

Inspection of The Pace Centre

Coventon Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 9JL

Inspection dates:

31 October to 2 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This outstanding school makes a significant and profound difference to pupils' lives. A highly inclusive and caring ethos weaves across all aspects of school life. Staff have very high expectations and go the extra mile to ensure that pupils accomplish great things. They know each pupil exceptionally well. Staff strike the right balance in nurturing pupils so that they believe in their own capabilities and confidently have a go themselves. Phrases of encouragement like 'yes you can' reverberate through every classroom. Consequently, pupils' sense of self-worth and self-esteem grows exponentially.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They feel safe and their big smiles show how happy and settled they are. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, trusting and highly respectful.

The school holds pupils' best interests at the forefront of its work. Staff champion pupils' interests and talents exceptionally well. Pupils are excited to attend clubs such as boccia, gardening, cooking and singing. They are thrilled to visit the Stoke Mandeville stadium and participate in pentathlon activities alongside Paralympians. Pupils wholeheartedly enjoy taking part in challenging and exciting activities, such as horse riding and ice skating. They plant wildflowers around their school to encourage bees and bugs to the area.

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

The Pace Centre is a learning community of the highest calibre. The quality of education here is first class. Ambition for what pupils and staff can achieve is boundless. Pupils exceed their potential and leave school extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the school. They value the supportive and reassuring communication they receive. Most describe the school as a 'place that sees possibility where others only see disability'.

The proprietor body supports the school's work exceptionally well. It makes sure that all of the independent school standards are met securely. The school has a well-considered accessibility plan and meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Staff are infectious positive. They highly value the support and training they receive, describing their work as 'fulfilling and enriching'.

The curriculum is structured superbly. Each pupil has a bespoke curriculum designed to meet their particular needs. The starting point for each subject is the pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Teaching staff work closely with therapists to plan each pupil's personal learning goals. Pupils' interests and sensory needs usually determine the context for their learning and the resources they use. Adults carefully, expertly and sensitively blend specialist support and therapies, both within lessons and on a one-to-one basis. These include occupational, speech and language, hydro and movement therapies.

Pupils achieve highly from their individual starting points. Staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), should have 'a voice'. All pupils are expertly taught to communicate using a wide range of alternative communication methods, devices and systems. For instance, tactile signing is used with pupils with the most profound learning and sensory needs, while other pupils use communication books. These books contain the symbols and pictures that are most relevant and meaningful for the individual pupil. Where relevant, staff skilfully train pupils so that they can use augmentative communication devices to help them understand and interact with others. Consequently, pupils learn to express their needs and their knowledge of the world exceptionally well.

Reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils learn to read in a multitude of ways. Staff are experts in teaching phonics sounds. They know exactly what works well for each individual and adapt resources and equipment accordingly. For instance, for each pupil, staff identify the best way to teach them to learn to read. Pupils relish listening to the interesting stories staff read and share throughout the day. As one Year 7 pupil explained, 'We love to listen to stories in school as this makes us go into a beautiful world of imagination.'

A calm and peaceful atmosphere pervades all classrooms. Pupils demonstrate genuine commitment and concentration at all times. They approach lessons with a serious attitude. Staff are adept at promoting pupils' independence. For example, they patiently encourage pupils as they learn to manoeuvre and drive their powered wheelchairs. Pupils are extremely proud of themselves when they succeed. They excitedly express their joy through vocalisations and by laughing, clapping and smiling.

Pupils' personal development offer is dynamic and rich. The school ensures that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils volunteer at the community allotment, the local café and the church nearby. They learn about the different jobs and careers they can pursue. Pupils work with a range of professionals such as musicians, sports personalities and entrepreneurs who visit regularly. They celebrate religious festivals and visit different places of worship. Pupils talk knowledgeably about what makes a good friend and what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of mutual respect and tolerance. As one younger pupil shared, 'It doesn't matter who you love or like because everyone should be respected and appreciated for who they are.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	131462
DfE registration number	825/6031
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10286398
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	The Pace Centre
Chair	Helen Shepherd
Headteacher	Claire Smart
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,523 to £74,186
Telephone number	01296 392739
Website	www.thepacecentre.org
Email address	info@thepacecentre.org
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 November 2019

Information about this school

- The school is registered for up to 43 pupils with complex physical disabilities. There are currently 38 pupils on the school's roll. Most pupils have cerebral palsy and sensory impairment. Some use augmentative alternative communication. All pupils require very high levels of personal support and medical care.
- Almost all pupils have an EHC plan. They are placed at the school by local authorities, including Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Hounslow and Hillingdon. A few pupils attend on a part-time basis.
- The school provides an integrated curriculum which includes principles from a specialist teaching method known as conductive education. This approach adopts individual physical learning programmes for each pupil and provides one-to-one support throughout the school day.
- The school operates on two sites which are located at Coventon Road and Wendover Road in Aylesbury.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, and teaching and specialist support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees and one other trustee. Inspectors also spoke with a headteacher of a virtual school and officers from two of the local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- A few pupils are also registered at other schools and attend The Pace Centre on a part-time basis. An inspector spoke on the telephone with headteachers and senior staff from these schools.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held

discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms and during breaktimes and transition times.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Dyer

Ofsted Inspector

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