

Inspection of Learn 4 Life School

Quarry Bank Community Centre, 364 Ormskirk Road, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale,
Lancashire WN8 9AL

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not achieve as well as they could. This is because leaders' expectations of pupils could be higher. Some pupils attain GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. However, pupils do not do as well in other subjects. There are variations in how well the curriculum plans in these other subjects set out the knowledge pupils need to learn or the order they need to learn it.

Pupils feel safe. This is because caring staff make them feel at ease and build trusting relationships with them. There is little bullying at the school because teachers intervene quickly so that any problems with misbehaviour are remedied. However, some pupils do not attend the school as often as they should.

Pupils are offered a range of subjects to study. These include training in hair and beauty or mechanical engineering qualifications at alternative providers. Pupils enjoy these placements. Their attendance at these settings is often more frequent than their attendance at the school.

Some pupils leave the school or their placements without permission. This means that some pupils are at risk for the time they are absent from the school or their placements. Leaders have not acted appropriately to reduce the risks of this happening again.

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

The proprietor and senior leaders have become too lax in their oversight of the school. This has led to a decline in the quality of provision since the previous inspection. Senior leaders lack a determination to provide a well-designed curriculum which supports pupils to learn more and remember more of the subjects they study. Senior leaders do not provide teachers with the strategic direction they need to enable teachers to lead the development of curriculum subjects.

The curriculum is planned effectively for a few subjects, such as English, including reading, and mathematics. In these subjects, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), build the knowledge they need to improve their reading skills and learning in mathematics.

The programme for the teaching of reading has a clear structure. Pupils enjoy the texts they read. However, the texts do not always match their abilities and allow them to practise their reading skills effectively. This means that pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could. Additionally, the reading curriculum does not help pupils to catch up quickly on any learning that they may have missed.

In mathematics, pupils revisit some of their learning so that they can regularly practise their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Leaders ensure that the range of subjects taught meets the requirements of the independent school standards. However, planning for subjects other than reading and mathematics varies in how it sets out the knowledge pupils will learn. For example, in subjects such as geography, history and design technology, planned learning is superficial and lacks depth. In these subjects, learning activities focus on completing tasks rather than on what pupils need to learn next.

Leaders use assessment to check what pupils are learning. However, the information collected from assessment is not routinely used to adapt curriculum plans.

Leaders have not provided training for teachers to help them to develop curriculum plans which set out the subject content pupils will learn and remember in order. This means that not all teachers teach their subjects in a way which enables pupils to build their knowledge. Furthermore, some alternative provision does not provide pupils with the opportunity to access more advanced qualifications. For example, pupils cannot go on to study level 2 qualifications in hair and beauty despite being capable of achieving them.

Pupils behave well and disruptions to lessons are rare. When this does happen, staff ensure that any misbehaviour is addressed discretely so that it does not impact on pupils' learning. However, leaders' records of pupils' attendance are confused. Information is not accurately reported to the proprietor. Risk assessments to manage pupils who go missing are not effective. Leaders have not learned from such episodes so that pupils can be kept as safe as possible. Supervision for pupils at risk of going missing has not been good enough. Year 11 pupils recently left the school roll, having been encouraged to attend following the summer half term. Despite this, pupils do not attend school regularly enough and absence rates are increasing over time.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum supports pupils well to understand the views and opinions of others. Pupils gain an appreciation of what makes everyone different, as well as an understanding of equalities. These help pupils to get on with each other and make friends. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, the pupils inspectors spoke to were respectful and accepting of each other's differences. They understand the need to treat others equally.

Leaders have ensured that careers advice and guidance starts as soon as pupils join the school. Teachers make sure that pupils' interests and goals are matched to the alternative provision on offer. The careers leader has started to improve the school's careers provision by making use of national guidance. Most pupils move on to appropriate post-16 destinations, such as college or apprenticeships.

The proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards have been met consistently. Neither has he ensured the safety and well-being of pupils. Leaders have not done enough to promote the attendance of pupils at school. Senior leaders have not provided a strategic direction to school improvement. In turn, school improvement has become stifled. Teachers feel that their workload is

acceptable, but some staff would like more clarity about what is expected of them so that their time can be used more productively. For example, subject leaders would appreciate more professional development and time allocated to enable them to improve their areas of responsibility.

The proprietor has a clear accessibility plan in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The leadership of safeguarding is weak. The designated safeguarding lead does not ensure that there is a clear log of concerns raised by staff. Records of any instances when pupils have been at risk lack detail. School leaders lack the knowledge and awareness that they need to keep pupils safe. Leaders do not look at patterns and trends to identify how to prevent some safeguarding incidents from repeating. For example, some pupils go missing from the school and placements. This is despite it being highlighted as a significant risk for some pupils.

In contrast, the safeguarding knowledge of teachers and support staff is much better. The proprietor ensures that staff receive appropriate training regularly. Staff ensure there is an emphasis on how to keep safe in the curriculum. For example, pupils' work showed an awareness of the effects of drugs and alcohol.

Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding policy is available for parents and carers on request from the school office. This policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance.

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

- Leaders do not record all safeguarding concerns about pupils. Leaders do not analyse the records for pupils who go missing from school well enough. This means that leaders cannot be sure that pupils are safe. The proprietor and other leaders should urgently ensure that all safeguarding concerns and incidents are recorded and analysed to identify patterns and causes. This will help leaders to introduce better preventative measures and increase pupils' safety.
- Leaders do not have a clear evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement needed by the school. Targets for improvement are not clear or measurable. School improvement has stagnated. The proprietor and senior leaders should accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school and set clear targets for improvement.
- Subject leaders have not received training to help them to plan a logical sequence of learning in all subjects. This means that pupils do not learn or remember subject knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should provide staff with

professional development to help them to plan the content of each subject curriculum so that pupils, including those with SEND, can learn more and remember more.

- Curriculum plans are based on assessments and the achievement of qualifications. This means that the curriculum does not provide enough depth to pupils' learning. Senior leaders should ensure that they make more productive use of assessment to adapt learning so that it builds on what pupils have learned previously.
- Senior leaders do not find out the reasons why some pupils fail to attend school. Pupils' absence is not recorded accurately or reported on. This has resulted in some pupils being at risk. Leaders should analyse the reasons why pupils do not attend regularly and use this information to help them to ensure that there is sustained improvement in pupils' attendance.

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	129571
DfE registration number	888/6089
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10177208
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Daniel Curran
Headteacher	Cath Briggs
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,142 to £77,792
Telephone number	01695 768 960
Website	None
Email address	cath.briggs@careafloat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 September 2018

Information about this school

- The school currently uses five alternative providers. None of these providers are registered as a school.
- The school is preparing to move to new premises. At the time of the inspection, the school had not received approval from the Department of Education.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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 headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and teaching staff about the areas that they lead.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and PSHE. As part of these, they spoke with the headteacher, met with teachers and pupils, undertook an analysis of pupils' work and visited lessons. Inspectors heard pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work in subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors met with pupils to ask them about safeguarding. They also discussed safeguarding with the headteacher, governors, proprietor and staff. They reviewed documentation that included the school's safeguarding policy, the register of checks carried out on employees and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors looked at the school's behaviour records, observed pupils in and around the school and discussed behaviour and bullying with staff.
- Inspectors took account of four written responses to Ofsted Parent View, the inspection survey for parents, as well as six responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Adam Sproston

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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