

Inspection of The Seeds School

Unit 6, The Bridges Business Park, Horsehay, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3EE

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 September 2023

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?

This is a school where leaders and staff know the pupils inside and out. Pupils value the sense of community that exists within the school. As a result, they feel valued and trust the staff to help them if they are worried or have concerns.

The school are keen for pupils to be the best they can be. To support this aim, they have transformed the curriculum. The school has built on the strengths in the vocational curriculum and redesigned the curriculum in the academic subjects. All of this is having a positive impact on how well pupils achieve. However, leaders at all levels are keen to improve the school even further.

Overall, pupils conduct themselves well and, in most instances, engage in their learning. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour and step in quickly to help pupils manage their emotions. Leaders have recently established a behaviour curriculum. This is helping pupils to further understand what appropriate behaviour looks like.

Parents are relieved that their children are in a school where their needs are being met. In particular, they value the open lines of communication that exist between the school and home.

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

The vocational curriculum is the hallmark of this school. Pupils can choose to follow a pathway in construction, hairdressing, hospitality and catering, or physical education. Pupils are taught by knowledgeable staff who have extensive experience in their subjects. Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and take tremendous pride in their work. They are well prepared to continue with vocational learning when they leave the school.

The school has rightly focused their efforts on developing the curriculum in the academic subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders have completely overhauled and redesigned the curriculum. It is well ordered, so pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary build well over time. Pupils understand that what they learn in English and mathematics supports their learning in the vocational subjects. Staff value the guidance that the curriculum planning gives them. They know what to teach and when to teach it.

Teaching staff explain new learning clearly, in a well-structured manner. They use questioning well to check that pupils understand what they have been taught and adjust their teaching if required. Non-specialist teaching staff are supported effectively by leaders and other colleagues to develop their subject knowledge.

Teaching staff use information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, alongside initial assessments, to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individual learners. The initial assessments identify any pupils who are at the early stages of

reading. However, the school does not have a mechanism to identify any gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. As a result, these gaps remain unfilled, which slows pupils' progress in reading.

Many pupils have historic low attendance or have been out of education for extended periods of time before they join the school. The school works with pupils who are persistently or severely absent and with their families. However, their approach is not effective. The school is not analysing individual and whole-school attendance data well enough. This means their actions are disjointed and lack consistency. Consequently, attendance remains stubbornly low.

Improving pupils' well-being underpins the core work of the school. Pupils' personal development is supported by a well-designed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. A range of elements are taught well, such as healthy lifestyles, positive relationships and consent. These topics are revisited to cement and extend pupils' knowledge. The school has also placed a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for adulthood. A range of areas are explored effectively in order to support this aim, such as independent living and managing money.

Careers education begins by identifying pupils' strengths and the types of careers that they would like to pursue. Staff support pupils to map out the pathway they need to follow to work towards their chosen career choice. This process is supported by an external careers adviser. Currently, pupils do not engage in work experience placements. However, they visit the local college to explore possible post-16 options.

The proprietor has established a governance panel to support and hold school leaders to account. The panel consists of members who possess a range of experience in attendance, health and safety, and school leadership. The panel is in its infancy, but there is already evidence of the impact of their work, particularly in relation to securely meeting the independent school standards. For example, they ensure that the safeguarding policy meets current statutory guidance and is available on the school's website.

Staff work well as a team and there is a strong sense of camaraderie. Staff are right behind leaders in their continuing efforts to improve the school. Staff value the training they receive. They say this helps them to do their job better. Some staff comment that workload can be a challenge at times, although they add that leaders will always provide extra help if needed. Staff say that leaders have an open-door policy, are visible, and act on any concerns they raise.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, as a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The school does not have a mechanism in place to identify any gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. As a result, pupils at the early stages of reading do not get the help they need to become fluent readers. The school should implement a phonics programme that will allow them to identify and fill gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge.
- Too many pupils are persistently or severely absent from school. This has a negative impact on their progress through the curriculum. The school should establish an attendance policy and systems, which use data intelligently, so that they can put in place effective individual and whole-school attendance strategies.

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	146164
DfE registration number	894/6011
Local authority	Telford & Wrekin
Inspection number	10284435
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Steve Knight
Headteacher	Robert Pritchard
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500
Telephone number	01952 630710
Website	www.the-eds.org
Email address	enquiries@the-eds.org
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 July 2022

Information about this school

- The Seeds School is an independent school for pupils aged 14 to 16. The school operates from two sites, one in Telford and one in Walsall (King George Crescent, Rushall, Walsall WS4 1EG).
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have an EHC plan.
- A range of local authorities place pupils in the school. Some pupils arrive and leave the school by local authority-funded transport.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school opened in 2019. The school's last full inspection was in July 2022. The school was judged to be inadequate.
- The school received a progress monitoring inspection in June 2023, when it met all the independent school standards that were checked during the inspection.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor, the headteacher and a member of the governance panel. He held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils' attendance, careers and pupils' behaviour.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, PSHE education and vocational learning. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also met with the history subject leader and discussed curriculum planning in this subject.

- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises on both sites to check their suitability.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors were unable to consider responses to Ofsted Parent View, due to the small number of responses received, but they considered the free-text response received during the inspection. Inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records and minutes of meetings held by the governance panel.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Heather Phillips

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

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