

Inspection of Neptune School

24 Poplar Road, Warmley, Bristol BS30 5JU

Inspection dates: 14 and 16 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend this new specialist setting benefit from strong relationships with staff. Pupils say that they can talk to staff and believe that they will help to resolve any problems. However, the curriculum is not adapted well enough to match some pupils' needs. In addition, leaders have not made sure that the school's admissions procedures are strong enough to ensure that pupils' needs are well matched to what the school can provide.

Leaders demonstrate a determination to improve the school. They listen to pupils and take their views into account. School governors invite pupils to their meetings to tell them about their experiences of the school. As a pupil explained, 'This school isn't perfect yet, but it's trying to be perfect.'

Small groupings enable staff to get to know and understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs well. This helps some pupils who have found it challenging to access education in the past to become more secure in attending school. Staff are developing consistent approaches to managing the sometimes challenging behaviours that pupils show. However, the school is not a consistently calm place to learn.

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

Since the school opened to pupils just over a year ago, there have been significant changes of key staff. These changes have slowed the development of a curriculum that successfully meets pupils' needs. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. However, it is not organised or structured so that pupils are likely to learn and remember the content. Leaders have recognised this.

There have been some recent improvements. Leaders are introducing a new 'pathway' curriculum, which is designed to support pupils' interests, targets and outcomes as described in their education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders have begun to check the quality of how well staff implement this new curriculum. However, this work is at an early stage.

Leaders have the capacity to make the improvements needed. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the right actions that are likely to secure a high-quality of education.

The personal, social, health education curriculum helps pupils to be aware of how to live healthy, safe lives. It also promotes pupils' awareness of the need to respect everyone, regardless of their background or characteristics. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to impartial careers guidance. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on how well pupils are prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

A system of celebrations for pupils' achievements help to support pupils' personal development. Staff encourage pupils to take on extra responsibilities that match their interests, for example by helping to provide food at a breakfast club, or looking after the school's allotment.

The proprietor ensures that the school is well resourced and that there are high-quality reading books for pupils. However, staff have not had the guidance they need to be able to support pupils who have gaps in their reading and writing knowledge. As a result, pupils do not catch up as well as they should.

Staff form a caring and close team. They are proud to work at the school and appreciate the support of leaders. The therapy team based at the school helps to guide staff to manage pupils' SEMH needs. Staff are patient and use a variety of approaches to help pupils when they are anxious or showing disruptive behaviours. However, some pupils say that their learning can be interrupted and that too often, the school is not the calm learning environment they would like it to be.

Pupils particularly enjoy the outside space, which includes learning areas for reading and art. The proprietor ensures that there is strong oversight of health and safety procedure and policies. This supports pupils' safety in and around the site. Even so, checks to ensure that incidents involving physical restraint are recorded appropriately are not as robust.

The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding seriously. Staff know pupils well, which helps them to notice changes to behaviour that could signal a concern. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that staff have the information they need to recognise and report signs of abuse.

The safeguarding team liaises with other agencies well so that pupils get the required help. The curriculum raises pupils' awareness of safeguarding risks. There are thorough procedures to secure safe recruitment of staff.

The school has a safeguarding policy available to parents on the school website. The policy takes into account current government requirements.

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

- Some parts of the curriculum are more relevant to pupils than others. Leaders have recognised this and have begun to review the aims and organisation of learning across the school. Leaders must ensure that different subjects and

pathways within the curriculum have clear end goals. They must agree the important content that pupils will learn so that pupils are prepared well for their futures.

- The proprietor has ensured that checks are made to secure compliance with the independent school standards. However, there is not sufficient rigour to check the quality of the curriculum or how well it is delivered. Leaders must introduce robust monitoring systems so that they can be assured that the quality of education is good.
- Some staff do not have a strong understanding of how to teach phonics or how to support pupils who need to catch up with reading and writing. Leaders must ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills they need to support pupils to read and spell.
- Too often, leaders have discovered that the school cannot meet the needs of pupils who are placed there. This has resulted in disruptions to pupils' learning. Leaders must ensure that they have sufficiently thorough admissions and assessment processes in place so that successful, permanent placements at Neptune are the norm.
- Since the school opened, staff have developed strategies to manage pupils' behaviours, but this has not resulted in a consistent approach. Leaders must ensure that staff develop a consistent approach to managing behaviour so that there is a reliably calm environment which helps all pupils to feel safe.
- Leaders have not been sufficiently thorough in checking the recording of incidents that involve physical intervention. This means that they cannot be assured that all parts of the process have taken place. Leaders must ensure that every incident that involves physical intervention is recorded according to the school's procedures.

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

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| Unique reference number | 148843 |
| DfE registration number | 803/6011 |
| Local authority | South Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10254702 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 8 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 17 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 2 |
| Proprietor | Phoenix Learning and Care Ltd |
| Chair | Jon Pain |
| Headteacher | Shane Villa-Hayes |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £56,728.19 |
| Telephone number | 0330 135 8202 |
| Website | www.phoenixschools.org.uk/neptune |
| Email address | neptune@phoenixschools.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Neptune School is in South Gloucestershire. The premises are a converted residential building.
- The school was registered by the DfE on 18 January 2022. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is for pupils with SEMH needs and/or autism spectrum disorder. All pupils are allocated to the school by local authorities, and all have an EHC plan. The school is not approved under section 41.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2022.

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 was the first routine inspection the school 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 had several meetings with the operations director, the regional education lead, the quality manager and the headteacher.
- An inspector met with the therapies team as well as teachers and teaching assistants.
- A telephone discussion took place with a representative from Bristol local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the online surveys for staff and pupils and to the free texts on the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also spoke to four parents or carers on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive inspectors met with curriculum 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.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined safeguarding records.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors held discussion with leaders and considered documentation such as policies and procedures to maintain pupils' safety. An inspector also toured the site and premises, both internally and externally.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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