

# Inspection of Physis Academy

PO Box 179, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 9DE

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Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Building positive relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils is the hallmark of this school. Pupils, parents, and carers value the level of care and support that the school provides. As a result, pupils feel protected and safe.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. When pupils join the school, many have failed at their previous setting and have been out of education for some time. Pupils are often switched off from learning. The school works tirelessly with pupils to re-engage them with their education, so they can achieve well and improve their future life chances.

Leaders and staff know the pupils inside and out. They notice any changes in a pupil's behaviour and step in quickly to offer help and support when required. As a result, pupils are quickly refocused so that the minimum amount of learning is lost.

The school's therapeutic programme dovetails well with the academic curriculum. It helps pupils to make sense of their emotions and understand their past experiences. This in turn helps to improve their self-esteem.

Parents and carers value the difference that the school make to the pupils' lives. One parent described the school's work with her daughter as 'life changing.'

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

The school carries out a range of initial checks on pupils' abilities and learning behaviours when they join the school. This helps staff to understand pupils' starting points and provides them with valuable information about pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils access a therapeutic programme to support their social, emotional and mental health needs. This is a key feature of the school's offer and supports pupils to access learning effectively.

In a wide range of subjects, there is appropriate coverage of the national curriculum and examination board syllabuses. Pupils work towards a range of qualifications including GCSEs and functional skills. In many subjects, the school has mapped out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn within and across year groups. Consequently, teachers are clear about what to teach and the order in which it needs to be taught. However, in some subjects, the school has not considered the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn over time.

Many staff are subject specialists and they possess secure subject knowledge. Staff tailor learning activities to meet the individual needs and interests of pupils. Pupils value this because it makes learning more interesting. Staff use questioning well to check that pupils understand what they are learning and adapt their teaching if required. They are always at hand to step in if a pupil needs extra support, which pupils find reassuring. However, staff recognise the importance of helping pupils to become independent learners and so do not over support.

The school identifies pupils at the early stages of reading by making checks on their reading ability when they join the school. However, they do not check if there are any gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. In addition, there is not a structured phonics programme in place to fill these gaps if required. This hinders pupils' progress in reading, which hinders how well they access other areas of the curriculum.

The school has effective systems in place to monitor pupil absence. They use this information to look for patterns, so they can put measures into place to promote better attendance. The school keeps a close eye on levels of absence because some pupils struggle with school, particularly when they first join.

Pupils have a clear understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships, including issues such as consent. They know how to stay safe when working online and understand the associated dangers of the internet, such as grooming. Pupils enjoy the range of trips, including recent visits to a museum and the local zoo. Pupils organise fundraising events, which provides them with opportunities to engage with the local community, such as through their work with the local food bank.

The school prioritises careers information and guidance so pupils are clear about their next steps. The school and the external careers advisor, encourage pupils to consider their interests and abilities when considering future career choices. The school guides pupils to follow the relevant curriculum pathway linked to their chosen career choice. The school ensures that pupils have first-hand experience of post-16 options by visiting a range of colleges and making them aware of apprenticeship opportunities.

The proprietor has a clear vision to re-engage pupils into education, achieve well and improve their future prospects. He has established a governing board and a leadership structure which allows him to monitor the independent school standards and the quality of education within the school. The proprietor is always looking for ways to improve the school even further.

Staff enjoy working in the school. They value the training they receive and how this helps them to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Staff say that leaders have an open-door policy and are considerate of their well-being. The staff work as a team and they appreciate the support they get from each other.

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.

The safeguarding policy meets current government guidance and is available on the school's website.

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

- In some subjects, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum does not clearly set out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn within and across year groups. This means that staff are not always clear about what to teach and the order in which to teach it. The school should ensure that the curriculum maps out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn over time in all subjects.
- The school does not have a system in place to identify gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. This means gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge remain unchecked, and pupils do not get the help they need to catch up. The school should develop a system to identify potential gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge, so that they can be addressed.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138580
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6029
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10299218
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	9
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	2
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Clifton Supple
<b>Headteacher</b>	Craig Seretny
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,042 to £56,422
<b>Telephone number</b>	01948 841070
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.physisgroup.co.uk">www.physisgroup.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:academy@physisgroup.co.uk">academy@physisgroup.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 to 27 February 2020

## Information about this school

- Physis Academy is an independent day school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is part of the Physis Group (GB) Limited. The school is surrounded by countryside and is close to the village of Prees.
- The school provides education for girls who have been victims of trauma. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A range of local authorities place pupils in the school.
- The school caters for sixth form students. However, due to the very small number of students, there is no reporting on this provision due to the risk that it may identify individual students.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers to support their curriculum offer.
- The school's last full inspection was in February 2020. The school was judged to be good.

## 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 director of children's services and the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, the therapeutic curriculum, pupils' attendance, careers, personal development and pupils' behaviour.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, art and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.

- 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 the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation form, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records and minutes of meetings held by the governing board.

### **Inspection team**

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mel Ford

His Majesty's Inspector

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