

Inspection of Somerset Progressive School

Bath House Farm, West Hatch, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5RH

Inspection dates: 29 June–1 July 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is made to feel welcome at the school. Pupils are safe. Staff go all out to ensure that the unique nature of each pupil is fully understood, and their voices are heard. Pupils have great confidence in the adults that care for them.

A well-crafted transition programme ensures that pupils rebuild their trust in schooling. Their previous poor experiences are soon left behind. Pupils enjoy school and feel proud to be part of it.

Adults work expertly with pupils to develop their social interactions. Pupils get along and say that disagreements are infrequent. On the rare occasion bullying happens it is dealt with swiftly.

Pupils are nurtured exceptionally well to expand their horizons. Whether this is through art, food technology, learning Spanish, creative writing, tending to the pygmy goats and other animals on-site, doing horticulture or music, all pupils develop their character well.

Pupils are well prepared for what comes next. Pupils gain the core knowledge and skills they need for future employment. All go on to study at college. Many follow highly individualised pathways.

Pupils learn through a wide range of subjects. However, the range of qualifications available to pupils is not as extensive as it could be.

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

Leaders make sure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met in full. This includes ensuring that the school meets schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Parents and carers are highly satisfied with the school. Excellent communication between home and school means that parents know straight away how successful the day has been for their child.

Staff work tenaciously with external agencies and other professionals to make sure that pupils get the ongoing help and support they need. Pupils re-engage with education well, often after prolonged periods of absence. Staff are highly skilled in calming pupils' anxieties and unsettled behaviours. Over time, pupils' enjoyment of schooling improves markedly. Almost every pupil attends very well. Interruptions to learning are rare. Where pupils and their families have increased anxiety levels because of COVID-19 (coronavirus) there is strong support on hand.

The specialist curriculum meets pupils' individualised needs expertly. Staff's intensive focus on pupils' health and care needs and their social, emotional, and

communication needs is all-embracing. Leaders develop bespoke curriculum plans to match each pupil's individual education plan. At the same time, pupils study a wide range of subjects successfully. The art curriculum is particularly strong.

Most staff use precise checks of what pupils know to plan onward sequences of work. Sequences of learning have an established structure that helps pupils not to become anxious when starting new content. Pupils feel secure and confident in the guidance they receive from adults. This means pupils gain the fundamental knowledge they need before moving on.

Reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. By the time pupils leave school, they make strong progress in reading. Older pupils develop their understanding of what they read very well. When pupils join, a few are at the early stages of reading. Work has begun to strengthen the teaching of early reading. However, not all staff are experts at helping pupils to catch up. This holds a few pupils back.

The mathematics curriculum is mostly well sequenced. The youngest pupils get lots of practice in geometry and enjoy mathematics. This helps them to establish excellent learning habits. However, it does mean that a few pupils go into Years 7 and 8 with gaps in their number knowledge. The mathematics curriculum is suitably ambitious for secondary-aged pupils. It covers a full range of mathematical knowledge. These pupils achieve well and can recall their previous learning in mathematics.

Teachers tailor units of work carefully to teach pupils about personal finance and the legal system. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to enter into debate. For example, pupils discuss issues around leaving a digital footprint or how hate crime is driven by hostility and discrimination. Pupils learn about the risk of criminal exploitation. Relationships, sex and health education is comprehensive, including the risk of online relationships. Pupils' life skills and resilience are being developed exceptionally well.

Staff ensure that pupils have suitable work experience and careers guidance. Every pupil goes on to achieve qualifications and moves into further education. Pupils are being well prepared for the transition into adulthood. Even so, leaders are starting to increase both the breadth and depth of knowledge pupils learn in some curriculum subjects and the range of qualifications and accreditations pupils can gain. However, this work is still at an early stage.

The proprietor body sets the vision for the school well. Central staff provide school leaders with high-quality pastoral support. They organise leadership training so that staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. However, the governance arrangements do not hold leaders to account sufficiently well for the quality of education that pupils receive. Although the school meets all the standards, a few aspects of leaders' record-keeping are not as strong as they might be. This issue is not followed up sufficiently by central staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policies and procedures follow the latest statutory guidance and are published on the school's website.

Safer recruitment procedures are comprehensive. Leaders undertake all the recruitment checks they should, which ensures that they appoint appropriate adults to work with pupils.

Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities. All have a strong understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff use their training well. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that all pupils get the help and support that they need. Leaders act swiftly on concerns about pupils' safety or well-being.

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

- Some staff do not have the expert subject knowledge they need to teach early reading consistently well. A few pupils who are at the early stages of reading do not get the full support they need to read with confidence and accuracy. Leaders need to ensure that all staff get the training they need so that all pupils who are at the early stages of reading catch up and read well.
- The range of accreditations and qualifications pupils can gain is not as extensive as it could be. The proprietor body needs to ensure that they hold school leaders to account for successfully extending the curriculum choice, breadth and depth, and increasing the range of qualifications on offer so that all pupils can meet their potential.
- Central staff do not check carefully enough the implementation of operational systems in the school. While the standards are met, some record-keeping is not as well organised as it should be. The proprietor body should ensure that central staff ensure that all required records are kept in good order.

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	133527
DfE registration number	933/6203
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10192614
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keys Group Progressive Care and Education
Chair	Nicola Kelly
Headteacher	Karl Templeman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,499 to £68,000
Telephone number	01823 481902
Website	www.somersetprogressiveschool.co.uk
Email address	admin.somersetschool@keys-group.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 September 2017

Information about this school

- Somerset Progressive School was registered in 2001 as a day special school to provide education for boys and girls who have behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. The school caters for pupils aged 7 to 19.
- In April 2017, Keys Group Progressive Care and Education, a national organisation which owns a number of health, social care, and education settings, took over ownership of the school.
- The school's stated aims are to: 'help children towards a better future by supporting pupils in the change and growth that will lead to success and progress'
- All pupils at the school an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Fees are paid by a number of local authorities for pupils who have an educational needs or an EHC plan.
- Pupils are taught in small groups or through one-to-one tuition.
- The school is in an extended farmhouse with adjoining buildings and cabins set in four acres of land near Taunton in Somerset. The school uses three local sports centres for physical and practical activities.
- The school was last inspected in September 2017. The school met the standards at that time.
- The school uses the following alternative providers: Otterhead Forest School, EAQ Manor Farm CIC and the Conquest Centre.

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 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 headteacher, the wider leadership team, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and other staff members.
- Inspectors held a telephone conversation the chief executive of Keys Group. They also met the chair of governors, who also sits on the proprietor body, and the regional manager. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education and art and design. Inspectors met with subject leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and talked to pupils about their work. Inspectors also discussed the school's approach to curriculum delivery with staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. They met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised the school's safeguarding records and the single central register. The inspection team also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors observed pupils during the school day, including at social times. A range of documentation was scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the six responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and six additional free-text responses. An inspector held telephone meetings with four parents. Inspectors reviewed staff survey documents provided by the school and Keys Group.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Farr

Her Majesty's Inspector

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