

Inspection of Dovetree School

Ferness Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 0TB

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Dovetree is an ambitious school. Pupils, staff and the wider school community are inspired by the drive to 'Dream, Believe, Achieve'.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything that the school does. It is woven into all aspects of the curriculum, teaching and wider provision. This prepares pupils well for their next steps. All pupils go on to meaningful employment, education or training. They are well supported.

Relationships between pupils and staff are consistently, highly positive. Over time, pupils learn to conduct themselves very well. They are expertly supported to achieve this. Staff know pupils well. Staff provide bespoke help and encouragement. One pupil, with a comment that was typical of many, said, 'Staff are great at helping us to regulate.'

Pupils are highly motivated by the rewards on offer. The school's points system is commonly understood and applied. Pupils know that, showing positive attitudes, being safe, respectful and kind will earn them points. The points 'double up days' are popular. Points are exchanged for sought-after rewards, including visits to the local trampoline park, cat café and time in the school's recently opened gym. Achievements are recognised in the well-attended and busy 'Celebration Assemblies'. The school ensures that everyone's success is recognised.

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

Pupils benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum. Content is taught in a logical order. Teachers plan lessons that are closely matched to the intent of the curriculum. Over time, in most subjects, pupils remember what they have learned. This is especially the case in reading, and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum does not make clear enough the precise knowledge that pupils are expected to know and remember. In these cases, teachers decide which parts of the curriculum to emphasise. This means that leaders cannot be sure that the most important content is prioritised.

Reading is a high priority. Pupils study a wide range of texts, authors and genres. They recall what they have read with an impressive level of detail. Those who are at an early stage of learning to read get the help that they need. The school's phonics programme is well planned and taught.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are meticulously understood and catered for. The longer-term targets set out in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are skilfully broken down into smaller, manageable targets. The school regularly checks to make sure that these targets are being met. Where they are not, changes are made swiftly. The school's pastoral team, therapy team and special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENCo) work in unison. They

create an 'Internal Team Around The Child' that checks closely on all aspects of provision. The SENCo uses a wide range of information to gauge how well provision is working.

Pupils' personal development is catered for exceptionally well. A carefully planned programme is in place that encompasses PSHE and pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. This is meticulously planned and sequenced. It has been carefully designed to meet the specific needs of the pupils at the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom. Enrichment afternoons allow pupils to try, and experience, a wide variety of activities. Pupils are proud of the roles that they play, including being mentors, ambassadors and student councillors. They are equally proud of their work in the local community, including reading to residents in a local home for the elderly.

The 'Futures' curriculum provides pupils with high-quality careers information and guidance. Pupils benefit from a range of experiences that relate to the world of work. They are supported well for life after school. The school continues to offer this guidance and support until pupils are well into adulthood.

Leaders know their school well. They know what is working and where improvements are still to be made. They have an ambitious and uncompromising vision for the pupils at the school. Leaders have created a united team of staff who share their determination and drive. Typically, a member of staff said, 'This really is like one big family.'

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards (the standards) are met. The school's premises are maintained to a good standard. The procedures in relation to first aid, fire safety, and health and safety are appropriate. All necessary information is available to parents. The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is the school's highest priority. On the whole, safeguarding records are detailed and fit for purpose. However, in a small number of cases, some of the follow-up actions that the school has taken are not recorded in safeguarding records.

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

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum does not make clear the most important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. This means that teachers select which parts of the curriculum are emphasised. As a result, the

school cannot be sure that the right content is being prioritised. The school should ensure that the curriculum, across all subjects, consistently makes clear the precise knowledge that pupils are expected to know and to commit to their long-term memory.

- In a small number of safeguarding records, some of the follow-up actions that the school has taken are not recorded. This means that safeguarding records are not as consistent or comprehensive as they should be. The school should ensure that safeguarding records consistently and accurately document the actions that have been taken by the school.

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	146360
DfE registration number	855/6043
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10286464
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Limited
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Rebecca Hill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£83,576 to £106,695
Telephone number	01455 243 918
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/dovetree-school
Email address	dovetree@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Dovetree school is registered as an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The proprietor is the Witherslack Group Limited, which provides residential care and education for pupils in various locations across the country.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 50 pupils aged 8 to 18 years. There are currently 49 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses the services of three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 25 to 27 June 2019, when the school received an overall judgement of 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.

- This was the first routine inspection that 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, physical education and PSHE. 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 looked at individual pupils' support plans and spoke with the SENCo and therapy team leader.
- The lead inspector met with the chief operating officer and the company's regional school director.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan.
- Inspectors considered parental responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff. Inspectors met with small groups of pupils to gather their views.
- 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 of safeguarding that puts pupils' needs first.

- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities, to check the school's compliance with the standards.

Inspection team

Vic Wilkinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Monk

Ofsted Inspector

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