

Inspection of TLC The Learning Centre

Princes Plain, Bromley, Orpington, Kent BR2 8LD

Inspection dates: 8–10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

TLC The Learning Centre gives pupils a distinctive experience. Pupils enjoy coming to the school because it is a secure place in which to learn and grow, and plan for the future. Everyone has pupils' well-being and learning as their priorities.

Leaders and staff work together to create a highly positive climate where all pupils are valued. There is a shared commitment to high expectations that informs everything staff do. The approach is neither too lax nor too strict. It hits the right balance between setting clear boundaries and enabling pupils to learn well, deal with their anxieties and build their confidence. This helps pupils to be resilient in the face of challenges.

Support for pupils to achieve academically and develop their personal skills is interwoven so that each contributes to the other. For example, staff understand that learning is the key to raising pupils' self-esteem, and vice versa. The success of this approach shows in lots of ways. Classrooms are purposeful, with staff and pupils taking learning seriously. There is little, if any, disruption to lessons because staff calmly but firmly make their expectations clear. The school's ethos makes clear that bullying will not be tolerated. Incidents are very rare, and dealt with effectively. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe.

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

Leaders and staff have designed a curriculum that is well structured and flexible. This helps teachers to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is a key element of the school's curriculum. It covers a broad range of topics in a sequenced way so that pupils build their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. In English and mathematics, staff have designed a curriculum that teaches pupils the important concepts before moving on to more complex work.

The flexibility in the curriculum is achieved in a number of ways. Teachers provide one-to-one help when needed. Well-trained staff manage behaviour effectively and there are always adults on hand to work individually with pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants pick up pupils' misconceptions quickly and give them individual help. Pupils study a broad range of texts in English and teachers help pupils to practise reading accurately and fluently. This, and the reading programme, helps pupils become confident readers and writers.

The curriculum is matched well to pupils' individual needs and interests. Many pupils start at the school having missed a lot of their education. They have significant gaps in their learning and face particular social, emotional and health challenges. Leaders and staff are skilled in identifying and understanding pupils' individual needs. The curriculum deals with these challenges effectively, giving pupils the knowledge they need to achieve recognised qualifications. For example, in art pupils work towards GCSE, while in mathematics there are three different qualifications to work towards.

The PSHE curriculum extends pupils' knowledge of the world suitably, including British values; relationships, health and sex education (RSHE); and careers education. The planned programme is taught well. Pupils discuss issues related to consent, sexual orientation and transgender with great sensitivity. They learn about how government works, and managing money. Leaders consult with parents and carers on the RSHE curriculum when pupils are admitted to the school. Leaders ensure that the school complies with government guidance, including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Despite these strengths, there are a few areas that leaders recognise need improving. While teachers' knowledge of how to teach subjects such as English and mathematics is secure, it is less so in some other areas of the curriculum. This means that sometimes pupils are given work that does not take their learning forward. Pupils complete activities, but in some instances these do not help pupils to know more about the subject content being studied. Leaders' plans identify teachers' professional learning, rightly, as a priority.

The proprietor works closely with senior leaders to ensure that all staff are included fully in the work of the school. Everyone plays their part in working with pupils, helping to make sure that staff workload is manageable.

The proprietor has made a request to the Department for Education (DfE) for a material change, to increase the maximum number of pupils from 35 to 50. The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. These are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved and implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and the proprietor ensure that the vetting checks on staff are detailed and follow government guidance carefully. There are clear procedures for recruiting new staff, including a suitable policy. Safeguarding training is provided regularly for all staff, ensuring that everyone is aware of the most recent guidance.

All staff, from leaders to teaching assistants, know pupils extremely well. This, and the clear procedures, means that staff are quick to recognise those pupils who need extra support or are experiencing additional challenges in their lives. Senior leaders act swiftly on these concerns, working closely with local authorities and external agencies. Often, the school provides the early help pupils need to get on with their education. As a result, pupils' well-being, health and safety are catered for effectively.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and reflects current government guidance.

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

- Although the curriculum is matched appropriately to pupils' additional needs and interests, teachers' knowledge of how to teach some of the foundation subjects is not strong enough. As a result, at times pupils gain only a superficial knowledge of some subjects, for example in religious education. Activities are relatively easy to complete but do not give pupils an in-depth understanding of the subject. As a result, they lack the knowledge to make sense of the facts. Leaders need to ensure that their plans to provide more professional development opportunities for teachers include increasing staff's expertise in teaching some of the foundation subjects.

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	136228
DfE registration number	305/6081
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10217387
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Proprietor	Geraldine Kane
Chair	Helen Dyer
Headteacher	Geraldine Kane
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,000 to £50,000
Telephone number	01689 824463
Website	www.tlcthelearningcentre.co.uk
Email address	g.kane@tlcthelearningcentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–7 June 2018

Information about this school

- TLC The Learning Centre is a small independent day school for girls and boys in the London Borough of Bromley.
- The school provides permanent school placements and temporary alternative provision for pupils with a range of complex needs, including learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school works with pupils excluded, or at risk of exclusion, from schools in a number of local authorities in south east London. Some pupils on short-term placements are dual registered. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Since the previous full standard inspection in June 2018, the registration authority has increased the school's age range from 11 to 16 to 11 to 18 and allowed it to admit boys.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision. However, pupils attend weekly physical education sessions at the local gym facilities at Uppercutz gym, Whitebeam Avenue, Bromley BR1 8DD.

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.
- In addition, the inspection was commissioned to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration agreement. The proposed change is to increase the maximum number of pupils from 35 to 50.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life. They also spoke with the proprietor, the centre manager, staff and parents.
- There were four responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and two written comments from parents. There were five responses to the online staff survey and two to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, and PSHE. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection, including art and design, and religious education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, and spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including curriculum plans. They also looked at the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, records of behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by school leaders.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Matthews

Ofsted Inspector

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