

# The Place Independent School

Hill Farm, Belvoir Road, Bottesford, Leicestershire NG13 0EA

## Inspection dates

16–18 January 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher has built a cohesive team which has a strong commitment to improving the life chances of the pupils.
- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points as a result of effective teaching and a curriculum that is relevant to their needs.
- The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to experience learning in a range of contexts, including outdoors and off-site. This ensures that pupils are motivated to engage with their learning.
- Leaders with responsibility for different subjects have detailed knowledge of individual pupils' learning and progress. Planning is, therefore, personalised and well matched to pupils' needs.
- Safeguarding is effective. The school has robust systems in place and staff are well trained and knowledgeable.
- Relationships in the school are strong. Staff actively promote the school's values and there are clear expectations that are lived out in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Behaviour is good overall because all members of staff apply consistently the agreed behaviour management strategies. Where individual pupils display challenging behaviour, this is managed effectively in line with school policy.
- The school has a strategic plan for further improvement, but this lacks focus and priorities do not have measurable or time-related outcomes.
- Not all leaders are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school or supporting colleagues to develop and improve their practice.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school improvement plan is more effective in enabling leaders to gauge whether actions have been successful within the given timeframe.
- Establish and embed a monitoring and evaluation calendar which involves all leaders in a range of focused activities.
- Reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by ensuring that leaders, including subject leaders, provide targeted support and training for colleagues.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The headteacher has ensured that there are robust systems and documentation which underpin the day-to-day work of the school. The parent company provides support for some aspects of the running of the school, for example finance and human resources.
- The headteacher is providing strong and focused leadership. She is well supported by her strong and cohesive team, who are committed to improving the life chances for the pupils. There is a culture of high expectations within a warm and welcoming atmosphere.
- The proprietor and leaders are ambitious for pupils and strive to ensure that transition from the school is carefully considered and pupils are well prepared for their next steps. Older pupils are helped to find out about different options available to them beyond school, to help them prepare for their adult life.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. It ensures that pupils develop basic literacy and numeracy skills and apply them in different contexts. Physical education (PE) lessons, which usually take place off site, provide a range of opportunities for physical development. The school makes particularly good use of the woodland area available to support aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the environment.
- The personal, social and health and economic curriculum includes a wide range of topics to help pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of life in modern Britain, and both national and global issues. For example, they learn about the British parliamentary and justice systems, and are encouraged to discuss the impact of events and actions which may challenge such institutions.
- Leaders know the school well and have an accurate view of what is working well and what could improve further. They have worked with external consultants to validate their evaluations. However, although they have identified what needs to be improved in an action plan, this plan is not as effective as it might be in ensuring that improvements can be regularly reviewed and happen in a timely manner.
- There is a calendar outlining when monitoring and evaluation will take place. This work is at an early stage and, as yet, does not include all leaders in a full range of activities. Findings from monitoring activities do not fully inform improvement priorities.

### Governance

- The proprietor and school leaders have established a 'supportive committee' to provide support and challenge to school leaders. Members have skillsets which are helpful to the school. The group has access to employees of the parent company when further, specific expertise is required. Plans are in place to extend this group so that there is greater connection with the local community.
- The proprietor, who is employed by the parent company, is knowledgeable about the school and is actively involved in aspects, such as commissioning for places at the school, financial planning and recruitment.

- The proprietor and headteacher meet regularly to discuss the school's work. The proprietor is aware of the need to be outward-looking and build relationships with other schools and organisations locally, so good practice can be shared. This is also seen as a way of helping the school's pupils to achieve effective transition back into mainstream education or other appropriate destinations.
- The proprietor and supportive committee are improving the level of challenge to the school. They have generated a strategic plan which identifies improvement actions. However, as with the school's improvement plan, the strategic plan is not as effective as it could be in setting out how the supportive committee and leaders can check the progress of key actions.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established clear procedures to safeguard all members of the school community. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and documentation is detailed and of a good quality. Staff apply the school's expectations and policies consistently, and are mindful of pupils' welfare and safety at all times.
- All members of staff are observant and vigilant when working with pupils. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they are fully up to date with the most recent government guidance. They meet regularly to review pupils' well-being and discuss therapeutic approaches they can use to support pupils.
- Incidents are recorded carefully on an electronic system so all staff have access to relevant information about individual pupils and can meet their needs appropriately. Leaders also monitor incidents so they can identify any patterns of behaviour, which they can then respond to by adjusting provision.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching is effective as a result of the good relationships that teachers and teaching assistants develop with pupils. Most teaching is on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, and this enables adults to take a flexible approach that is responsive to pupils' needs at the time.
- Pupils engage with their learning because teachers make every effort to make it interesting and relevant. They plan different types of activity to promote curiosity and positive learning behaviour. As a result, pupils enjoy the confidence adults have in them and often try hard to do their best.
- At the end of every term, the school provides detailed information about pupils' progress to parents and carers. This includes information about attendance and behaviour, demonstrating pupils' non-academic progress.
- Books show that pupils regularly complete written work, as well as taking part in practical activities and discussion. All work is thoroughly marked by the subject leaders, who, in line with the school's policy, identify additional challenge and next steps in learning. This gives them a detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities.

- Although there are written comments in pupils' books, in line with the school marking policy much of the feedback to pupils is verbal, at the point of learning. This means that any misconceptions can be dealt with quickly and a good pace of learning is maintained.
- Questioning is often a key element in lessons. Skilful questions provide challenge and encourage active participation and positive attitudes. However, the quality of questioning seen during the inspection varied from lesson to lesson.
- Subject leaders plan and mark pupils' work, and liaise with teaching assistants, who deliver some lessons. This sometimes leads to inconsistencies, because planning is sometimes interpreted differently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are pleased to be a valued member of the school community. One pupil explained that the hands making up the canopy of the tree on the school's logo 'show that you are part of the school family'.
- Pupils feel safe at the school. They have confidence that all adults will look after them and say that if they are worried or unhappy 'someone will notice'. They all have weekly sessions with their key workers, who provide regular opportunities to discuss any concerns that pupils may have.
- Pupils value the support they receive from staff members. As pupils settle in to the school, their confidence as learners grows. This is because, as one pupil's 'rap' declared, 'the teachers have hope'.
- Pupils know about the risks associated with social media and internet use. They learn about how to keep themselves safe online.
- Pupils know about bullying and say that any issues are dealt with very quickly. They are less sure about different types of bullying and where it differs from falling out with a friend.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is an orderly environment, where the caring ethos permeates all aspects of its work.
- Pupils generally follow the expectations of the school and are rewarded if they are 'caught doing the right thing'. Some pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour at times and this sometimes leads to the need for intervention. However, any poor behaviour is managed well and consistently, and disruption is kept to a minimum.
- Leaders track behavioural incidents in detail. Because they reflect carefully on the causes, leaders are able to reduce the number of incidents through the support they provide. In this way, aspects of pupils' non-academic progress can be demonstrated.

- Attendance is good for most pupils. However, overall attendance is a little below the national average, because, given the small numbers on roll, occasional absences have a significant impact on overall figures.

### Outcomes for pupils

- Overall pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Work in books shows that some pupils are making rapid progress, filling gaps in learning and working at standards that are closer to expectations for their age.
- Pupils read competently and accurately, often with some expression. They have good understanding of the text they are reading, and answer questions about it. Less-confident readers are more hesitant and have limited decoding skills, but try to find meanings through contextual clues or pictures. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and give examples of books they have enjoyed.
- Mathematics books show that pupils complete a variety of activities to develop fluency in calculation. For many pupils, there are gaps in prior learning, which mean that the work they tackle can be at different levels of difficulty, but contributes equally to their overall progress. Some pupils confidently tackle multi-step problems and apply a range of mathematical skills in different contexts. Other pupils complete work successfully with support but, as yet, lack the confidence to work independently.
- Attainment in writing is often low relative to pupils' ages, but the content of the work is often more mature than the accuracy of the writing would suggest. Books show that pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are improving.
- Pupils make equally good progress in other subjects, such as environmental sciences, history, geography and art. For example, they show an increasing knowledge and understanding of habitats, historical events and the work of famous artists.
- Although no pupils are working at standards expected for their age, some have the potential to do so and are making rapid progress towards their individual goals.

## School details

Unique reference number	142939
DfE registration number	855/6038
Inspection number	10039198

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	The Place Young People's Company
Chair	Sonia Frankish
Headteacher	Cate Tumman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,333
Telephone number	01949 844440
Website	<a href="http://www.theplace-care.co.uk/independent-school">www.theplace-care.co.uk/independent-school</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:cate@theplace-ypc.co.uk">cate@theplace-ypc.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Place Young People's Company, which is a specialist provider for children with complex needs. The company's aims are 'to provide therapeutic care and nurture to young people who have emotional, social, educational and behavioural difficulties, as a result of past trauma and attachment difficulties'. The company owns four children's homes.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 6 October 2016. This is the school's first standard independent inspection.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is situated on the Belvoir Castle Estate. The main building is a converted farmhouse. There is a range of outbuildings, some of which have been converted to teaching spaces. There are paddocks and a ménage within the site. The school keeps horses, pigs, alpacas and chickens.
- The school has exclusive use of a woodland area a short distance from the main school where pupils go for some lessons. Local sports facilities are used regularly for PE lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the school with the headteacher and carried out a check of the school's premises, including the outbuildings and grounds.
- The inspector observed the learning of a number of pupils, both indoors and in an outdoor setting. These visits were carried out with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with pupils and listened to some pupils read.
- Working alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the inspector scrutinised a range of pupils' books and reviewed the school's assessment information.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, school policies and a number of documents relating to safeguarding.
- There were two responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector took into account the eight responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jane Salt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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