

Inspection of Our Place

The Orchard, Bransford, Worcestershire WR6 5JE

Inspection dates: 29 June to 1 July 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Our Place is a happy school. Pupils develop trust and confidence because of the positive relationships they have with staff. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They tap into pupils' interests, such as gardening, cooking or sewing, to make learning fun. This helps pupils to stay focused on their learning. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in the school.

In the school woodland area, pupils learn about plants and animals and toast marshmallows over the campfire. Pupils enjoy each other's company. They are kind and helpful towards each other. They say that bullying does not happen, but if ever they fall out, staff help them to make friends again.

Each day starts with a 'daily mile' of exercise. Pupils keep active by using the play and fitness equipment in the school grounds.

Trips to local places of interest, such as Hartlebury House, help bring learning to life. Pupils develop their independence by planning travel arrangements and calculating costs.

Pupils receive reward certificates for their achievements. These include an extra trip to the library or for a special lunch. Staff make sure that all pupils experience success. Each small step towards independence is celebrated. Parents feel that their children are well cared for at this school.

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

The head of education works tirelessly with staff to improve the quality of education pupils receive at the school. The aim of the curriculum is clear – to prepare pupils for adulthood, building their confidence and independence alongside academic success. The curriculum is ambitious and offers pupils different pathways to meet their needs. Teachers adapt curriculum plans to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Leaders prioritise communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils love reading or listening to adults read to them. Those pupils who can read, read often, developing increasing fluency and independence. Pupils who use alternative communication methods are supported by a speech and language therapist.

Most staff skilfully provide the right amount of support for pupils at the right time. However, some support staff step in too quickly without waiting for pupils to respond to questions. This means that pupils using alternative communication systems, such as symbols, do not have enough opportunity to practise and apply their communication skills independently.

In activities such as cooking or gardening, teachers draw on pupils' interests to excite them in learning about a range of topics, such as science, religious education and technology. In their 'farm to fork' project, pupils grow and cook their own vegetables. Pupils cook food from other cultures and attend a range of religious services. This supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Leaders have devised a new assessment framework. This helps teachers to capture and celebrate pupils' steps towards independence. Teachers now set more challenging targets in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan). These higher expectations are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. External partners, parents and pupils are fully involved in reviewing pupils' progress.

Pupils learn about respect and equality through the school's personal, social, health and economic curriculum and the 'values of the week' shared in the weekly gatherings. Leaders make sure that pupils learn about healthy relationships and sex education at an appropriate level for their age and stage of development. Some older pupils were able to explain what makes a good friend or a healthy relationship. The school now complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders have reviewed careers advice and guidance to ensure it meets pupils' needs and interests. School leaders work closely with local businesses who provide meaningful work experience opportunities for older pupils, for example on a local farm. Staff support parents and pupils well when they are deciding on next steps for post-16 and beyond.

As a result of leaders' relentless focus on improvement, the school now provides a good quality of education. The school now meets all of the independent school standards. The school's safeguarding policy, published on the school's website, references the most up-to-date government guidance. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are paramount. The proprietor is investing in a new building which will provide additional classroom and assembly space should the school's application to extend the age range of pupils and the number of places be approved by the Department for Education (DfE).

Members of the 'education review board' hold leaders to account for the impact of their work. At each monthly meeting, they invite a member of staff to tell them about their work. Leaders regularly consult with staff, pupils and parents about how they could improve the school further. Parents feel fully involved and pupils feel they can make a difference. The proprietor has ensured that leaders maintain a focus on what is best for the young people at the school. As a result, pupils thrive at Our Place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the safety of pupils is paramount. Staff receive regular training to update them on government guidance. In daily and weekly staff briefings, leaders make sure staff are aware of any adaptations they need to make to the care and support for pupils.

Staff are vigilant. They know that, because of pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs, they may be more vulnerable to potential safeguarding risks than other pupils of a similar age. Pupils were able to explain how to keep themselves safe online, how to recognise good and bad behaviour and what makes a healthy relationship.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some staff do not give pupils enough opportunity to use and apply alternative communication strategies. As a result, pupils are not able to use alternative communication methods independently. Leaders should ensure that all staff benefit from the expertise of the speech and language therapist so that all pupils are supported effectively to use alternative communication methods with increasing independence.

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	136260
DfE registration number	885/6039
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10164643
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	David French
Headteacher	Lauren Tallis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£88,710.01
Telephone number	01886 833378
Website	www.ourplaceschools.com
Email address	headofeducation@ourplaceschools.com
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 June 2018

Information about this school

- Our Place is an independent special school in Worcestershire, set in extensive grounds.
- The school provides for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the areas of communication and interaction, including autism spectrum disorder, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory impairment. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Places are commissioned by a small number of local authorities from across the country.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.
- The school has submitted an application to the DfE to increase the number of pupils on roll by five and to extend the age range of pupils to eight years old.

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.

- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector read the published reports of previous inspections and checked the registration details of the school. A range of other documents were reviewed on the school's website, including the school's vision statement, curriculum statement, safeguarding and other policies, and complaints information.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other members of staff to discuss aspects of the school's provision, such as the curriculum, safeguarding, SEND, speech and language support, behaviour, attendance and careers advice. Meetings were held with the proprietor, the school improvement adviser and the headteacher of the virtual school for Worcestershire. A range of documents were considered, including curriculum plans, minutes of meetings, safeguarding files and records of behaviour incidents, including peer-on-peer abuse incidents.
- Inspectors visited lessons and talked to pupils about their learning and life at the school, including how they are taught to keep themselves safe, and about bullying and behaviour.

- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks and lunchtimes and talked to a range of staff about their understanding of safeguarding policy and practice.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the school with the headteacher, the director of safeguarding and the health and safety manager to discuss how the school meets the independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, and the premises and accommodation at the school.
- The lead inspector met with all staff to discuss the progress the school had made since the last inspection. Fifteen responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. Three responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, were taken into account.

The school's proposed change of age range and maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.**

Inspection team

Jane Spilsbury, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Field

Ofsted Inspector

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