

E-Spired

Unit C, Bedford Business Centre, Mile Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9TW

Inspection dates

24–26 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
Sixth form provision	Insufficient evidence
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and the proprietor provide good leadership in developing a strong culture of good teaching, achievement and behaviour.
- Pupils are making good progress towards their examination courses.
- The principal and the proprietor are working closely with governors to ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders are ensuring that safeguarding is effective. As a result, pupils feel safe.
- Leaders have implemented a relevant curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils. This is preparing them well for the next stage of their lives.
- Teachers manage behaviour effectively and make good use of assessment to move learning forward.
- At times, teachers do not deploy teaching assistants well enough to support learning and to check how well pupils are doing in lessons.
- Pupils rapidly develop their spiritual, moral social and cultural knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour and attendance rapidly improve.
- Leaders are making good use of their self-evaluation to continuously improve the school. However, they have not yet developed clear criteria for measuring success in meeting the school's priorities for development.

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 quality of teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively in all lessons to support the learning of pupils appropriately
 - teachers check the learning and progress of each pupil frequently.
- Ensure that leaders develop clear criteria for measuring success in meeting the school's priorities for development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal is working effectively with the proprietor and governors to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently since the registration of the school.
- The principal is providing clear direction for continuously improving the school and has ensured high staff morale and strong teamwork in the school.
- Leaders benefit from the support of parents and carers and the confidence of the local authority in meeting the needs of individual pupils.
- Leaders have developed a relevant curriculum, which is closely tailored to the individual needs and interests of pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy and good opportunities for pupils to follow a range of academic and vocational courses, which prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. These include GCSE English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders are enriching the curriculum through strong links with local schools and Bedford College and are ensuring that pupils benefit from effective careers advice and guidance.
- The curriculum is promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, through the school's youth leadership programme and a well-conceived programme of personal, social and health education. This is raising pupils' self-esteem and encouraging them to show respect for one another and to develop a keen sense of right from wrong.
- Leaders are securing good teaching in the school through an effective system of appraisal designed to improve performance. They identify strengths in teaching and areas for development through visits to lessons, reviewing progress seen in pupils' work and through the school's tracking system. Leaders use this information to set clear targets for improvement. As a result, teaching and learning across the school are good and are ensuring that pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders have implemented the school's assessment systems well, ensuring that staff know how to track and record pupils' progress over time. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on assessments and are using this information to set clear priorities for development. However, they have not developed a clear means of measuring how successful they will be in meeting each priority for development.
- Leaders have a clear three-year plan in place to improve access for disabled pupils. They do not tolerate any form of bullying or discrimination and are ensuring that all pupils are treated equally.

Governance

- The new governing body is providing effective support for staff and good oversight for the school's work in driving improvement. The chair of governors has a first-hand view of the school through visits and reviews of the school's work with the principal.
- Governors have an accurate view of teaching and its impact on learning. They are developing their understanding of data and are asking challenging questions about the

progress that different pupils are making, which helps governors to shape improvements in teaching and learning.

- Governors receive regular reports from the principal and have a good knowledge of how pupils are improving their attitudes to learning and of their attendance and behaviour.
- Governors regularly check that all policies are up to date and are promoting pupils' personal development and well-being.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed and are maintaining a strong culture for safeguarding in the school.
- In discussion, parents confirmed that pupils feel safe, and staff agree.
- Leaders are rigorous in ensuring that all the required checks are made of the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils. They record these accurately in their single central register, which is updated regularly.
- Leaders are making sure that all training in safeguarding and child protection is up to date so that staff know how to keep pupils safe in school.
- Staff maintain high levels of supervision throughout the day to ensure pupils' safety and well-being and assess any potential risks to pupils effectively. Pupils move around the school sensibly and handle equipment safely. They abide by the school's zero tolerance of no smoking.
- Leaders maintain regular contact with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and are implementing locally agreed procedures for ensuring pupils' safety effectively.
- A suitable policy for safeguarding pupils is available on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching across the school is ensuring that pupils learn effectively and make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations for learning and make good use of questioning to move learning forward. This was seen in all lessons during the inspection and confirmed by the school's monitoring of teaching over time.
- Staff maintain good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. As a result, pupils focus on their learning in lessons, listen carefully to their teachers, follow instructions and try to do well.
- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects, and their teaching of basic skills is good. In English lessons, teachers focus on the development of vocabulary and provide opportunities for pupils to write at length, promoting good use of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils are given every opportunity to deepen their reasoning skills and to demonstrate their understanding of new concepts and ideas.
- Teachers make good use of well-chosen resources such as interactive whiteboards and

computers to develop learning. This maintains pupils' interest so that they remain focused on the learning tasks.

- Teaching assistants usually provide good support for learning in lessons, although they do not support the learning of pupils sufficiently while the teacher is working with individual pupils.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to set individual targets for pupils and to track their progress over time. They use the information from assessment well to plan lessons based on pupils' previous learning. They usually make good use of assessment through the lesson to check that pupils are learning effectively enough. However, sometimes they do not check the progress of pupils well enough in order to move their learning forward.
- Teachers provide termly written reports to parents on pupils' progress over time, and parents said that these were useful and informative.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff work well as a team to ensure that pupils are safe throughout the school day.
- Staff implement the school's policies on safeguarding effectively and work closely with pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of staying safe in school. Pupils benefit from good pastoral support and guidance.
- Staff carry out regular fire drills and ensure that up-to-date checks are made on the safety of electrical equipment and fire appliances. They ensure that health and safety policies and risk assessments are implemented effectively.
- Pupils handle equipment including computers safely, and they move safely from one area of the school to another.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development and know the importance of good behaviour and attendance for learning.
- Pupils increasingly develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils show respect for people from different cultural backgrounds and religions, and are improving their relationships with others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils' behaviour rapidly improves over time and exclusions are rare. Pupils respond well to the school's behaviour policy including the system of rewards and sanctions, resulting in a decreasing rate of incidents of disruptive and challenging behaviour in the school over time.
- Although attendance is below average, all pupils make good progress in their attendance over time. As a result, many pupils reach broadly average attendance, and a significant number reach 100% attendance because staff promote attendance effectively. Staff

respond quickly to any unauthorised absence from school and work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure good attendance. Most pupils want to attend school, arrive punctually and are well prepared for lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with histories of poor attendance and disruption to learning. Many are lacking in confidence and, as a result, their attainment on entry is below average.
- Within a few weeks of admission, pupils settle into the school and begin to re-engage in learning. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points in their GCSE courses over time, including in English and mathematics. The school has accurate information to show that all pupils in Year 11 are on course to achieve at least three GCSEs this term.
- Pupils' work shows that they make good progress in English, building rapidly on prior learning. This was seen in their writing about Macbeth and in writing for different purposes, in which they considerably improved their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation over time. Work is presented neatly.
- Pupils increasingly make good progress in deepening their understanding and mastery of new mathematical concepts. Their written work shows that they progressively build on their prior learning and apply their mathematical knowledge well to real life.
- The few pupils who are registered on the roll of mainstream schools and who attend on a part-time basis are making good progress, and this is having a beneficial effect on their learning in their mainstream schools.
- The very small number of pupils who are receiving home tuition from the school are making good progress in their five GCSE courses.
- The pupils who have an education, health and care plan are making good progress from their starting points. This is because staff take full account of the provision specified to develop individual learning plans to meet their needs.
- Pupils have a clear idea of the next stage of their education because they receive good support and careers guidance. Most pupils want to move on to the new sixth form when it opens in the new premises in September 2018, and others want to pursue more vocational training at the local college.

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence - amnesty granted

- Since its registration in August 2017, the school has responded to the local authority request to admit two pupils in Year 12 on a part-time basis to repeat GCSE subjects to improve their grades. The school has responded flexibly to this request despite having no separate sixth-form provision. There is insufficient evidence to comment on their achievements over time. The school has clear plans in place to develop full-time sixth-form provision in new premises from September 2018.

School details

Unique reference number	144807
DfE registration number	822/6007
Inspection number	10046993

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Mark Hudson
Chair	Jacqueline Brown
Headteacher	Mark Hudson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,000 to £24,000
Telephone number	01234 363400
Website	www.espired.org
Email address	info@espiced.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an independent school for up to 20 pupils in September 2017, following its registration with the Department for Education as a day school in August 2017.
- Prior to its registration, the school was operating as an alternative provider, since October 2016, with 18 part-time pupils who attended for two days per week in partnership with

local schools.

- This is its first standard inspection.
- The school complies with its registration requirements as specified in the government information about the school.
- There are currently 10 full-time pupils on roll in Years 10 and 11 including some who are receiving full-time home tuition at the request of the local authority.
- There are six part-time pupils, four of whom are dual registered in mainstream schools, and two students in Year 12, who are attending the school at the request of the local authority to repeat their GCSEs in order to improve their grades.
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs, who have histories of poor attendance and who have failed to thrive in mainstream schools. Some pupils are looked after by their local authority. Four pupils have an education, health and care plan for their special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The school has strong links with Bedford College, Bedford Free School and Mark Rutherford School.
- The school occupies a site within a business park in Bedfordshire and has plans in place to move to new accommodation in August 2018, when it will provide full-time sixth-form provision.
- The school is owned by the E-Spired Community Interest Company. There is a sole proprietor and a board of directors. Two directors of the company work full time in the school as the principal and the business manager.
- A governing body was appointed in the school from January 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in each year group jointly with the principal and looked at pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the principal, business manager, the leaders for the curriculum and the chair of governors.
- The inspector looked at the school's assessment information about the progress that pupils are making over time.
- Telephone discussions were held with the commissioner for the local authority and with six parents to seek their views. There were too few returns from the online questionnaire, Parent View, for evaluation. The inspector also looked at questionnaire responses completed by staff during the inspection.
- The inspector examined the school's website and looked at a range of documentation including: safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures; minutes of meetings of the governing body; records of training; curriculum planning documents; attendance information; records of exclusions and records of behaviour; the school's self-evaluation and school improvement summary.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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