

Dudley Port School

Station Drive, Tipton, Dudley Port, West Midlands DY4 7QR

Inspection date

10 January 2024

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

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h), 3, 3(a), 3(h) and 3(j)

- Curriculum plans and schemes of work provide an overview of what is to be covered each week. However, these documents do not identify the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn and remember within and across year groups. The curriculum is not well sequenced, so pupils' knowledge and skills do not build well over time.
- The curriculum is not delivered effectively. Some pupils spend time copying information without fully understanding what they are doing. Furthermore, in some instances, learning can be disjointed. It is unclear how tasks link together so that pupils can deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- In some instances, work is not sufficiently adapted to take account of pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Occasionally, pupils in different year groups are given the same work without careful consideration of their different starting points and abilities.
- Pupils struggle to recall what they are studying or what they have learned in the past. Similarly, they are unaware of how new learning connects to what they have learned previously. As a result, pupils make limited progress in the subjects they are studying.
- In some instances, behaviour in lessons and corridors is not managed sufficiently well. Pupils are allowed to leave lessons freely, which impacts on their learning.
- The school is aware of the work that needs to be undertaken to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders have formulated an action plan to address these areas.
- These independent school standards (the standards) are now unmet.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii) and 5(b)(vi)

- Currently, the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is delivered through the school's 'Sphere' programme. This programme is supplemented by form-time activities and focused assemblies. However, changes in staffing mean that leaders are not clear which aspects of the PSHE curriculum have been taught and where gaps in pupils' knowledge exist. In addition, there are inconsistencies in relation to how well the PSHE curriculum is delivered. The school is in the process of replacing the 'Sphere' programme with a published scheme.
- The PSHE curriculum and the wider curriculum do not ensure that pupils experience a curriculum that adequately supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have covered topics such as drugs and bullying. However, the school has not ensured that all pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships, or how they can contribute positively to society in an age-appropriate way. In addition, topics are often taught in isolation: they do not connect to previous and future learning. The school is aware of this and is in the process of reviewing the PSHE curriculum.
- Pupils do not have a secure understanding of the protected characteristics and fundamental British values, including the rule of law and knowledge of different faiths and cultures. Some pupils do not understand why the use of certain terms, including homophobic language, is not appropriate.
- These standards are now unmet.

Paragraphs 5(d) and 5(d)(i)

- There is no evidence to suggest that pupils are exposed to partisan political views while they are in school.
- These standards continue to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent government guidance and is available on the school's website.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards continue to be met.

Paragraph 7 and 7(a)

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the two deputy DSLs have completed suitable training in relation to their roles. Those responsible for the leadership of safeguarding are knowledgeable about the local safeguarding risks that pupils may encounter, including the prevalence of far-right extremism in the local area. Safeguarding training for all staff focuses on government guidance updates, dealing with disclosures, recording concerns, and the 'Prevent' duty. The training also covers a range of areas, such as fire safety and substance misuse. Staff who join the school mid-year complete an induction, which includes safeguarding elements.
- The school uses an online system to record safeguarding concerns. Staff are knowledgeable about how to deal with safeguarding disclosures made by pupils and

how to record these. Records show that staff are vigilant in making safeguarding referrals.

- The DSL and one of the deputy DSLs had only been in post for a matter of days at the time of this inspection. Currently, some of those responsible for the leadership of safeguarding do not have a clear oversight of safeguarding across the school. They do not have an understanding of the contextual information surrounding individual pupils in the school, including those who are most at risk. In addition, safeguarding information is not being shared with the appropriate personnel because no one has a strategic overview of this. The combination of these is potentially putting pupils at risk of harm.
- Some pupils say that they do not feel safe when there are fights in school. However, pupils say that they trust the staff and school leaders to look after them.
- These standards are now unmet.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a) and 9(b)

- The school has a behaviour policy in place. However, it no longer reflects current practice within the school. Leaders are keen to review their approach to behaviour management, including the school's reward system. Behaviour incidents are recorded on an online system. However, leaders have not analysed this information to identify patterns and trends which may exist. This limits leaders' ability to put remedial action into place if required.
- All staff are trained in restrictive physical intervention, including annual refresher training. All incidents of restraint are recorded in detail, including a description of the incident, the type of hold, start and end time, the trigger, and next steps. Parents and carers are contacted by the end of the day if restraint has been used and restorative conversations are held with pupils. Leaders assert that physical intervention is used as a last resort. Nonetheless they acknowledge that in the past it has sometimes been used unnecessarily. Consequently, leaders are working with staff to develop de-escalation techniques further.
- Too many pupils choose to walk out of lessons and wander the corridors, and this is not always dealt with effectively. While pupils are always supervised, they are not engaging in their learning within the classroom. In addition, issues can occur in corridors that disrupt other's learning. Some pupils speak negatively about behaviour in the school and how it is dealt with. They are frustrated that negative behaviour disrupts their education.
- These standards are now unmet.

Paragraph 10

- The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy in place. All bullying incidents are initially recorded on a paper form and then recorded in more detail on an online system. Incidents of bullying are uncommon due to the high staff-to-pupil ratio. Pupils are clear about the definition of bullying and the different types that exist. They say that bullying does happen at times but that it is dealt with by staff swiftly. The school has strategies in place to support both the victim and the perpetrator.
- The proprietor body has ensured that this standard continues to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- In December 2023, the school commissioned an external company to conduct a fire risk assessment to ensure the school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Following this, the school created an action plan to address the minor points identified. All points that needed to be actioned within one month have already been completed.
- The school has a suitable risk assessment policy in place. Leaders have written and put in place appropriate risk assessments. These include risk assessments for the school site and for individual pupils. The school also carries out suitable risk assessments for off-site visits and activities.
- The staff-to-pupil ratio means that pupils are suitably supervised throughout the school day, both within lessons and during breaktimes. Pupils work closely with specific members of staff, so they can build trusting relationships. Currently, the school is using four agency staff while they are recruiting additional staff.
- A suitable number of staff have completed first aid training. When first aid is administered, this is recorded on an online system.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards continue to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c) and 21(6)

- The school has appropriate recruitment procedures in place. All the necessary pre-employment checks are made before an offer of employment is given. Currently, the school uses four agency staff due to gaps in staffing. Leaders are in the process of recruiting additional staff to fill these gaps. All the necessary checks have been made on these agency staff.
- A sufficient number of leaders are safer recruitment trained. At least one of these leaders sits on every recruitment panel.
- The single central record contains the full range of pre-employment checks. It is stored centrally in an electronic format. It is maintained by the school administrator and checked by the headteacher.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 25, 28(1) and 28(1)(a)

- The school building is maintained to an acceptable standard. The school makes regular checks on the building to remedy any issues or defects to ensure the safety of

pupils and staff. A classroom that was recently vandalised has been redecorated and a new floor has been laid.

- Drinking water is available throughout the school day. There is a water fountain and most taps around the school are suitable for drinking water. There are systems in place if pupils want a drink and these are understood by staff and pupils alike.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards continue to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii)

- The complaints policy sets out the steps that parents need to take if they have a concern about the school. The aim is to resolve complaints informally where possible, but more formal steps are outlined, including a panel hearing. The policy sets out suitable timeframes for dealing with complaints. The school maintains records of formal complaints that have occurred in the past.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The school has undergone a tremendous amount of turbulence in leadership since September 2023. A series of leaders have been appointed and subsequently left for different reasons. These changes in leadership have left the school with a lack of direction. The new substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their roles at the start of January 2024, without the benefit of a transitional handover. As a result, they are still getting to know the pupils, the staff and the systems that exist within the school. There have also been members of staff who have left the school, which has led to gaps in staffing. The proprietor body is currently in the process of recruiting new staff to fill these vacancies to remove the reliance on temporary agency staff.
- The proprietor body has established systems so that they can be informed about what is happening in the school. This includes a weekly report submitted by the headteacher. Currently, the proprietor body's operations manager is spending a substantial amount of time in the school to support the new leadership team. In addition, the school has recently appointed an assistant headteacher who will be responsible for curriculum development.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the independent school standards are being met consistently. Leaders are aware of this and, supported by the proprietor body, they have formulated an action plan that they intend to put into place over the coming months. However, leaders are under no illusions that there is a lot of work to be done, including changing the culture of the school to make it more inclusive.
- Staff say that they are already noticing and feeling the positive impact of the new leadership team. They say that the school is now in 'a different place'. Staff say that new leaders have high expectations, and they feel supported in their roles. They add that the new leaders have stabilised the school. Staff say that they now feel free to speak out, whereas previously they did not feel confident to raise concerns.

- Due to the concerns around safeguarding, behaviour management and the quality of education, the school has more work to do to ensure that the well-being of pupils is actively promoted. However, pupils comment positively about the recent changes that they have noticed in the school since the arrival of the new leadership team.
- These standards are now unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- 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.

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	147736
DfE registration number	333/6016
Inspection number	10325999

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Horizon Care and Education Group
Chair	Amanda Cunningham
Headteacher	Simon Hobbs
Annual fees (day pupils)	£66,441 to £110,000
Telephone number	0121 557 7544
Website	www.horizoncare.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	22 to 24 June 2021

Information about this school

- Dudley Port School is an independent day school. It offers up to 30 places for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Horizon Care and Education Group.
- The headteacher, who is the named DSL, joined the school in January 2024.
- A range of local authorities place pupils in the school, including Sandwell and Walsall.

- The school opened in September 2020. The school's last full inspection was in June 2021. The school was judged to be good.
- Currently, the school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The emergency inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education due to safeguarding concerns linked to several complaints they had received. The inspection was carried out without notice.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; examined relevant documentation; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, including the headteacher and a representative of the proprietor body. An inspector met with a group of staff to discuss their experiences of working in the school.
- As the inspection included a full-day, on-site visit, a tour of the premises was completed.
- Inspectors carried out learning walks. This enabled them to visit a range of lessons, look at examples of pupils' work, and observe pupils in lessons and at breaktimes. Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors held meetings linked to behaviour, personal development, and health and safety.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Howes

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
- 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(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;
 - 3(j) does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the 2010 Act[10].

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(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)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and.

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
- 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

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.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2024