

# Inspection of The Island Project School

Diddington Hall, Diddington Lane, Meriden, West Midlands CV7 7HQ

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Inspection dates: 29 June–1 July 2021

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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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?**

Pupils at this school come first. Many of them come to the school having had a negative experience of school in the past. Staff quickly build strong relationships with the pupils. Parents value the support they and their child get from staff. They say that 'staff go the extra mile'. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school.

The high levels of staff supervision allow staff to deal with any incidents of challenging behaviour quickly. Typically, school is an orderly and calm environment. If pupils are unkind to each other staff are quick to intervene. As a result, pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This means getting some qualifications. Many pupils achieve this. It also means learning the skills needed for their next steps in education or employment and training and independent living. Building pupils' self-esteem and confidence is a key priority in the curriculum. Pupils become more confident and independent through activities such as shopping at the local supermarket and trips to Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

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

Leaders plan the curriculum around what they want each pupil to achieve. It is tailored to their needs and ambitions and what they have learned before. It is based on the core subjects of English, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils experience a broad range of subjects through topic-based work and accredited courses in the sixth form. Many pupils achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and/or personal progress awards. However, not all pupils get a qualification in both English and mathematics. This affects the options available to them in the future.

Staff use the daily planning and debrief sessions well to plan an individual pupil's timetable. Learning builds on what has been taught before and prepares pupils for what comes next. The focus is on ensuring that pupils have a high success rate. Previous learning is revisited. This builds pupils' confidence and helps them to remember what they have learned. Work in pupils' learning journey shows how they are making progress. For example, they can learn how to sort laundry, work a washing machine, and then go to a laundrette in the local community to do their washing.

Staff have regular training on how to deliver the curriculum. Leaders check how well staff do this. They support staff who may need extra help by showing them how to deliver a lesson. Leaders plan and deliver whole-staff training on how to meet the needs of pupils with autism. As a result, staff are highly skilled at using different ways to help pupils learn. Mostly, pupils engage in their learning. When pupils lose focus or find it hard to settle, staff are quick to intervene. Because they know the

pupils' needs well, they get them back on track. This may take longer for some pupils than others.

Leaders give priority to the development of pupils' reading. Some pupils come to the school with a dislike of reading. Staff successfully use a variety of ways to overcome this. Curriculum leaders and members of the speech, language, and therapy team train staff in how to teach reading. Most teaching spaces have mini libraries and areas where pupils can read. Some pupils use these areas well.

Leaders prepare pupils well for their next steps. Learning is given a meaning. For example, the 'learn to earn' scheme teaches pupils the value of money and how to budget. Pupils can earn money by completing daily chores around the school. They can spend their wage at the end of the week, or they can save it. In the past, pupils have used their savings to pay for school trips. They have been able to vote for where they would like to go. This helps them to learn about democracy.

Leaders carefully check pupils' attendance. Consequently, many pupils have improved their attendance from low starting points. However, a small number of pupils who are regularly absent from school are affecting the overall attendance of the school. Therefore, the overall figure for attendance is low.

Leaders take care of their staff. Staff value the support which leaders give them for their professional development. As a result, staff morale is high.

Trustees have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are clear about the school's priorities for the future. The development of specific roles and responsibilities related to aspects of the school's work is working well. For example, the link governor for health and safety routinely checks that the school continues to meet the independent school standards. Record-keeping and documentation for health and safety are robust.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding systems are thorough. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders address concerns quickly and effectively. Leaders work well with external agencies. For example, the police regularly visit the school and talk to pupils about people who help us. Leaders help families get extra help when they need it.

Adults who work at, or visit, the school are appropriately checked. Records are detailed and well organised. Staff receive regular training and updates. This has included county lines and gang awareness.

Leaders teach pupils how to keep themselves safe through the PSHE programme. Topics taught include online safety and healthy lifestyles.

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

- Pupils can access a range of qualifications. Many pupils achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and/or vocational subjects. However, not all pupils achieve a qualification in both English and mathematics. This may limit their options in the future. Leaders need to make sure that all pupils achieve accreditation, appropriate to their ability, in both English and mathematics before they leave the school.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance well. They use a range of strategies to improve attendance. For many individual pupils with particularly low starting points, this is beginning to have an impact. However, the regular absence of a small number of pupils is adversely affecting the overall attendance figure, which is low. This regular absence inhibits some pupils' progress and personal development. Leaders need to continue to work with parents and carers and outside agencies to improve the attendance of a few pupils who are regularly absent from school so that they make better progress.

## **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>	135453
<b>DfE registration number</b>	334/6010
<b>Local authority</b>	Solihull
<b>Inspection number</b>	10193313
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	16
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	6
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietors</b>	Mrs Jacqueline Walters-Hutton Mrs Carol Howe
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jacqueline Walters-Hutton
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Sarah Gallagher
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£48,000–£67,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01675 442588
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.theislandproject.co.uk">www.theislandproject.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@ipschool.co.uk">admin@ipschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22–24 May 2018

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism and additional complex needs. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school admits pupils from several local authorities in the region.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school currently operates from one site in Solihull. There are plans to relocate the school to a new site near Shirley in the West Midlands. This is due to the likely impact of the High Speed Two (HS2) rail project. The relocation date is planned for September 2022.
- The school's last full inspection was in May 2018. A progress monitoring inspection was conducted in July 2019.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, proprietors and three members of the board of trustees, including the chair.
- Inspectors focused on English, mathematics, PSHE and reading. The lead inspector also looked at vocational studies in the sixth form. Inspectors discussed the curriculum design with the principal and curriculum leaders. Inspectors went to two of the team's lesson-planning meetings in the morning and the debrief sessions at the end of the school day. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- An inspector examined the single central register of staff recruitment checks and met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included school policies, curriculum documents, health and safety documentation and information relating to attendance and behaviour.
- The lead inspector toured and checked the premises.

- The lead inspector considered the 11 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including eight free-text responses, the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the five responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke informally to school staff, transport staff, parents, and pupils during the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Satchwell

Ofsted Inspector

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