

Inspection of The Ryes College

Pump Farm, Bures Road, Assington, SUDBURY, Suffolk CO10 5NA

Inspection dates: 7–9 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well supported to develop socially and emotionally. Most pupils re-engage with learning after long periods out of education or not doing well at previous schools. However, some pupils have left the school in the past because leaders and staff were not meeting their needs. Beyond English and mathematics, pupils do not always learn what they need to know so that they make the progress in the curriculum that they should.

Learning focuses on what pupils need to know to participate in life outside of school. Pupils learn how to be independent. For example, they use what they have learned in real life situations. Older pupils get the help they need to make choices about their next steps in education, training, or employment.

Pupils say behaviour has improved since the inspections in January and October 2020. They know what is expected of them. Pupils develop good relationships with one another and staff. Pupils and staff participate enthusiastically in games at lunchtimes. Most pupils attend school regularly. Bullying, when it happens, is dealt with quickly. Pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils develop understanding of responsibility and empathy for others. They take part in charity work for the local community. Pupils enjoy outside activities like country walks. They all take part in work experience placements. Some parents are very positive about what the school has done to help their children.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn a range of subjects, and that there is a curriculum for each of these subjects. All pupils have opportunities to complete qualifications and accreditation in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. This prepares pupils to be able to apply for appropriate post-16 courses at college, or training or employment opportunities.

There is precise detail in English and mathematics curriculum plans. In other subjects, curriculum plans vary in quality. In some plans, there is not enough detail about what knowledge pupils need to have learned before they are able to move on to the next section of learning. In other subjects, plans focus overtly on the completion of activities rather than building knowledge and skills. This limits pupils' progress and understanding in those curriculum subjects.

In English, pupils are introduced to a range of different texts. Books are chosen carefully to link with topics being taught, capture pupils' interests and be at the right level for pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils who get extra help with their reading improve, so that they read with greater accuracy and understanding. Some pupils choose not to take part in extra sessions to improve their reading. Other subjects do not contribute as well as they could to developing pupils skills in reading and

writing. Curriculum plans in most subjects do not include how they will help pupils practise and use their reading and writing knowledge or develop their vocabulary.

Leaders have systems in place for setting pupils' targets and monitoring progress towards them. However, these targets are not clearly linked to achieving the outcomes intended in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. This means that the activities that teachers provide are not always matched to pupils' needs.

A number of pupils left the school in the past. Leaders acknowledge that this is because the school's provision did not meet these pupils' social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. Leaders have changed processes for reviewing applications for places so that they understand and are able to cater for pupils' needs better before they start at the school. Leaders are starting to work with a wider range of external professionals to better meet pupils' SEMH needs. However, this work is still developing and does not closely align with the targets being set for pupils, or the curriculum they are accessing.

Leaders have worked hard to raise expectations of behaviour since the serious failings identified by inspectors in January and October 2020. Leaders have made significant headway in this area of their work. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is mostly good. Most pupils attend regularly. The attendance of pupils who have been absent frequently has improved significantly. Typically, staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and well. This had led to a significant reduction in behavioural incidents in the school.

Staff have a strong understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils' personal development is supported well. In life skills, pupils learn many of the things they need to live independently in modern British society. Routine involvement in charity work, work experience and volunteering placements help pupils develop responsibility and self-esteem. Pupils have contributed to the local community, for example by raising money for the construction of a children's play area.

Leaders and the proprietor body want the best for pupils. They have identified where there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Leaders are now providing the training and support needed to improve teaching and teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum.

Governors, who include members of the proprietor body, hold school leaders to account using their range of educational skills and expertise. They have acted decisively to ensure that independent school standards that were not met at recent emergency and monitoring inspections are now met. Governors now have systems in place to try to ensure that the issues identified in those inspections do not occur again.

The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school site is safe because health and safety policies and procedures are rigorously followed. The school's website provides parents with the information they require such as the school's safeguarding policy. The school complies with the 2010

Equality Act. The school building is well-maintained. It provides a welcoming environment for the pupils that attend the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have worked diligently to improve safeguarding. The checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work in schools are thorough and accurately recorded. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.

Staff know how to recognise the risks that pupils face. Leaders follow up any concerns thoroughly and swiftly. They ensure that pupils get the help they need, involving external agencies when necessary. Pupils learn about different risks through the taught curriculum and assemblies.

Leaders follow up absence rigorously and check that pupils are safe. They ensure that the admissions and attendance registers are accurately maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Several subject plans do not clearly identify the underlying knowledge that pupils need to understand securely to successfully build on previous learning. In other subjects, leaders do not identify the breadth of subject knowledge that pupils should learn over time. As a result, teachers focus on teaching activities rather than helping pupils learn and remember important subject content and knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans clearly identify the important subject knowledge that pupils should learn and that teachers implement plans effectively.
- Leaders have identified where there are inconsistencies in teaching. Teachers are more secure in their subject knowledge and more effective in helping pupils learn in some subject areas than others. This slows pupils' progress in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop the expertise of all teachers in order to implement the planned curriculum effectively.
- Other than in English, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, language and communication skills. Pupils who take part in programmes to improve their reading make progress. However, some pupils choose not to participate in these programmes. This is a barrier to pupils' learning across the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that they promote the development of pupils' language, reading and communication skills across the curriculum more effectively.
- Leaders have systems in place for setting targets for pupils and monitoring their progress towards these targets. The targets in EHC plans and other support plans do not always match. Leaders do not accurately capture pupils' contributions to setting targets and producing EHC plans. Leaders should ensure that the targets

set for pupils are related to the pupil's individual needs and achieving the outcomes in their EHC plans, and ensure that provision consistently meets pupils' needs and aspirations.

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	143911
DfE registration number	935/6004
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10193493
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Ryes College Limited
Chair	Kate Yarbo
Headteacher	Daniel Lawrence
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,820 to £41,652
Telephone number	01787 228 344
Website	www.theryescollege.org.uk
Email address	office@theryescollege.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5–7 December 2017

Information about this school

- The school is currently registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit up to 36 pupils.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, including autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome diagnosis, attachment disorders, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and specific learning difficulties.
- All pupils are in receipt of an EHC plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities. Most pupils arrive having been excluded from school or having missed long periods of education.
- The school does not currently use supply staff.
- The school uses alternative provision to provide education programmes suited to individual pupils' needs and interests. The school currently makes use of Rally Sport in Rayleigh and Suffolk College. Pupils also have opportunities for work experience and volunteering with a range of local employers and through ActivGardens.
- The Ryes College Limited is also the proprietor of another school, Argyll House in Norfolk.
- The school's inspection history:
 - The school's first standard inspection was in June 1998. The quality of education was judged good.
 - In July 2005, Ofsted conducted another standard inspection. The quality of education was judged inadequate.
 - In March 2006, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. Not all of the independent school standards were met.
 - In November 2006, Ofsted conducted an emergency inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
 - In April 2008, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged inadequate.
 - In February 2009, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
 - In July 2009, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
 - In January 2010, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
 - In October 2010, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
 - In June 2011, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards checked at the time were met.

- In December 2011, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged good.
- In November 2014, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged good.
- In April 2015, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection. Following this inspection, the DfE issued the school with a new unique reference number.
- In December 2017, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged good.
- In May 2018, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection. Following the inspection, the DfE changed the school's registration details and increased the maximum number of pupils on roll from 24 to 36.
- In January 2020, Ofsted conducted an emergency, one-day inspection. The independent school standards were not met.
- In October 2020, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. The independent school standards were not met.

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 held meetings with members of the proprietor body, the education lead for The Ryes College Limited, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant special educational needs coordinator and other school staff. They held telephone conversations with representatives from Essex County Council (which commissions the largest number of places at the school) and staff from an alternative provider that pupils attend.
- Inspectors visited lessons, some jointly with school leaders. They looked closely at the quality of education in English, including reading, mathematics, food technology and personal, social, health and economic education. They checked curriculum plans, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central register. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.

- Inspectors did not report on the sixth-form provision as it has fewer than five students.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff and three free-text responses to the parents’ survey, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector held telephone conversations with three parents. Inspectors also considered information provided by the school sharing pupils’ and parents’ views. There were no responses to Ofsted’s online pupils’ survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty’s Inspector

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