

# Inspection of Flexible Learning School

23 All Saints Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5QB

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Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Good**

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?**

Flexible Learning School is a place where the staff go the extra mile to support the pupils who attend. Their purpose is clear: to re-engage pupils in their education. It is successful in doing so. Most pupils arrive following very poor experiences of education. For many pupils and their families, Flexible Learning School provides their first experience of a successful school life. This is because staff work skilfully with pupils to rebuild their trust. Parents and pupils appreciate this.

The proprietor and staff have high aspirations for what pupils can achieve. They want the best for them. Pupils spoken to talked about how much staff support them both academically and personally. There is a collective belief among the staff that all pupils can achieve and be successful.

Pupils feel safe at school. They like the fact that each campus of the school is small and that they can talk to any member of staff. Pupils know that staff will take any concerns seriously and deal with them immediately. One pupil said, 'We all just talk openly as we are more like a community.' The school also offers all pupils access to a 24-hour helpline that they can call with academic or personal issues.

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

Leaders believe in the pupils. They are ambitious for them and want to improve their life chances. Staff help pupils to become aspirational and consider what might be possible in the future. All Year 11 pupils have secured a college place for September with the support of the staff.

Leaders have a clear rationale for what they want pupils to learn. They ensure pupils access a broad range of subjects. Many pupils are studying for GCSEs. Leaders have also ensured that pupils can study for technical qualifications. Staff listen to what pupils want to study and have included this into the curriculum offer over time. Pupils' attainment continues to be affected by issues with attendance and behaviour at their previous schools. Some feel they have no hope with the end-of-year examinations, and it is 'too late' for them. As a result of this, leaders have thought carefully about what subjects they can offer these pupils. They have selected some qualifications that they can deliver during the time pupils are at the school. Pupils have a second chance at gaining qualifications in subjects such as business studies and travel and tourism.

The head of school works tirelessly to support staff across the three sites with their planning, teaching and assessment. However, this is more reactive than proactive. As a result, some staff are more skilled than others in delivering a highly effective curriculum, and staff are not always exposed to the most up-to-date information about their subjects.

Pupils' excellent behaviour, coupled with their positive attitudes to learning, help to ensure that the school is a calm, purposeful and harmonious place. Adults listen to

pupils and help sort out any problems. They work with pupils to create a calm environment where everyone respects each other. Bullying is extremely rare and dealt with very quickly by staff.

Leaders have established a clear behaviour system that staff, pupils and their families understand. There are opportunities to earn positive postcards which can cancel out 'strikes' for negative behaviours. When incidents do happen, staff skilfully deal with them to minimise disruption to learning.

Leaders and staff are tenacious in addressing pupils' barriers to attendance. The head of school has created a portal which has many features, including sharing live attendance information between the three sites so staff can monitor pupils' behaviour effectively. This is also shared with parents and the referring school. This enables all people involved to act immediately if a pupil's attendance starts to slip.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and with the implementation of statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education. The proprietor has ensured that they have met the independent school standards.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school website.

Everyone has the pupils' best interests at heart. Leaders and staff are fully aware of the risks pupils face such as from drugs and gang affiliation. Through honest, open discussions, staff help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know that staff are there for them.

The designated safeguarding lead is very knowledgeable. She knows how to refer to external agencies for help when pupils need this. She is tenacious in securing the support that pupils need. She keeps meticulous safeguarding records and monitors the progress of any concerns carefully.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some staff are more skilled than others in delivering a highly effective curriculum. As a result, pupils have a variable experience of the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that there is a consistent approach to professional development ensuring that staff's subject and pedagogical knowledge is secure in order to meet the needs of all pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135561
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6128
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10209315
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Shamim Akhtar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shamim Akhtar
<b>Head of school</b>	Zubair Khan
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£11.00 per hour for full-time pupils (25 hours per week) £13.00 per hour for part-time pupils (less than 25 hours per week) £14.00 per hour on roll
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5547918
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.flexiblelearning.org.uk">www.flexiblelearning.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@flexiblelearning.org.uk">info@flexiblelearning.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 to 30 November 2017

## Information about this school

- Flexible Learning Centre is an independent day school for pupils aged between 13 and 16 who have experienced significant disruption to their formal learning. Many have been excluded from previous schools. The school provides alternative education for pupils who cannot attend mainstream schools.
- Nearly all the pupils have social and emotional difficulties which have resulted in them not doing as well as they could at school. Three of the pupils on roll have education, health and care plans.
- The school is located on three sites in different parts of Birmingham: Hockley, Erdington and Northfield. Staff work across all three sites. The headteacher is also the proprietor and owner of the school. There is a head of school who oversees curriculum and the day-to-day running of the school.
- All pupils are dual registered.
- The school does not use alternative educational 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 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the head of school and other staff.
- Inspectors checked the single central record. Inspectors held meetings with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors spoke with staff about their safeguarding training.
- Inspectors toured the premises and looked at a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education and biology. Inspection activities in these subjects included: lesson visits, discussion with staff and pupils and work scrutiny.
- Inspectors also looked at records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times and talked to them informally about behaviour, bullying and welfare.

- The inspectors talked to parents and referring schools on the phone.

### **Inspection team**

Emma Gater, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ant Edkins

Ofsted Inspector

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