

Inspection of Act Fast NL Ltd

Kieradan Park, North Moor Lane, Scunthorpe DN17 3PS

Inspection dates: 12–14 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Act Fast school is a place where the proprietor and staff go the extra mile to support the pupils who attend. It has a unique vision of how to 'hook' pupils back into education, and it is successful in doing so. Act Fast has started to re-engage pupils who have experienced difficulties in their education. Parents believe that, finally, a school 'gets' their child.

The wider curriculum, built around motor-cross, is a distinctive feature of the school. It motivates pupils to attend and to behave well. For those pupils who do not wish to ride the bikes, staff work with them to find alternatives.

The proprietor and staff have limitless ambition for what pupils can achieve in their personal development. At the heart of this is a patient, careful building of relationships, and, in many cases, a re-building of trust between the pupil and their experience of education.

However, some essential aspects of the curriculum need to be strengthened, because the ambition for what pupils could achieve is currently not high enough. This is particularly the case for pupils who are on the school's roll for longer periods of time.

Pupils, parents and staff believe that behaviour overall is good, with bullying an infrequent event and well managed when it happens. Inspectors agree that this is the case.

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

Leaders' ambition for pupils' personal development and re-engagement with education is boundless. However, their expectations of what pupils could achieve are not high enough. Although the school provides some alternative provision education for a small number of pupils, it is registered as an independent special school. As such, it takes most pupils onto its roll for the rest of their secondary education. Depending on when pupils join, this can mean a period of years. Shortly, this will mean all five years of secondary education. Leaders have not thought through how to design a curriculum that is sufficiently ambitious, broad and organised for the majority of its pupils. They are, though, determined to put this right immediately following the inspection.

The functional skills-based curriculum in English and mathematics provides pupils with valuable qualifications. However, it is organised in such a way that pupils cover the same content repeatedly, the more so the longer the pupil is at the school. As a result, this has led to a curriculum that is too narrow for pupils who are at the school beyond a short stay. The curriculum is not challenging enough for those pupils who are capable of aspiring to, and achieving in, richer depth in English and mathematics, and in a range of other subjects.

For older students in the 'further education' phase of the school, leaders have already identified that their curriculum requires a rethink. While a bespoke curriculum is built around each student, leaders know that, at the moment, it is not as coherently planned as it needs to be.

The teaching at the school is well matched to pupils' needs. Strong and respectful relationships foster good behaviour overall. Increasingly, the proprietor has been appointing qualified teachers to work at the school. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of assessments to help determine what support a pupil requires. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a strong understanding of the requirements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Recently, the SENCo has started to work with a senior leader to more effectively incorporate pupils' SEND targets from their education, health and care (EHC) plans into teachers' planning. Leaders are working with the local authorities who commission places for pupils to update EHC plans so that they better reflect pupils' needs.

Leaders have also recently taken action to improve the school's support for pupils' reading. For instance, a primary specialist has been appointed with experience of teaching phonics to the weakest readers. The English lead is in the process of building a programme to encourage pupils to read widely and for enjoyment.

Leaders' wider curriculum for pupils' personal development is, to very large extent, a strength of the school. The proprietor's vision for getting young people who have had difficult experiences of school back into education is impressive. It is backed up by an innovative personal development curriculum, built on a range of activities that take place in the afternoons. These include a variety of motor vehicle-related opportunities, as well as visits out of school to a range of venues. Recently, for instance, pupils have started to be taken to a local engineering firm to participate in a scheme to broaden their career aspirations. Pupils know that there is a plan in place for them to make a suitable next step into further education or training at the end of Year 11.

The wider curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. As a result, the school is a tolerant community where pupils are able to express their identity in a supportive environment. There is some coverage of protected characteristics in the personal, social, health and economics education (PSHE) curriculum. That said, leader's curriculum thinking does not make it explicit enough where pupils are to be taught about the protected characteristics or relationships and sex education. As a result, provision for these matters is limited.

Leaders were not aware of their responsibilities in implementing the statutory guidance for the teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). Consequently, they have not consulted with parents about the policy, or published any information about the school's approach to RSHE on their website. Additionally, leaders do not record pupils' previous schools on the admissions and attendance

register, and they do not keep a record of what amendments have been made to the register, who made them and when.

The proprietor does, however, have a firm grip on his responsibilities related to pupils' welfare. Risk assessments are in place for the range of activities provided. The proprietor acts on the advice given by professional bodies in relation to the motor vehicle aspects of the school's work. Staff confirm that they are required to follow risk assessments when carrying out activities which carry elements of risk.

The school is compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The proprietor and leaders have a secure understanding of their safeguarding duties. Where necessary, they have made referrals to local authorities' children's services. The SENCo ensures that any safeguarding matters are raised with local authority officers during EHC plan meetings. Staff have received up-to-date training on safeguarding matters and understand the particular risks facing the young people who attend the school.

The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school website and is compliant with the Secretary of State's guidance.

Although safeguarding is effective, there are minor weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. However, these are easy to put right and do not leave pupils either being harmed or at risk of harm. While leaders maintain a 'tracker' of safeguarding cases, the current system is cumbersome and holds information in different places. Leaders state that they have recently purchased a commercially available safeguarding management information system, which is due to be installed immediately following the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The current curriculum is based on a limited set of qualifications in two subjects. For a registered special school, this lacks ambition. As a result, pupils experience a narrow curriculum, including a limited suite of qualifications. Leaders should take action to broaden and deepen their curriculum so that pupils have opportunities to study a wider range of subject content, organised coherently and cumulatively over the entire secondary and post-16 phases; and, for those who are capable, to a higher level of accreditation.
- Leaders have not taken the required action with regard to the statutory guidance for the teaching of RSHE. Consequently, parents have not been made aware of the school's policy and their parental rights within the policy. Also, the teaching of

RSHE is not clearly planned in the school's curriculum. Leaders should take action to be compliant with the statutory guidance and to ensure that curriculum thinking incorporates structured RSHE teaching.

- Leaders' PSHE curriculum includes reference to the protected characteristics and the school is a respectful community: however, coverage of the protected characteristics in the curriculum strategy is not as detailed as it could be, so pupils' understanding is not as developed as it could be. Leaders should revisit their curriculum thinking for PSHE so that teaching of the protected characteristics is made more overt.

How can I feed back my views?

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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

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| Unique reference number | 145462 |
| DfE registration number | 813/6006 |
| Local authority | North Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 10209288 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 25 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 39 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 20 |
| Proprietor | Peter Sembiente and Cheryl Sembiente |
| Chair | Peter Sembiente |
| Headteacher | Peter Sembiente |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £18,600 to £33,120 |
| Telephone number | 01724 856868 |
| Website | www.actfast-nl.co.uk |
| Email address | info@actfast-nl.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9–11 July 2019 |

Information about this school

- The previous principal left the school in December 2021. One of the proprietors is now the principal. A restructured senior leadership team was formed in December 2021.
- All places at the school are commissioned by neighbouring local authorities. A large proportion of pupils have EHC plans, for a range of SEND. These include autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out this inspection earlier than previously planned, due to a complaint. At the DfE's direction, the inspection was carried out without notice.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, senior staff and the SENCo. An inspector met a member of the school's accountability and standards board.
- To evaluate safeguarding arrangements, inspectors checked the school's processes for the safe recruitment of staff; reviewed the school's systems for acting on safeguarding concerns; talked to a range of staff about safeguarding matters; met with groups of pupils; spoke with the local authority designated officer for North Lincolnshire; reviewed a range of health and safety-related information, and reviewed safeguarding documentation.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. Inspectors also carried out activities to evaluate the school's wider curriculum, including the motor vehicle curriculum. An inspector spoke on the telephone with two of the local companies who work with pupils.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents, including several parents' free-text responses. An inspector spoke with several parents on the telephone.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Suzette Garland-Grimes

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools
 - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b)
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 2A(2) Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the headteacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - (b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

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.

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