

# Our Place

The Orchard, Bransford, Worcestershire WR6 5JE

## Inspection dates

12–14 June 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders do not demonstrate sufficient awareness of the independent school standards. Too many of the standards are not met.
- Leaders have not done enough to make sure there is a strong culture of safeguarding. They have been slow to report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate authority. The school’s safeguarding procedures are not robust. This presents a risk to pupils at the school.
- Governance of the school is not stable. Additionally, governors’ oversight of safeguarding and pupils’ welfare is not rigorous enough.
- The school’s whistleblowing policy is not fit for purpose. It has proved ineffective when used.
- Some staff feel that they are not trained well enough to manage the most difficult behaviours presented by a few pupils. However, pupils’ behaviour requires improvement overall.
- Leaders and managers have not secured good teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, outcomes have not improved enough.
- Teaching is not enabling the most able pupils to make sufficient progress.
- There are weaknesses in the school’s assessment systems. Leaders do not have an accurate overview of pupils’ outcomes.
- Leaders do not provide accounts of income and expenditure to the local authorities who place pupils. This means local authorities do not know with precision how funds have been spent.
- The quality of 16 to 19 study programmes are suitable, although, because safeguarding has serious deficiencies, the sixth form is inadequate.
- Not enough pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form are entered for more challenging, accredited qualifications.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school has a new acting headteacher. She has a zeal and drive for improvement, and clear plans for addressing the weaknesses of the school.
- Teaching staff are highly dedicated to the pupils. They work with tireless enthusiasm.
- Some governors are committed to the improvement of the school’s systems and outcomes.
- Staff develop detailed and effective educational and health care plans for all pupils who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Pupils’ attendance is improving and is high for most pupils.

**Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Urgently improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - all elements of statutory safeguarding guidance are followed and there are systems for regularly checking and monitoring that this is the case
  - all record-keeping of recruitment checks is kept up to date and is regularly reviewed and monitored
  - all records of actions taken to keep pupils safe are followed through to conclusion
  - detailed information is provided to governors so that they can check the school is safe
  - the school's whistleblowing policy is fit for purpose and monitored to see that it is correctly implemented when necessary
  - all staff are trained well to manage pupils' wide range of behaviours, and feel confident to manage potentially difficult situations
  - all of the independent school standards are met
  - leaders have an accurate overview of pupils' outcomes across the school.
- Urgently provide placing local authorities with clear information about the income and expenditure for each pupil supported by public funding.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance and governors' to hold leaders to account by making sure that governors are kept fully informed of:
  - all aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding and pupils' outcomes
  - leaders' actions to improve the school, and the effectiveness of these actions.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and thereby pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
  - assessment systems are clear, and provide accurate information about pupils' achievements
  - the most able pupils are challenged and are provided with more opportunities to develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills
  - the most able students are prepared for more challenging accredited qualifications in the sixth form.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders have not established a strong culture of safeguarding. There are weaknesses in the leadership of safeguarding. For example, leaders were slow to report a serious safeguarding incident to statutory authorities. The school has a safeguarding policy which is fit for purpose and is published on the school's website. However, leaders did not follow this policy with enough urgency in making a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- The governance of the school is not stable or secure. Three governors who presented a degree of challenge to leaders, including the governor responsible for safeguarding, resigned during the inspection. They cited a lack of confidence in the school's leaders.
- Leadership at the school is fragile. There have been significant staff changes in recent months at a senior level.
- The school's whistleblowing policy is not fit for purpose. It has proved ineffective in its use. This presents a risk to pupils at the school.
- The recently appointed acting headteacher has worked hard and has started to bring some continuity and order to school leadership.
- The school does not provide information to local authorities that accounts for the income it receives and how these funds have been spent on individual pupils. For example, where pupils have one-to-one provision funded, the school does not always fulfil this obligation from the teaching staff.
- Some staff feel that they are not trained well enough to manage the most difficult behaviours presented by a few pupils. This means pupils' safety is not consistently secure.
- The school's records of checks relating to staff recruitment were found to have an omission. This was immediately put right once identified by the lead inspector. However, this demonstrates that the governing body does not have sufficient oversight of safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders have not done enough to improve the school since the previous inspection. The new acting headteacher has a clear vision for how teaching must improve, but it is too early for her changes to have been implemented.
- For too long, leaders' expectations of pupils have been too low. Leaders are aware that current assessment systems are not good enough. They have plans to improve the systems, but the implementation of these plans is at an early stage of development. As a result, the impact of the improvements is yet to be seen. Leaders know that they need to ensure that assessment information is shared more effectively with staff and used to enhance pupils' progress.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that has a strong emphasis on communication, personal development and enhancing pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils have access to have a wide range of work experience which supports their social skills.

## **The school's application to make a material change to its registration**

- Leaders have made an application to the Department for Education for a material change to the school allowing for younger and older pupils to be admitted to its roll.
- Since safeguarding is not secure and the oversight of governance is too fragile, it is unlikely that the independent school standards will be met if this change is approved.
- Part 1. Quality of education. This standard is likely to be met. Although pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching learning and assessment require improvement, leaders have plans to ensure that the quality of education will meet the needs of the pupils it intends to admit.
- Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The school currently provides appropriately for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. There is evidence, for example, in the celebration of different faiths and the variety of work experience that purposeful learning in this area is likely to occur. This standard is likely to be met if the material change is implemented since it has been met in the existing provision.
- Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils. This standard is unlikely to be met since leaders have not ensured there are secure systems for monitoring and checking the implementation of its policies with respect to safeguarding. Not all staff feel confident about managing behaviours that are the most challenging. The school is unlikely to meet this standard if the material change is implemented.
- Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors. This standard is likely to be met. By the end of the inspection, the school's single central record was fully compliant. Although necessary checks are carried out for employees, leaders must take steps to ensure that the single central record is regularly reviewed to ensure that all employed staff are recorded. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.
- Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools. This standard is likely to be met since the premises and accommodation at the school are adequate for the numbers of pupils the school proposes to admit. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.
- Part 6. Provision of information. The school has no secure and systematic way of informing local authorities about the ways in which income received for each pupil is spent. Currently, for example, pupils with one-to-one provision do not receive such provision from teachers or staff employed by the school. The school is unlikely to meet this standard if the material change is implemented.
- Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled. The school currently has a policy for making complaints and procedures in place that respond to complaints that meet requirements. This standard is likely to be met if the material change is implemented.
- Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools. The school's governance is too unstable. Some governors have resigned because they have no confidence in the quality of leadership at the school. Leaders have not put into place robust systems for monitoring the effectiveness of crucial policies. For example, they have not followed their safeguarding policy in making a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. The whistleblowing policy has been found to be ineffective. This standard is unlikely to be met

if the material change is implemented. Safeguarding procedure. This standard is unlikely to be met without urgent change in the manner in which leaders implement and monitor the statutory guidance relating to making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

- Schedule 10 of the Equality Act. This standard is likely to be met since the school has an Accessibility Plan that is fit for purpose.

### **Requirements unlikely to be met if the material change relating to the school provision are implemented**

- *Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils.*
- *Part 6. Provision of information.*
- *Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools.*
- *Safeguarding procedure.*

### **Governance**

- Governors do not oversee the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. Monitoring and checking of the school's responsibilities to ensure that they meet statutory guidance is not strong enough.
- Governors do not work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition.
- Some governors have lost faith in the leadership of the school and have resigned recently. Other governors who have remained in post are fulfilling their responsibilities.
- The governing body is currently too unstable and does not provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders. Some governors say they do not understand the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school. A significant group of governors say they cannot provide support for the headteacher.
- There is inconsistency in the ability of governors to understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school.
- Some governors do not believe they are given accurate assessment information from leaders on which to base probing questions about pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders do not do enough to monitor whether the independent school standards that relate to safeguarding are met. Records of safeguarding presented to governors do not clearly describe the actions the school is taking to make improvements. As a result, some governors, including the safeguarding governor, did not believe they were well enough informed about pupils' safety.
- Leaders had not maintained the school's single central record adequately. There was an omission at the time of inspection. This was corrected during the inspection.
- Some staff say that, on occasion, pupils are not safe because of the worrying behaviour of a minority of pupils. Other staff say the opposite, that pupils are entirely safe. As a

result, there is an inconsistency in the staff perception of safeguarding that leaders do not do enough to address.

- The whistleblowing policy is not effective. Leaders are aware of this and have plans to make the necessary improvements so that it is fit for purpose.
- Leaders did not follow statutory guidance when they were faced with a critical staff discipline issue relating to safeguarding.
- The school's designated safeguarding leader works closely with staff to give them up-to-date information about safeguarding issues. Staff are required to sign and return documents that give clear instructions about how to keep pupils safe.
- Staff records show that there is a high frequency of training for staff. This includes training in how to prevent the escalation of challenging behaviours and gives strategies in how to respond when these behaviours do occur. However, this training has not given all staff the confidence they need to deal with challenging behaviours.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Staff do not accurately monitor the standard of pupils' work. They do not share assessment information among themselves. This means it is difficult for teachers to standardise and moderate the accuracy of their assessments. Although there are links with a local primary school, there are no such partnerships with special schools in key stages 3, 4 or 5 to make sure assessments are precise.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for some pupils, especially the most able and articulate pupils. Staff do not offer enough opportunities for independent writing, extended writing, and literacy and numeracy for these pupils. This limits the progress these pupils make.
- Some teachers' well-considered planning results in activities that are matched well to pupils' needs, and which help them to make progress.
- Staff work hard to promote pupils' understanding, and skills in independence and teamwork. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, particularly in the management of some pupils with considerable barriers to learning.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils respond well to feedback from staff. Staff are successful at building pupils' confidence and helping them to enjoy learning. As a result, pupils make better progress in their learning over time.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **Inadequate**

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school has not developed a rigorous safeguarding culture. Leaders have not followed some elements of statutory guidance relating to safeguarding.
- Some teachers do not have the skills they need to manage the most challenging behaviours of a minority of pupils. These teachers believe that this places the welfare of other pupils at risk.
- Several governors expressed deep concerns about pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Records suggest that there is very little bullying at the school. Pupils who display bullying behaviours or who are the subject of bullying are carefully managed and supported by the staff.
- Staff show a deep moral commitment and enthusiasm for their work. Staff are highly professional and communicate well with one another about pupils' behaviour and what they can and should do to improve behaviour.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils respect the school site and its environment. However, there have been some recent incidents where pupils caused significant damage to one of the classrooms. Leaders have not done enough to reduce the chance of incidents of this nature reoccurring.
- School records show that there have been improvements in pupils' behaviour, although there have been incidents of poor behaviour, including assaults on staff. Leaders do not have the full confidence of the staff and know that there is more to do to improve behaviour.
- Levels of attendance at the school are high. Staff do well to ensure that pupils get to school on time and work throughout the day. Pupils have improved their rates of attendance compared to their attendance records at their previous schools.
- Pupils learn successfully about modern British values. Staff help pupils learn how to respect each other's opinions and preferences. The school has a council of pupils that helps them learn about the value of democracy. Staff successfully help pupils learn that stereotyping and derogatory language are not acceptable.
- Pupils gain in tolerance and understanding of different faiths. For example, they have been taken by staff to Worcester Cathedral and to a Sikh temple.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils do not attain the standards of which they are capable, although overall their



progress requires improvement and is not inadequate. Leaders are aware of and are addressing the reasons for that. However, it is too early to say that leaders' changes are leading to sustained improvements.

- The most able pupils make slow progress in the development of reading and writing. This is because planning across the curriculum has not identified where there are opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy at a more rapid rate for these pupils.
- Too few pupils are entered for accredited qualifications. While pupils do achieve success in modules of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Functional Skills, these awards are not ambitious enough for some pupils. This means pupils are not as well prepared as they could be for the next stage of their education or training. Some pupils go on to employment and training. Staff prepare these pupils with diligence and meticulous attention to pupils' needs.
- All pupils are disadvantaged and have education, health and care plans. Pupils work towards achieving their targets in their plans. Most pupils make progress in personal and social skills. Pupils make progress in their levels of confidence, their ability to form relationships and their skills of independent living. Staff develop pupils' abilities to work in a team and understand instructions. They also work to enhance pupils' fine and gross motor skills.
- Pupils are usually prepared for life when they leave the school. Through work experience and personal, social, health and economic education pupils learn a range of valuable social and emotional skills.

### **Sixth form provision**

### **Inadequate**

- The sixth form provision is inadequate because of unstable leadership and a weak safeguarding culture at the school.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment is linked effectively to pupils' education, health and care plans.
- The most able pupils are not yet entered for, or follow, challenging enough accredited qualifications. There is not enough systematic planning throughout the school to help pupils get ready for studying and passing appropriately challenging qualifications.
- Pupils' acquisition of skills is being recorded and tracked. However, this information is not widely enough shared between staff or moderated. This contributes to the most able pupils not being effectively challenged.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that curriculum planning is purposeful. As a result, pupils are not taught subject-specific knowledge that enables them to achieve.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are not sufficiently well monitored and managed by the school. For example, safeguarding systems are deficient, and this means a culture of safeguarding is not yet completely secure.
- School records show that pupils' behaviour is improving, and pupils are developing positive attitudes to school and themselves. There are impressive strategies for improving pupils' self-confidence, physical coordination and independent living skills.
- The new acting headteacher has clear plans to address the weaknesses in curriculum,

teaching, learning and assessment.

- Teaching staff and leaders have a high level of commitment and dedication to their pupils.

## School details

Unique reference number	136260
DfE registration number	885/6039
Inspection number	10038843

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 Special School
School category	Independent special 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	9
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	David French
Chair	David French
Headteacher	Chris Coombes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000
Telephone number	01886 833378
Website	<a href="http://www.ourplaceschools.com">www.ourplaceschools.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headofeducation@ourplaceschools.com">headofeducation@ourplaceschools.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	October 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is a very small independent special school catering for pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Currently there is an acting headteacher in post.
- A number of local authorities place pupils at the school.

- The school does not use an alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in October 2014.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in key stages 2, 4 and 5. There are no pupils on roll in key stage 3.
- The inspector conducted a visit to one of the school's outdoor learning settings. The inspector also conducted a work scrutiny in each lesson visited and met with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team and middle leadership staff. The inspector met with representatives of the governing body and spoke on the telephone with former members of the governing body. The headteacher was not on site during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone to local authorities, including the Worcestershire local authority designated officer. The inspector met with a local authority social worker.
- There was scrutiny of the single central record and a range of records on recruitment, welfare plans, and actions taken to keep pupils safe. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A scrutiny was conducted of documents the school produces as part of its self-evaluation and development planning. The inspector evaluated policies and documents published on the website and made available during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at responses from the six staff questionnaires. There were very few responses to Parent View free text and no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The Department for Education requested the school's plans for a material change to be considered as part of this inspection. The material change is an application to extend the age ranges of pupils at the school from 9 to 18 to 8 to 19.

## Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **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;
  - 7(b) and 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)(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 2006[16]) 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;

### **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.

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