

The Island Project School

Diddington Hall, Diddington Lane, Meriden, West Midlands CV7 7HQ

Inspection dates

22–24 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders have not ensured that the school premises are a safe environment for pupils. Suitable checks on health and safety are not in place.
- Leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently.
- The recently formed trust board is not provided with information about teaching and learning, pupils' outcomes, behaviour, attendance, accidents and incidents and so cannot check the school's performance and hold leaders to account.
- Leaders and managers have not had sufficient impact on teaching and pupils' outcomes. Systems to monitor all aspects of the school's performance are at an early stage of development.
- Staff do not consistently challenge pupils with harder tasks to accelerate their progress.
- Teachers' planning is not focused sharply enough on desired outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have not established clear expectations for measuring pupils' progress and so cannot hold staff to account for their actions.

The school has the following strengths

- There is a strong commitment from all adults to provide a positive educational experience for pupils.
- Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and to whom they should report any concerns.
- The curriculum provides a breadth of bespoke activities which interest pupils.
- Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff understand pupils' needs very well.
- Effective therapy support for pupils and training for staff ensure that pupils are improving their engagement in, and behaviour for learning.
- The college site provision is led and managed effectively and prepares students well for their next steps in education or training.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve pupils' welfare, health and safety so that they are kept safe by:
 - undertaking a full risk assessment of the premises and taking decisive and swift action to lessen the risks identified
 - managing the risks relating to the windows on the upper floors of the building
 - ensuring that an up-to-date asbestos survey of the identified areas of risk in the building is carried out, and making this information available to all users and visitors of the building
 - making arrangements for regular water testing for Legionella
 - providing hand-washing facilities that have hot running water for pupils
 - relocating the accommodation for the treatment of sick and injured pupils so that it is in a room close to, but separate from, a toilet.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - arrangements to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are effective
 - all of the independent school standards are met consistently
 - a risk assessment policy is drawn up and is effective in keeping pupils safe
 - the health and safety policy is reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose
 - an accessibility plan is drawn up and implemented effectively
 - leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this information to inform improvements to the school
 - leaders develop systems for monitoring all aspects of the school's performance
 - the different systems for monitoring pupils' progress are reviewed and refined so that leaders can set clear expectations for pupils' performance, ensuring that pupils are suitably challenged in their learning
 - leaders check on the progress that pupils are making in their learning.
- Improve the quality of governance of the school so that:
 - leaders provide members of the trust board with information about all aspects of the school, especially the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' progress and outcomes, safeguarding, the curriculum, pupils' welfare, behaviour and safety, and attendance, so that they can hold leaders to account for their actions
 - systems are in place to manage the performance of all staff so that staff can be held more closely to account.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - adapting activities so the level of challenge for pupils is increased over time and pupils' prior learning is built on, allowing pupils to make the best possible progress
 - developing the planning of activities further so that the desired outcomes of learning are more sharply defined.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management of the school are inadequate. While the commitment of the proprietors and leaders to providing an effective education for this vulnerable group of pupils cannot be disputed, there are shortfalls in the way the school is led and managed.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils are kept safe because they have not identified the risks that exist in and around the school building.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school is not an accurate one because they do not gather information about all aspects of the school's performance in a systematic way. The resulting school development plan lacks focus and makes no reference to improving the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and learning have only recently begun to take place and are currently limited to a small number of lessons. Leaders recognise that this is an area that requires further development as they do not yet take into account a wider range of evidence about pupils' performance.
- Leaders are not yet able to verify the accuracy of judgements staff make about pupils' progress because they do not check pupils' work in a systematic way.
- A significant number of staff who responded to the Ofsted staff questionnaire expressed their lack of confidence in the leadership and management of the school. Staff have concerns about communication from leaders and a feeling of not being supported or being treated fairly or equally at the school. Staff were more positive about the leadership and management of the college site, which provides for the sixth form.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is well suited to the individual needs of the pupils. The individualised approach to learning that exists in the school ensures that pupils' personal, social, health and economic development are carefully considered. Leaders have ensured that British values are thoughtfully addressed at a level appropriate to pupils' understanding. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through a variety of activities, including community visits, an emphasis on respect and school values, and developing an awareness and tolerance of other pupils.
- Behaviour analysts and other therapists make an effective contribution to pupils' education, including by helping to write their 'passports'. These passports provide valuable information about pupils' development, including their behaviour and their sensory, social and emotional needs, and identify the support pupils require. As a result of the use of these passports, pupils have an effective individualised approach to their learning and development.
- Staff value the professional development opportunities they receive. A comprehensive induction training plan is in place for all new members of staff. All staff benefit from training in areas such as autistic spectrum disorder, sensory integration and managing complex behaviours.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, a board of trustees has been established. The chair of the board is also a proprietor. The chair of the board demonstrates a strong commitment to the school, but acknowledges that the work of the trust is in the early stages of development. Minutes of trust board meetings are focused on staffing and finance and do not show that trustees are provided with any information about other aspects of the school's work. There is no evidence that trustees are involved in evaluating the school's performance or developing an improvement plan.
- Trustees have not established any systems of managing staff performance and so are not able to hold leaders to account. They do not ask for information about pupils' progress, standards in teaching and learning, or the curriculum. They do not make sufficient checks on pupils' welfare, or on behaviour incidents, physical interventions and attendance.
- Trustees have not had sufficient oversight of safeguarding. They have not ensured that the health and safety concerns identified in an externally commissioned audit in February 2018 have been addressed. They have not drawn up a suitable health and safety policy or an accessibility plan for the school.
- The chair of the board acknowledges that the capacity of the trustees has been stretched because of protracted discussions about the relocation of the school to a new site.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. Although the school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, reflects current legislation, it is not implemented effectively.
- Leaders have not carried out a risk assessment of the school site, or acted on advice from a recent health and safety audit. As a consequence, a number of risks to pupils have not been addressed.
- Leaders are not yet able to ensure that the use of the internet is sufficiently well monitored. Although pupils are supervised when using the internet, there are no control measures in place to monitor the way staff use the internet, or reduce risks when staff use their own devices at work.
- Staff have a secure understanding of child protection procedures. They are provided with frequent safeguarding training and updates and know to whom they should report their concerns.
- The designated safeguarding leader and her deputies act in a timely way when concerns about pupils are expressed. Records show that staff follow up concerns with tenacity if they feel they have not been listened to by external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement. Staff do not consistently challenge pupils with harder work so that they can speed up pupils' progress.
- Staff's planning of activities varies in quality. Some pupils are provided with activities which spark their interests and as a result, they work for sustained periods of time. Some

planning is less focused and does not set out clearly what pupils are learning, or what the expected outcomes of the activity are.

- Occasionally, activities are not organised in a systematic and purposeful way, and do not increase the level of challenge for pupils over time. Inspectors saw some pupils engaging in sequences of activities which did not build on their prior learning. For example, pupils practised some phonics sounds before reading words which did not require them to use this skill, but relied on them recognising the word by sight.
- Some of the most able pupils are able to record their work, but leaders provided limited evidence of this. Staff report that pupils' work is sent home to parents and carers to keep them informed of their child's progress. However, some staff do not keep copies of work sent home so it is difficult to see the progress pupils are making, or for leaders to check on pupils' progress.
- For the most able pupils, written work in books shows some evidence of progress over time. However, activities were not suitably challenging and staff feedback had errors in grammar and spelling.
- Leaders are beginning to monitor the standards of teaching and learning, but this is not yet taking place in a systematic way and is currently solely focused on lesson observations. Leaders do not sample pupils' work and so cannot check whether judgements staff make about pupils' achievements are accurate.
- Leaders currently use three separate assessment systems to track pupils' progress. One system refers to national curriculum levels, which are no longer used. Leaders are not able to articulate what they see as suitable progress for pupils, and so are not clear about whether pupils are making adequate progress.
- Strong relationships that exist between staff and pupils enable pupils to feel well supported in their learning. Staff ensure that pupils use their communication systems effectively when they make the transition from one activity to another, or one part of the school to another.
- Individual progress information shows that pupils are making progress from their starting points. Leaders and staff carry out a series of detailed, baseline assessments of pupils when they arrive at school, so that any gaps in their learning can be identified and appropriate support can be put in place.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Leaders have not taken swift action to identify or address the health and safety risks that affect pupils' safety. Leaders put temporary control measures in place after the inspector highlighted the risks.
- Leaders have not made arrangements for window restrictors to be fitted onto windows on upper floors of the building. During the inspection, windows were fully open and accessible to pupils. After the inspector highlighted her concerns, leaders again put in place temporary measures to control the risk.
- Although leaders are aware that some areas of the building contain asbestos, they have

not ensured that annual checks have been carried out as specified in the 2006 asbestos survey. Leaders do not have an asbestos management policy in place and available to all staff and contractors.

- Leaders have not ensured that checks on the water supply for Legionella have been carried out at the required intervals. At the time of the inspection, there was no hot running water available for pupils to wash their hands.
- Leaders have not ensured appropriate provision of accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils as it is located in the same room as a toilet facility. They have not ensured the provision of additional medical accommodation to cater for pupils who have complex needs.
- Leaders do not check on the recording of, or analyse information about, incidents or accidents well enough. Some incidents which required first aid did not correlate with the first-aid reporting.
- There is a clear commitment from staff to ensure that pupils are well supported in all aspects of their personal development. Staff use the information they have about pupils to good effect, building meaningful relationships with them.
- Different agencies work well together to ensure consistency of approach for pupils. For example, speech and language therapy targets are shared with staff and built into pupils' daily learning activities. The occupational therapist ensures that pupils' sensory needs and diets are taken into account in the planning of learning activities.
- Staff ensure that reward systems are tailored to pupils' interests because they know and understand what motivates individual pupils to engage in learning activities. The inspector saw pupils working towards their reward of a healthy snack, or favourite game.
- The small number of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey were generally positive about the work of the school, especially those whose children had been out of education for a considerable length of time, or who had had a negative experience at another school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour analysts work closely with staff to gather detailed information about the way in which pupils' sensory needs affect their behaviour. Staff use this information well to inform strategies for working with pupils, helping them to learn to manage their behaviour and engage in learning. Analysts gather detailed information about pupils' engagement in learning over time. Information about individual pupils shows that pupils' behaviour and participation in learning activities are improving.
- Personalised risk assessments for pupils accurately identify specific risks that staff need to be aware of during certain activities. Staff know pupils well and focus on positive behaviours for learning.
- Staff use and understand the 'escalation scale' effectively, which helps them to identify when a pupil's behaviour is changing, and intervene so that the behaviour does not deteriorate further. A scrutiny of incident reports shows that despite some pupils exhibiting extremely challenging behaviour, staff rarely use physical intervention when dealing with incidents. However, leaders acknowledge that their current system of recording of physical interventions does not enable them to analyse effectively any

emerging patterns.

- Pupils' attendance at school is improving over time and most pupils attend well, including some pupils who have missed significant periods of their education, or have previously refused to attend school. Leaders do not yet analyse overall attendance rates or check registers and so have not ensured that the correct national attendance codes are being used consistently. Attendance codes were corrected during the inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- While individual information shows that pupils are making progress from their starting points, progress targets are not set in a systematic way for pupils. Pupils' academic progress is not checked with as much rigour as their progress in their behaviour and social and emotional development. As a result, leaders are not able to articulate whether the progress pupils are making is good enough.
- Some pupils are able to access externally accredited courses. There is more evidence of pupils' work in these subjects, but work is not annotated well, so pupils' learning outcomes are not clear.
- As a result of the support pupils receive for their behaviour and sensory needs, pupils' levels of engagement and cooperation in learning activities are improving. Some parents reported positive outcomes for their children, who were accessing community-based activities more successfully.
- Pupils are supported well to move on to their next stage of education, employment or training, including access to impartial careers advice and guidance. Currently, despite the school's best efforts, a small number of pupils who are due to leave school this summer do not have a suitable destination identified. Leaders are working closely with local authorities and other agencies to remedy this.

Sixth form provision

Inadequate

- The provision for sixth-form students is inadequate because safeguarding is inadequate in the main school. While most sixth-form students are educated at the college site, some sixth-form students attend the main school site and so are not adequately safeguarded.
- The educational provision at the college site is of a good quality, and is led effectively by a committed and able senior leader. The premises provide a suitable and engaging learning environment for students.
- The wide variety of teaching and learning activities at the college site have a strong focus on vocational learning, preparing students for their next steps in education, training or employment. Students are helped to become more independent, by taking responsibility for the environment and carrying out important day-to-day tasks such as recycling and cleaning. Some students learn how to operate the lawnmower so that they can help maintain the garden.
- Students have helped to develop an engaging outdoor environment, suited to their needs. The inspector saw students engaging in a fitness training session outside, using suitable equipment. They have helped to create a quiet, external sensory area, which students

can use in their breaktimes, or as part of their learning experience.

- Leaders and staff have put the outbuilding on the site to very good use by providing a safe, practical working environment for students to develop their vocational skills. Students are able to design and make products using a range of different tools and techniques, based on their interests, such as a 'hedgehog house'. Students are currently making 'mushroom stools' from recycled tyres, which will be put to good use in the learning bases.
- Students' sensory and behavioural needs are well understood and catered for through the provision of individualised learning spaces. Students behave well because staff know and understand their needs.
- The college leader correctly identifies that some lessons are not planned sufficiently well and do not have a sharp enough focus on outcomes for students. The college uses the same system for assessment as the main school, so progress is measured on an individual basis. As in the main school, it is not clear whether students are being adequately challenged in their academic work. The leader plans to introduce a system to track students' progress in vocational skills in the next term.
- Staff carefully plan transition activities, which are helping students to develop their resilience out in the community and improve their social skills. Some students who have found it difficult to tolerate others are being supported to develop their social skills by participating in frequent community visits.
- Students are able to gain some external qualifications while at the college site, including functional skills in English and mathematics where appropriate. The college leader is planning to extend the range of qualifications for students at the site.
- Students are provided with careers advice and guidance appropriate to their needs. Leaders track the progress of students at their next placement after they have left the school.

School details

Unique reference number	135453
DfE registration number	334/6010
Inspection number	10026106

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Mrs Jacqueline Walters-Hutton Mrs Carol Howe
Chair	Mrs Jacqueline Walters-Hutton
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Gallagher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,249, £67,629 and £71,970
Telephone number	01675 442588
Website	www.ipschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@ipschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2015

Information about this school

- The Island Project is an independent day special school for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder and often have additional communication difficulties. It is founded on the principles of applied behaviour analysis (ABA). Currently there are 31 pupils on roll, between the ages of nine and 21 years. Eleven of these pupils, aged 14 to 21, are

educated at a separate site in Coleshill, West Midlands, which is known as 'The College'.

- The school is located in a large country house, which is a grade 2 listed building, constructed in 1637. The school opened in 2007. There are plans to relocate the school in the next year due to the impact of the HS2 project in the locality.
- Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school admits pupils from a number of local authorities in the region.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not have any religious ethos.
- The school has been granted permission to extend its age range for one student, while a more suitable provision is being sought.
- In the last year, and following advice from the Charities Commission, the proprietors have formed a board of four trustees. The chair of the board, who is a proprietor, was previously the school's principal. The current school principal's responsibility is for compliance. The education director is also a proprietor and is responsible for teaching and learning.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in January 2015, when it was judged to be good. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to conduct an emergency inspection of the school in October 2015, where a number of unmet standards were identified. The DfE commissioned a further, unannounced emergency inspection in August 2016, where it was judged that all the independent school standards were met.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the principal, the proprietors, the school's director of education and other senior leaders. She spoke to staff informally, met with a group of staff and met with one of the school's behaviour analysts and the occupational therapist.
- The inspector observed a range of teaching and learning activities over the course of the inspection. Where appropriate, she looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils informally.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documentation, including policies, planning, behaviour monitoring, incident and accident reports, staff training records and minutes of trust board meetings. She looked at documents relating to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils, including the school's employment checks on the suitability of staff. The inspector used the range of information gathered to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector looked at the information about the school provided on the school's website.
- The inspector visited the school's off-site provision, known as 'The College'.
- The inspector considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to be able to consider these. The inspector took into account six free-text responses to the survey.

Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and
 - 24(1)(c) where a school caters for pupils with complex needs, additional medical accommodation which caters for those needs.
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- 28(1)(b) toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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