

# Inspection of The Pace Centre

Philip Green House, Coventon Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 9JL

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Inspection dates: 12–14 November 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

'Fantastic and exciting' was how one pupil described this school to inspectors. Others share this view. Pupils, including those with complex needs, thrive at this excellent school. They are upbeat, determined and joyous. Because pupils take a very active role in their own learning, they are highly motivated. They enjoy learning new knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects. Pupils know their needs and can communicate them confidently. They are energised by the high ambitions that the staff have of them.

Pupils enjoy the extra activities which the school offers. These include trips to museums and regular sessions at the local therapy pool. They have exceptionally positive relationships with each other, the teaching staff and therapists. All staff treat pupils with dignity and respect. This is shown in pupils' own behaviour towards each other.

Pupils are keenly aware of how their behaviour can affect others. Staff assist pupils well so that they can communicate their needs and how safe they feel. Pupils know about the different risks they face, including some that are physical. This does not stop them pushing themselves.

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

Leaders and staff are experts in providing for the complex needs of the pupils. They place the pupils at the heart of their work, ensuring that a high-quality education is available to all. They keep the high expectations they have for every pupil front and centre in all that they do.

Leaders and staff carefully organise the curriculum. Over time, pupils know more and can do more in a wide range of practical and academic subjects. They expand their horizons, finding out about the past and different countries. Learning programmes carefully combine therapy, subject-related content and life skills. For instance, pupils gain the hand skills needed to count money, knowledge about numbers and a firm grasp of how money is used in society.

Leaders and staff rightly place communication at the heart of the curriculum. They ensure that pupils can have a say in their lives and futures. Staff work closely with pupils to develop the range of words and/or symbols they use, including subject vocabulary. Pupils become fluent at combining them to make longer sentences. They can express their ideas and interact with their classmates. Staff train pupils so that they can use electronic devices to help them to communicate.

Leaders and teaching staff are experts in teaching phonics to pupils who have complex needs. Staff have recently strengthened the way that they teach phonics. They give pupils lots of opportunities to practise matching sounds to letters throughout the school day. This means that pupils are able to use their phonic knowledge well when encountering new words.

The personal development programme is to be commended. Staff have designed it very well. It deepens pupils' understanding of risk and how to stay safe, as well as showing how they can contribute to society. Pupils also learn about the issues that they face as they grow up. Staff told inspectors that the school is like 'an extended family'. No opportunity is missed to make pupils feel that they belong to the school family. For example, staff and pupils know and celebrate pupils' different cultural traditions.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. They try hard, pushing themselves in every lesson. They are determined to overcome any barriers they face. Pupils are aware that these barriers can make them feel frustrated. Staff successfully support pupils so that they can communicate their emotions and manage them.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school because the nurturing culture extends to them. Leaders and trustees ensure that all staff receive extensive training and development. For example, new staff have to complete an induction programme delivered over an 18-week period. This helps the provision stay top-notch. The headteacher and trustees have recently made changes to reduce workload.

Trustees who oversee the charity that owns the school are very knowledgeable about many aspects of the school's work. They ask probing questions to check that any proposed spending will benefit all pupils and help them to develop.

Leaders are fastidious when checking the independent school standards and early years requirements. The school meets all requirements. The environment supports pupils' needs very well. Leaders have drawn up very detailed plans to ensure that the site and the curriculum are accessible to all. Staff guide and support pupils when they decide on their next steps. They ensure that pupils make a good start in the next stage of their education.

Staff involve parents in their youngsters' education. This assists them in supporting pupils well when they are at home. The vast majority of parents value the school tremendously. One parent commented on free-text in Parent View: 'I wish every school could be like The Pace Centre: my son is so happy there and looks forward to going. The staff are amazing with him and I feel safe and confident that they always have his best interests in mind.' Many parents hold similar views.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and this aspect of the school's work is impressive. Leaders and staff work very closely with pupils and their families, developing a deep understanding of the challenges they face. This understanding means that they can provide suitable support. Staff tirelessly promote pupils' sense of self-worth and their rights. They see this as the bedrock of their work to keep pupils safe. The designated safeguarding leader keeps a very close eye on the referrals she makes to local authorities. She diligently follows up on any next steps recommended.

## 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](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131462
<b>DfE registration number</b>	825/6031
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10103862
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	34
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	8
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Pace Centre
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Julian Lovelock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Claire Smart
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£31,523.15 to £65,127.00
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 392739
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thepacecentre.org">www.thepacecentre.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:claire.smart@thepacecentre.org">claire.smart@thepacecentre.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November–1 December 2016

## Information about this school

- The vast majority of pupils have education, health and care plans. All pupils have sensory motor disorders, such as cerebral palsy. Pupils also have communication difficulties and some have complex medical needs.
- There is a discrepancy between the school's actual capacity and the number shown on the government's website, 'Get information about schools' (GIAS). The school can offer 43 places not 74, as indicated on the GIAS website. This is out of date.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the current deputy headteachers were known as joint head of school.
- The school operates on two sites: The primary school is based at Coventon Road

in Aylesbury and the secondary school is based at the Bradbury Campus on Wendover Road in Aylesbury.

## 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the chief executive officer of the charity that owns the school. We also met with trustees of the charity, including the chair of trustees. We made a telephone call to the trustee responsible for safeguarding.
- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, therapists, and teaching staff, including staff working in early years. We met separately with parents, support staff, and pupils.
- We looked in detail at certain subjects (deep dives) to examine the quality of education. We did deep dives in English (including communication); mathematics; personal, social and health education; and humanities. To explore each subject, we spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils, looked at pupils' work and examined curriculum plans for the subject. We visited lessons in the subjects being taught during the inspection.
- We scrutinised safeguarding arrangements, carefully reviewing policies, documents and records. We spoke in detail with the designated lead and deputy for safeguarding, other staff and pupils. We checked the single central record.
- We observed the school at work during the inspection and reviewed a wide range of documentation relating to the independent school standards and the quality of education. We toured the premises and chatted to staff, including lunchtime support staff.
- We reviewed four responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire, a video which a pupil made for the inspectors about their views of the school, and the 12 responses that pupils gave in response to the school's own accessible version of the Ofsted pupil questionnaire. Inspectors took account of the 17 free-text comments that parents made as part of the Parent View survey, 34 responses made to the Parent View questionnaire, 65 responses to the staff survey and an email from a parent.
- As there are only two children in early years, there is no report on this aspect of the school's provision.

## Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lucy English

Her Majesty's Inspector

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