

Inspection of Demeter House

Demeter House School, Bigby Street, Brigg North Lincolnshire DN20 8EF

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

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?

Adults at Demeter House want the very best for the pupils in their care and will go the extra mile to help achieve this. Prior to attending Demeter House, most pupils have not had a successful school experience. Some pupils have spent extensive periods of time unable to access a formal school education. Leaders and staff at Demeter house are determined to change this so that pupils have a positive experience of school in their care. Pupils are proud of their school and what they can achieve here. They understand how adults help them to stay safe.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They appreciate how staff support them with home visits in term time and school holiday periods. Parents welcome how leaders signpost them to helpful professionals. Almost all parents that inspectors spoke with, had a story to share of something special that school staff had provided and how this had supported them at a difficult time. This is testament to the commitment and care provided by the staff in this school.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct across school. These expectations are commonly understood and applied consistently by pupils most of the time. Pupils say that while bullying does happen in their school, teachers deal with this promptly and they feel safe. Pupils have key workers who support them with any behaviour concerns. Reflection time is used to manage poor behaviour. Adults demonstrate caring relationship with pupils.

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

Following Demeter House's last standard inspection, leaders have completed detailed work to develop the school's curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered pupils' starting points as well as the ambitious outcomes they want all pupils to achieve. This school's written curriculum is now in place. This is being implemented well in some subjects.

Reading is at an early stage of development. The school has introduced a phonics programme since the last inspection. However, leaders acknowledge that they have further work to do to ensure that staff teach the phonics programme in a consistent and effective way. Reading is a priority in school. There are a small number of pupils who cannot read with accuracy and fluency. Despite this, pupils demonstrate an increasing love of reading, for example during conversations with inspectors.

In all subjects, the school has a written curriculum in place. However, this curriculum offer has undergone substantial change. Leaders have begun to lead subject-specific training and have further training planned. Leaders are still considering the monitoring processes they need to put in place to check how well each subject is taught and how well pupils can recall their learning. In core subjects such as mathematics and science, the curriculum is implemented well and pupils can talk articulately about what they know and remember. In history, the school has been

awarded the status of 'Beacon School for Holocaust Education'. Pupils enjoy learning in these subjects.

All pupils who attend this setting have an education, health and care plan. More than half of the pupils require support to meet their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Many of these pupils also have autism. This can result in pupils having difficulty in managing their emotions and behaviour. Most pupils arrive at Demeter House with a history of high-level behaviour incidents in their home school and very poor attendance. Key workers and teachers work closely with the pupils in their care to support them to manage their behaviour. Leaders can demonstrate the positive impact of this targeted work through the significant increase in pupil attendance, as well as a continued reduction in incidents of poor behaviour over time.

Pupils' personal development is of the utmost importance to staff. The school has a sharp focus on each pupils' quality of life. Key workers support each pupil and their wider family. Together, they develop a carefully adapted personal development offer which includes relationships, sex and health education, as well as careers guidance. This bespoke offer supports pupils to build their personal and vocational knowledge as well as their social skills so that they are better prepared for adult life. Staff work closely with the pupils in their care, supporting them to develop their confidence in a range of different settings, helping them to grow into respectful young citizens.

During the inspection, there were some minor issues identified with the school buildings and the grounds. Leaders have recently commissioned an external agency to support them in prioritising this work and ensuring compliance with the independent school standards (the standards). While most of the school's buildings are maintained to a reasonable standard, the school does not meet all the requirements for part 3 or part 5 of the standards. At the start of the inspection, it was not clear which toilets girls had been allocated to use. Leaders understand that, unless the toilet facility is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time, there must be adequate separate toilet facilities. This was rectified by the end of the inspection.

The proprietor has not made sure that Demeter house is compliant with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. During the inspection, there were a small number of fire extinguishers placed outside of the designated locations. Some of the fire extinguishers had not been checked during the school's most recent fire audit. Furthermore, when inspectors checked the fire system, one of the magnetic door locks did not automatically unlock.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school's accessibility plan was not available on the school's website at the start of the inspection. However, school leaders rectified this oversight while inspectors were on site.

Staff morale is strong. Leaders recognise when staff have a lot to do and they take reasonable steps to support staff in this regard. Staff say that leaders are approachable and listen to any concerns or ideas that they may have.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place a high priority on making sure that all staff understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Staff receive comprehensive training in the school's systems before they begin working at the school. Safeguarding updates are provided at regular intervals and staff meet for a daily briefing before pupils arrive in school.

Safer recruitment procedures are followed for all new appointments. All references are received and appropriate checks are undertaken before staff are allowed to commence work. The school's single central record is held electronically and well-maintained. All necessary checks are recorded on this and regularly reviewed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some elements of the school's new early reading programme are not taught using the school's agreed phonics strategies. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand the importance of the school's early reading strategies and ensure these are used consistently throughout school to support pupils to read with accuracy and fluency in all lessons.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new curriculum across all subjects. Staff have not received the necessary training to support them in following the new curriculum. Leaders must ensure all staff are trained and able to teach the new curriculum well so that pupils' learning is supported effectively.
- Leaders have not monitored the effectiveness of the curriculum on a regular basis. They do not know when teachers require additional support with subject knowledge, pedagogy or the implementation of the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that a purposeful monitoring system is put in place to ensure the school's curriculum is taught well and additional training or support can be provided for staff when this is needed.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all of the standards. The proprietor must ensure that the outstanding premises work is completed, the school is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and that the school premises are maintained to a high standard so that pupil health and safety is ensured. The proprietor must take action to make sure that the school meets the unmet standards in part 3, part 5 and part 8 of the independent school standards and that all the standards are consistently met over time.

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	135247
DfE registration number	813/6005
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10286414
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Proprietor	Dr Rodney Wardlaw
Headteacher	Melissa Marris
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,400 to £38,000
Telephone number	01652 228207
Website	www.demeterhouseschool.com
Email address	admin@demeterhouseschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	16 to 18 November 2021

Information about this school

- Demeter House is an independent special school which provides specialist education for up to 100 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with SEMH and those with autism.
- The school's education staff work alongside various therapeutic staff to meet the pupils needs.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Demeter House school operates over two sites. The lower school educates pupils from the ages of five to 14 years and is based in Appleby. The upper school takes pupils from 14 to 19 years and is based in Brigg.
- At the time of this standard inspection, a pre-registration visit was also conducted as the proprietor has applied for Demeter House to be split into two separate schools. The proprietor wishes for the lower school to become a new school named Hera House. They intend that this will continue to take pupils from five to 14 years on the Appleby site. The upper school will be renamed Hestia House and take pupils from 14 to 19 years. The proprietor intends that this will continue to be based on the Brigg Site.
- The pre-registration inspection and the standard inspection both found that the same independent school standards were unmet. These are detailed in the annexe to the inspection report.

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 is the second standard inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of upper school, the head of lower school, the curriculum manager and the wider leadership team.
- Inspectors also met with the proprietor and a company director. The lead inspector spoke with members of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked in detail at English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. They talked to leaders and staff about their curriculum plans. They also talked to pupils about what they know and remember in these subjects. They looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.

- Inspectors met with the leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and looked at school records. They also scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. They also reviewed Ofsted Parent View, an online questionnaire for parents, including free-text responses and spoke with several parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors talked to pupils to gather their views on school life.

Inspection team

Zoe Lightfoot, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nick Horn

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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