

Our Place

The Orchard, Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JE

Inspection dates	1–3 October 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

This school requires improvement

- Our Place has been through a period of substantial change which has limited the rate of improvement since its last inspection. The relatively new head of education has started to bring about improvements, but initiatives have not yet had enough impact on teaching and students' achievement.
- The overall quality of education requires improvement. Although the school has addressed the recommendations of the last inspection, teaching is not yet good.
- Teaching requires improvement. Sometimes the pace of learning is not rapid enough and mundane activities, particularly in classroom lessons, do not capture students' interests. As a result, they lose focus which slows their progress.
- Students make expected progress against their objectives, but they should be doing better. The tasks set for students are not always sufficiently well matched to their abilities.
- The leadership and management of the school require improvement. Governors are not sufficiently involved in the management and oversight of the school. The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning are patchy and do not focus strongly enough on how to improve teaching and students' progress.
- The sixth form provision requires improvement. Sixth form students do not reach their full potential because they are not always stretched enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Students are happy and enjoy school, particularly the use of the extensive outdoor grounds, which are used to support their learning.
- Students make good progress in their personal and social development.
- Staff know students well and supportive relationships help students to gain confidence and independence as appropriate to their level of complex needs.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students well and enables students to achieve some accredited awards.
- Students behave well and they make good improvements in managing their own behaviour.
- Students are safe and school's safeguarding arrangements for students are effective.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons or part lessons taught by three teachers, looked at students' work and records, held discussions with senior leaders and analysed staff responses to a questionnaire.
- The school's documentation was examined, including information relating to the range of planning for subjects, records of students' progress and the welfare and safeguarding of students. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The views of parents were gained through their responses to annual reviews, as there were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Our Place is a small school, which provides education for boys and girls aged nine to eighteen years.
- It caters for students who have severe and complex learning difficulties.
- The school aims to 'create a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages and promotes communication, positive behaviour patterns, cooperation and mutual respect'.
- The school opened in November 2010 and is registered for up to eight students. There are currently four full-time students on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school was last inspected in October 2011.
- The school caters for residential students and an inspection of the welfare provision for children took place at the same time. The last inspection interim social care inspection took place in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students' progress is accelerated by:
 - ensuring that students' learning in lessons is more closely matched to their abilities so as to provide greater challenge
 - better planning and organisation of some learning activities
 - making sure that classroom activities motivate and engage students leading to faster learning
 - helping students gain skills and knowledge by moving them onto new areas of learning or, where appropriate, by presenting tasks in different ways that are relevant to all students
 - ensuring that reading materials are appropriate to the age of students
 - undertaking more regular lesson observations so that staff can improve their teaching.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing the governance of the school, through an external review of governance, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved, resulting in increased governor involvement in the life of the school
 - improving the quality and rigour of the school's self evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The school has undergone a period of change and staff turnover at senior levels since the last inspection, which has limited school improvement. However, the new headteacher is passionate about improving the school. She has the confidence of staff and is starting to secure improvements, but these have not yet had time to impact on improved teaching and learning.
- The school's self-evaluation does not have enough evidence to support its judgements. It does not set out clearly enough the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve. Governor involvement in this process is limited. Similarly, the school development plan does not focus enough on how to improve teaching and accelerate students' progress.
- The school's leadership and management have created a culture where students are safe and enjoy school. This promotes their good behaviour, but procedures to check the quality of teaching have not given rise to sustained good teaching or achievement. Monitoring of teaching is not regular enough. While there are discussions with teachers about their performance, there is not enough focus on identifying the salient points about strengths and weaknesses of teaching and how to improve learning.
- The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of students and the developing use of accreditation is a strength. This enables students to achieve adequately in academic areas, although there is still scope for them to achieve more. Achievement in their personal development is good. Although the school actively promotes British values, information about this provision is not yet posted on the school's website, as required.
- Assessment of students' progress has been improved to provide a clearer view of progress over time. Students are well prepared for the next steps in their education and adult life.
- Other leaders have areas of responsibility, but there are no clear plans in place for the systematic development and improvement of subjects.
- The school is starting to make increasing use of visits to similar special schools to observe best practice and to improve teaching and learning, but this has not yet had sufficient impact on improving teachers' classroom practice.
- The issues raised at the last inspection have been largely been addressed and all the independent school regulations are met.
- **The governance of the school:**

The board of governors is a relatively new development and they meet regularly. However, they do not focus enough on improving teaching and the progress of students. The lead proprietor is involved well in the school, spending regular time in school and holding supervision meetings with the headteacher. These discussions hold the headteacher to account and provide some challenge and rigour. Although governors receive reports from the headteacher, they do not have enough first-hand experience and knowledge of the school through visiting lessons or talking to staff about their areas of responsibility and how improvements can be made. The school's self-evaluation is not thorough enough to enable governors to have a clear overview of strengths and areas for development. However, governors have ensured that the issues raised from the last inspection have been addressed and that safeguarding procedures are diligent and secure. They have started to explore the use of external support to bring greater rigour and challenge, but this is in the early stages of development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Most make good improvement in their behaviour over time. They learn to become more co-operative and to interact with other students and adults more readily. Their behaviour is not outstanding as some have challenging behaviour which continues to require careful management by staff. However, some students learn to self-manage their behaviour well by taking short walks and then returning to lessons.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The school has good arrangements to check visitors to the school and for ensuring the suitability of those working with students. Risk assessments for activities are thorough and ensure that students can participate in community activities in a safe manner.
- Students are taught about British values in a manner that is appropriate to their level of development and understanding. For example, their individual liberty is developed well by empowering them to make choices and to accept change more readily. They learn to follow simple rules and develop their social skills well, given their level of need.
- Students enjoy participating in the local and wider community through the use of community facilities, such as a sensory and music therapy centre and shopping in Worcester.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged strongly through regular assemblies, celebration of different festivals and visits to places of worship. The cultural needs and wishes of parents are carefully considered and respected.
- Students' self-esteem and confidence is boosted through a secure and supportive environment and they enjoy achieving awards. The school is a harmonious community where respect, tolerance and individual achievements are valued.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement. It is not yet good because learning in lessons is not always tailored closely enough to students' abilities. Planning for lessons is usually based on the schemes of work or course outcomes, but individual objectives are not specific enough and this makes it difficult to track how well students are learning.
- On occasions, classroom activities are too mundane. The resources used in lessons lack imagination and do not enthuse students. For example, in mathematics, students count out plastic blocks up to a given number, rather than using more interesting items or a variety of challenges to motivate them more effectively.
- Other adults in the class write diligent evaluations of the lesson, but these do not capture clearly enough what students have learned, know or can do.
- Students' reading is normally at very early levels but they enjoy listening to audio stories. However, the range and quality of books are too limited and do not meet fully the age range of students.
- Baseline assessment of students is carried out when they start school but their levels of previous achievement are not always evident. This makes accurate measuring of improvements over time more difficult.
- Staff create a calm learning atmosphere and they know their students well. Their approach to teaching coaxes students into becoming more engaged in learning. Relationships are positive and supportive, and help students to settle and be receptive to learning. Staff use symbols and signing widely and this helps students' understanding and communication skills.

- Students derive security from a well-ordered and structured environment and this has led to some needing less adult input and support. Staff are skilled at managing students' behaviour effectively.
- Staff use a very effective method of breaking lessons down into small chunks, usually of 15 minutes. This allows students to have a short reward and then return to learning refreshed.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' progress requires improvement. Their progress is not good because in some lessons teachers miss opportunities to challenge them more, so that they do not all achieve as well as they should.
- Some students spend too long over-learning skills before moving on to new skills quickly enough. In numeracy and literacy, for example, learning activities are sometimes repeated in the same or similar format, so that students complete more of the same work rather progressing onto the next concept and this slows their rate of learning. Where students require longer time to learn skills, activities are not presented in a variety of different ways or contexts to help them generalise their skills more effectively.
- Over time, students make expected progress but not enough make better than expected progress. Students develop their communication skills, such as using signs, to indicate preferences of food and drink.
- Students' improvement in their personal development is good. For example, since attending the school some students have made good progress in taking responsibility for their personal care and this has increased their independence and confidence substantially.
- Where students' objectives are applied across the school and residential setting, this helps them to learn and apply their skills in a wider range of contexts.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Students' progress in the sixth form requires improvements for the same reasons as for other students. Students who have been at the school for a longer period of time than others sometimes make good progress. On occasions, opportunities to allow and encourage students to respond, for example in a greeting session, are missed.
- Learning for students is good when it is practically based and develops their life skills in everyday situations. For example, selling produce they have grown to the school chef gives them an understanding of money and lifetime experiences of buying and selling.
- Students achieve a suitable range of accredited awards, mainly geared towards promoting independence skills such as cookery, shopping and staying safe. They have plenty of opportunities to use facilities in the local community to promote their independence.
- Students are supported when they leave school and move onto their next provision and this helps them settle into their next placement.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	136260
Social care unique reference number	SC407929
Inspection number	446256
DfE registration number	885/6039
Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Our Place Schools Ltd.
Chair	David French
Headteacher	Lorraine O' Connor
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 October 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£80,168
Telephone number	01886 833378
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