

# Inspection of Access School

Holbrook Villa Farm, Harmer Hill, Broughton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 3EW

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Inspection dates: 27 to 29 September 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

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

Access School is a caring place with friendly and welcoming staff. Leaders and staff show commitment and belief in the pupils who attend. Leaders and staff are determined to support pupils as well as they can.

Leaders recognise that, in the past, many pupils have not had a positive experience of school. Therefore, their approach to carefully building relationships with pupils and their families sits at the centre of Access School. Parents and carers really appreciate this.

Leaders have developed the curriculum over the past few years and there are some areas of strength. However, sometimes expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough as pupils' personal development is often prioritised over their learning needs.

Most pupils say that they feel safe at school. A few pupils feel less safe when other pupils misbehave. If bullying happens, pupils usually trust adults to sort it out.

Almost all parents express very positive views about their children's experiences at Access School. Parents praise the staff and their dedication to supporting their children. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'They are kind, welcoming and understanding. Each and every staff member has my child's best interests at heart.'

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

Leaders and staff provide effective social and emotional support for pupils to develop positive relationships. However, sometimes pupils' learning needs are not as well addressed as their social and emotional needs. Leaders expect teachers to use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to inform what pupils need to learn in the lessons, but this is not monitored well. Targets in pupils' individual learning plans sometimes lack ambition and do not relate to academic achievement. This may lead to further gaps when many pupils already have significant gaps in their learning.

Leaders have developed the curriculum over the past few years. Where subject leaders are specialists, for example in art, projects engage and motivate pupils. Trips to art galleries bring pupils' learning to life and as a result they achieve well. Some of the art is of such good quality that local companies have purchased it for their offices. The curriculum is well planned and learning is carefully sequenced in other subjects too, for example in mathematics, where pupils make good progress.

However, pupils' learning is sometimes hindered by disruption. Strategies to prevent pupils from leaving lessons or disrupting the learning of others are not always effective. When this happens, leaders do not always track carefully the learning that has been missed. As a result, the curriculum does not always have the impact that leaders intend.

Leaders have made reading a priority. They have recently changed the phonics programme, which is starting to improve the reading skills of younger pupils. Staff have received training in the delivery of phonics and leaders plan to deliver more this term. A well-stocked library is available for pupils to use. Leaders have invested considerably in reading books. However, some of the older pupils do not read regularly and do not access the wide range of books available to them. Older pupils do not read for pleasure. Leaders have recently introduced some strategies to address this.

At times, some pupils find it very challenging to meet expectations for their behaviour. Leaders firmly believe in a therapeutic approach to behaviour management, helping pupils to learn how to regulate their own behaviour. Staff are patient and encourage pupils in a calm manner. However, this approach does not always support some pupils to manage their conduct. On occasions, staff do not consistently manage poor behaviour. Some pupils regularly miss lessons. All of these factors are significantly limiting the learning of these pupils and of other pupils in the school.

Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This hinders how well they learn. Leaders currently work closely with families and agencies to support pupil attendance, but this is not having sufficient impact.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. Pupils take part in weekly enrichment activities as part of their outdoor education programme. There was a real buzz of excitement about a candle-making activity that was happening during the inspection. Careers guidance is a strength of the school. There is a well-planned programme to teach pupils about their options for future careers. Pupils receive advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about further education, employment and training. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued and listened to. They appreciate leaders' support to help them to develop their knowledge and skills. They feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff share and know the proprietor's vision and values. All leaders show commitment to ensuring that pupils get a second chance. They want the best for them.

Leaders are compliant with the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and with the implementation of statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and on health education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. The policy is in line with statutory guidance.

Staff have a strong understanding of individual pupils. This means that they are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour that may suggest that a pupil is at risk or needs support. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have a concern about a pupil or a member of staff. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help and support they need in a timely way. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and have an understanding of risks, both online and in the local community.

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

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

- Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour as well as they could at times. There are inconsistencies in practice. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils impacts negatively on their learning and on the learning of others. Leaders should ensure that all staff consistently support pupils with their behaviour.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. This impacts negatively on their learning and creates gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should continue to work closely with families and agencies to ensure that all pupils attend regularly.
- Leaders do not ensure that all targets in pupils' EHC plans are given equal priority. As a result, there is sometimes insufficient focus on pupils' academic targets. Leaders should ensure that staff prioritise pupils' academic development, as well as meeting their social and emotional needs.
- Some older pupils are not encouraged to read widely and regularly. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could. Leaders should ensure that all pupils read regularly to make the progress of which they are capable.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132772
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6096
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10220398
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Family Care Associates Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew O'Reilly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Earing
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,615 to £34,515
<b>Telephone number</b>	01939 220791
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.family-care.co.uk">www.family-care.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:access@family-care.co.uk">access@family-care.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 to 7 November 2019

## Information about this school

- Access School provides education for pupils with SEND, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs, learning difficulties and mild learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use any alternative 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 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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a member of the proprietor body, the head of education and the head of school. Inspectors also met with teachers, learning support assistants, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with the virtual headteacher from a referring local authority.
- Inspectors checked the single central record. They held meetings with the designated safeguarding lead and 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 reading, mathematics, PSHE and art. 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.
- Inspectors reviewed additional free-text comments on Ofsted Parent View. They also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Emma Gater, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jane Spilsbury

Ofsted Inspector

Heather Phillips

Ofsted 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)(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;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
  - 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(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

#### **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;



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