

Inspection of The Aspire Hub, Bolton

Dalton House, 33 Leigh Road, Westhoughton BL5 2JE

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 May 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

The Aspire Hub provides pupils with a calm, welcoming and nurturing environment. Staff treat pupils with kindness and respect. Throughout the school day, pupils interact happily with adults and other pupils. Pupils have a significantly more settled experience in school than in schools they have previously attended.

The care and guidance that staff give to pupils helps them to overcome their many barriers to learning. Adults are successful in helping pupils to build their confidence and improve their communication skills. Despite this, pupils do not make the strongest possible progress. This is because the curriculum plans lack precise detail about what pupils will learn as they progress through the school. They do not reflect leaders' high expectations for pupils.

Staff are skilful at helping pupils improve their behaviour. They teach pupils to follow the school's motto, 'kind words, kind hands, kind feet'. With intensive support from staff, pupils become more successful in managing their actions when they become anxious or upset.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. Staff watch carefully for any signs of bullying. They encourage pupils to share any concerns that they may have.

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

Leaders have taken steps to improve the curriculum. In mathematics and early reading, curriculum plans are detailed and identify the important knowledge that they want pupils to remember. Staff understand what pupils need to know before moving on to new learning. However, curriculum plans in other subjects are at an earlier stage of development. Staff have not identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. The plans do not ensure that pupils' knowledge builds in a sensible order. This means that pupils have less opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding in many subjects.

Staff have not benefited from recent training in most areas of the curriculum. This means that some staff have limited expertise and confidence in planning a detailed curriculum across different subjects.

During their time at the school, leaders make sure that pupils read very regularly. Staff share story books each day with their class. These sessions are fun. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed the books that they are sharing in class. Adults ask lots of questions to help pupils learn new words and understand what they are reading. Pupils at an early stage of reading benefit from daily phonics lessons. Staff have had recent training, which ensures that they teach phonics well. Adults listen to pupils read regularly, which helps pupils to recognise and remember new sounds. More fluent readers are encouraged to read often. These pupils enjoy choosing books from the class reading areas. They read with confidence.

Leaders check regularly on pupils' learning. Through these checks, staff identify where pupils need more support to help them with their learning.

The school is calm. Staff are very well trained in supporting pupils when they become unsettled or show extremes of behaviour. Leaders work closely with parents, carers and professionals, such as the school's educational psychologist. This means staff can assess pupils' particular needs and develop effective strategies and therapies to support pupils.

Before the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, leaders planned a range of trips and visitors to school to enhance pupils' learning. For example, pupils enjoyed a trip to the beach. A visitor showed pupils a range of mini beasts as part of their science learning. Leaders intend to resume these opportunities when the restrictions are fully lifted. Pupils learn to be respectful and tolerant of others. Through celebrations such as Diwali, pupils learn about different cultures and religions.

The family liaison officer works closely with parents to offer useful support. Parents praised the effectiveness of staff in supporting them, and in improving their children's well-being and attitudes to school. They typically described the school staff as 'brilliant', 'fantastic' and 'wonderful'.

The proprietor body is aware of the independent school standards (ISS), including compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The school's premises are spacious and well equipped. Classrooms are well decorated and inviting. There is an attractive enclosed outdoor area for pupils to exercise and relax safely. Clear information about the school is available on the school website. This includes the safeguarding policy. Leaders made some small improvements to documents so that all the ISS were met by the end of this inspection.

The proprietor body keeps a careful check on the school. It has a clear oversight of different aspects of the school, such as finance, staff training and safeguarding. Managers of these areas meet with the members of the proprietor body very regularly to share information. This enables the proprietor body to assure themselves that leaders are effective. The proprietor body uses this information well to identify any areas to develop, such as the curriculum.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They enjoy working at the school and appreciate the opportunities they have for professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular and effective safeguarding training for staff. For example, staff learn about forms of abuse, such as domestic abuse. This means that staff are alert to possible risks that pupils may face.

Leaders respond quickly to pupil absence from school. They remain persistent about following up any absence with parents until they know that pupils are safe.

Leaders work closely with a range of agencies when needed, to help keep pupils safe. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when working online. Pupils feel confident that they can speak to members of staff about any concerns that they have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Recent curriculum developments in reading and mathematics have given staff a clear picture of what important knowledge pupils need to learn. Staff know how pupils' learning should build in sequence. However, curriculum plans are at an earlier stage of development in other subjects. In these areas, leaders have not identified precisely what knowledge they want pupils to learn. Less consideration has been given to how pupils will build on their learning over time. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum plans include the important knowledge and skills that they intend pupils to learn. The plans should reflect how staff should sequence lessons to help pupils deepen their learning.
- Leaders have provided useful training for staff in planning and teaching phonics. Staff have not had recent training in other areas of the curriculum. This means that in some areas, staff have less expertise in planning and teaching a coherent sequence of lessons. Leaders should provide further staff training, to build staff expertise and confidence in planning and teaching the curriculum in all subject areas.

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	147295
DfE registration number	350/6005
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10193237
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspire Behaviour Management Ltd
Headteacher	Gillian Bullock
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,350 to £32,175
Telephone number	01282 792 943
Website	aspirehubbolton.co.uk
Email address	info@aspirebm.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first standards inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education on 9 September 2019.
- The school admits pupils who have behavioural and social difficulties, many of whom have been identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education. Pupils come from mainstream schools in Bury, Bolton and the surrounding area. Places are secured through a referral process involving different agencies, including schools and local authorities.
- A number of other services operate out of The Aspire Hub which complement the work within the school. These services include support for the development of behaviour management strategies in mainstream schools, and the provision of courses for parents.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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.

- During the inspection, I spoke with pupils about their work and school life. I spoke with the headteacher, the curriculum leader, members of staff and the proprietors. I also spoke with the school's special educational needs coordinator and family liaison officer.
- There were no responses to the online staff survey or pupils' survey. There was one response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I spoke with three parents and carers, and professionals from the local authority and a local school.
- I looked in detail at several subjects. These were English, including reading, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education, and history. I met with staff, visited lessons and spoke with pupils about their learning. I also looked at pupils' work and curriculum plans in science and geography. I observed pupils reading with an adult.
- During the inspection, I reviewed a range of documentation, including documentation in relation to safeguarding and information relating to the independent school standards. I looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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