

West Midlands Education and Skills

Blue Lane East, Walsall WS2 8HN

Inspection date

21 September 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f)

- The previous inspection identified shortcomings in the curriculum. It lacked appropriate breadth and ambition. Schemes of work were underdeveloped. Programmes of study were overly focused on examination specifications and did not take sufficient account of pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Leaders had not established an organised approach to teaching reading. Staff did not have sufficient subject expertise or training to teach some subjects.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes at the school. Leaders have broadened the curriculum so that it now includes history, geography and combined science. In addition, they have increased the range of vocational courses on offer. Pupils still work towards accredited qualifications, but leaders and staff also pay proper attention to the targets set out in their EHC plans.
- Each subject is now overseen by a subject leader who has suitable expertise and training. These subject leaders support staff in their teaching, both with advice and resources. Staff report that they receive informed guidance and feedback about their work. Pupils say that the school day is now more organised and structured than it used to be. They say this is a good thing and helps them to learn more.
- Leaders have written a suitably ambitious reading policy, and have ongoing plans to improve the teaching of reading. They have purchased some resources to support pupils' early reading and acquisition of phonics knowledge, and intend to buy more. They have also arranged external training to strengthen staff's expertise in the teaching of reading. There is more to do to support some pupils with their early reading, but actions so far show that leaders have put an informed strategy in place.
- Lessons are informed by the school's curriculum guidance. During this inspection, pupils could talk about what they were learning and how it built on what they already knew.
- These standards are met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(b), 5(b)(iii)

- The previous inspection found that pupils did not work, learn or socialise with their peers. Consequently, they had limited opportunities to improve their wider social skills such as accepting responsibility for their own behaviour.
- While the function of the school is to provide one-to-one tuition, leaders recognise that the school was not doing enough to help pupils cope in group situations. When possible, they now teach pupils in pairs instead of always on their own. Leaders have drawn up appropriate risk assessments for when pupils are learning at off-site venues, such as the town library. They take care to avoid groupings that may present a risk to pupils.
- Leaders plan to introduce school assemblies. They aim to do these online at first and then, in the longer term, in groups. Looking further ahead, leaders have ambitions to create a pupil-led school council and run school trips.
- These standards are met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 15

- The previous inspection identified that pupils' attendance was not being recorded accurately. Some pupils had been on part-time timetables for a long time with no clear plan to re-integrate them into full-time education. Some pupils were marked as present when they were not. In addition, the school was not using the Department for Education's recommended attendance codes.
- All pupils are now on full-time timetables. Daily attendance and absences are recorded on the school's electronic system, using the correct codes. If a pupil does not turn up, then staff find out why.
- Following a risk assessment process, the school has reduced the number of off-site venues used by tutors and pupils. For example, they no longer provide tuition in supermarket cafes. This inspection checked the arrangements for providing both on-site and off-site tuition, for example in the town library.
- These standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that the curriculum had suitable breadth and ambition. Too many pupils were on part-time timetables and some aspects of their personal development were underdeveloped.
- Since that time, leaders have revised and broadened the curriculum. They have put new policies and guidance in place. They have also improved the learning environment, bought new resources and introduced a programme for staff training. They now have higher expectations for pupils' attendance and for what pupils can do and achieve.
- The headteacher is informed about how leaders' actions to improve the quality of education align with the requirements of the independent school standards. Both the proprietor and headteacher know that there is still more to do to strengthen the teaching

of reading. Actions so far, and leaders' written plans for the future, show that their ambitions for pupils' learning and well-being have risen.

- These standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets 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(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
- 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.

School details

Unique reference number	146563
DfE registration number	335/6044
Inspection number	10252812

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special 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	21
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Hodgetts
Headteacher	Helen Barber
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,006
Telephone number	01922 643303
Website	www.westmidlandseducationandskills.org.uk
Email address	learning@wmes.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 February 2022

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who have had a disrupted education. Most pupils have an EHC plan.
- Some pupils are educated full time in the school building. Others are educated by tutors in local nearby 'learning venues'. These venues are located in local businesses and other organisations, such as museums and libraries. Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

- Pupils have physical education lessons at several local venues.
- Since the previous inspection, three staff have left and five new staff have joined. A new headteacher started in the summer term 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- Leaders were not given any prior notice of this progress monitoring inspection. The inspector arrived at the start of the school day.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the proprietor. He also spoke with some staff and pupils.
- The inspector checked the school's attendance records and pupils' timetables. He visited lessons in the main school building and a session held in the town library. He examined schemes of work for different subjects and the school's curriculum and personal development policies. He considered the arrangements for staff training.
- The inspector examined the school's most recent action plan and considered evidence of progress against planned actions. He checked the school's resources for teaching reading and discussed the teaching of reading with staff.
- The school's website is not currently operational. However, the school's safeguarding policy is available on request.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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