

# Nisai House Stoke

The Swan, Swan Square, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 3EA

## Inspection dates

2 March 2021

## Overall outcome

**The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(g) and 2(2)(h)*

- The registration authority, the Department for Education (DfE), requested that aspects of the quality of education provided by the school be reviewed as part of the emergency inspection.
- The proprietor has not ensured that there are curriculum plans and schemes of work in place that take sufficient account of pupils' needs and abilities, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In some subjects, including personal, social and health education (PSHE), staff were unable to provide any curriculum plans. They did not explain how learning was sequenced to enable pupils to make good progress or show how pupils would be encouraged to have regard and respect for the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Leaders have not ensured that planned learning in other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, is consistently well matched to what pupils already know and can do. Some pupils, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan cannot access the work they have been given because they cannot read what they are being asked to do. Sometimes work is not sequenced well enough so that pupils can gain and deepen their knowledge in order to make good progress.
- The school has access to an online resource that is intended to support pupils who have weak reading skills. Staff at the school do not know enough about this programme to ensure that the tasks set are well matched to pupils' needs.
- These standards, which were met at the previous inspection, are now not met.

*Paragraphs 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a) and 2(2)(b)*

- The school offers a blended approach to learning, involving some remote education using digital learning. This covers a broad range of subjects. Some subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are delivered virtually by teachers employed

centrally by the Nisai Group. Other subjects and programmes are delivered by the staff at the school. These include physical education and PSHE.

- The school's curriculum offer does not undermine any fundamental British values. The proprietor has ensured that the school's ethos reflects these values. Pupils who met with the inspection team were polite and well mannered.
- These standards are met.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h)*

- Learning mentors are required to teach some subjects, including PSHE, and to provide support for pupils in other subjects, including English and mathematics. Over the past twelve months there has been a high turnover of staff. Several new learning mentors have started working at the school very recently. At the moment, they do not have sufficient knowledge about the curriculum and plans in each subject to support the pupils to make good progress.
- Staff do not take sufficient account of assessment information the school has about the pupils. This means they do not have a secure enough knowledge of the academic abilities of the pupils to make sure that the tasks and activities they plan or support pupils to complete are well matched to pupils' needs.
- Some staff do not insist on pupils following the school rules and do not apply the strategies set out in the behaviour policy when pupils do not act as they should. This means that some pupils waste learning time in lessons, and this affects the amount of progress they can make.
- These standards, which were met at the previous inspection, are now not met.
- Not all of the standards in this part are met.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

*Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 32(1)(c) [Part 6 provision of information]*

- The proprietor has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy reflects the most recent government guidance. The policy is available on the school's website.
- The child protection policy includes details about the safer recruitment process that the school follows when it is appointing new staff. The proprietor ensures that pre-employment checks are completed in line with current guidance.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead. She has undertaken enhanced safeguarding training and ensures that she keeps up to date with new information about safeguarding issues in the local area.
- Staff receive training so that they know how to report any concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being. The school's records show that these concerns are taken seriously and followed up with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- Pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe when they are online. They are confident that an adult in school will help them if they have any worries or concerns.
- These standards are met.

*Paragraphs 9(a), 9(c) and 10*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is an appropriate behaviour policy. The policy explains the rewards and sanctions that pupils can expect to be applied.
- There is a system in place to record concerns and incidents linked to individual pupil's behaviour. Leaders record information about what has triggered the behaviour, as well as details of communication with parents. The system also records examples of pupils behaving well.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable anti-bullying policy. Pupils know what bullying is and say that it does not happen very often. Pupils were able to explain that it not acceptable to bully someone because of a characteristic such as their gender, race, religion or culture.
- These standards are met.

*Paragraphs 9 and 9(b)*

- The proprietor has not ensured that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently. Staff do not have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and when pupils do not follow the rules, they do not challenge pupils well enough. For example, pupils continue to use their mobile phones in school despite being asked not to. Staff find it difficult to get pupils to follow instructions, and this has a negative impact on how well they engage with their learning and the quality of work they produce.
- In addition, pupils do not respond positively when staff suggest healthy food options at lunchtime. Staff are unable to successfully influence pupils' approaches when they are choosing what to eat.
- These standards are not met.

*Paragraphs 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)*

- There is an appropriate policy in relation to health and safety. The proprietor has ensured that this provides clear guidance for all staff about how to keep themselves and everyone else safe.
- Risk assessments for the building, for activities and for individual pupils are written clearly. Risks are assessed and there are appropriate control measures to reduce incidents and accidents.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable first aid policy. There are staff on both sites who have completed first aid training.
- The proprietor has ensured that the admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately. There is a clear process in place for following up any absences and recording details of contact with parents and the local authority about the reasons why a pupil has not attended.
- These standards are met.

*Paragraph 12*

- The proprietor has commissioned a fire risk assessment from an external specialist. Leaders ensure that fire safety equipment is checked and tested regularly, and a log of this information is kept in a 'fire file'.

- Fire extinguishers are positioned appropriately around the school. There is signage around the building to show evacuation routes. Pupils have recently practised a fire drill.
- One of the fire exit doors is difficult to open. It appears to require a particular way of moving the bar to release it. In the event of a fire, it could prevent a quick and safe exit from the building.
- This standard is not met.
- Some of the standards in this part, which were met at the previous inspection, are now not met.

## Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

### *Paragraph 25*

- It is not possible to open any of the windows in the ground floor break room. They have been screwed shut following incidents of poor behaviour where the window frames and locks were damaged by some pupils. This room is used by pupils to spend time away from lessons, socialising, playing games and eating lunch, supervised by school staff. With limited ventilation, it is likely to be an uncomfortable space for pupils and staff.

### *Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)*

- There is no space for pupils to play outside safely or for any physical activity to take place. Leaders' plans for pupils to engage in physical activity at a local leisure centre have been affected by COVID-19 (coronavirus). However, they have not arranged any alternative opportunities, and some pupils have not been able to take part in any physical activity for several months.
- These standards, which were met at the previous inspection, are now not met.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor and headteacher have a secure knowledge of the independent school standards. However, they have not used this understanding to ensure that all of the standards are met consistently.
- The issues with the premises, in terms of windows that cannot be opened and the fire exit door being difficult to open, compromise the welfare and safety of the pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that they promote pupils' well-being sufficiently. For example, they have not done enough to ensure that pupils are make healthy food choices at lunchtime. Staff told inspectors that pupils often eat items purchased from takeaway cafes, for example burgers, breakfast sandwiches and fizzy drinks. It should be noted that the proprietor has ensured that pupils have constant access to drinking water.
- The proprietor and the headteacher are committed to the school and its pupils. Currently, the school is facing increased challenges in terms of staffing. This is because a significant proportion of staff have left the school since July 2020. While there have been some successful appointments, these have been very recent. The

school is finding it difficult to appoint enough staff with appropriate skills and experience to meet the needs of pupils and to manage their behaviour.

- The school belongs to the Nisai Group. There is capacity within the organisation to provide support for the school. Members of the proprietary body say that COVID-19 has hampered opportunities to provide this much-needed support. This is particularly so for the development and implementation of the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs, abilities and aspirations of the pupils who attend the school.
- These standards, which were met at the previous inspection, are now not met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	140487
DfE registration number	861/6025
Inspection number	10180098

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	14
Proprietor	Nisai Learning Hub Ltd
Chair	Dr Gordon Foulkes
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Sheldon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,200
Telephone number	020 8424 8475
Website	<a href="http://www.nisai.com">www.nisai.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@nisai.com">info@nisai.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	24–26 April 2018

## Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was in April 2018. A material change inspection took place in June 2020 and was commissioned by the DfE because the school was planning to move from its existing site in Nottingham to the two sites in which it is currently situated.
- The school is part of the Nisai Group of schools.

- The school provides full-time education for pupils aged 12 to 19 with social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have been excluded from their previous school or are at risk of exclusion from their parent school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for the pupils. Some pupils attend the school on a part-time basis and attend a different provision for part of the week. This is not organised by the school but by the local authority who have placed the pupils at the school.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school operates from two sites: The Swan, Swan Square, Burslam, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 3EA and 1 Commerce Street, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 1NW.



## Information about this inspection

- This emergency inspection was carried out at the request of the DfE, the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to check that the school continued to meet the independent school standards relating to the health, safety and well-being of pupils. Inspectors were also asked to consider if the school continued to meet standards in relation to the quality of education.
- This inspection was conducted with no notice. The lead inspector spoke to the headteacher on the telephone prior to entering the school to ask about procedures in place as a result of COVID-19. The lead inspector also asked the headteacher to confirm that no one on site had any symptoms of COVID-19.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, the chief executive officer of the Nisai Group and learning mentors. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors conducted a tour of both sites. They also reviewed school documents and policies. The lead inspector checked the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, and looked at child protection records. Both inspectors spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jo Evans, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Yates

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school does not 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; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
  - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
    - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
    - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
  - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
  - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 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(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 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(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;

- 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;
- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
  - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable–
  - 29(1)(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and
  - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.

### **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; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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