

Demeter House School

Bigby Street, Brigg, North Lincolnshire DN20 8EF

Inspection dates

14–16 May 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that the independent school standards continue to be met. A good standard of education has been sustained.
- The members of the leadership team are passionate about education, and are caring and compassionate. The pupils are at the heart of everything they do and planned developments are based on the specific needs of the pupils.
- Leaders and the proprietor have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They recognise the need to develop further the quality of record keeping to reflect good practice and to further improve systems and procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.
- Staff have exceptionally effective relationships with pupils. Pupils trust the staff to support them with their academic and social development.
- Leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date by providing training that is wide and varied, including that related to safeguarding. Effective relationships and clear communication mean that the designated safeguarding lead is able to involve external agencies swiftly when needed.
- Pupils' attendance has improved since the last standard inspection. The vast majority of pupils attend school well.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality therapies offered by specialists. As a result, pupils are able to manage their own behaviours well.
- Leaders use off-site provision at the school's farm well to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning on this site.
- Staff ensure that pupils receive the high-quality, independent careers advice and guidance that they need to continue into further education, training or employment.
- Leaders have developed a varied curriculum that has been designed with the needs of pupils at its heart. A variety of accredited outcomes, including GCSEs, are achieved.
- Pupils' progress in English is not as strong as in other subjects such as mathematics. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in this subject are limited and reading is not embedded well enough across the curriculum. There are few opportunities for pupils to read.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in English, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to read during the school day
 - embedding a culture of reading across the school
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that systems and processes for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are applied consistently across the school
 - improving record keeping so that it better reflects the strong practice that is in place
 - monitoring more closely how pupils develop an understanding of protected characteristics, as described in the Equality Act 2010.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and the headteacher have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher is totally committed to the school and to improving the education and life chances of all pupils. Her vision, ethos, compassion and innovation have supported her successful partnership with staff, which has ensured that the school has continued to develop since the previous inspection.
- Staff are motivated and enthusiastic about their work. They understand the complex needs of the pupils in their care. Effective communication is evident in classrooms, where teachers and support workers work seamlessly to provide a good quality of education.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It is constantly evolving to ensure that pupils have a strong chance of accessing learning that interests and motivates them. This is particularly effective in the vocational elements of the curriculum. Design and technology and art are strengths of the school.
- Leaders work diligently with the high number of local authorities that place pupils at the school. They are advocates for the pupils and their families to ensure that the pupils receive the education they need, even when the information requested is slow to be made available.
- The few parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are pleased with the progress their child makes at Demeter House School. Parents spoken to believe that the school has made an 'amazing' difference to both the academic and social progress of their children. Parents relate this to the knowledge the staff have about each child's needs and the skill with which they respond to the needs presented.
- Leaders support staff well in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Every member of staff who completed Ofsted's staff survey is proud to work at the school. Leaders support staff well. They benefit from a wide and varied range of training opportunities, including safeguarding training. This helps staff to improve their own effectiveness and increases the range of learning options for pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and his team link closely with the teaching staff. This ensures that the education provided links well with pupils' targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils make good progress academically and with their EHC plan targets.
- The outdoor space both at the school and the farm are well equipped with climbing and other play/work equipment. Pupils are encouraged to take appropriate risks to develop their understanding of the wider world.
- School staff maintain admissions and attendance registers, along with risk assessments. They provide information to the local authorities that place children at the school when required, for example, in annual reviews of pupils' EHC plans. Occasionally, the quality of risk assessment, record keeping and administration is not as rigorous as it needs to be.
- Leaders' systems to monitor the progress of pupils are at an early stage of development. As a result, leaders have limited data to analyse regarding the ongoing progress of pupils.

- Pupils' knowledge of the wider world, people of different faiths and cultures, and the rule of law is appropriate to their level of understanding. However, education about the protected characteristics, as described in the Equality Act 2010, is not yet strong enough. This work is carried out in various lessons, for example in primary topic, where the pupils have completed work on influential women, but this is not embedded in the curriculum as a whole and not all of the characteristics are covered well enough across the curriculum.

Governance

- The proprietor oversees the work of the school alongside another director from the parent company. Together, they work alongside the senior leadership team to provide challenge and support.
- The proprietor has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of the school to develop. He has a clear vision for the future of the school.
- The proprietor is fully involved in the appointment of new staff. He is clear about his expectations and for the need to ensure that the applicants have sufficient understanding of the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of the pupils. This ensures a high level of teaching and care is provided for all pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Minor administrative errors on the school's single central record were corrected during the inspection.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has a good understanding of her duties and of the pupils in the school. She responds swiftly to any concerns raised. The DSL ensures that teaching staff prepare pupils for the hazards they might face both in and out of school, for example, teaching concepts such as being a good friend, the 'pants rule', online safety and healthy relationships. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe.
- All staff, including the DSL, are trained appropriately. They know what to do if they have any concerns about safeguarding. Staff say that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils and parents spoken with said that they feel that the school is a safe place. Pupils are clear about whom they can talk to if they have a concern or worry.
- Record keeping within pupils' case files is effective overall. Documents show that the DSL regularly attends child protection conferences and works closely with multi-agency teams. Files are stored appropriately.
- The requirements of the independent school standards regarding safeguarding are met. This includes the publication on the Demeter House School website of the school's safeguarding policy, which takes into account the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff know pupils well. Staff use their strong knowledge of pupils to provide successful learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom environment. As a result, most pupils are making good or better progress.
- Staff understand that pupils have often had disruption to their learning prior to joining the school. The six-week transition and induction process supports relationship-building and ensures that teachers have an accurate baseline of pupils' educational ability on entry. This information is used to plan effective learning programmes for each pupil.
- Teaching staff ensure that pupils' individual special educational needs are met well because learning is closely aligned to their EHC plan outcomes. The evidence provided for annual reviews is detailed and helps to ensure that the provision for each individual pupil meets their specific needs.
- Classroom visits during the inspection showed teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond well to these expectations and are, in the main, engaged and involved with learning. Staff calmly and quickly support pupils back into learning when low-level disruption occurs.
- Teachers use support staff effectively. Key workers play an important role in motivating pupils, keeping them on task and supporting them when they are in crisis.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is put to good use. This is especially the case in history and vocational subjects, such as design technology and art. Teachers' enthusiastic approach to their subject is infectious and pupils respond well to the environment these teachers create. For example, in design and technology, the workshop is run like a business and pupils are given the freedom to create and make a product to take home. Inspectors were shown a range of tables and cat-scratching posts, which were all made to an extremely high quality.
- Effective questioning by teachers is used throughout lessons to tease out information and help pupils to develop an understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to participate in how they learn. For example, a Year 9 mathematics class took part in a lesson about measuring and estimation while putting up the school's new goal posts.
- In some subjects, including English, teachers do not have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and miss opportunities to challenge pupils' misconceptions about spelling and grammar. Progress in these subjects is slowed as opportunities to develop writing at length are not embedded.
- Although the lower school site has a library, reading is not fully embedded across the curriculum. Opportunities to bring reading into every classroom have been missed and as a result, pupils do not talk positively about reading. In the upper school, a space for the library has been identified, but as yet this resource is not ready.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The curriculum and wide range of enrichment activities ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is secure. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop respect for, and understanding of others.
- Pupils join the school with a wide range of social and emotional needs. Most have been unsuccessful in mainstream education. Staff treat each pupil as an individual and, as a result, barriers to learning are quickly removed.
- The transition process into and through the school, and out to mainstream or further education, is a strength of Demeter House School. The six-week induction process ensures that pupils are ready to enter into the life of the school. Since the school's opening, all pupils who left after Year 11 have moved on to a positive destination in further education, employment or training.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors showed age-appropriate knowledge of the dangers they face out of school. This includes the use of social media.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment and staff maintain high levels of supervision to ensure that pupils stay safe.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who attend off-site provision and alternative education receive the same good standard of education as they receive in the school. Checks are routinely carried out to assess welfare and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff have high expectations and tackle any poor behaviour in a consistent manner across the school, while still treating each pupil as an individual. The school atmosphere is calm and pupils are welcoming to visitors.
- Despite pupils' complex social and emotional needs, staff are skilled at not letting inappropriate behaviour disrupt learning. They de-escalate situations calmly and effectively and support pupils to continue with their learning.
- The school keeps accurate records of attendance. Over the last two years, pupils' attendance has increased steadily. The school's monitoring data shows that most pupils attend well.
- Leaders invest in a range of therapeutic provisions to assess and support pupils' needs. This work has proved successful for many pupils, as they learn to regulate their emotions and take part in learning more successfully.
- There are a few reported incidents of bullying, but pupils and staff are confident that bullying is not an issue and any isolated incidents are dealt with by staff quickly.
- Leaders have introduced a new nurture room, and plans and processes for increasing the use of this space are in development. It is too soon to see the full effect of this new initiative.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school carries out comprehensive assessments of pupils as they join the school. Teachers use this information to plan learning that address gaps in pupils' knowledge and supports the EHC plan outcomes. As a result, the work in pupils' books, in some subjects, for example humanities and topic, shows good progress over time. This fits with leaders' assessment of progress.
- Leaders' innovative practice, for example provision trails, follows a pupil through their school day. Leaders assess and monitor a particular pupil's engagement, learning and progress across academic and social time. This allows leaders and teachers to work collaboratively to ensure that all pupils' needs are being met and that they have every possible opportunity to succeed.
- Pupils in key stage 4 work towards, and are successful in gaining a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, functional skills in English and mathematics, and vocational awards.
- There are no discernible differences in the progress made between children looked after by the local authority and other pupils.
- Leaders are proud when, as a result of their work, pupils make a successful return to mainstream education. All of the older pupils who leave the school continue to further education and training, the vast majority of these at a mainstream college.
- Pupils make good progress towards the objectives in their EHC plans. The reporting format introduced by the SENCo ensures that ongoing progress towards these objectives is captured.
- Leaders have introduced a system to measure outcomes across the curriculum that looks at pupils' starting points and the progress made each term from that point, even if the gains are small. Progress for individual pupils can be seen, but this system is not yet fully embedded, and development is still ongoing.

School details

Unique reference number	135247
DfE registration number	813/6005
Inspection number	10077928

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	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Dr Rodney Wardlaw
Headteacher	Mrs Melissa Marris
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,000 to £36,500
Telephone number	01652 654251
Website	www.demeterhouseschool.com
Email address	admin@demeterhouseschool.com
Date of previous inspection	6–8 December 2016

Information about this school

- Demeter House School is an independent day special school that is registered to admit up to 100 boys aged from five to 19 years.
- The school has facilities for boarding; however, these have not been used.
- Pupils attending the school have social and emotional difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder, which may lead to challenging behaviour.
- Leaders have opened a second site successfully since the last inspection. The school operates from two sites. Lower site, based in Brigg, caters for pupils in key stage 1 to lower key stage 3. The upper site, based in Scawby, admits pupils in upper key stage 3 to key stage 5.

- The school makes use of two additional sites to extend the curriculum. The farm is an outdoor area that pupils can access for forest school, fishing and animal husbandry. The school has a therapy centre where the therapy team is based. Pupils access this provision on a referral basis for an hour a week to receive targeted therapeutic intervention.
- Three pupils attend alternative education at the Study Skills Centre, where they undertake vocational courses, including motor vehicle skills.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Most have previously experienced a disrupted education and poor attendance at other schools.
- Pupils have been placed at the school by nine local authorities.
- The school was last inspected in December 2016; a material change visit was undertaken in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspection team checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors viewed the school's policies and examined schemes of work and other relevant documentation. Records of social and academic achievements, records of behaviour and pupils' work were scrutinised.
- The inspection team observed learning at the two school sites and the farm. Short visits to lessons were undertaken in all key stages, accompanied by senior leaders. Pupils were spoken to informally during these visits.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, a group of staff members, three pupils and one parent. Another parent was spoken with over the telephone.
- The 11 responses to Parent View and 37 staff questionnaires were analysed.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Sharpe

Her Majesty's Inspector

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