

# Inspection of New Skill Centre

Wolsey House, 2–5 The Drift, Nacton Road, Ipswich IP3 9QR

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Inspection dates: 28 to 30 June 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This school helps to transform young lives. Pupils who previously did not engage in education now do so. Pupils are proud that they attend school every day. Pupils feel accepted and they say that they can be who they are. Pupils are supportive of one another. New Skill Centre is a friendly and safe place. There are few incidents of bullying. If bullying should occur, pupils are confident adults will resolve issues.

The atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils behave well. They learn the social skills they need to thrive. Many confidently talk to visitors. Pupils receive appropriate support for managing their social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils attend on a part-time basis while still accessing education in their mainstream school. There is an increasing recognition in the local area that pupils are helped to 'come out of their shell' and be successful. Pupils are happy and settled. They are learning well. Several parents now want their children to stay for post-16 education. Pupils are well prepared to secure the next steps in education, employment and training.

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

Leaders have provided pupils with a suitably rigorous academic curriculum, together with the pastoral support to help them access it. Pupils study a range of subjects. This includes those that help pupils work towards a vocational career, such as carpentry or digital animation. Pupils gain accreditation in a variety of qualifications.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the order in which pupils need to learn important knowledge and skills. Teachers carefully consider what pupils know and can do when planning what they teach in lessons. They make sure pupils' learning is adapted and appropriate for their needs. For instance, teachers ensure that pupils have secure knowledge of mathematical concepts before moving on to more advanced work. Teachers are also adept at helping pupils make connections across their learning and to the world around them. For example, pupils compared their recent experiences of the pandemic when considering healthcare in history.

Leaders are currently reviewing and changing what is being taught in English. This is because the teaching of reading for the few pupils who have not mastered this skill is not as carefully considered as it should be. Some staff have not received sufficient training to be an even more effective support in helping all pupils learn to read well. Senior leaders have secure plans in place to address this shortcoming. Pupils typically enjoy reading and appreciate the time set aside for independent reading.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders have a strong focus on removing the challenges pupils face. They work diligently to ensure that pupils' needs are routinely reviewed and met. They work tenaciously with external agencies when they have additional concerns about pupils' progress and development. They ensure that staff are well trained in the different and specific

strategies needed to support individual pupils. As a result, leaders ensure that pupils get the right support at the right time.

The quality of pastoral support and care is a strength. Staff know pupils well. They work collectively as a team, and with relevant external agencies, to help pupils to settle quickly and to develop their emotional resilience and social skills. As a result, pupils forge respectful and trusting relationships with staff, and with other pupils. For many pupils, this allows them to develop friendships with other pupils. Some pupils say this is the first time they have been able to develop friendships with their own peers.

Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils undertake a range of visits including to places of religious worship. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive. Leaders make sure that pupils have one-to-one guidance for those aspects that will help them function better in the wider world. Pupils also benefit from effective careers advice. They can undertake meaningful work placements which link to their aspirations and interests.

Since the time when the school opened, leaders continue to make changes so the educational experience is better for pupils. Middle leadership is still an area to fully develop so these leaders can express more clearly the impact of their actions. The newly introduced advisory board is also helping with this through the questions they ask during their focused visits to evaluate the school's provision.

The proprietor checks carefully and ensures that the school consistently meets the independent school standards. This includes meeting statutory obligations such as compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are uncompromising in ensuring pupils' safety. Leaders have productive working relationships with external agencies. They challenge decisions and the support provided if they are not meeting the needs of the pupil.

Staff view the safeguarding of pupils as the upmost priority. They carefully note any changes in pupils' behaviour and appearance. They follow the school's safeguarding policy diligently. They know and understand the latest government guidance.

Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of risk through the PSHE curriculum and one-to-one tuition.

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

- Some staff have not received precise training to teach and support pupils who are still learning to read. A few pupils cannot easily access and engage with texts in lessons, including tutorial time. Leaders should ensure that all staff are appropriately well-trained so they can improve pupils' accuracy, fluency and stamina with reading.
- Not all middle leaders clearly evaluate the impact of the actions they take, especially when making curriculum changes. They are not able to fully demonstrate the impact of these changes on pupils' experience. Leaders should continue to run their programme for professional development for middle leaders, to improve this aspect.

## **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>	146332
<b>DfE registration number</b>	935/6013
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10230317
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	29
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	3
<b>Proprietor</b>	Centre for Care T/A New Skill Centre
<b>Chair</b>	Jo Kerley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Winston
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£11,500 to £23,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 290 276
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.nsc-sen-school.co.uk">www.nsc-sen-school.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@newskillcentre.org">enquiries@newskillcentre.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–14 November 2019

## Information about this school

- New Skill Centre is an independent special school registered to provide education for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those relating to autism spectrum disorder, cognition and learning, emotional and social development, communication and interaction, sensory and/or physical needs, and physical disability. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- All school placements are funded by Suffolk local authority.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The last standard inspection took place in November 2019. At this time the school was judged as requires improvement. There were unmet standards, and the school was served with a notice by the Department for Education (DfE), which required an action plan to be drawn up. This action plan was assessed and found to be acceptable in February 2020. A progress monitoring inspection took place in November 2021, when the school did not meet all the independent school standards that were checked at that time.
- The school continues to educate pupils post 16 as identified in the last progress monitoring inspection. School leaders are in communication with the DfE to appropriately formalise provision for post 16.

## Material change

The proprietor has requested a material change to the school, which was carried out as part of this standard inspection. The school wishes to increase the age range of pupils they educate up to 21 years old. This is above an age covered under the independent school standards. The proprietor wishes to increase the overall number of pupils from the current registration of 40 pupils to 60 pupils.

Leaders have already implemented some of these changes, with some pupils remaining at the school post 16. At the previous monitoring visit, there were 45 pupils receiving education. Currently, there are 31 pupils.

The proprietor is in communication with the DfE to arrange suitable changes to the numbers and age range. The building, staff expertise and curriculum provision is suitable for educating the numbers and age range the proprietor has requested.

The independent school standards are likely to be met if the material change is agreed for the age range these standards cover.

## 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.

This full standard inspection included a progress monitoring inspection. This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the school's full standard inspection in November 2019.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, a member of the advisory board, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from Suffolk local authority and two secondary schools who place pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leaders. They spoke to a range of staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, including those related to risk assessments, health and safety checks and the safer recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a few parents by telephone and met one in person. There were 10 responses to Ofsted Parent View. They considered the views of staff through conversations and scrutiny of the 14 responses to the Ofsted online staff survey. Inspectors spoke to pupils in class and around the school, held meetings with groups of pupils and considered 11 responses to the Ofsted online pupil survey.
- Inspectors toured the school premises on both sites, checked the school's website, and scrutinised the admissions and attendance registers and a range of other documentation to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kay Leach

Ofsted Inspector

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