

Inspection of Holton Sleaford Independent School

Westgate House, 45 Westgate, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7RJ

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are glad to be part of this school. They say that this is a safe school. They are well cared for. They gain socially, personally and emotionally by being part of the school. They appreciate the responsibility that belonging to this school brings.

Pupils gain from outdoor education activities each week. They enjoy and learn from the challenges of mountain biking, planned walks and volunteering activities. They spoke about the challenges and opportunities of the residential expedition to the Brecon Beacons, as well as overnight camping and trekking in the Peak District. A pupil said, 'We are pushed beyond what we think we can do.' Staff develop pupils' self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

Most pupils' behaviour improves the longer they are at the school. They are mostly respectful of staff and visitors. They say that there is no bullying. They are confident that staff would deal with it, should it happen.

Parents and carers appreciate what the school offers. They comment very positively about the school. Typically, one parent commented, 'This school has changed my son's life. He has never been happier. The staff are extremely approachable and have his best interests at heart.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education is good. Directors and leaders have established a curriculum based on a clear and ambitious vision. Pupils learn through a range of experiences. For example, trekking builds their geographical knowledge, map reading and fieldwork skills. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is enriched with opportunities to be creative, for example through art and music activities. Leaders lead a school that enables pupils to re-engage with education. Pupils become successful learners.

Pupils' learning in mathematics is well structured. Teachers ensure that learning covers important concepts in a logical order. For example, pupils learn about 'correlation' in a coherent way through real situations. They revisit previous learning. Pupils gain confidence. They know more and remember more over time.

Leaders encourage a love of reading. They have made the English curriculum more ambitious by including key literature. These books are the basis for developing pupils' reading skills. However, some pupils do not yet access the support they need to become fluent readers. Leaders are introducing support for those pupils who are at an early stage of reading.

Teachers and experienced support staff adapt subject curriculums to make sure that pupils learn what they need to. They are aware of gaps in pupils' learning caused by interruptions in their previous schooling. Staff know and understand pupils' special

educational needs and/or disabilities. They provide for pupils' social and emotional needs very well. However, not all support staff have the refined skills needed to consistently support pupils' learning. Leaders use ongoing assessment to identify strengths and learning needs. They use this information to develop individual pupils' improvement plans and education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Pupils gain from a range of experiences that support their spiritual and moral development. For example, they learn about different religions and festivals. They develop social skills appropriate to different settings. They learn about what is right and wrong. They consider different points of view about topics and issues.

Staff develop pupils' positive attitudes to school. Many pupils have had a high absence rate at their previous school settings. Most pupils follow a full timetable of learning and attend regularly. They mostly show positive attitudes and engage well with staff.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's curriculum. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Staff promote an understanding of and respect for difference. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to engage with the local community.

Leaders have developed a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum that is well structured. It includes appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils learn about physical health and mental well-being. However, leaders have not fully developed a careers programme that enables pupils to explore all of the choices available to them for their next steps in education or training.

The school is well led and managed by directors, governors and senior leaders. They lead with a strong moral purpose. They know the school's strengths and priorities for development. Their strategic planning has focused on opening the school during the pandemic and dealing with an unexpected change of premises. They are mindful of staff's well-being and workload. However, they need to further support staff and leaders with training that will enhance the school's provision further.

Staff are proud to be part of this school. Staff's morale is positive. They feel well supported by leaders.

Leaders ensure that all of the independent school standards are met. They make sure that the premises are well maintained. They place pupils' welfare and well-being at the centre of their work. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders make sure all policies are available to parents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know that staff will support them when they share their worries or concerns. Staff know and understand each pupil very well. They receive safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities. Staff know what to do when concerned about a pupil's welfare.

Safeguarding leaders work with a range of external agencies to make sure pupils get extra help when needed. They keep records of safeguarding concerns and their responses. However, they have not made sure that these records contain the precise details that they should.

Leaders carry out safer recruitment checks before adults start working with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders promote reading, and most pupils read well. However, some pupils do not benefit from a well-planned approach to help them become fluent readers. As a result, not all pupils learn to read well enough. Leaders need to make sure that all pupils learn to read well and are enabled to develop a love of reading and be able to access the wider curriculum.
- Pupils are supported through transition discussions to explore some of their future options. However, pupils are not fully enabled to explore all options available to them for their next steps in education or training. Leaders need to strengthen the careers programme and make sure all pupils have a secure appreciation of the many choices available to them when they leave the school.
- Leaders have focused on strategically establishing the school during the pandemic and an unplanned change of premises. They have carefully planned to increase pupil numbers to 40 over the next two years if the Department for Education (DfE) approve the material change reviewed at the previous material change inspection. However, they have not carefully planned to strengthen teachers' pedagogical knowledge and the leadership training of key leaders. Leaders must sharpen their strategic planning to include support for staff to further improve the school's provision.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	148356
DfE registration number	925/6059
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10213186
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Holton Sleaford Independent School Limited
Chair	Luke Hollingworth
Headteacher	Daniel Laughton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000
Telephone number	01529 410111
Website	www.holtonsleafordindependentschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@holtonsleafordindependentschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Holton Sleaford Independent School was registered by the DfE in February 2021 and opened for pupils in April 2021. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school had a material change inspection in August 2021 following the school's request to the DfE to increase the number of pupils on the school's roll to 40 and to report on the suitability of additional premises at Westgate House, 45 Westgate, Sleaford, NG34 7RJ.
- In February 2022, the school relocated to new premises. The school is now located at Westgate House, 45 Westgate, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7RJ. The premises at Kesteven Business Centre Units, 9-12 Kesteven Street, Sleaford, NG34 7DT is no longer used by the school.
- The school provides an outdoor-based education for up to 16 pupils aged 13 to 19 years old.
- All pupils have a primary diagnosis of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. Some secondary associated needs include behavioural and social difficulties and an autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- All pupils are funded by local authorities.
- The school does not use the services of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the curriculum leader. They met with the designated safeguarding lead and the special educational needs coordinator. They met with other members of staff.
- Inspectors met with both directors and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, physical education/sports science, outdoor education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with teachers and subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and teaching assistants, spoke with pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors looked at other subjects, including English and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

- Inspectors spoke informally with staff and pupils about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included policies related to health and safety, risk assessments, curriculum and complaints. Inspectors reviewed the single central record. They reviewed safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors toured the premises to review the suitability of the accommodation.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who completed the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire.

The school's proposed change to its premises

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.**

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Horrocks

Ofsted Inspector

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