

Our Place

The Orchard, Bransford, Worcestershire WR6 5JE

Inspection dates

4 July 2019

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(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 5, 5(b) and 5(b)(vi)

- At the previous inspection in June 2018, these standards were met.
- School leaders have completely overhauled the school curriculum to improve the way it meets the needs and interests of pupils. Leaders have developed a therapeutic approach that meshes child development with social and emotional development. This means that the well-being of pupils is planned for more effectively. Curriculum planning and behaviour for learning have improved because teaching is more closely aligned to what pupils need and can cope with.
- An unintended consequence of such a substantial development has been the omission of the protected characteristics and careers education from the new curriculum plan and policy framework. This is particularly relevant for post-16 students and their next steps. Staff rely on what they already know and what they did in the past to support students moving on. Provision is weak. This has resulted in ad hoc arrangements and a failed placement.
- These standards are no longer met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- At the previous inspection, safeguarding was judged to be ineffective because monitoring was not good enough and governors were not well enough informed. There were omissions in the single central register and the behaviour of some pupils was a cause for concern. The school's whistleblowing policy was not fit for purpose and leaders had not followed key guidance in a safeguarding matter.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are now effective. All staff and governors receive regular training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff spoken to during the inspection showed that they were knowledgeable about safeguarding issues. The school has updated its safeguarding policy to meet the most

recent government requirements. It is now suitable, and it is published on the school's website.

- The head of education's termly report to governors includes details on the monitoring of safeguarding so that governors are kept suitably informed of developments and issues.
- To support the introduction of a new curriculum model, which centres on pupils' well-being, leaders have invested substantially in staff development and training. Staff are now much more comfortable and competent in managing learning and behaviour. This is because they have developed the skills and knowledge to diffuse difficult incidents and to redirect learning effectively.
- There were no incidents of poor behaviour among pupils during the inspection. The behaviour of pupils is well managed because their needs are understood and planned for. Staff are very caring and determined to help pupils overcome their difficulties. Some exceptionally good relationships have subsequently developed. These are helping pupils to thrive. This was evident in classrooms and during the lunchbreak when staff were helping some pupils to socialise.
- Leaders have ensured that education, health and care plans, pupil education plans and an internal monitoring tool are all aligned. This results in a single point of contact for information about the progress and development of pupils. The approach is effective in preventing information going astray and in reporting a rounded picture of physical, social and emotional progress at various pupil review meetings.
- Since the last inspection, seven new staff have been appointed. They represent half of the teaching team. Leaders have ensured that the systems for carrying out appropriate checks are thorough and robust for all adults who work at the school. The single central register is now properly maintained.
- The whistleblowing policy has been suitably updated.
- These standards are now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(h)

- The previous inspection found that the school did not comply with this standard because it did not provide annual accounts on income and expenditure to the respective local authorities.
- Leaders have strengthened the school's financial practice and costed the provision of services. Each placing authority receives an annual statement of income received against expenditure incurred for each pupil. The school administration is much clearer and accurate about the cost of pupils' placements. This development has opened up a productive dialogue with local authorities and a sharper targeting of resources for all concerned.
- The school's website adequately provides all the necessary contact information for parents and local authorities in addition to access to policies and the school's prospectus.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that the school met all the independent school standards. Leaders had not fulfilled their responsibilities for safeguarding matters effectively. They had not sent annual accounts of income and expenditure to local authorities.
- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have worked hard on a substantial agenda for change. The new head of education has shared effectively a vision for how the school can better meet the needs of pupils and how this translates into a new curriculum and a new approach to learning. The well-being of pupils has been elevated significantly and the positive impact of new developments has been resounding. Staff are welcoming and enthusiastic about the changes and the capacity for school improvement has increased.
- Policies have been updated. These support staff in their endeavours to improve the quality of life and learning for their pupils. Learning is bespoke, and each pupil has their own individualised curriculum plan which is appropriate to their needs and interests.
- Work has begun on developing assessment practice. It is early days, but, at the first review, one pupil showed considerable improvement in mathematics and no pupils regressed. Leaders are not complacent and have introduced opportunities for internal and external moderation to make sure that teacher assessments are secure.
- Leaders have invested substantially in staff development activities. These include safeguarding, therapeutic learning approaches, behaviour management and subject-specific courses to upskill the workforce. As a result of the positive impact on staff, pupils benefit from a calmer, safer and more productive working environment.
- The school's action plan is incorporated into a revised school improvement plan. However, some actions are not specific enough to enable leaders to address successfully the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection.
- A board of governors was formed in January 2019, and they have had three formal meetings. Some governors are new to the role of governance. Training has been provided to support them, and they are keen to get to know the school. At this stage, governors are still learning about the school. They are not yet providing any significant challenge to school leaders. One governor stated that once she felt comfortable about her role and what was expected of her, she would be able to play a full part in moving the school forward.
- The changes made to the school's curriculum resulted in the loss of arrangements for teaching pupils about the protected characteristics and careers education. This was not a deliberate decision but an unfortunate omission resulting from leaders trying to do so much too quickly. The provision of careers education and personal development, particularly for sixth-form students, is weak. The standards relating to the protected characteristics, careers education and sixth-form provision are not met. Therefore, leaders are not ensuring that all standards are met consistently.
- These standards are not 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. 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 does not meet the following independent school standards

- Part 1: 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g)
- Part 2: 5, 5(b), 5(b)(vi)
- Part 8: 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- Part 3: 7, 7(a), 7(b)
- Part 6: 32, 32(1)(c), 32(1)(h)

School details

Unique reference number	136260
DfE registration number	885/6039
Inspection number	10102413

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 – Day School
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr David French
Acting Chair	Mrs Lena Graham
Head of Education	Mrs Charlotte Duke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,839
Telephone number	01886 833378
Website	www.ourplaceschools.com
Email address	headofeducation@ourplaceschools.com
Date of previous standard inspection	12 to 14 June 2018

Information about this school

- Our Place is a very small independent special school located in a rural area of Worcestershire. It is a specialist provision for pupils with a range of special educational needs and difficulties in the areas of communication and interaction, including autism, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory impairment.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The school has 13 staff. Seven joined the school in September 2018, including the head of education.
- A number of local authorities place pupils at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

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.
- This progress monitoring inspection was carried out without notice and lasted one day.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since its last standard inspection in June 2018, at which it was judged inadequate.
- The school was required to prepare an action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards following the June 2018 standard inspection. The proposed action plan was judged to be unacceptable in February 2019.
- The inspector held meetings with the head and deputy head of education, a school governor, a human resources manager, a finance manager, and several members of staff. She observed pupils at work and during their lunchbreak. She spoke informally with pupils.
- Prior to this inspection, the inspector reviewed information and policies published on the school's website, including the safeguarding and whistleblowing policies. During the inspection, the inspector reviewed other school documents and policies relating to the behaviour management of pupils, curriculum planning and assessment, minutes of the board of governors' meetings, the head of education's reports to the board of governors and staff training records. She reviewed the systems for maintaining the single central record and financial management.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were met at the previous inspection and were un-met at this inspection

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 other schemes of work which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
 - 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 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)(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)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;

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

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 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;
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

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.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32 (1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request;
 - 32((1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006¹) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State.

¹ 2006 c.21. Section 7 was substituted by section 1 of the 2011 Act and section 7A was inserted by section 87 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (c.6).

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