

Inspection of REAL Alternative Provision School

6 Woodhouse Road, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 2AD

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 July 2021

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| The quality of education | Good |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
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| Personal development | Good |
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| Leadership and management | Good |
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| Sixth-form provision | 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?

Pupils value and enjoy the opportunities they have at school. Pupils know that learning is important and apply themselves to their work. Staff have high expectations. Pupils, including post-16 students, gain valuable experience and qualifications that will help them be successful in their lives. Pupils are taught to have high aspirations for themselves. They say things like 'I feel like I belong here' and 'I feel I am somebody'.

Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive. Pupils are listened to and respected. There is a positive and purposeful atmosphere at the school and other sites. Staff are caring, encouraging and enthusiastic. They use teaching approaches that suit different pupils' needs. However, sometimes they do not identify carefully enough the most important things pupils need to remember, including for reading.

Pupils are polite and behave well. They are taught to be responsible for their own actions and to respect others. Pupils say there is no bullying, and they feel safe. They are confident that staff will resolve any concerns they have. From their different starting points, pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning. However, the number of pupils who are regularly absent or who attend part time is high.

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

The school is well led and managed by the cohesive senior leadership team. Leaders know what the school does well and the areas in which it can further improve. The ambition to enable all pupils to succeed and be positive, productive members of society is shared by all. The school offers a broad curriculum that is planned well. This includes for post-16 students, who pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their stage of education. They learn English, mathematics and vocational subjects, often alongside key stage 4 pupils. Staff and pupils know what pupils need to achieve in the different subjects to enable them to be successful.

The curriculum includes high-quality vocational opportunities and facilities. The school works with a range of alternative providers which provide experience and study in, for example, mechanics, land-based studies, sport, construction, music and digital-based learning. Some post-16 students were creating online commercial advertisements to match what the clients wanted, for example.

Staff have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Staff use different teaching approaches and adapt the curriculum based on pupils' individual needs. They explain things clearly and help pupils link new learning to what they have learned before. Staff check what pupils remember in different subjects. However, sometimes staff do not identify carefully enough the most important knowledge pupils need to learn that will make the biggest difference.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. They have introduced several initiatives. These include study based around chosen novels, for example 'Skellig'. Pupils in Year 11 say things like 'I don't read books', 'This is the first book I've taken home' and 'I was doing a lesson and it got interesting'. Pupils are supported to develop their reading comprehension skills, including by being helped to develop their phonics knowledge in order to assist them in reading difficult words. However, this work is still at an early stage. Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the expertise they need to teach reading well.

Pupils, including those in the post-16 provision, achieve well. Staff prepare pupils carefully for each next step of their education and development, including for when they leave school. Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance and work experience. From their often low starting points, nearly all pupils, including those who are post-16, go on to gain vocational qualifications or relevant experience that will enable them to go on to college, training or apprenticeships, and the world of work.

Pupils behave well. Staff use a consistent, calm and positive approach to managing behaviour that is built on positive relationships. For pupils who find managing their behaviour more difficult, staff provide individual support. Most pupils who join the school are anxious about coming to school and many initially attend part time. For some, attendance takes time to improve. Leaders carry out a range of determined actions to improve attendance. They work closely with parents, carers and pupils. They have recently appointed a dedicated attendance officer. However, while the attendance of many pupils is improving, the number of pupils who attend part time or who are regularly absent is high.

Leaders and other staff place pupils' personal development at the heart of the school's work. Staff know all the pupils well and teach them to become self-confident and more independent. There is an inclusive ethos of mutual respect. Incidents of bullying are rare. Staff broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world through the curriculum and events such as Pride Month, Holocaust Memorial Day or careers week. Pupils learn to understand different types of relationships and families. They learn to respect those who may be different from themselves. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

Staff are proud of the work they do for the pupils. They say leaders are supportive and considerate of their well-being and workload, and morale is positive. Parents who expressed a view are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work.

Senior leaders, the proprietor and the governing body work together effectively, to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards, including those related to post-16 provision and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They make sure that the school as well as other sites are safe and positive places to learn. They evaluate possible risks and put measures in place to reduce them. They have ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. The proprietor and governing body maintain oversight of the school's curriculum. They visit the school and have a good understanding of all aspects of

the school's work. They are effective in supporting and challenging leaders to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff understand the additional vulnerabilities that many of the pupils have. Staff receive training on the latest safeguarding guidance. They understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders check pupils' well-being and safety, including of pupils who learn off site or who attend alternative provision.

Leaders complete all required pre-employment checks for new members of staff. They act appropriately and promptly to follow up any concerns about pupils' welfare. They record the actions they take, including the involvement of external agencies, where this is relevant.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Sometimes, staff do not identify effectively the most important knowledge they want pupils to learn, including for reading. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Staff should ensure that their plans for learning clearly identify what pupils need to learn and the order they will learn it.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the necessary expertise to teach reading well, particularly for pupils who struggle to read. Some pupils do not improve their confidence and fluency in reading as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand how best to teach reading.
- Many pupils are regularly absent, and many attend the school part time. This limits these pupils' chances to achieve well and prepare for their next steps effectively. Leaders are determined to support these pupils to attend more regularly. They should ensure that their work increases the amount of time these pupils are in school so that the pupils can benefit fully from the curriculum provided.

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

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| Unique reference number | 142538 |
| DfE registration number | 891/6037 |
| Local authority | Nottinghamshire County Council |
| Inspection number | 10194710 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 14 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 53 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 13 |
| Proprietor | R.E.A.L Education Limited |
| Chair | Steve Quinn and Richard Smith |
| Headteacher | Nikki Purcell |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £45,000 to £46,398 |
| Telephone number | 01623 423 411 |
| Website | realaps.org |
| Email address | enquiries@real-education.org |
| Dates of previous inspection | 1 to 3 November 2016 |

Information about this school

- REAL Alternative Provision School is an independent special school. The proprietor of the school is R.E.A.L Education Limited.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A deputy headteacher and four senior leaders have been appointed since September 2020.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for pupils who have additional learning needs or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school works with a range of unregistered alternative providers at different sites that provide a range of practical and vocational courses. These are run by the proprietor but are separate to the school:
 - R.E.A.L. Sport, Pleasley
 - R.E.A.L. Mechanics, Mansfield
 - R.E.A.L. Mechanics, Sneinton
 - R.E.A.L. Construction, Chesterfield
 - R.E.A.L. Music, Mansfield
 - R.E.A.L. Adventure, Mansfield
 - R.E.A.L. Land Based Studies, Sutton-in-Ashfield
 - R.E.A.L. Creative Digital, Mansfield
 - R.E.A.L. Hospitality and Catering, Mansfield.
- The school currently works with three alternative providers that are external to the organisation. These are also unregistered: CAST Angling Project, Newstead, Nottinghamshire; Hinckley Guitar Lessons, Hinckley, Leicestershire; and Enstruct Training, Leicester, Leicestershire.
- This is the school's second standard inspection since the school opened in January 2016. The previous inspection took place on 1 to 3 November 2016.
- There are currently 53 pupils on the school's roll. This is above the number that the school is registered for. The facilities and provision are sufficient to care for and meet all the pupils' needs. The school is in the process of applying for a material change to its registration status.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school's leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the proprietor and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked closely at reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education to evaluate the quality of education. Inspectors met with nominated leaders for each subject. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' workbooks and, as far as possible, met with some pupils and staff who were involved in the lessons we visited. The inspectors visited or spoke with staff from four of the alternative provision sites attended by pupils.
- Inspectors met with staff and pupils both formally and informally. On some occasions, an adult was present when we spoke with pupils, to reduce any possible anxieties pupils may feel.
- Throughout the inspection, the lead inspector met with safeguarding leaders and other staff to discuss safeguarding. The lead inspector also considered documentation relating to the checks made on new staff. Safeguarding records and processes were evaluated, as well as those relating to attendance, bullying and behaviour.
- The lead inspector toured the school site to check the school's compliance with Part 5 of the independent school standards. The lead inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors took account of the seven free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 11 responses to the pupils' survey. There were no responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

John Lawson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

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