

Inspection of Infiniti School

The Street, Doddington, Sittingbourne, Kent, Kent ME9 0BG

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are understood and accepted for who they are. But, as they explained, this does not mean they can do as they please. Expectations of pupils are high. There is a strong culture of mutual respect. Overall, pupils enjoy school, behave well and work hard.

Relationships are very strong. Pupils are proud of the school values of 'engagement', 'compassion' and 'ownership' that they have helped to create. They are reflective about what these values mean for them as individuals in their daily lives.

Pupil voice is central to all aspects of school life. Pupils' opinions matter and are heard. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and improve their communication and self-esteem. There are multiple pupil ambassadors, including for sport, mental health, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community.

Outdoor and adventurous activities are highly valued and provide valuable experiences and learning. Pupils can also explain the significant impact these opportunities have on their academic studies and engagement.

Pupils have complete confidence in the school's ability to deal with bullying. Most think it doesn't even happen. Pupils highly recommend their school as a positive and safe place.

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

The vision for this new school is clear. Through strong direction and leadership, the intended ethos has been quickly established. The passion and positivity about pupils from leaders and staff shine through.

The school successfully promotes pupils' mental health and personal development. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate and praise the support and understanding pupils receive.

The carefully considered curriculum is evolving well. Valuable time is spent revisiting and building on previous content to help pupils remember the most important learning long-term. For many pupils, this boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

The school's approach to teaching the curriculum is flexible enough to keep sight of its aims but also tackle significant gaps many pupils have in their previous learning. In mathematics, for example, there is strong emphasis on checking and securing the important foundations before moving on to more challenging content. Pupils' confidence and accuracy with calculations are growing. They know and use an increasing range of mathematical vocabulary.

The curriculum rightly prioritises pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Teachers pay close attention to the target outcomes in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans through different subjects. The school's 'engage' and 'explore' pathways prioritise time for less formal activities. Leaders rightly intend to keep this balance under review over time. They plan to expand the breadth and ambition of academic opportunities for pupils who are able to access them.

The school promotes the importance and value of reading. In English, carefully crafted questions prompt pupils to reflect about what books or texts might have to say about wider issues and ideas. Pupils who have not learned to read fluently are given extra help, including targeted phonics teaching. However, valuable learning from these sessions is not reinforced as well as it could be.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. For example, the skilful teaching of sometimes sensitive topics in personal, social and health education (PSHE) means that pupils' contributions are usually sensitive and insightful. In physical education (PE), leaders and teachers allow time for pupils to develop and refine their skills by focusing on a particular sport or activity for a sustained period, then revisiting it over time.

Pupils typically approach lessons with a serious attitude. Some demonstrate genuine commitment and concentration. Where pupils struggle to focus or apply themselves to lessons, adults' strategies to encourage engagement secure improvements over time. Pupils and staff clearly take a pride in pupils' written workbooks.

There are many success stories about getting pupils to spend more time in school. Leaders and staff rightly continue to strive to build further on this success.

Pupils are respectful of difference and keen to learn about and embrace diversity. For example, pupils have learned about customs and traditions within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities through their peers sharing their family experiences. The school and families are working closely together with the aim of changing the culture around education through the generations.

Work is underway to strengthen the offer of careers information and guidance so that it exceeds the minimum requirements. Leaders' plans are rightly ambitious, but COVID-19 has undoubtedly hampered their efforts.

There is a very strong commitment to training and professional development. Leaders employ helpful strategies to ensure that the training has value and is interpreted and used in the context of Infiniti School. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel listened to, valued and part of the ongoing development of the school.

The proprietor has accrued a knowledgeable and experienced group of governors to oversee the work of the school. There is more to do to fully establish effective governance arrangements, but governors are already providing helpful challenge and support. Statutory requirements, such as the independent school standards,

planning to improve accessibility, and implementing the new relationships, sex and health education requirements, are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school works extensively with families in the best interests of their children. The dedication and commitment of leaders and staff to support, help and protect pupils are clear. Adults are vigilant and tenacious in pursuing safeguarding matters. They recognise vulnerabilities and are prompt to act on these. Leaders engage proactively with other agencies and professionals.

The approach to safeguarding is systematic and staff are well trained. A suitable safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Through the curriculum and interactions, staff seek to empower pupils and promote their ability to protect and keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Phonics teaching for the few pupils who still need this is not reinforced well enough to give pupils the best chances of learning to read well as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that all relevant staff are well trained in teaching early reading to secondary-age pupils. They should also provide sufficient high-quality opportunities and resources for learning phonics so that pupils are given every chance to become competent readers as quickly as possible.
- Leaders are rightly continuing to build and refine the curriculum in this new school. They should continue to develop the scope and content of the curriculum to ensure that it is as broad and ambitious as possible and fully meets the evolving needs of pupils as their attendance at the school extends.

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School details

Unique reference number	147635
DfE registration number	886/6159
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10202285
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	NR Education Ltd
Chair	Nick Rogers
Headteacher	Nick Rogers
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,000 to £72,000
Telephone number	01795 886 687
Website	www.infinitischool.co.uk
Email address	office@infinitischool.co.uk

Information about this school

- Infiniti School was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 24 August 2020. The school admitted its first pupils in October 2020. This was the school's first standard inspection.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision, which pupils attend accompanied by staff. Most pupils also visit an unregistered outdoor learning provision weekly, also accompanied by Infiniti School staff.
- All pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health difficulties identified as their prime area of need. Many also have other complex needs. All pupils have EHC plans.
- Currently, all pupils attending the school are in Years 7 to 11.
- The headteacher is also the school's proprietor through his limited company. In addition, there is a governing body to provide governance and oversight of the school's work.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.

- The inspector met the proprietor/headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team including the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding lead, and governors. He held meetings and spoke informally with a range of pupils and staff.
- To understand the quality of education provided by the school, the inspection looked in detail at certain subjects (deep dives). The inspector did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and PE. To explore each subject, he spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils, examined curriculum plans for the subject, looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- Inspection evidence included confidential survey responses submitted by 10 pupils, 12 parents and 16 staff.
- The inspector also reviewed other curriculum policies and plans.

- The inspection scrutinised the school’s arrangements for safeguarding pupils, both on and off site. The inspector examined policies, processes and written records. Safeguarding was a theme of discussions throughout the inspection.
- Through all activities, the inspector considered evidence about the school’s compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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