

Inspection of The Linnet Independent Learning Centre

107 Mount Pleasant Road, Castle Gresley, Derbyshire DE11 9JE

Inspection dates:

23 to 25 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that this is a safe and happy school. Staff know pupils and their backgrounds very well. They care for the pupils well. Pupils understand what bullying is. They are confident that staff spot and deal with it when it does happen.

Expectations of pupils' learning, behaviour and attitudes are not high enough. Leaders and staff do not consistently help pupils to manage and improve their behaviour. Pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy their experiences at this school, such as visiting an alpaca farm and the local war memorial. Older pupils visit a further education college, to help them understand and prepare for their possible next steps.

Some parents and carers do not feel that their children's needs are being met. Leaders are not meeting pupils' needs as identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.

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

The school has been through a lot of change since its previous inspection, including to leadership and the curriculum. The proprietor and governors have not supported leaders well enough to manage this change effectively.

Senior leaders do not recognise the school's weakness. They have an over-generous view of how well the school is doing. The proprietor and governors rely too much on what senior leaders tell them.

Leaders do not support staff to identify what pupils need to know, understand and do. They have not identified clear endpoints for the curriculum. Staff try their best, but are not well led and managed.

There are short-term curriculum plans in place for younger pupils, but these are not ambitious enough. The plans do not identify the key knowledge that pupils should learn. Leaders have not ensured that teaching builds on what pupils have learned previously. They have not made sure that pupils learn things in the right order, so that they know and remember more over time. Leaders do not have curriculum overviews or subject plans for pupils in key stage 4. Staff across the school do not know what they are expected to teach from January 2022.

Leaders have not recognised the need to prioritise reading. Teachers and key workers read with pupils, but leaders do not have a consistent approach to develop pupils' confidence, fluency or a love of reading. Leaders have no plans in place to help pupils who are at an early stage of reading. They do not support staff with training or resources to enable them to teach reading effectively.

Leaders have not provided staff with the guidance and training they need to meet pupils' needs effectively. Pupils' therapeutic needs are not being met. Plans to improve this aspect of the school's work are at an early stage.

Pupils' behaviour has got worse since the previous inspection, but is beginning to improve. Leaders ensure that no pupils are excluded from school. However, some pupils do not demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning. Not all staff ensure that that learning gets off to a good start by settling pupils down at the start of lessons. Senior leaders do not support staff to have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes.

Staff have supported some pupils to improve their attendance, but some pupils are too frequently absent from school.

Staff give pupils a valuable range of different opportunities and experiences. They broaden pupils' horizons through work-related experiences. They help pupils learn about healthy relationships and lifestyles in the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Pupils learn about equality and differences, for example by learning about different religions. Leaders have not made sure that these opportunities are always well planned. They have not planned a well-sequenced PSHE curriculum that meets pupils' needs.

Leaders do not make sure that the school meets the independent school standards consistently. The premises are well maintained and risk assessments are in place. Leaders make sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that all policies are readily available on request to parents. The school's safeguarding and curriculum policies were uploaded to the school's website during the inspection.

Some parents expressed concern that the school did not facilitate on-site provision from March to June 2020, when the Department for Education pandemic guidance was that schools should prioritise remaining open for pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils (among others).

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils and their backgrounds very well. They receive safeguarding training and updates. Leaders understand safer recruitment practices. They have undertaken pre-employment checks.

Safeguarding leaders know and understand their responsibilities well. They take the right steps when there are concerns about a pupil's welfare. They work with a range of external agencies to make sure that pupils get the help that they need. They keep detailed records of concerns and their actions.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that the school meets the independent school standards consistently. They are not providing pupils with a coherent and aspirational curriculum. Leaders do not have a curriculum that enables pupils to build their learning progressively. They have not prioritised reading. Pupils do not learn as well as they should. Leaders must urgently develop and effectively implement a curriculum that is coherent, sequenced and ambitious, to enable pupils to make strong progress by knowing and understanding more and developing relevant skills.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school meets the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Pupils at each key stage are not prepared well for their next stages of education. Leaders must raise staff's expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve. Leaders must support all staff to be able to identify, assess and meet pupils' therapeutic needs, as set out in their EHC plans, as well as their educational needs.
- Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are not as positive as they should be. They do not learn as well as they should. Leaders need to support staff to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes, enabling pupils to meet high expectations, be resilient and maintain positive attitudes.
- Pupils experience a range of opportunities to support their personal development. However, they do not experience strategically planned opportunities and learning that will enable them to be better prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders need to develop and implement a coherent PSHE education curriculum. They also need to ensure that opportunities are carefully planned to build pupils' experiences in, across and beyond the curriculum.
- Leaders, including the proprietor and governors, have not ensured that recent changes were implemented strategically. They have not monitored and evaluated the impact of these changes, and do not have an accurate understanding of some aspects of the school's work. The proprietor, governors and senior leaders accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. They should develop leadership capacity to implement change effectively and improve pupils' education strategically.

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	131327
DfE registration number	830/6033
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10209382
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Lewis Charlton Ltd
Chair	Zaheer Esat
Headteacher	Malcolm Kerridge
Annual fees (day pupils)	£69,000 to £72,450
Telephone number	01283 213989
Website	www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@linnet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 June 2019

Information about this school

- The Linnet Independent Learning Centre is an independent day special school for boys aged three to 16 years. There are currently 20 pupils on roll, aged between seven and 16.
- The school is part of Lewis Charlton Ltd, which is the proprietor. The company has one director. It has an advisory board that acts as a governing body with delegated responsibilities. There are five governors.
- The school operates across three sites: The Nest and Treetops at Castle Gresley DE11 9JE, and The Willows (formerly known as The Haven) in Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 1HU.
- The Department for Education wrote to the school in October 2019 confirming the approved use of accommodation in Ashby.
- The school has seen many changes to senior leadership since its previous inspection. The headteacher, who started in August 2021, has recently left and has been replaced with an interim headteacher. The executive headteacher has been in post since November 2018.
- Pupils typically have significant behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an EHCplan. Pupils travel to the school from several local authorities. A few pupils are in the care of their placing local authorities.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in June 2019, when it was judged to be outstanding.

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 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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and the interim headteacher. They met with other members of staff and with the director. Inspectors spoke with the chair of governors remotely. They spoke with a local authority officer on the telephone.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, PSHE, creative arts and reading. For each deep dive, inspectors met with teachers and the curriculum leader, looked at curriculum planning, visited sample lessons, spoke with the teachers and key workers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors looked at a range of other subjects, including science, geography, history, religious education and music.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, site leaders and the very recently appointed special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils informally about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included policies related to curriculum, teaching, assessment and health and safety. Inspectors reviewed the single central record three times. They reviewed safeguarding records.
- Inspectors toured the premises to review the suitability of the accommodation at all sites.
- Inspectors considered written communications from five parents.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julian Scholefield

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils.

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the school’s written behaviour policy is implemented effectively.

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021