

Dovetree School

Ferness Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 0TB

Inspection dates

25 to 27 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
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 proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders have established a culture of successful teamwork among the staff and uncompromising ambition for pupils' success.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' ability to succeed. They ensure that teaching is continuously adapted to meet individual needs.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils to fill gaps in their previous learning across a wide range of experiences.
- Records of the assessment of pupils' progress provide clear evidence of their successes and assist teachers with their planning for future learning targets.
- Further development of pupils' independence in learning is required to prepare fully for the demands of the key stage 4 curriculum.
- All staff are committed to pupils' personal development. Pupils improve their attendance and behaviour compared with their experience in previous settings.
- Pupils are strongly supported to overcome any previous disaffection with school. Pupils engage well with their learning and enjoy school.
- Pupils are safe in school and value the support and care provided by teachers, learning assistants and therapeutic staff. This strong start needs to be extended through the expansion of therapeutic services.
- Leaders' accurate self-evaluation provides an effective basis for further growth of this new school. Development of staff and middle leaders' roles is required to ensure continuous whole-school improvement.
- The governing body and the proprietor's representatives visit the school regularly, provide effective support with school improvement, and hold senior leaders appropriately to account.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the regular information received, informing them about their children's progress and well-being.

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?

- Embed and consolidate planned developments to ensure:
 - That the proposed curriculum at key stage 4 is underpinned by the continuous development of skills for independence in learning at key stages 2 and 3
 - the further integration of comprehensive therapeutic arrangements to enhance the outcomes for individual pupils
 - that the skills and experience of all staff are harnessed in effective whole-school evaluation and improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the requirements of the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have quickly established an exemplary, cooperative ethos of shared responsibility. The school's aims are clear, and staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils settle quickly and begin to enjoy their education.
- The ethos and culture of the school are based on a commitment to continuous improvement. This is strongly supported by detailed planning in all aspects of the school's development. Staff work extremely hard to ensure that the school provides success for each pupil.
- The school's self-evaluation, led effectively by the headteacher, demonstrates an accurate understanding of the school's achievements to date and its ambition to manage continuous improvement as the school grows.
- School leaders have established comprehensive and thorough arrangements for the monitoring and review of teaching and learning. Senior leaders share insightful evaluations of learning and agree appropriate development points with staff.
- Support for staff and strategies for development are practical and effective. Staff at all levels of responsibility share effective practice and support each other to find solutions to challenges in teaching and learning. Strong teamwork emphasises the value placed on the involvement of staff at all levels of responsibility. Staff demonstrate further potential to make a continuous contribution to whole-school evaluation and development.
- The curriculum provides pupils with experiences across a wide range of areas of learning. Appropriate attention is given to the development of skills in English, mathematics and science. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in creative, aesthetic and physical activities. Further development of pupils' independent learning skills is required to prepare them fully for the challenges and responsibilities of vocational courses at key stage 4.
- Senior leaders have made an effective start with the integration of the work of the therapy team into the daily life of the school. Appropriate plans are being developed to extend and consolidate their work across the full range of the curriculum and the personal development of pupils.
- School leaders are committed to the continuing development of staff expertise, including leadership capacity, and excellence in teaching. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the management of staff performance, with related opportunities for staff to improve their qualifications and effectiveness through further training.
- Communication with parents and carers is regular and appropriately focused on pupils' progress and personal development. Parents appreciate the openness of communication with school leaders and staff.
- All staff contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through appropriate themes in the curriculum and the quality of personal relationships within the school community. Leaders and staff are committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils. The culture of the school celebrates individuality and diversity, and supports

each pupil to address any personal barriers to successful relationships.

- Excellent support is provided for pupils to begin to develop career plans and aspirations for future training and employment. This is part of a structured programme, including independent advice and guidance, to help prepare pupils for adult life and independence.

Governance

- The governing body provides extensive experience and practical insights into all aspects of the leadership of the curriculum, teaching and learning and pupils' personal development.
- The proprietor has ensured an appropriate, well-resourced curriculum, well-matched to the pupils' aspirations to achieve academic qualifications and vocational experience.
- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's priorities for development and works constructively to shape and endorse strategies to achieve these. Governors' views are appropriately informed by the on-site work of the regional director and regular meetings with senior staff.
- The governors combine a commitment to resourcing this new school's needs with expectations of comprehensive and well-planned continuous improvement.
- The governing body has excellent capacity to promote continuous improvement, to support high-quality leadership and to ensure that its demanding standards are maintained.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have produced a comprehensive safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website. The policy takes account of the latest government guidance. It is reviewed regularly and updated to reflect any changes of emphasis in national or local priorities.
- Pupils, through the curriculum, learn about risks to their safety, such as online abuse, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Support for individual pupils is also appropriately targeted depending on staff awareness of individual needs.
- The school provides an extensive programme of training for staff in all aspects of safeguarding policy and practice. Designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained to the requirements of the local safeguarding children's board. All staff receive regular updates through safeguarding briefings and annual refresher training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good-quality teaching is based on thorough planning to meet the individual needs of pupils. Teachers have produced schemes of work which develop progressively pupils' learning and take account of what they have learned previously. Staff are skilled at identifying gaps in pupils' previous knowledge and adapting tasks to give pupils confidence to take on higher levels of challenge.
- Learning arrangements place a strong emphasis on individual learning and pupils' support plans. Staff respond flexibly to pupils' changing attitudes and feelings and adjust teaching

groups or provide one-to-one support readily to ensure that no pupil misses out on planned experiences.

- Teaching staff, learning assistants and therapists work well together to identify what motivates and supports the needs of each individual pupil. School leaders continuously evaluate what is working well and consult with staff about the success of current teaching groups and learning objectives.
- Staff use visual resources very effectively to focus pupils' attention and to provide reinforcement of key learning objectives. Pupils in a key stage 3 English lesson made good progress with identifying and applying appropriately literary devices, such as metaphor and alliteration, to add descriptive detail to their writing. Pupils' understanding was deepened throughout the lesson by continuous questioning and dialogue with the teacher.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' engagement in lessons, and they maintain an appropriate pace to ensure continuous challenge. Pupils in a Spanish lesson demonstrated the ability to respond confidently in the target language and to translate accurately from the text.
- Any distractions or off-task behaviour are managed through good teamwork between staff. There is always an additional adult present to support alternative learning tasks or to provide brief time out for any pupil feeling anxious or unsettled. Staff challenge the occasional use of derogatory language or verbal distraction with low-key interventions, which do not disrupt the flow of the lesson.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in the use of effective questioning, often working one-to-one with pupils, to develop their use of spoken language. In a key stage 2 lesson, pupils produced an impressive range of descriptors for characters in the text of 'The Twits' by Roald Dahl. Pupils were encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics to break down words and to build up the correct spelling of their own choices of adjectives.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in developing pupils' understanding through dialogue and effective questioning. Pupils in a practical science lesson, for example, identified appropriate safety features, made well-informed predictions and understood the features of a fair test. They were supported and challenged throughout the practical work by sensitive questioning and discussion.
- Pupils begin, often cautiously, to apply their skills and consolidate their learning independently. Pupils in a key stage 3 mathematics lesson applied their knowledge of how to calculate area to more complex irregular shapes. Having been reminded of the principles, pupils demonstrated the ability to persevere and apply their understanding effectively.
- Further development is required of skills to support independent learning to prepare pupils fully for the demands of courses at key stage 4.
- Staff have developed thorough arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work and progress. Staff use schemes of work with a clear understanding of how learning builds up in structured steps. Pupils understand the objectives for each lesson and what they are expected to know and understand. Teachers use a variety of approaches to assessment which take good account of individual pupils' preferred learning styles and which avoid unnecessary stressful situations.

- Senior leaders oversee effective arrangements for monitoring assessment procedures. They work regularly with staff to ensure consistency of judgements in assessments of pupils' progress. They also make effective use of external partners to moderate and standardise their judgements, and to develop staff experience and expertise.
- Summary reports of pupils' progress with their learning and personal development are provided for parents each term. Parents value these regular updates and believe they have a clear picture of their children's work and development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and learning assistants place a high priority on the development of pupils' self-confidence and willingness to settle to sustained periods of learning. Most pupils, on entry, have lost confidence in their ability to succeed due to negative previous experiences of education. In the short time the school has been operating, they have begun to recognise that they can do well.
- Pupils learn to take pride in their achievements, for example talking about the practical projects they have completed or demonstrating satisfaction when a new concept or technique has been mastered.
- Pupils demonstrate positive responses to staff and have rapidly established trusting relationships. These positive attitudes and relationships contribute effectively to their social and emotional development.
- The school's therapy team provides essential support for the personal development of individual pupils. The head of the team leads on the allocation of activities, involving, for example, work with groups of pupils developing social skills, music therapy, occupational therapy and the development of emotional skills. This work is closely linked to the requirements in pupils' education, health and care plans and is carefully evaluated. Working systems and practice in this area are still developing and both physical and human resources are continuously reviewed with plans for further expansion.
- Appropriate themes are included in the programme for personal and social development. Pupils learn how to keep safe, how to manage differences of opinion, and about skills of self-reflection and understanding themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. Older pupils contribute positively to supporting new arrivals joining the school. Pupils respond respectfully to staff and enjoy moments of shared humour.
- Pupils' good cooperation with staff has a positive impact on learning. Pupils are punctual to lessons and mostly settle well to effective learning. Most lessons proceed smoothly and without interruption. Staff have a good understanding of the anxieties of individual pupils and what might trigger their negative behaviour. Staff are sensitive to these and anticipate and intervene to provide support or alternative learning arrangements.

- Many pupils have demonstrated marked improvements in their behaviour since joining the school. Staff intervene appropriately and sensitively to the use of inappropriate language and create clear expectations regarding respect for each other. Lessons proceed in an orderly manner and effective learning is the norm.
- There have been very few instances of bullying. The school's policy and procedures support an appropriate response, including restorative approaches to resolution. Pupils feel safe in school and know they are well supported by staff in all circumstances.
- Pupils' attendance shows marked improvement for all pupils. There is almost no unauthorised absence and staff respond promptly and appropriately to follow up any absences. Effective school procedures, and good-quality relationships with parents, ensure the safeguarding of pupils. There are no cases of persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is mostly below average. Pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and learning skills due to previous periods out of school or difficulties coping with the demands of full-time education.
- Staff rapidly develop an awareness of pupils' different starting points. Pupils make good progress from their starting points across the current age range of the school. Pupils who have previously missed many months, or even years, of school attendance, demonstrate engagement in learning as they settle into the expectations of the school. In their relatively short time at the school, most pupils have made good progress.
- Pupils develop the skills required for effective learning. Pupils improve their ability to read as a result of the patient teaching of phonics to enable them to read unfamiliar words and attempt new challenges. Staff continuously encourage reluctant readers to read aloud and most pupils gain the confidence to do this.
- Pupils develop confidence in tackling calculations and formulae in mathematics as a result of patient explanations by staff working alongside them. Staff recognise pupils' perceived failure to understand basic concepts and provide them with alternative strategies and the time to practise and consolidate their skills.
- Pupils develop confidence and safe working practices in workshops and the science laboratory. They enjoy the challenges of experimental work in science and demonstrate appropriate skills in prediction and fair testing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress in line with other pupils with similar starting points. Pupils enjoy small teaching groups or one-to-one learning. They benefit from the time and attention focused on their personal learning needs and individual gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Staff give very effective attention to pupils' emotional anxieties and challenges with social interaction.
- In the short time the school has been open, there have been no pupils admitted to key stage 4 and, consequently, no entries for external examinations or nationally recognised qualifications. Pupils are developing positive attitudes to learning and the confidence to tackle increasingly challenging tasks in preparation for academic and vocational qualifications in later years.
- Pupils also demonstrate success in art and design, including producing artwork for display

around the school and items of furniture to use at home. Pupils at key stage 3 sample activities in the school's vocational workshops, such as repairing bicycles or learning basic techniques in hair and beauty. Pupils sample activities, appropriate to their age, in preparation for access to more challenging activities and equipment at key stage 4.

- The school's curriculum and learning experiences are building skills and attitudes appropriately to enable pupils eventually to access further education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	146360
DfE registration number	855/6043
Inspection number	10094062

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	Day special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Limited
Chair	Mike Barrow
Headteacher	Paul Hostead
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,375 to £100,386
Telephone number	01455 243 918
Website	Witherslackgroup.co.uk/dovetree-school
Email address	dovetree@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dovetree School is located in a residential area in Hinckley, South Leicestershire. It occupies recently renovated premises which provide full-time education for up to 50 pupils in the age range eight to 18 years. The school currently has 12 pupils on roll, aged nine to 14 years.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2018, opened in January 2019, and this is its first standard inspection.
- The school is registered as an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and mental-health difficulties. The proprietor is the Witherslack Group, which provides

residential care and education for pupils across the country.

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

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the full age range of the school. He scrutinised samples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects and discussed pupils' work and progress with teachers of English, mathematics and science.
- The inspector discussed all aspects of leadership and management and the implementation of school policies with the headteacher and senior leaders. He held discussions about oversight and accountability of the school with the chair and other members of the governing body.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire. The inspector discussed views about the school with the parents of a sample of pupils. He also considered responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by two pupils and 15 members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised several school policies, procedures and records to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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