

Inspection of The Place Independent School

Hill Farm, Belvoir Road, Bottesford NG13 0EA

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2021

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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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 feel fortunate to come to this school. They know that staff have their interests at heart and want them to be successful in all that they do. The school is inclusive and welcoming. Many pupils have experienced difficulties at their previous schools. Some had struggled to attend or had been excluded. Staff go to great lengths to make pupils feel secure and safe, so that they are able to apply themselves to school life. Pupils have very positive relationships with staff. They feel respected and cared for. They say that staff help them to sort out any problems. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. Most attend well.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They know all pupils well and make sure that they meet their needs.

Staff want pupils to do well in their studies as well as developing the skills to manage themselves responsibly. Pupils benefit from intensive support to develop social skills and independence. They value this support. As one pupil put it, 'This school has helped me to show who I am.'

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

Pupils are supported very well when they join the school. Staff work with families and external agencies to gather relevant information to ensure a smooth transition. Pupils are supported to build gradually towards full-time attendance. Leaders and staff give pupils helpful strategies to help them manage their behaviour. They encourage pupils to reflect when things go wrong, so that they can make better decisions in the future. Pupils' behaviour improves significantly during their time at the school. The school has a policy of not excluding pupils.

Plans are in place to develop the curriculum offer at key stage 4 so that pupils can study vocational subjects such as hair and beauty, bicycle maintenance and construction. The site has been developed to accommodate such courses in bespoke, high-quality facilities.

Leaders of most subjects, such as physical education (PE), mathematics and science, have a clear vision for their curriculums. They have identified the key concepts that pupils should know and by when. Curriculum content is appropriately challenging. Curriculum plans are designed to help pupils build their knowledge over time. Staff consider pupils' needs when planning lessons. For example, they ensure that pupils are given plenty of opportunities to work towards their personal targets and make progress towards their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes.

In most subjects, teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain things clearly and check that pupils understand. Teachers give pupils time to reflect on what they have learned before. This helps to consolidate knowledge so that pupils remember more over time. Teachers continually check pupils' knowledge and use this information to inform future planning. Pupils progress well through the curriculum.

Leaders want pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly, in school and at home. Many pupils enjoy reading and do so with confidence. Most pupils choose their own reading books. However, staff do not make sure that all pupils read books that are suitable for their ability. A few pupils who are at the early stages of reading are not getting the precise support they need to improve their reading skills.

Currently, each pupil has their own classroom. Classrooms are set out to support pupils' individual needs. Pupils value having their own space. Over time, pupils are supported to work with others. For example, some pupils work in pairs in PE lessons.

Pupils' personal development is promoted through all aspects of the school's work. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums are comprehensive and provide pupils with the knowledge they need to maintain healthy lives. These subjects help pupils understand how to live in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about respect and consent. Sessions with their key workers complement this work. Pupils understand diversity and respect differences in others. However, opportunities for pupils to experience life beyond the school gate are limited. Pupils receive appropriate careers education and are supported to take their next steps. For example, staff accompany pupils when visiting colleges and help pupils to write applications.

The proprietor has the skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that the independent school standards continue to be met. He has introduced a rigorous approach to monitoring the school's work. He has identified clear, appropriate priorities for school improvement. Some aspects of leadership are not as effective as they could be. Some leaders need further training to do their roles well.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel that they are making a positive difference to pupils' lives. Parents and carers agree, and are overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision. Leaders allocate time for staff to complete administrative tasks and prepare for the next day. A few staff feel that leaders do not consider their workload or well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand and take seriously their duty to safeguard pupils. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. Staff know all pupils very well as individuals. This helps staff to spot signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. They act quickly when concerns arise. They involve external agencies appropriately.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the PSHE and RSE curriculums, and sessions with their key workers. Pupils know how to raise a concern with staff, should they be worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's approach to reading is not as well planned as it could be. Some staff need further training to teach reading effectively. Leaders should ensure that there is a strategic, coherent approach to teaching reading. They should ensure that all staff are trained to teach reading, including how to teach phonics effectively. They should ensure that pupils' reading books consistently match their reading knowledge.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to experience life outside school. This means that they are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be. Leaders should ensure that pupils are given more opportunities to develop their independence and experience of the wider community.
- Not all leaders have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective in their roles. Senior leaders should ensure that all leaders are trained, challenged and supported to lead their areas of responsibility effectively.

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

Unique reference number	142939
DfE registration number	855/6038
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10209122
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Leo Guy
Headteacher	Cate Tumman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,988 to £61,209
Telephone number	01949 844440
Website	www.theplaceindependentschool.co.uk
Email address	Cate@theplaceindependentschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–18 January 2018

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with complex needs. Almost all pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is registered to admit up to 26 pupils, aged seven to 18. Currently, there are 22 pupils on roll, aged eight to 17.
- The school operates on two sites. The lower school is located at Hill Farm, Belvoir Road, Bottesford NG13 0EA. The upper school is located at 7 Jericho Lane, Barkestone NG13 0HF.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in proprietor.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met the headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, reading, humanities and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, reviewed curriculum plans, looked at pupils' work, visited lessons and spoke with staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with leaders of other subjects and reviewed curriculum plans, including for English, science and PE.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead. They spoke to staff and pupils about their understanding of safeguarding matters. The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and other related policies. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's single central record of checks on staff's suitability to work with children, and the school's child protection records.
- The lead inspector toured both school sites to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards (the standards). She met with the proprietor to discuss the findings and reviewed the proprietor's plans to monitor compliance with the standards.

- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the views of parents shared via an email and in the free-text comments on Ofsted Parent View.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

The outcome of this part of the inspection is:

- The lead inspector discussed the school's application to increase the maximum number of pupils to 50. The inspector agreed with the proprietor that she would recommend a maximum number of 40 pupils. **The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to increasing the maximum number of pupils to 40 is implemented.**

Inspection team

Deborah Mosley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Hall

Ofsted Inspector

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