

# Inspection of Avon Park School

St John's Avenue, Rugby, Warwickshire CV22 5HR

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Inspection dates: 14–16 January 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

Pupils feel safe and secure in this school. The therapy team gives exceptional support to the pupils. This, together with the work of the rest of the staff, ensures that pupils' behaviour improves during their time in school. Pupils know that all adults care for them and want them to do well. Bullying is not tolerated and pupils say that it rarely happens. Pupils are confident to speak to adults about anything that is worrying them. Lessons are interesting and often fun. Lots of pupils love mathematics. The teachers know their subjects well and know how to get pupils interested. Pupils go swimming every week. They can join clubs and go sailing and windsurfing. Enjoyable activities engage pupils. This helps them to learn together and to remember more. Pupils act out their ideas and work together in groups. They plan real events like coffee mornings and pancake days. They enjoy music. The music room has lots of instruments to play. They have great physical education (PE) lessons.

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

Leaders have ensured that the school consistently meets all the independent school standards. The inspirational headteacher and his outstanding senior leadership team have turned Avon Park School around. The school is now a well-ordered environment where behaviour is good, bullying is rare and pupils can learn effectively. Leaders are very strongly supported by the clinical therapy team and the expert guidance of leaders from the Witherslack group. Leaders have created a supportive and collegiate atmosphere in the school. The headteacher's drive and enthusiasm positively infect his whole staff. Staff morale is high and leaders ensure that staff well-being is carefully considered. Every member of staff who answered the staff questionnaire agreed that the school encourages calm and orderly conduct and is aspirational for all pupils. The work of the pastoral leaders and the family liaison officer ensures that excellent relationships are maintained with the families of pupils. Almost every parent or carer who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire would recommend this school to others.

Leaders make sure that staff have the training they need to develop the curriculum and teach it well. They all know how to support pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and mental health and behavioural difficulties. Subject specialists lead each subject area well. They coach staff who are teaching outside their specialism.

Teachers teach phonics and early reading well and pupils enjoy these lessons. Pupils have a dedicated reading lesson every day, where they become deeply engaged in reading. A typical remark was 'To be honest, this is the most enjoyable lesson of the day.' However, teachers do not yet expect pupils to write enough. Teachers use a programme to develop pupils' vocabulary but they do not make sure that pupils practise using the new words they are learning. Pupils rarely use them in their speech or in their writing.

Leaders have made major changes and improvements to the curriculum. It now includes a broader range of subjects. The majority of subjects, for example mathematics, reading, PE and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, are very well planned and implemented. Pupils' work and teachers' plans show that teachers teach the right things in the right order in these subjects. They cater effectively for pupils' differing needs. However, there are still subjects, for example design and technology, science and writing, that need further work.

Many worthwhile experiences help pupils to develop personally and socially. For example, teachers spend time with pupils helping them to think about how well they behave in lessons. Teachers see this as being equally as important as the subject matter that is taught in lessons. Careers education begins in Year 3. By the time pupils leave in Year 11, they have received plenty of effective help with thinking about their future lives. The school building is kept in immaculate condition so that pupils always work in a building that they respect.

Pupils are aware of different faiths and cultures. Pupils learn about different cultures by visiting a gurdwara, a mosque and a church. The school promotes equality of opportunity, diversity and accessibility extremely well. Pupils understand, appreciate and respect differences. Discrimination is not tolerated. Protected characteristics are built into the PSHE education curriculum. Each characteristic is taught at an appropriate time.

Pupils have excellent opportunities to gain wider experiences. For example, they visited the Houses of Parliament, sitting in on a live debate. They have debates in school and a school council. Pupils have many opportunities to go on trips, for example to the cinema, a pantomime and a butterfly farm. They take part in rugby and badminton tournaments and enjoy yoga and mindfulness. The uptake of extra-curricular activities is high. Pupils have good opportunities to meet people in the locality. They go to church and join parishioners for coffee mornings. They enjoy talking to older people who volunteer in the school. Pupils spoken to by inspectors know about healthy eating.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are vigilant about child protection and care strongly about the well-being of their pupils. They report their concerns in a timely way and work closely with other agencies. When necessary, they produce individual risk assessments for pupils. They explicitly teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from danger. Pupils learn, for example, about the dangers from knife crime, gangs and radicalisation and extremism. Leaders invite the police into school to develop positive relationships with pupils and to support the school in teaching how to manage risk. All staff are recruited safely. The school's safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website and meets the latest government requirements.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

- There are still some subjects where the curriculum needs to improve. This means that pupils may not make strong progress in all subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned in all subjects, including, science and design and technology.
- Pupils do not develop their writing skills sufficiently well. This means that they are not good at writing at length. Leaders must ensure that expectations of pupils' writing are demanding enough to enable them to produce longer pieces of writing and improve their skills.
- The school has adopted a programme to develop pupils' vocabularies. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils build the new words they are introduced to into sentences in their spoken language or their written work. Therefore, the programme is not having the intended impact. Staff need to ensure that pupils practise using the new words.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140354
<b>DfE registration number</b>	937/6008
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10112504
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	60
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Witherslack Group
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Wilkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert James
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£63,375–£90,030
<b>Telephone number</b>	01788 524 448
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://witherslackgroup.co.uk/avon-park-school/">https://witherslackgroup.co.uk/avon-park-school/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@avonparkschool.co.uk">admin@avonparkschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	31 January–2 February 2018

## Information about this school

- Avon Park School is an independent school that is part of the Witherslack Group.
- There are 60 pupils on roll.
- The school is registered to admit up to 70 pupils between the ages of six and 16.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of complex learning difficulties, communication difficulties and challenging behaviours. A significant number of pupils have been diagnosed as having ASD. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The school uses a range of providers, including vocational learning providers, and work-related learning organisations.
- The school was first registered in October 2013 and registered its first pupils in November 2013. An inspection in 2014 judged the school to be good in all areas. A subsequent inspection in February 2018 judged the school to be inadequate overall.
- A monitoring visit in September 2018 found that all the independent school standards were met.
- This is the school's third standard inspection.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the school's previous standard inspection. Additions to the leadership team have been made to include two new deputy headteachers. Further changes have also been made to the teaching staff. Every teacher has a teaching qualification or is studying for one.

## **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 held several meetings with all senior leaders, including the pastoral manager. I also spoke to the family liaison officer and to three members of the clinical therapy team.
- I made a tour of the premises with the maintenance manager and the headteacher and scrutinised a number of health and safety documents, including first-aid documentation and risk assessments. I scrutinised the single central record of appointments to the school, the admissions register and the pupil register.
- I reviewed safeguarding documents and spoke to the headteacher, the family liaison officer and the senior designated safeguarding leader about safeguarding arrangements.
- We looked closely at four curriculum subjects. These subjects were English, mathematics, PSHE education and design and technology. In each of these subjects, we interviewed the curriculum leader, teachers and pupils about that subject. We also visited lessons in that subject and scrutinised books. My colleague also observed a humanities lesson and spoke to the humanities teacher. I spoke to the PE teacher and looked at plans for PE. We reviewed documentation from a number of other subjects, including science.
- We spoke to pupils about behaviour, personal development and healthy eating.

- We examined a large number of policies, as well as documentation related to health and safety and safeguarding.
- I spoke to the regional manager for the Witherslack Group, the operations director for all the schools in the Witherslack Group and the quality assurance director for the Witherslack Group about their support and quality assurance of the school.
- We took into account findings from the Ofsted staff survey of views and the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. Twenty-one parents responded to Parent View.
- We were required by the Department for Education to consider a recent complaint about safeguarding.

### **Inspection team**

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mike Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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