

The Seeds School

Seeds Centre, Unit 6, The Bridges Business Park, Horsehay, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3EE

Inspection dates

18–20 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have a strong record of training pupils for employment. However, in this new school, inconsistencies exist in the quality of teaching at one of the three sites. Consequently, the quality of teaching is too variable.
- There is no formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and few opportunities for teachers to improve their skills in teaching academic subjects. As a result, teaching skills do not improve and this has a negative impact on the progress a few pupils make.
- The curriculum supports pupils' development across a range of subjects but pupils can only gain qualifications in mathematics, English, construction, hair and beauty and cooking.
- The teaching of mathematics and English is not as inspiring as the teaching of vocational subjects. Consequently, pupils are more reluctant to apply themselves to these subjects.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' reading skills well enough or encourage pupils to read widely so their reading does not improve fast enough.
- Teachers use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans and assessment information to identify gaps in learning. However, their use of this information is inconsistent so a minority of pupils do not make enough progress.
- A minority of pupils have only a limited understanding of democracy and equality. As a result, they are not as well prepared for their adult lives as they could be.

The school has the following strengths

- Careers education, including opportunities for work experience, is a strength of the school.
- Pupils appreciate the good opportunities for vocational training. They benefit from excellent resources at all sites and the strong subject knowledge of vocational teachers.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The quality of care, combined with the school's skilful management of behaviour, ensures that pupils enjoy a friendly, supportive atmosphere.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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 leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders' expectations of the quality of teaching are applied across all school sites
 - staff who teach pupils have regular opportunities for continuing professional development in teaching academic subjects
 - the curriculum is broadened to include more opportunities for pupils to gain external qualifications.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is monitored regularly
 - information from EHC plans and assessments is used consistently to inform teaching and to have a positive impact on pupils' progress
 - teachers give pupils regular opportunities to discuss the content of their reading with adults and their peers, and support them to develop strategies to work out meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases
 - pupils are encouraged to read more widely
 - pupils are motivated by interesting and exciting learning opportunities in English and mathematics, enabling them to make better progress.
- Ensure that all pupils develop a deeper understanding of democracy and equality.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have high aspirations for the vulnerable pupils in their care and clear plans to improve the curriculum. They have a strong record of providing training for alternative provision and for preparing pupils for their adult lives. However, the school has only been open for a few months and leaders are new to managing a school. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in one of the three school sites.
- Leaders have provided staff with good training for behaviour management and safeguarding and have employed skilled instructors and/or teachers for vocational subjects. As a result, safeguarding is effective, and pupils benefit from high-quality teaching in vocational subjects. However, staff have not yet had sufficient developmental opportunities for teaching academic subjects and, as a result, the quality of teaching in these subjects is variable, particularly on one of the school sites.
- There is no formal programme for monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, teaching staff are not sufficiently challenged to improve their skills and they do not make sure that English and mathematics lessons are interesting enough for pupils.
- The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities for learning in mathematics, English, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, physical education (PE), art, employability, cultural studies, fundamental British values, science, gardening studies and food technology. Pupils also choose one vocational area from construction, hair and beauty or cooking. However, pupils only have the opportunity to gain qualifications in English, mathematics and their chosen vocational subject. As a result, they have few opportunities to gain a range of qualifications.
- Leaders have an accurate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and have clear plans of how they want to improve the school. As a result, they have a clear direction for the school and inspire their staff.
- Leaders have employed a team of people who are experienced and well trained in the management of pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The teams work well together on the three sites. Their experience with vulnerable pupils ensures that they are able to maintain a calm environment where pupils feel safe.
- Leaders have put in place a framework for assessment that includes assessments on arrival and further tests half-termly. Teaching staff also use day-to-day assessment to inform their teaching and plan next steps for pupils. However, there is variability in the way teachers use these. As a result, a minority of pupils do not make enough progress. However, most pupils have achieved functional skills examinations. They had not had such successes in previous placements.
- Leaders provide pupils with opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and to learn about fundamental British values in PSHE education, during assemblies and in lessons across the curriculum. The teaching of democracy and equality

is variable across school sites. Consequently, a small minority of pupils have a superficial understanding of these areas.

- All pupils have benefited from several visits and visitors. For example, they have visited the 'knife angel' in Birmingham, local businesses and a historical site. Previous pupils visited the Houses of Parliament. Visitors come to the school to talk about a variety of issues that touch the pupils' lives. These opportunities develop pupils' understanding of themselves and other people whose lives are different.
- Leaders have developed very strong links with companies and colleges that provide apprenticeships and that offer work experience. These links are a valuable asset. As a result, the vast majority of Year 11 pupils have secured places in colleges or local companies for further study or apprenticeships this year.
- Leaders have very good relationships with parents and carers, who are delighted with the way their children have settled into the school. A typical contribution from a parent was: 'He has come on tremendously and is now much more confident and happy in himself.' Parents say that their relationship with the staff at the school has had a positive effect on the lives of the young people.
- Staff morale is high. All those who completed the online staff survey gave positive responses in all areas. They say that they are proud to work at the school and that they are well supported by leaders. One written comment was: 'I have never worked anywhere that supports its staff and invests in them the way I have experienced here.' This collegiate atmosphere has a strong impact on the security that pupils feel in the school environment.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor gives strategic leadership to the school. He visits the school at least twice a week. He maintains relationships with businesses, local authorities and colleges in the interests of pupils. He challenges and supports the headteacher effectively. As a result, the headteacher feels well supported in his role.
- The proprietor has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and is actively involved in action-planning to improve the experiences of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is on its website and reflects the latest government guidance.
- Leaders place a very high priority on keeping pupils safe. They make careful checks on everyone who works in the school to ensure that they pose no risk to pupils.
- All staff are trained in the most up-to-date safeguarding guidance on induction to the school, whenever updates are necessary and during staff training days. In this way, leaders ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding pupils. Leaders have also reviewed all risk assessments, for example risk assessments that

relate to the school buildings, to external visits and to the use of the school minibus, as well as to pupils who may pose risks to themselves or others.

- Leaders ensure that they keep detailed and secure documentation of all safeguarding issues. They are vigilant and respond swiftly to anything that poses a risk to individual pupils. Leaders maintain good relationships with other agencies, for example the police, social workers and attendance officers.
- Leaders ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They make sure that they are taught about safe and positive relationships and mental health. In addition, leaders ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The teaching of English and mathematics is weaker than the teaching of vocational subjects. The strong emphasis on preparing pupils for examinations leads to some teachers, for example, giving pupils dull grammar exercises to practise that do not relate to their own interests. Consequently, pupils are more reluctant to apply themselves to work in these lessons. This reluctance results in them not making the same strong progress as they do in vocational lessons.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils vary on different school sites. For example, pupils' work at one site shows that they have been expected to write about a variety of different subjects, whereas in another site, examples of pupils' writing are limited. As a result, progress in different lessons across the school is variable. Where teaching is at its best, PSHE education and SMSC elements are woven into the curriculum. In these lessons, pupils benefit from developmental experiences that enhance their understanding.
- Reading takes place in functional skills lessons in English. However, teachers do not expect pupils to read more widely. They do not give them enough opportunities to discuss the content of their reading with adults and with their peers and do not support them to develop strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words. As a result, pupils do not make strong enough progress in reading.
- Assessment evidence and pupils' EHC plans provide staff with information about pupils' skills and knowledge. Where teachers use these well, they provide staff with good information about the next steps that pupils should take in their learning. However, teachers do not all use these in the same way, which results in some pupils being more challenged than others.
- Teachers have the subject knowledge to teach mathematics and English but they have not all received good training that enables them to make the lessons interesting, stimulating and challenging. As a result, a small minority of pupils do not make enough progress.
- The school has excellent resources for teaching construction, hair and beauty and cooking. As a result, pupils work in the most appropriate environments to maximise their learning.

- Teachers of vocational subjects have good subject knowledge and know how to teach their subject well. Consequently, pupils recognise their skills, respect their teachers and are enthusiastic about learning.
- All staff know the pupils well. Staff develop good relationships with them and with their colleagues. Consequently, a supportive learning environment develops. Staff remind pupils frequently about the importance of being able to read, write and speak clearly in their future adult lives.
- Pupils understand classroom rules so that there is generally a calm environment conducive to learning. One-to-one teaching enables pupils to benefit from teachers who know them well.
- Most of the teachers use detailed policies, schemes of work and plans for all subjects taught. Staff adapt these plans to meet the needs of individual pupils so that gaps are filled in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils and parents are very positive about the level of care and the emphasis upon personal support provided by the school. One pupil said, 'School is brilliant! I love it here!'
- Staff use information from pupils' EHC plans to develop personalised strategies that work for individual pupils. Pupils have access to educational psychologists if they wish. Pupils have good opportunities for one-to-one discussions with staff. These discussions ensure that teachers develop supportive, trusting relationships with the pupils.
- Staff devote considerable time and effort to building the self-esteem and self-worth of pupils. Pupils begin to take on individual responsibilities. For example, pupils understand that others rely on them when they are asked to collect the newspaper to bring into school every day.
- Teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour, to reflect on the consequences and to make restitution if they have caused trouble. Consequently, pupils begin to regulate their emotions and learn to behave well.
- Pupils are encouraged to support the local community, for example by making cakes for an older people's home or supporting a food bank or a local charity. Pupils have also either sold or donated bird boxes that they make in construction lessons. In this way, they learn about the world of business and they contribute to the lives of others in the locality and the wider community.
- Pupils feel confident to talk about issues that affect their lives because of the trusting relationships they have with adults in the school. PSHE education lessons support pupils well in developing a good understanding of themselves. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of how to remain safe online.
- Teachers help pupils to be prepared for life in British society. However, the impact of this education is not clear in all school sites. As a result, some pupils have a good understanding of equality and democracy, but other pupils' understanding is more

superficial. As a result, this aspect of their development is weaker among a small minority of pupils.

- Well-organised careers education is a strength of the school. It includes visits from careers advisers, guest speakers from different trades and apprenticeship providers, and visits to further education providers. Leaders have developed close relationships with local traders and national companies that provide work experience for pupils. For example, a national hairdressing chain has offered apprenticeships to pupils who achieve their hairdressing qualification at the school. Future pupils will benefit from this offer.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and friendly to visitors.
- The attendance of the vast majority of pupils has improved since they joined the school. Leaders work hard to improve the attendance of the few who do not attend well, with success.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning have also improved since joining the school and this results in good progress for the majority.
- Parents spoken to by inspectors are positive about children's behaviour since joining the school. They also speak about improvements in children's self-esteem and self-worth.
- Effective behaviour and anti-bullying policies and practices are consistently applied across the three centres.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They said they had not been bullied.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Almost all pupils have made good progress in their personal development. They settle down quickly, develop good relationships with the staff, feel secure and enjoy their learning.
- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of social, emotional and mental health needs, with a background of issues in their previous education. The vast majority of pupils have made good progress in academic education. This is because they have developed trusting relationships with staff and they feel safe and secure at the school.
- On arrival at the school, pupils who have been extremely withdrawn and refusing to talk to anyone are now willing to talk to staff and to visitors.
- All pupils have made strong progress in their vocational studies in either construction, cooking or hair and beauty. This is because of the strong subject knowledge of their teachers, the effective teaching and the good resources at all the schools.
- The vast majority of pupils have made good progress in functional skills from their starting points. However, this progress is not as strong as the progress they make in their vocational studies.
- Pupils learn to read in English lessons, but a few teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to discuss the content of their reading. They do not support them to develop strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words. Pupils do not read

widely enough. As a result, a small minority of pupils do not make enough progress in reading.

- The vast majority of pupils have achieved qualifications in functional skills English and/or mathematics at entry level or level 1. They have also achieved qualifications in construction and hair and beauty.
- Almost all pupils in Year 11 have gained places in further education or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	146164
DfE registration number	894/6011
Inspection number	10100049

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	6
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Steve Knight
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Rob Pritchard
Annual fees (day pupils)	£80 per day
Telephone number	01952 630 710
Website	www.the-eds.org
Email address	enquiries@the-eds.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Seeds School opened in January 2019 following its pre-registration inspection in September 2018. Previously, the organisation was a training provider offering alternative provision on a part-time basis.
- The main hub of the school is on a business park at Horsehay, Telford. In addition, it operates two satellite units that are based on school sites in Dudley and Walsall. The Seeds School works with the local authorities for each setting and is owned by an organisation called Educational Development Service Limited.
- Pupils are referred to The Seeds School by local authorities and other schools local to the

setting. Many pupils arrive with unmet learning needs and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- The school admits pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream schools, as well as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some have EHC plans and some are looked after by the local authority.
- The school offers alternative provision to pupils from other schools on a part-time basis.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school retains a focus on vocational education.
- The school uses the PE facilities at the premises of the two schools in Walsall and Dudley. Telford pupils access a gymnasium opposite the school building called The Fitness Factory and the Lilleshall National Sports Centre in Newport for their PE.

Information about this inspection

- This was the school's first inspection after the pre-registration inspection in September 2018.
- Two inspectors visited the three educational sites of the school.
- The inspectors visited several lessons and looked at the work in pupils' folders.
- The inspectors toured all the premises to ensure that they met the independent school standards for school premises.
- One inspector spoke to two parents on the telephone.
- The inspectors observed relaxation times and spoke informally to several pupils.
- The inspectors held meetings with the proprietor, the headteacher, the operations manager and the admissions manager, as well as with the leaders of all school sites and several teachers.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of policies, schemes of work, planning documents and documents related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- Inspectors took account of the six staff responses to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michael Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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