

Inspection of Inaura School

Moorview House, Riverside, Burrowbridge, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 0RB

Inspection dates: 14–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher expects all pupils to work hard and learn. He is passionate about building pupils' knowledge at the same time as building their self-esteem.

Pupils feel respected and valued. Many pupils have experienced emotional distress in the past and lack confidence. Some pupils take a long time to settle when they join the school. A minority can become anxious or agitated. This sometimes leads to incidents of poor behaviour. However, the great majority of pupils behave well. Teachers are calm and patient.

Senior leaders do not accept bullying. A small number of pupils were recently trained as anti-bullying ambassadors. They were very proud to represent their school at the training event. They help other pupils at school to talk about their feelings and so better understand their emotions.

Pupils appreciate the faith that staff place in them. For example, staff show pupils how to use cutting tools at the forest school and then trust them to use these tools safely. Pupils are well supervised and feel safe.

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

Senior leaders use the phrase 'head, hands, heart and home' to describe different aspects of the curriculum. Staff work together well because they share a common purpose. They provide an education that offers equal chances to pupils no matter what their background.

The curriculum specialises in helping pupils to develop their personal skills. However, pupils also study English, mathematics, science and other subjects. Other therapeutic options are also offered, such as music therapy and forest school. This gives pupils a suitably balanced experience of learning.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' knowledge in English and mathematics are clear and accurate. However, in other subjects, the assessment system is not as well developed and so teachers' judgements are not yet precise enough.

Pupils are taught in one-to-one lessons. Staff know their pupils very well. They recognise pupils' needs and adjust their teaching to suit pupils' circumstances. For example, teachers know when pupils are feeling uneasy and so alter their plans.

Pupils who find reading difficult are given extra help to succeed. The school has developed a systematic approach to supporting these pupils. While this approach has had some success, there is not a culture of reading for pleasure at the school.

Over the past two years, senior leaders' raised expectations of pupils' academic learning have resulted in more pupils achieving formal qualifications. As a result, they are better prepared than ever to continue learning when they leave.

Many pupils are not able to regulate their own behaviour when they first join the school. From the outset, pupils are taught how to improve their social skills and their behaviour. Staff know how to avoid potential triggers for poor behaviour and how to de-escalate difficult situations. Therefore, when conflict happens, staff are good at reducing the tension.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They value the extra time and support staff give them. However, a significant minority do not attend school regularly. The rate of persistent absence is too high, even when compared with similar schools.

Staff go out of their way to develop pupils' social skills. For example, teachers show pupils how to use the train to get to college. This builds pupils' confidence so that they can cope on their own when they leave. Staff are adept at creating opportunities, such as visiting local museums, to develop pupils' cultural and moral understanding.

Senior leaders have trained staff to understand the fundamental principles of good-quality careers education. Consequently, staff have conversations with pupils about their career aims. These give pupils new ideas and raise their aspirations.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Senior leaders are aware that communication remains an important weakness for many pupils. However, the school's ability to adapt the curriculum quickly is beginning to change this. For example, personal learning plans are reviewed frequently and so programmes that are not working can be modified rapidly.

Senior leaders have attempted to improve their links with parents and carers. However, their outreach to parents has had a mixed response. Senior leaders have plans to redouble their effort in this area. Even so, one parent stated, 'School to home contact is fantastic at Inaura. Staff are understanding and supportive.'

The proprietor and the governing body hold senior leaders to account well for the quality of education that the school provides. Consequently, the school has improved quickly since the previous inspection. All the independent school standards are met and the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Governors are diligent. Nevertheless, they recognise that the small size of the governing body hinders its ability to support senior leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher makes the welfare and safety of pupils his first priority. He ensures that all staff receive regular training in safeguarding. This has led to an honest and vigilant safeguarding culture among staff at the school.

Senior leaders have established a system of staff advocates for pupils. Each member of staff provides guidance to an individual pupil at the school. Pupils feel able to talk openly about sensitive topics to an adult who will listen. This helps pupils to understand the risks they face and become more resilient to them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Senior leaders have not yet established a precise enough system for assessment in subjects other than mathematics and English. As a result, they are not able to evaluate pupils' attainment in these subjects in sufficient detail. Senior leaders need to further develop assessment methods in these areas of the curriculum.
- The rate of persistent absence is too high. This hinders a minority of pupils from developing their confidence and building their knowledge quickly. Senior leaders must ensure that their strategy for improving attendance is more effective.
- Governors are highly committed to the inclusive education that the school offers. However, the governing body is a small group that does not have a wide enough range of skills. This limits its ability to form a strategy for further improvement set on a broad base of experience. The school should recruit more governors, particularly with financial, legal or business expertise.

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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	135735
DfE registration number	933/6000
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10121021
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Inaura School Registered Charity
Chair	Andrew Warner
Headteacher	Emile Etheridge
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,622
Telephone number	01823 690211
Website	www.inauraschool.org
Email address	office@inauraschool.org
Date of previous inspection	22–24 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils who have complex emotional, social and mental health needs. It operates from four sites across the Somerset Levels. The main site is in Burrowbridge, near Bridgwater. Two sites are approximately 14 miles away in Lower Godney, near Glastonbury, and one further site is in East Huntspill.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Places are funded by local authorities. The school has pupils from Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Dorset, Somerset and North Somerset.

- The proprietor is a registered charity, Inaura School. The local governing body represents the proprietor. The chair of the local governing body took up his role in September 2018.
- The school currently uses two off-site facilities. These are Alstone Court Riding School and the Somerset Rural Youth Project. Pupils are supervised by school staff when they visit these facilities.
- We were aware during this inspection that serious allegations against a former member of staff were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform our judgements.
- The last standard inspection took place in May 2018. All the independent school standards were met at that time, but the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to require improvement.

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 headteacher, deputy headteacher, chair of the governing body and four other governors. Three of these governors were directors of the proprietorial body. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of two local authorities that commission places for pupils at the school.
- We spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, scrutinised the school's safeguarding policy and considered records of the pre-employment suitability checks the school makes on its staff.
- We visited all four of the sites used by the school, including the forest school provision near to the Lower Godney site. The lead inspector visited one of the off-site facilities that the school uses for pupil visits.
- The lead inspector met with the four site managers to discuss all aspects of the education provided for pupils at each site.
- We did deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, and personal and social education. In each of these subjects, we met with teachers, considered curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and considered pupils' written work.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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