

Inspection of New Skill Centre

Wolsey House, 2–5 The Drift, Nacton Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9QR

Inspection dates:

12–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small, welcoming school. Pupils enjoy their time here. They treat visitors with courtesy. They treat each other and staff with respect. Pupils feel safe and have someone to talk to if something is worrying them. Pupils feel free from bullying and say that bullying does not happen.

Parents, carers and pupils are highly positive about the work of the school, particularly the caring and personalised approach adopted by staff. Pupils receive good, individual attention for their personal development. Pupils benefit from staff's focus on developing positive relationships. Pupils are confident to learn and participate in lessons. They rise to the challenge of staff's high expectations for how pupils should behave. Pupils work well in lessons and make good use of time. Although the school is a nice place to be, pupils are not helped sufficiently to fulfil their potential.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education pupils receive is not of a high enough quality. Leaders and teachers do not do as much as they should to promote pupils' academic progress. Their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. The work they set for pupils is not challenging enough. Staff do not do enough to find out what pupils have learned at their home school prior to starting at New Skill Centre. They do not use the information they do receive well enough. This means that leaders' and teachers' understanding of pupils' starting points and of what they could achieve is limited.

Leaders' assessments of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take appropriate account of pupils' social and emotional needs, but not of their learning needs. If pupils are not secure in essential skills, such as reading or spelling for example, this is not addressed. This hinders pupils' progress.

After pupils join New Skill Centre on a part-time basis, they continue to spend some of their time studying at their home school. Staff at New Skill Centre do not do enough to match what they teach to what continues to be taught at pupils' home schools. In addition, they do not do enough to make sure that pupils understand the connections between the different topics they learn at New Skill Centre. The impact of this is that pupils find out about disconnected facts rather than building a deep body of knowledge.

Leaders and teachers are successful at promoting pupils' personal development. They have a broad programme to cover important elements of pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils study parts of this curriculum, depending on the amount of time they spend at the school. Staff tailor the guidance they give to individual pupils so that pupils get pertinent information based on leaders' evaluation of what would be of most benefit to them. Parents appreciate the positive impact leaders and teachers have on their children's educational experience.

Many links have been made with employers so that, as the school grows, pupils will have access to a wide range of experiences of different types of careers. Pupils learn important life skills, such as getting on with others and making good choices. Pupils are taught about personal budgeting and gain a wider understanding of the world around them through trips, such as to local places of worship.

The proprietor has failed to ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards. Since the school opened, leaders have not done enough to make sure that parents get the information they need about the school. The contact details of the proprietor are not provided to parents, the complaints procedure does not meet statutory requirements and the arrangements to safeguard pupils are not published on the school's website.

Aspects of maintaining and protecting the school are not up to the required standards. The fire risk assessment for the premises has not been updated to accommodate the changes to use of the site as a school. There is insufficient hot water in toilet facilities, no washing facility in the accommodation for pupils who become unwell and drinking water is not labelled as such.

The proprietor has high expectations and recognised before the inspection that provision was not good enough. As a result of the weaknesses identified, the proprietor recently appointed a new headteacher to enhance the capacity for the school to improve. Leaders' evaluation of the school now shows their realistic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. They have created a plan to drive improvement. The implementation of this plan is already under way, including extensive building renovations taking place to ensure that specialist teaching rooms are available for specific subjects. There are firm and imminent plans to bring the fire risk assessment up to date.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a positive culture for safeguarding pupils in school. They make sure that staff are trained in safeguarding matters. They share pertinent safeguarding issues with staff regularly. Concerns about pupils' well-being are clearly recorded and followed up appropriately.

There were some minor administrative errors in the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, identified at the start of the inspection. Leaders were quick to rectify these errors during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders and staff do not do enough to make sure that what pupils are taught builds well on what they have already learned. They do not use assessment information effectively to determine pupils' learning needs and they do not ensure that pupils understand the connections between different aspects of knowledge. Senior leaders should ensure that teachers and leaders:
 - base what they teach on a secure understanding of what pupils already know and can do
 - address pupils' individual learning needs to enable them to have full access to the whole curriculum
 - help pupils to make connections between different aspects of what they are taught so that pupils develop a broad and deep knowledge base.
- Some policies are not fit for purpose. Some information which should be readily available to parents is not. Leaders should make sure that all policies are up to date and compliant with statutory requirements, and that information is available to parents in line with the requirements of the independent school standards.
- Not all the requirements for the school's premises are met. Leaders should ensure that the facilities of the school consistently and fully meet the requirements of the independent school standards.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	146332
DfE registration number	935/6013
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10113582
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Centre for Care T/A New Skill Centre
Chair	Jo Kerley
Headteacher	Mark Winston
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,410
Telephone number	01473 290276
Website	www.newskillcentre.com
Email address	jo@newskillcentre.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- New Skill Centre was registered by the Department for Education as an independent special school on 8 April 2019. This is the school's first standard inspection. The school's registered capacity is for 40 pupils, 36 full-time and four part-time, between the ages of 11 and 16.
- All pupils who currently attend do so on a part-time basis and also remain on the roll of a different (home) school. Leaders are in discussion with the local authority and have firm plans to begin admitting full-time pupils to their roll in line with their registration.
- The school is registered to cater for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those relating to autism spectrum disorder, cognition and learning, emotional and social development, communication and interaction, sensory and/or physical needs, and physical disabilities.

- The proprietorial body is a private limited company, consisting of one director and one shareholder.
- The school is in the process of setting up a governing body.
- The school is located on a single site. The school shares the same site as an established provision for older students and adults who have learning disabilities and those who require rehabilitation following medical needs.
- New Skill Centre does not make use of any alternative education provision. It does not currently use any supply staff.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, all staff and the chair of the proprietorial body.
- Inspectors looked in detail at the curriculum in English, mathematics, the arts and woodwork, meeting with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils. We visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors toured the school site and reviewed a range of policies and documents to check how well the school complies with the independent school standards. We considered documentation for safeguarding pupils, spoke with pupils about their well-being and discussed safeguarding practice with leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors considered the four responses to Ofsted's free-text option and information from the school about the views they have gathered from parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's surveys of pupils' and staff's views.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Dick

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if:
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work:
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school:
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 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.
- 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).
- 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;
 - 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that:
 - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is:
 - 32(2)(b)(ii) where the proprietor is a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is:
 - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2;
 - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which:
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing

before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;

- 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
- 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
- 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is:
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
- 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and:
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

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.

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