

Inspection of The Pinetree School

Staniforth Road, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3LH

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The head of school of this school is James Rice. This school is part of Unity Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Glyn Hambling, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Jones. There is also an executive headteacher, Katrina Warren, who is responsible for this school and eight others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at The Pinetree School having had numerous failed educational experiences. All are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Here, they are supported to get back into school and succeed. Over time, pupils become more motivated and gain the qualifications they need to move on to appropriate college placements at age 16.

Pupils have positive relationships with the staff. Pupils feel well supported and understood as individuals. Most are happy and engaged. They talk about how they are succeeding in this school and how the adults are good at helping them with learning. They feel safe.

Pupils' work is adapted to meet their own individual needs but is appropriately challenging. Pupils study a curriculum that contains a high focus on academic knowledge, together with work on life skills, developing resilience and tolerance.

Behaviour has improved substantially. The need for suspensions has dropped. Pupils describe how their and others' behaviour has improved as they spend more time in the school. However, a minority of pupils are still demonstrating very challenging behaviour and using poor language more than they should.

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

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of education it provides. The school has ensured that there is a full curriculum in place. Pupils learn appropriate knowledge and skills for their age. Teachers make careful adaptations to ensure pupils with large gaps in previous learning can access the curriculum. Expectations are high and most pupils leave with GCSEs.

Most pupils are competent, but reluctant readers. The school has purchased additional books to meet pupils' specific interests, such as recipe books. The few who need additional help with reading receive extra teaching and online practise. Reading and writing are part of the curriculum across all subjects.

The unit overviews used in each subject make it clear how learning progresses within each topic. Pupils' written work matches the planned schemes. The school is organised into mixed key stage classes to meet pupils' emotional needs. However, the long-term planning of how topics build up year on year is not yet fully in place since changing from year group classes.

The school is clear about its three priorities for getting pupils to succeed and that these can only work in the right order. These are attendance, behaviour, and engagement. Several pupils have been non-attenders in the past. Leaders work very closely with them and their families to get them into school. This has succeeded for many, with most pupils in school regularly.

Teachers assess pupils' participation and engagement in every lesson. Pupils are motivated by this as it brings both daily and termly rewards. If pupils have not cooperated, they catch up on learning instead of taking part in enrichment sessions each day. A small number of pupils have not yet learned to focus as well as others. They do not meet expectations, for example they are disruptive and swear. There have been recent incidents of pupils vaping on the field and they regularly have mobile phones out.

Once pupils become engaged, most are motivated by future college and career possibilities. Many pupils take part in regular work experience or placements to learn skills, such as mechanics. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain through the well planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, tutor time and assemblies. They are further engaged by regular themed days to learn about different ways of life.

Governance is from a school improvement board, which looks at every aspect of the school's performance in detail. The challenge from this board has supported leaders' work in continuing improvements. Staff feel well supported by both leaders in school and those from the multi-academy trust. Subject leaders benefit from network meetings with peers in similar schools.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- It is not clear enough in all subjects' planning how topics will build year on year for the mixed-age classes. This means that how pupils will build new knowledge on what has come before has not been considered as well as it should have been. The school needs to ensure that it is clearer what pupils will be taught, and when, over an entire key stage.
- Some pupils' behaviour is not yet good enough. They do not meet the school's high expectations or follow rules and routines. As a result, they miss out on some of their learning. The school needs to ensure that the improvements in behaviour for most pupils are also in place for this minority.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139665
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10288524
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Free schools alternative provision
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Jones
CEO of the trust	Glyn Hambling
Headteacher	Katrina Warren
Website	www.pinetreeschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides places for pupils with SEND, who have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have social, emotional, and mental health needs. They have either previously been permanently excluded from other schools or have been out of education for other reasons.
- The school provides long-term placements; pupils stay on roll from arrival until leaving at the end of Year 11.
- The school is part of the Unity Education Trust.
- The school uses one unregistered provider to provide alternative provision to enhance education for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school and subject leaders. They met with members of staff. They also spoke with the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees, and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, examined pupils' work, and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also visited a range of other subject lessons and spoke to pupils. They looked at a wide range of curriculum plans.
- To inspect 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 considered the four responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They considered the seven responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Cloke

Ofsted Inspector

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