupils, the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive of LPW and representatives of the governing body.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with four parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation and development plans. They also scrutinised records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Hannon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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