

# The Linnet Independent Learning Centre

107 Mount Pleasant Road, Castle Gresley, Derbyshire DE11 9JE

**Inspection date**

21 March 2023

**Overall outcome**

**The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(1), 2(2), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that pupils were being provided with a coherent and aspirational curriculum. Leaders had not prioritised phonics and reading. They had not made sure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were effectively met. Pupils at each key stage were not being well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Leaders have very recently addressed these issues. There are appropriate, fresh schemes of work in place for all key stages. These consider pupils' interests and aptitudes. They are designed to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time. A newly introduced phonics and reading scheme is helping pupils to become more confident and fluent readers.
- Most pupils with SEND in all key stages are now receiving effective support. They are being supported well by staff and are having their needs met.
- Leaders have introduced a curriculum to help prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. However, pupils still have a very weak understanding of this area.

*Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that the curriculum set out clearly what pupils should learn and when. Teachers did not know exactly what they needed to teach. Curriculum planning did not build on learning from the previous key stage. Leaders had not ensured that staff had received professional development training. Some teachers did not know the best ways to teach the subjects they deliver. Some pupils could not recall any prior learning from subjects.
- At the previous inspection, the targets on pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans were not appropriate. They were not broken down into smaller steps so that they could be monitored and reviewed.

- Leaders have yet to ensure that staff have received effective training to deliver the new key stage 2 curriculum and phonics programme. Staff in key stages 3 and 4 have yet to receive effective training to deliver the new schemes of work.
- Some pupils' work is not at the appropriate level of challenge. Work in pupils' books is not always of a high enough standard. Resources are of a poor quality. Too many pupils are not interested or self-motivated in their learning. They cannot recall what they have learned.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' EHC plans are now appropriate. The targets are broken down into smaller steps. They inform teachers how best to support pupils with EHC plans. The targets are reviewed and updated frequently. Consequently, pupils with EHC plans are now receiving more-effective support.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(g), 4*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had still not put in place a suitable assessment framework. The chosen assessments did not match the curriculum that pupils were learning. Teachers were unable to assess accurately pupils' progress towards identified end points.
- Leaders have introduced a suitable assessment framework for both the key stage 2 curriculum and for the phonics programme. Teachers can now spot gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, leaders have yet to introduce an effective assessment system in key stages 3 and 4. Therefore, teachers do not know how well these pupils are progressing through the curriculum.
- The school does not meet all the requirements of the independent school standards that were checked in this part.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

*Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not followed safer recruitment practices, as set out in the latest national guidance. They had not obtained and verified up-to-date references from previous employers. They had not completed all the required checks for all members of staff prior to their employment.
- At the previous inspection, safeguarding records did not detail the actions taken by leaders after a safeguarding concern had been raised. Not all safeguarding records were complete. Leaders had not made welfare checks on pupils who had been absent for a considerable period of time. Where welfare checks were made and not answered, leaders did not follow these up with actions, or involve other appropriate agencies.
- Leaders have improved some aspects of this work. For example, welfare checks on pupils who are absent are now more robust. Outside agencies are contacted, should the need arise.
- While the independent school standards in part 4 relating to staff recruitment and the single central record are met, other failings in relation to recruitment remain. Some references for prospective employees do not confirm that the employee is suitable to work with children or if they have been subject to any disciplinary action relating to their suitability to work with children. Leaders do not consistently follow up on these

references to check that the prospective employees are suitable to work with children. This potentially puts pupils at risk.

- Leaders do not always record the actions taken in response to a safeguarding concern. Leaders do not refer to statutory guidance when dealing with serious safeguarding concerns.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(h), 9, 9(b)*

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that expectations of pupils' behaviour were not high enough. Pupils disengaged from learning too easily and wandered out of classrooms. Staff had little expectation that these pupils should then return to their learning.
- Leaders have embedded the new rewards and points system across the school. Pupils respond well to these rewards. Staff have received some effective behaviour management training. Leaders' behaviour records indicate that the number of behaviour incidents is decreasing as the academic year progresses. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is improving. There have been no suspensions yet this academic year.

*Paragraph 15*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that attendance registers were completed in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Leaders coded pupils' absence as authorised when it should have been unauthorised. Pupils who had been sent home due to behavioural incidents were recorded as being authorised absent when they should have been recorded as excluded.
- Leaders have ensured that attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Pupils are now coded accurately to show the reasons for their absence. Leaders take appropriate action to discover the reasons why pupils are absent.

*Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that risk assessments contained the necessary detail in relation to identified risks and the actions taken to mitigate them. Leaders did not review or update risk assessments following serious incidents or after incidents of physical restraint.
- Leaders have reviewed their processes around risk assessment. These processes have improved. Pupils' individual risk assessments are detailed. They contain appropriate actions to mitigate the identified risks. Risk assessments are frequently reviewed and updated, including after serious incidents and incidents when physical restraint has been used.
- However, off-site risk assessments are generic and not detailed enough. They do not contain specific detail regarding the individual pupils who are due to attend each off-site visit. For example, staff are not fully aware if pupils might be at risk of absconding or requiring medication. This puts pupils and staff potentially at risk.
- The school does not meet all the requirements of the independent school standards that were checked in this part.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

*Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(3), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders were unclear which pre-employment checks were required. They did not consistently check on the previous employment of the staff they employed. There was no evidence that medical fitness checks for new staff had been completed. The proprietor had not ensured that the single central record contained all the required information about pre-employment checks.
- Leaders have rectified these previous failings. For example, a new application form for prospective employees contains relevant information. Leaders are now clear about the necessary pre-employment checks they should make.
- The single central record contains the required information regarding these checks. It matches the statutory guidance.
- The school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards that were checked in this part.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)*

- The school website contains the child protection and safeguarding policy. The policy contains the latest statutory guidance and is available for parents to download. A paper copy can be requested.
- The requirement remains 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 previous inspection, the proprietor had not acted effectively to address all the standards that were not met at the most recent standard inspection. The proprietor had failed to maintain some standards that were previously judged to be met. Safeguarding arrangements were not effective. Leaders were not actively promoting pupils' well-being. Pupils' risk assessments and EHC plans were not detailed nor were they being updated frequently enough. Consequently, some pupils were not getting the support they needed.
- The proprietor has ensured that some of the previously unmet standards are now met. However, failings still remain. Pupils are potentially at risk of harm through inconsistencies in the checking of prospective employee references and through generic off-site risk assessments that do not contain appropriate detail. Safeguarding records do not show the actions leaders take after a concern has been raised.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers have received sufficient training to implement the new schemes of work and phonics programme as intended. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress through the curriculum are not established well enough.

- The proprietor has not ensured that those who have leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are consistently met.
- The school does not meet all the requirements of the independent school standards that were checked in this part.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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 requirements of the independent school standards

#### Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 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)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

#### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
  - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 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.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
  - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
  - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person's medical fitness.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
  - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
  - 21(3)(a)(i) S's identity was checked;

- 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
  - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
  - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
  - 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
  - 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
  - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
  - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e),
  - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

## School details

Unique reference number	131327
DfE registration number	830/6033
Inspection number	10277817

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Lewis Charlton Ltd
Chair	Zaheer Esat
Headteacher	Nicky Felthouse
Annual fees (day pupils)	£69,000 to £72,450
Telephone number	01283 213989
Website	<a href="http://www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk">www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:nfelthouse@linnet.org.uk">nfelthouse@linnet.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	23 to 25 November 2021

## Information about this school

- The Linnet Independent Learning Centre is an independent day special school for boys aged 3 to 16 years. There are currently 17 pupils on roll, aged between 7 and 15.
- The school is part of Lewis Charlton Ltd, which is the proprietor. The company has one director. It has an advisory board that acts as a governing body with delegated responsibilities. There are five governors.
- The school operates across three sites: The Nest and Treetops at Castle Gresley, Derbyshire DE11 9JE, and The Willows, Ashby-de-la-Zouch LE65 1HU.



- Ofsted assessed the leaders' action plan in December 2022. It was deemed to be not acceptable. The leaders' previous action plan from May 2022 was also deemed to be not acceptable.
- There have been significant changes in staffing, including in leadership positions since the previous standard and progress monitoring inspections.
- Pupils typically have significant behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Many pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils travel to the school from several local authorities. A few pupils are in the care of their placing local authorities.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- During the inspection the proprietor requested that the Department for Education reduce the pupils' age range from 3 to 16, to 5 to 16.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 23 to 25 November 2021. Inspectors found multiple failings against the independent school standards at the time of this inspection.

## 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.
- The inspection took place with no notice. This was in line with the commission from the registration authority, the Department for Education. The inspection was the school's second monitoring inspection. The previous monitoring inspection took place on 6 July 2022.
- The headteacher and the site leaders of The Nest, Treetops and The Willows were all absent during the inspection.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher and senior staff. The lead inspector spoke to the proprietor on the telephone. Inspectors spoke with a number of other staff and pupils.
- The inspectors visited lessons on all three sites.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents relating to the school's provision, including schemes of work, safeguarding records and pupils' risk assessments.
- The inspectors checked a sample of pupils' EHC plans.
- The inspectors checked the school's single central record and recruitment procedures.

## Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Long

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school does not meet the following independent school standards**

*Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection*

#### **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(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 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;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

## **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; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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