

Lamledge School

Lamledge Lane, Shifnal, Shropshire TF11 8SD

Inspection date

20 November 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)(b)(i)

- Teachers undertake a series of assessments when pupils first start at the school to ascertain their aptitudes and to identify any gaps in their knowledge. This information is used to inform the curriculum content pupils need to learn.
- Staff are aware of the specific needs of individual pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. The information is easily accessible to staff. Teachers use this information to inform curriculum planning and the design of sequences of work specific to meeting pupils' needs.
- The school ensures that staff are particularly mindful of pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Staff work in conjunction with the school's clinical team to help shape the learning experience for pupils with SEND.
- The independent school standard in this part is met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 10, 14, 16 to 16(b) and 32(1)(c)

- The school has effective arrangements in place to safeguard pupils from harm. Staff understand and perform their duties effectively, to report any concerns without delay. Leaders act promptly to protect pupils from potential or further harm, involving external agencies as necessary. The school has a suitable safeguarding policy that takes into account the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State, and it is published on the school's website.
- The school completes all appropriate pre-employment checks to ensure, as far as practicably possible, that those who work with children are suitable to do so. At the time of the inspection, some dates for when checks were carried out were missing from the single central record. The checks had been undertaken, but the date was not recorded. This was rectified during the inspection.

- The school has an appropriate whistle-blowing policy for anyone to raise concerns about any possible misconduct or wrongdoing. Leaders take any allegations made against staff seriously. They involve the local authority designated officer and ensure that a thorough investigation is undertaken through to completion.
- The school has a suitable anti-bullying strategy that sets out clearly its approach to tackling any reported incidents of bullying. Pupils say that bullying happens, and in some cases, their perception is that nothing is done about it. However, staff do record incidents and they always take action to try and deal with the issues to prevent bullying from reoccurring. This can also involve intervention from the clinical team.
- The school has an appropriate risk assessment policy that is implemented effectively. Leaders consider any risks carefully and put in place measures that help to reduce the level of risk to pupils. Staff supervise pupils well.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(c)

- The school has a suitable 'person-centred' behaviour policy. It takes into account the needs of pupils with (SEMH) difficulties, and recognises that pupils' individual needs are unique. The school's approach to managing behaviour is informed by clinical well-being strategies and promotes trauma-informed practice. The policy is comprehensive and explicit in its expectations about creating an inclusive community within the school.
- The behaviour policy has recently been revised. It adopts a non-punitive approach to dealing with infringements of the policy. The emphasis is on natural and logical consequences. Nevertheless, sanctions, including suspension and exclusion are used as a last resort for serious breaches of the policy. These sanctions are recorded appropriately within the school's management information system.
- The standards in this part are met.

Paragraph 9(b)

- Too often, pupils' challenging and/or defiant behaviour is not as well managed by staff as it should be. This disrupts the learning of others, particularly in the secondary phase. Despite the school's clear policy on behaviour expectations, staff are unclear, and therefore inconsistent, in applying boundaries to help pupils improve their behaviour. This leaves some pupils believing that they can do whatever they want, without consequence. As a result, some pupils take themselves out of class for prolonged periods of time and miss important learning. Inconsistency in the way staff set boundaries is confusing to pupils and is not helping them to take responsibility and be prepared for their next steps.
- Some staff implement strategies successfully, as expected by the policy, to manage pupils' behaviour well. This includes providing routines for pupils and celebrating their achievements. Staff encourage pupils to make use of quiet spaces to reduce levels of anxiety or refocus. These approaches are used more effectively in the primary than the secondary phase.
- Staff receive a variety of training related to supporting pupils' behaviour. Most recently, staff have undertaken training on how to de-escalate a situation where, for example, a pupil is exhibiting a rise in anxious behaviour or aggression. Inspectors

witnessed some staff applying this new learning very well, but this was not always the case.

- The standard in this part is not met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 24(1) to 24(1)(b)

- The school provides an appropriate medical room for pupils who are unwell. The medical room is close to a toilet. It also serves as a first-aid area, as well as where medication is stored. Leaders have put in place procedures for the safe storage and administration of pupils' medication.
- The standards in this part are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The school has a suitable complaints procedure that includes an informal stage before potential recourse to a more formal process. Leaders manage any complaints thoroughly and fairly, applying the complaints procedure consistently. The school tries to reach a resolution without delay and communicates any findings and subsequent actions to relevant parties after the complaint has been resolved.
- The standards in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- The school has been through a recent period of flux following the completion of building works, changes to its approach to supporting pupils' behaviour, and the induction of a significant number of new staff and pupils. This transitional period has undoubtedly heightened some pupils' levels of anxiousness and contributed to changes in their behaviour. Leaders' efforts to mitigate the adverse impact of the recent changes have been only partially successful.
- The school has not ensured that the changes to the behaviour policy, particularly in relation to sanctions and consequences, have been fully understood by all staff. Consequently, these changes are taking longer to embed due to some inconsistencies in staff's application of the policy. The challenging behaviour of some pupils and the feeling of uncertainty and lack of clarity some staff show in setting boundaries are having a detrimental effect on the well-being of some staff.
- Leaders have clear and appropriate plans in place to bring about improvements to the management of pupils' behaviour – it is one of the school's current strategic priorities. This work has already started and is carefully aligned with the needs of pupils and students with lived experience of trauma.
- Governors have a comprehensive oversight of the school's performance. They challenge leaders respectfully, but also ensure that there is support in place to develop leaders' knowledge and practice, while being considerate of their well-being.

- The school has not ensured that all the standards have been securely and consistently met, specifically one relating to the implementation of the behaviour policy under Part 3 of the standards.
- The standards in this part are not met.

Paragraph 34(1)(c)

- All staff show commitment to promoting pupils' health and well-being. This is borne out in practice, where staff try to understand and cater for pupils' needs. Despite some of the pupils' challenging behaviours, staff demonstrate that they care and want to help pupils make positive choices.
- The standard in this part is met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	133478
DfE registration number	893/6025
Inspection number	10316252

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Martin Winward
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,093 to £85,450
Telephone number	01952 468220
Website	www.hillcrestshifnalschool.co.uk
Email address	shifnalypadmin@hillcrest-cs.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	18 to 20 October 2022

Information about this school

- The school had its most recent standard inspection on 18 to 20 October 2022. It had a material change inspection on 21 June 2023.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND; the primary need of most pupils relates to their SEMH difficulties. The vast majority of pupils have an EHC plan.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

- The proprietor is P. L. Bloom Limited. The school is part of Acorn Education and Care - this is part of the Outcomes First Group.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) due to concerns about pupils' behaviour and safeguarding linked to complaints it had received.
- The inspection was carried out without notice at the request of the DfE.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher (also designated safeguarding lead) and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with Acorn Education and Care's regional director.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, complaints and risk assessments. They sampled several EHC plans.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff about their experiences at school. They visited lessons to see pupils and students learning and to observe their behaviour.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Forrest

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.

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; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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