

Inspection of West Midlands Education and Skills

St Patricks Presbytery, Blue Lane East, Walsall WS2 8HN

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are educated one to one by tutors at settings in the community. They learn in a range of local venues, public spaces and cafes. Leaders have set the school up in this way to help pupils engage with their education. However, pupils do not get a good-quality education. They learn a curriculum that is too dependent on the requirements of certificated courses. It lacks clarity and detail. Tutors implement it poorly. They lack the subject expertise needed to make up for the failings in the curriculum. Consequently, pupils experience a random and muddled series of lessons.

A significant proportion of pupils attend school part-time. Leaders are not ambitious enough in making sure all pupils attend full-time. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. They are ill equipped for life in modern Britain.

Pupils respect their tutor. They behave well. Bullying is rare because pupils seldom see their peers at school. However, this means that pupils have few opportunities to work and socialise with each other. This limits their social development. For instance, pupils do not get the chance to learn how to cooperate with others or resolve conflict.

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

Many pupils join the school having missed lots of their education. Leaders recognise how important it is to change pupils' perception of school and make it more positive. They say that their approach is successful in doing this. However, leaders' success is limited. Pupils do not attend well enough or have been on part-time timetables for far too long.

Leaders have not ensured that attendance registers are accurate. Leaders do not use the recommended Department for Education (DfE) attendance codes. Leaders mark pupils on part-time timetables as present when they are not attending school. As a result, it looks like pupils are attending more often than is the case.

Pupils complete an initial assessment when they join the school. Leaders use this to construct a bespoke curriculum for each pupil. They rightly prioritise pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils can study a range of vocational courses, for instance bricklaying and decorating. However, leaders offer pupils a limited range and depth of subjects. For instance, pupils do not study science, geography or history beyond entry level. For sixth-form students, some tutors do not have the expertise to teach at a higher level. The curriculum lacks ambition.

Leaders have set out what pupils will learn in each subject. However, they have not done this well. The curriculum is too focused on the final assessment. This makes it difficult for tutors to plan effectively. Consequently, tutors often end up not following the curriculum. Instead, they rely on 'tick sheets' and examination papers to identify

what they are going to teach. They then try and 'plug the gaps' rather than helping pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need. This means that pupils' knowledge does not build cumulatively. As a result, pupils learn isolated concepts and ideas. This does not prepare pupils for future study, employment or training.

Tutors develop positive relationships with pupils. Pupils appreciate their efforts and work well with them. They treat tutors with respect and are usually willing to engage with their learning. Tutors promote equality and diversity and challenge negative stereotypes appropriately. Tutors use a wide range of strategies to cajole, encourage and support pupils. However, some of these approaches do not help pupils learn. In addition, tutors do not have access to high-quality resources, nor the subject expertise needed to deliver the curriculum well. This is because tutors have not had sufficient subject training. Pupils' learning is overly dependent on an assortment of worksheets drawn from a variety of sources. Often, these are not well matched to pupils' needs. For instance, pupils studying an entry-level qualification in geography complete worksheets containing A-level vocabulary.

Many pupils need help with their reading. Leaders do not have a strategic plan to help develop pupils' reading skills, and tutors do not have the expertise to teach phonics well. Tutors do encourage pupils to read articles and books that interest them. However, pupils remain reluctant to read new and different material. Consequently, pupils are not improving their poor reading skills. This hinders their ability to access the curriculum and to understand simple and more sophisticated vocabulary.

Most pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders do not make sure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met. Pupils with SEND do not receive the necessary academic or pastoral support, help and guidance identified in their EHC plan. This is particularly the case for pupils that need to develop positive relationships with their peers.

Leaders have trained all tutors so that they can provide careers advice and guidance. Tutors help pupils attend careers events, complete college applications and attend interviews. However, a lack of ambition in the curriculum limits pupils' choices.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is weak. Leaders have simply 'cut and pasted' content from statutory guidance on relationships and sex education into their plans. They have not considered in detail what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Pupils do not have enough time to learn this important knowledge because they are on part-time timetables. As a result, they do not have the information they need to make sensible and informed choices.

Leaders have not thought carefully about pupils' wider experiences. They do not have a strategic vision of the cultural and social learning that all pupils should access. Instead, tutors plan activities based on pupils' existing interests. This does

not challenge pupils to extend and broaden their horizons. Therefore, pupils miss out on the artistic, musical, sporting and cultural richness of their local community.

The proprietor has not made sure that pupils experience an acceptable quality of education. Too many of the independent school standards relating to this are unmet. School leaders are diligent and have the capacity to be successful. However, the proprietor has not made sure they have the knowledge and experience to lead the school effectively.

The proprietor has made sure that the premises meet the independent school standards. The small number of pupils who do attend the school site learn in light and airy classrooms. The proprietor is continuing to develop the facilities. For instance, adding a cookery room, art and design room and a hair and beauty facility. These will benefit pupils on vocational courses and those who attend the school site. However, the facilities do not benefit those pupils who are tutored off site.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Tutors often meet pupils at home or at the location where the tutoring will happen. Staff are diligent in letting leaders know that pupils have arrived safely. Leaders track this very carefully. They make regular checks to assure themselves that pupils and tutors are safe. Leaders have appropriate risk assessments in place for each pupil and each venue.

Tutors are adept at keeping pupils safe. They have had extensive training and know the signs that a pupil may be at risk. They report any concerns promptly. Leaders follow up on concerns swiftly so that pupils are not at risk.

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

- Leaders are not ambitious enough for pupils. Leaders view part-time timetables as a long-term solution, not as a stepping-stone back to full-time education. Leaders should ensure that plans for pupils to return to full-time education are aspirational and effective.
- Leaders do not record attendance accurately. Some pupils are recorded as present when they are not working with their tutor because they are on a part-time timetable. Leaders should ensure that they follow DfE guidelines for the recording of attendance and absence.
- Leaders do not give due regard to the targets set for pupils as part of their EHC plans. As a result, pupils' needs are not being met. Leaders should ensure that they adhere to the targets within EHC plans.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is too reliant on examination specifications. It is not coherently sequenced. Pupils' knowledge does not build on

what they have learned before. Instead, pupils experience a jumbled series of lessons based on their achievement in practice examination papers. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum clearly identifies what pupils need to know and remember at each stage of their learning.

- Tutors do not have the subject expertise to teach the full range of subjects. As a result, they often choose resources and methods that do not meet pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that tutors have the necessary expertise and knowledge and access to high-quality resources to teach each subject effectively.
- Some pupils are at the early stages of reading. Tutors do not know how to support these pupils effectively. This means that pupils are not making the progress they should because they are unable to read well. Leaders should ensure that pupils who need help to improve their phonics knowledge get the expert support they need.
- Pupils do not read widely and often. This means they miss out on the cultural, social and academic benefits of reading. Leaders should develop a culture that celebrates reading and encourages pupils to read new and varied texts.
- Leaders do not have a strategic vision for pupils' wider personal development. Consequently, pupils' cultural, social and spiritual education is disjointed and overly dependent on their tutor. Leaders should ensure that pupils benefit from a planned and organised rich set of experiences that broaden their horizons and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils learn on a one-to-one basis with their tutor. They do not get enough time to work and learn with their peers. This means they do not get the chance to improve their wider social skills. Leaders should ensure that pupils have ample opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers to develop the social and personal skills they need for life after school.

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	146563
DfE registration number	335/6044
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10213818
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Hodgetts
Headteacher	Jessica Butler
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,006
Telephone number	01922 643303
Website	www.westmidlandseducationandskills.org.uk
Email address	learning@westmidlandseducationandskills.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 January 2020

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who have had a disrupted education. Nearly all the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Some pupils are educated full time in the school building. However, many of the pupils spend some or all of their time being educated by their tutors in local nearby 'designated learning venues'. These venues are located in local businesses and other organisations, such as museums and libraries. The proprietors visit pupils at these venues to maintain oversight of the quality of education they receive from their tutors.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to new premises in Walsall. It now caters for pupils from the ages of 9 to 25.
- It would appear that there has been a change of proprietor. It was reported to inspectors that the sole proprietor is Paul Hodgetts. This is not consistent with the school's registration agreement that states Sharon Saunders is the proprietor.
- Pupils have physical education lessons at several local venues.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, the business administration officer, the proprietor and the chair of the governing body. They also held meetings with tutors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the headteacher, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work.
- The lead inspector toured the premises with the headteacher to ensure that the school provides an appropriate environment for pupils. The lead inspector examined health and safety documentation.

- Inspectors examined several policies, schemes of work and plans, as well as documentation relating to health and safety and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the business administration officer to discuss safeguarding procedures. Inspectors spoke to staff about safeguarding and looked at a variety of risk assessments.
- Inspectors visited pupils being taught by individual tutors at four venues.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to a staff survey, as well as Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Forrest

Her Majesty's 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;
 - 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.
- 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)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress;
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 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(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.

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-
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely.

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;
 -
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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