

# Inspection of White Trees Independent School

13a London Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5NA

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Inspection dates: 10 to 12 November 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils engage positively with learning at White Trees. Pupils learn a curriculum that is carefully tailored to their individual needs and aspirations. They develop the confidence and determination to achieve well. Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities they have to learn new skills and develop their interests. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education or training.

Pupils feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and understanding. Pupils learn strategies that help them manage their emotions and their behaviour. Pupils know that staff care for their well-being as well as their achievement. They are confident that staff listen to their concerns and work with them to resolve any difficulties they may have. Pupils take responsibility for their actions. They have opportunities to reflect when things have gone wrong. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, it is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils are well supported to be successful in school.

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the way staff work with pupils to understand their specific needs and provide them with a positive experience of education.

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

Since the previous standard inspection, leaders have brought about significant improvement in the quality of education. Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious and raises expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Leaders have carefully considered the knowledge pupils need to learn across a broad range of subjects, as well as in English, mathematics and science. Detailed subject plans enable teachers to identify pupils' starting points accurately. Teaching addresses gaps in pupils' knowledge and builds on what pupils have learned before. Pupils revisit important knowledge before they move on to new learning. Teaching is carefully adapted to meet individual pupils' needs.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to practise reading across the curriculum. Assessment is used well to identify the aspects of reading that pupils need to practise to help them become more proficient readers. Pupils develop their fluency as readers and learn skills to help them deepen their understanding of texts. While leaders promote an interest in books, they recognise that there is more work to do to encourage pupils to develop a positive view of reading.

In some subjects, for example when learning judo, pupils learn the relevant vocabulary that helps them remember and talk about what they have learned. This is not consistent across all subjects. Leaders should further develop subject plans to include the subject-specific vocabulary that pupils should know and understand as they progress in each subject.

The provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Through the curriculum and wider school experience, pupils discuss, debate and explore different ideas and different points of view. Older pupils can talk about the complexity of issues in society. Pupils learn to be tolerant and respect difference. Leaders emphasise the importance of physical health and emotional well-being. Pupils participate in sport and regularly access learning outdoors.

Pupils receive relevant careers education. Pupils explore the relevance of their learning to the world of work as part of the subjects they study. Work skills is a compulsory element of the curriculum for pupils in Year 10 and Year 11. Pupils reflect on the knowledge and skills that are appropriate for different types of roles. They practise writing applications and interview techniques. Leaders ensure that pupils access independent advice and appropriate experiences so that they are well informed about their next steps and possible career pathways.

At the time of this inspection, there were no sixth-form students attending the school. Sixth-form provision is in place to meet the individual needs of pupils who are already registered at the school and who may require additional support or more time to be successful in the next stage of their education or employment. Leaders ensure that all pupils receive a highly individualised programme of education and support. This also applies to students who attend the school in the sixth form.

The governing body has developed its role. Members of the governing body bring a range of relevant skills and experience. They share leaders' vision for the school and their ambition for pupils' progress and achievement. Leaders welcome the challenge and support they receive from the governing body. Governors ensure that leaders focus their actions on providing a good education for all pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Safeguarding is at the forefront of everybody's mind and in all aspects of the school's work. Staff are quick to report concerns. They know how to identify the signs of potential abuse. Training is regular and up to date. Policies, systems and procedures to safeguard pupils are clearly understood by all staff. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils and families can access the support they need.

Pre-employment checks are carried out rigorously to ensure the suitability of staff and governors. Risk assessments are relevant, detailed and regularly reviewed. Leaders ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard all members of the school community.

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

- Leaders promote reading. However, pupils are reluctant readers. Leaders should find ways to help pupils gain a more positive perception of themselves as readers so that they read more readily for enjoyment and to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study.
- Pupils learn key vocabulary in some of the subjects they study. This helps them secure important knowledge and talk confidently about their learning. Key vocabulary is not consistently planned and taught across all subjects. Leaders should identify the subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to learn in each subject.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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>	140655
<b>DfE registration number</b>	919/6053
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10203403
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<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>	23
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	8
<b>Proprietor</b>	Emma Barr
<b>Headteacher</b>	Laura Bull
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£25,000 per term, £75,000 per year.
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 658518
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://whitetrees-group.co.uk/education">https://whitetrees-group.co.uk/education</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com">laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 to 27 April 2018

## Information about this school

- White Trees Independent School is a day special school. It provides education for boys and girls who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.
- There are currently 23 pupils on the school roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan.
- The school opened in February 2014 and moved to its current location in 2017. Additional school accommodation is located in Little Hallingbury, two miles from the main school site.
- The school is registered to take a maximum of 23 pupils from the age of 11 to 18 years. Leaders clearly state that they do not intend to admit pupils between the ages of 16 to 18. The provision is in place for existing pupils who may need additional time or additional support to enable them to access the next stage of their education or employment.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the previous material change inspection. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- The school makes use of additional off-site locations regularly for day-to-day teaching. These include local venues in the community, such as the public library. The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- Inspection history:
  - On 18 December 2013, Ofsted carried out a pre-registration inspection.
  - On 24 February 2015, Ofsted carried out its first standard inspection of the school. The school was judged as good and met all the independent school standards.
  - On 5 November 2015, an emergency inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE). This was following a complaint about behaviour and supervision of pupils. There were a number of unmet standards.
  - Following the emergency inspection, the DfE required the school to provide an action plan. The action plan was approved on 21 March 2016.
  - In June 2016, Ofsted carried out a progress monitoring inspection. All the independent standards that were checked during the inspection were met.
  - In November 2017, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection.
  - At the standard inspection in April 2018, inspectors judged the school as requiring improvement. Two independent school standards were not met.
  - The school's action plans were reviewed in September 2018 and 2019. Both plans were deemed not acceptable.
  - In May 2019, Ofsted carried out a progress monitoring inspection. All independent standards that were checked during the inspection were judged to be met. This inspection included an application to make a material change to its registration. The school was registered to take 16 pupils in the age

range of 11 to 16 years. The request to extend the age range from 16 to 18 was granted in May 2019.

- A material change inspection was carried out in July 2020. Two independent school standards were not met at this inspection.
- An action plan was evaluated in March 2021. It was judged to be not acceptable.

## **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 deputy headteacher and the chair of governors. The lead inspector also considered information provided by the proprietor and spoke with the former chair of governors on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, physical education and science. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at subject plans, visited lessons with leaders, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors looked at the policies and procedures that are in place to safeguard pupils. They reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record of pre-employment checks, risk assessments, records of training and the systems used to report safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up. Inspectors also reviewed records of bullying and behaviour incidents. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff and considered feedback from parents with respect to safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with representatives from Hertfordshire local authority, and with the manager of Rallysports Engineering Academy alternative provider.
- Inspectors made a tour of both school sites, reviewed the information available on the school website and considered a range of documentation to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the feedback from seven parents and carers submitted to Parent View, which also included seven free-text comments. Inspectors also

reviewed the feedback from the 10 pupils that contributed to the pupil survey and 24 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wendy Varney

Her Majesty's Inspector



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