

Sheridan House School

Thetford Road, Northwold, Thetford, Norfolk IP26 5LQ

Inspection date

2 November 2023

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1)(a) to 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(i)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. Curriculum planning across several subjects was underdeveloped, including in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils experienced a series of disjointed learning activities that did not help them catch up in their early reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have acted with skill and determination to bring about improvement in the school's curriculum. There is now an ambitious curriculum in place for each subject taught in school. Pupils now receive a broad, well-designed curriculum. Staff have a clear curriculum and assessment framework to guide them to teach lessons that build on what pupils already know.
- Pupils receive regular and useful guidance about future careers. This is impartial advice and provides pupils with the chance to see the range of possibilities ahead of them as they move into adulthood.

Paragraphs 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(1)(g)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. There were weaknesses in the RSE curriculum, and teachers did not routinely follow the curriculum planning where it did exist. Planning and delivery of RSE did not meet all statutory requirements.
- The school's work to strengthen PSHE and RSE provision is bearing fruit. Pupils now receive regular and relevant guidance around subjects such as healthy relationships, mental health and being responsible citizens. Leaders elected to revise the school's timetable so that pupils learn PSHE and RSE every day. Doing so is helping pupils to retain the important knowledge leaders and staff want them to know.
- The school has consulted with parents about the content of the RSE curriculum in line with statutory requirements.

Paragraphs 3(a) to 3(h), 4

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. Pupils were

not supported to learn effectively. Staff did not know how to help pupils improve their conduct, and there was a lack of planning, assessment, resources and staff training to manage pupils' needs and behaviours.

- Pupils' experiences in school have been transformed. Lessons are generally calm. Pupils behave well. They learn well because teachers deliver the newly introduced curriculum plans effectively. Pupils themselves recognise and value the positive difference in the school.
- Work in books shows that pupils follow the curriculum because teachers now teach lessons in a sensible order. Teachers check that pupils remember what they are taught and adapt lessons or provide additional intervention if this is needed.
- Teachers now receive regular and relevant training to help them continue to improve their practice. This includes content such as work to strengthen subject knowledge and behaviour management.
- The independent school standards outlined in part 1 are now fully met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. Pupils' wider development needs were not being well supported, the PSHE curriculum was underdeveloped and pupils were not prepared to be active and positive citizens in British society.
- The school's effective work around the PSHE and RSE curriculum, along with a well-designed programme of assemblies, means that pupils are being well prepared for their lives in British society. Pupils display values such as respect and care in and around the school. As the school's culture around behaviour has changed for the positive, so too have pupils' attitudes and beliefs.
- Pupils learn about, and show understanding of, the differences between themselves and others. As they reap the benefits of learning a stronger curriculum than in the past, pupils' levels of self-esteem and self-confidence are rising significantly.
- The requirements of the independent school standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. There was a lack of rigour in safeguarding systems and case records were not well kept. Leaders did not ensure timely or appropriate support for pupils.
- Safeguarding systems, processes and procedures have been overhauled. The significant weaknesses seen at the previous inspection no longer remain. The new reporting system is well understood by all staff. The team of designated safeguarding leads has been increased, and it benefits from regular and relevant training and support. If staff have concerns about the welfare of a pupil, they report these in much detail. Leaders swiftly follow up on these concerns to make sure the right support is in place for pupils. There is a culture of vigilance in school.

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. There were high levels of disruption and sometimes dangerous behaviours exhibited by pupils towards one another and staff. Some pupils had an underdeveloped understanding of bullying, and staff were not well trained to manage pupils' behaviour.
- Behaviour has been transformed. Pupils, staff and leaders all report far less disruption than in the past. The school is a calm place. The school's behaviour policy is clear and now implemented extremely well. Staff are well trained. Bullying is rare, but pupils know that they have an adult to speak with if they have a problem.
- When misbehaviour does occur, pupils are confident staff will manage it well and keep everyone safe. Records of misbehaviour are detailed and used wisely by leaders to spot trends and quickly put in place additional support for pupils if this is needed.

Paragraphs 11 and 14

- The proprietor body has ensured that the health and safety policy in place is appropriate. The site is safe and well maintained.
- In the past, the school had too few staff. This is no longer the case. Pupils are well supervised in lessons, recreational time, lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- The requirements of the independent school standards were met at the previous inspection and continue to be met.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. Leaders did not consider risk management processes well enough after serious incidents and were not ensuring that all aspects of the school site were maintained reasonably for the safety of pupils.
- A suitable range of risk assessments are in place. Sensible mitigations are in place to keep all members of the community safe when risks are identified. Leaders review any incidents that occur to ensure they strengthen practice further.
- The independent school standards outlined in part 3 are now fully met.

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

Paragraph 21(1)

- At the previous inspection, this independent school standard was unmet. The proprietor body had not supported leaders well to ensure that the maintenance of the record of staff checks was appropriate and up to date.
- The single central record complies with statutory guidance. School staff are diligent in their work to ensure all checks that are carried out by the central team are recorded accurately on the single central record. While all checks have been carried out, a very small number of administrative errors were corrected by the end of the inspection.
- The independent school standards outlined in part 4 are now fully met

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- At the previous inspection, this independent school standard was unmet. Leaders were

not ensuring that all aspects of the school site were maintained reasonably for the safety of the pupils.

- The site is safe and well maintained. Regular maintenance checks are carried out and any issue addressed swiftly.
- The requirement of this independent school standard is now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- A check of the school's safeguarding policy was carried out. The policy is comprehensive and up to date and includes a section on safer recruitment. The policy is published on the school's website.
- The requirements of the independent school standards were met at the previous inspection and continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- At the previous inspection, these independent school standards were unmet. The proprietor body did not have sufficient and accurate insight into the day-to-day experience of pupils. They did not monitor leaders' actions systematically or hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work. This included in relation to regularly and accurately evaluating the quality of provision for curriculum, safeguarding, behaviour and site maintenance.
- Following the previous inspection, the proprietor body set about stabilising and strengthening the leadership of the school. It has been successful in this. The headteacher and the broader leadership team have brought about a sustained change to the culture of the school. This is one of high expectation. This high expectation is now being realised.
- The proprietor body uses useful external monitoring of the school to ensure standards continue to improve. This includes quality of education, behaviour, safeguarding and health and safety. There are strong systems to check that the school consistently meets the independent school standards.
- The requirement of these independent school standards is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets 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. 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 independent school standards

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; and
 - 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) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,

- 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
- 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,
- 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b),
- 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
- 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

■ 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;
- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

■ 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 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
 - 5(c) precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school; and
 - 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils–
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school,
 - 5(d)(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
 - 5(d)(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

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.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 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 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 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.

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

School details

Unique reference number	121246
DfE registration number	926/6133
Inspection number	10286556

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	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Phil Ringsell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000 to £77,000
Telephone number	01366726040
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/sheridan-school-thetford/
Email address	sheridanschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	19 to 21 October 2022

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspris Children's Services Ltd.
- In October 2022, Ofsted conducted the school's sixth standard inspection. The school was judged to be inadequate. Many of the independent school standards were not met.
- The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education, and this was deemed not acceptable on 24 February 2023.
- The school submitted an amended action plan to the Department for Education, and this was deemed acceptable on 2 May 2023.

- In July 2023, the school applied to the Department for Education for a material change to change the age range of pupils from eight to 19 to eight to 16. This material change was accepted. The school no longer have a sixth-form provision.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2023 in a consultant role. He became the substantive headteacher in May 2023.
- Pupils have a range of needs, but most notably autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.

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.
- During this unannounced inspection, the inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher. He also met with the proprietor of Aspris Children's Services Limited and the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks and a range of documents relating to safeguarding, school improvement, behaviour and curriculum planning.
- The inspector visited lessons, toured the school site and spoke with pupils. The inspector also spoke with teaching and support staff to consider the support they have had to deliver the curriculum, manage pupils' behaviour and keep pupils safe.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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