

Inspection of Learn 4 Life School

64A Rectory Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan WN4 0QD

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that their experience of education improves once they are part of Learn 4 Life School. They understand that leaders want them to work hard, to learn as much as they can and to be successful. Pupils do their best to meet these expectations. Many pupils gain knowledge and skills that prepare them well for the future.

Pupils are in no doubt that staff help them to stay safe. Pupils are confident that staff regard pupils' well-being as important. This helps pupils to enjoy school.

Pupils understand staff's expectations for their behaviour. Sometimes, pupils' needs result in behaviour that stops them from getting involved in their learning as fully as possible. They value what teachers do to help them to overcome these difficulties and to engage successfully in learning again. Pupils also feel that staff deal with bullying quickly and effectively if it happens.

Pupils benefit from appropriate opportunities to experience various activities outside the classroom. For example, they broaden their experience by visiting a farm or a local glass factory. Teachers use these activities to help pupils to learn how to behave respectfully and responsibly in the community.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that contains a broad range of subjects. It is shaped to meet the needs and interests of pupils, taking account of any gaps in their prior learning. Leaders have made it clear what pupils need to learn and in what order they will learn it. The curriculum is better organised now than it was at the previous standard inspection.

Leaders and teachers identify the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Expert staff, in areas such as mental health, support other staff to identify pupils' additional needs. Leaders use this information to make helpful changes to the way in which they teach the curriculum, such as presenting subject content in different ways or revisiting previous knowledge until pupils have remembered it. Teachers use various assessment techniques effectively to check what pupils understand and whether they remember what they have been taught.

Teachers mostly have the knowledge or support that they need to teach the range of subjects. Most teachers clearly explain what pupils are learning. However, some teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong as it could be. This sometimes prevents pupils from learning as well in some subjects as they do elsewhere. Leaders are in the process of strengthening this aspect of the delivery of the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes to learning improve after they join the school. This helps them to make the most of what is on offer and supports their good achievement. Leaders

ensure that most pupils have the qualifications that they need to take them to the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Leaders assess how well pupils can read when they start at the school. However, the assessments that are used to pinpoint any specific barriers to reading do not enable leaders and teachers to identify the specific gaps in pupils' phonics and reading knowledge. This means that, at times, the individual support that staff provide for pupils is not always as effective as it should be. Leaders have begun to address this issue. Typically, pupils read accurately and are able to access the curriculum well.

Parents and carers and pupils are involved in designing the support for pupils who need it. This helps leaders to meet pupils' needs effectively and to enable pupils with SEND to achieve as well as possible.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge and skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils benefit from a clear sense of calm and order in the school environment.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities to support pupils' development beyond the academic subjects that they study. Pupils can take part in a variety of activities that match their interests, such as badminton or cooking. They find out about and discuss fundamental British values. Pupils also receive detailed careers information that is tailored to their needs and interests. Leaders ensure that pupils enjoy relevant careers experiences to help them to make decisions about their future.

Leaders are considerate of teachers' well-being. Leaders do as much as they can to keep staff's workload manageable. Staff said that leaders are supportive and approachable.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. The chair of the proprietor body has a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities involved. The proprietor body checks thoroughly on the work of school leaders and holds these leaders to account effectively.

Leaders have all relevant policies in place. For example, there are suitable policies in place for health and safety, fire safety and first aid. Leaders implement these policies effectively.

Leaders have drawn up a detailed policy about relationships and sex education. There is a well-designed programme of learning that takes into account pupils' needs and experiences. It teaches pupils effectively about a range of topics, including consent and healthy relationships.

The school premises are well maintained and meet pupils' needs. For example, there are suitable toilets and washing facilities for pupils. There is also a suitable room to look after pupils if they are sick or injured. Leaders provide for physical education using a local sports venue. They have made careful risk assessments of this provision to ensure the safety of pupils.

Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders carefully consider and review the needs of pupils, parents and visitors. Leaders have an appropriate action plan to support pupils with disabilities who may attend the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have robust systems in place to report and record concerns about pupils' safety. This represents a significant improvement since the previous standard inspection. Staff are well trained in how to spot signs of abuse or neglect. Leaders promptly provide the help that pupils need, involving outside agencies such as social care when necessary.

There is a comprehensive and up-to-date safeguarding policy. This policy takes account of the government's current requirements. Leaders make this available to parents on request, as there is no school website.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to keep safe in different circumstances. For example, pupils know about the risks involved in using the internet and understand how to avoid harm.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the procedures for responding to allegations against members of staff, if any were to occur.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The systems that leaders use to assess pupils' reading abilities are not as precise as they should be. This means that staff do not have a clear enough picture of the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils do not get the support that they need to overcome some of these gaps. Leaders should continue with their work to introduce better focused reading assessment systems to enable them to target support more effectively for pupils who have difficulties with reading.
- Some members of staff do not have secure enough knowledge of some of the subjects that they teach. This hampers their delivery of these subjects. Pupils do not make the gains in knowledge that they do elsewhere. Leaders should carry on with their work to provide training to staff to strengthen their subject knowledge across the curriculum.

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

Unique reference number	129571
DfE registration number	888/6089
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10248052
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Care Afloat Limited
Chair	Mike Fletcher
Headteacher	James McAlpine
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,142 to £77,792
Telephone number	01942 466318
Website	None
Email address	jamesmcalpine@careafloat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 July 2021

Information about this school

- The date of the previous standard inspection was 6 to 8 July 2021.
- The school's previous inspection was a material change inspection in July 2022 because leaders intended to move the school to new premises. The school was judged to be likely to meet the relevant standards if the material change relating to the school provision was implemented. The school moved to the new premises for the start of the 2022/23 school year.
- The proprietor body is currently in communication with the Department for Education (DfE) to change the school's address on the government's 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) website. The school's previous address is currently recorded there.
- Leaders are also in communication with the DfE about changing the proprietor details on the GIAS website. A director of the current proprietor body, Daniel Curran, is recorded on the government's GIAS website as the proprietor.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders do not make use of 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 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 second routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair and the chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher, governors and other school leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. Inspectors heard some pupils reading to staff during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They also held telephone conversations with parents and carers. They looked at a range of other

policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View or Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Mawson

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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