

Inspection of Holton Sleaford Independent School

Westgate House, Westgate, Sleaford NG34 7RJ

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 June 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

To attend this friendly and inclusive school is to be given another chance. Pupils who join Holton Sleaford Independent School have struggled at previous schools. Staff get to know the pupils well as they guide them through this fresh start. They understand exactly how to help pupils if they feel anxious or distressed.

The school wants the very best for all pupils. It has grown recently and rapidly. As it has become more established, pupils have prospered. They have learned to control their emotions, communicate more effectively and attain more. Pupils are proud of the qualifications that they have achieved.

This is a school where pupils feel safe. Pupils say that staff act straight away when bullying happens. Warm and caring relationships between staff and pupils are highly evident. Pupils relish the reward of visiting the town at lunchtime with staff as their behaviour and attendance improves.

Pupils explain the difference that the school has made to them. All the pupils that inspectors spoke with would recommend the school. One pupil summed up the views of many saying, 'It's the best specialist setting I have been to. And I've been to a few'.

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

The school has a broad and rich programme in place to enable pupils to build their confidence and resilience. Much of this takes place outdoors. There is a well-planned range of activities that enables pupils to widen their horizons. Younger pupils learn to cycle safely. Older pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Staff understand what pupils find challenging. They identify precisely what pupils need to work on next to become positive individuals who persist at longer expeditions or more complex physical activities.

There is a shared ambition for all pupils to be ready for their next steps. Independent careers advice is in place. This increases pupils' knowledge of different courses and careers pathways. Sixth-form students have many opportunities to pursue their individual talents and interests. The school widens pupils' horizons through the thoughtful provision of key skills such as driving lessons.

Many pupils start at the school having missed substantial parts of their education. They have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers identify these as pupils settle into school life. There is a well-judged programme of interventions to enable pupils to catch up. Reading is prioritised. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read get the help they need to practice blending sounds together. The books that they read are chosen with pinpoint accuracy to support this. Sometimes teachers skilfully adapt activities to include all learners. However, the work that some pupils complete in class does not help them to develop the fundamental knowledge that they need.

In most lessons, teachers have identified what pupils might find difficult. Pupils practise this first. For example, pupils learn the meanings of unusual words, so that they can understand a longer passage of text. They rehearse their multiplication tables prior to solving problems about volume. This enables pupils to work successfully. The school has rapidly established a curriculum for younger pupils. Some newer parts of the curriculum do not identify clearly what pupils should know and be able to do. This means that in a few subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they might.

The school wants pupils to become responsible citizens, well prepared for life in modern Britain. They encourage pupils to volunteer locally and pick up litter in local beauty spots. Through a carefully planned curriculum, pupils learn how to respect each other, keep safe and live healthy and active lives. Pupils learn to be tolerant. However, they find it hard to recall what they have learned about a range of faiths and cultures. This means that pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be.

Prior to joining the school, many pupils did not attend school regularly. Bespoke support help pupils to feel confident in school again. The school works closely with parents and carers to change pupils' attitudes. As a result, persistent absence has decreased and more pupils attend regularly. Pupils respond well to individual targets about their behaviour and personal development. There is a notable improvement in pupils' behaviour as pupils learn to manage their feelings better.

The school ensures there is regular and effective communication with parents. Every week a member of the school staff calls parents to discuss what their child has done well and what they have found challenging. Parents value this. They describe the difference that the school has made to their children. They explain that their children are thriving and developing resilience and a love of learning. The opinion expressed by one parent that, 'Thanks to the school's nurturing environment, I'm confident that my child is laying the groundwork for future success in adulthood,' was shared by many.

The proprietor body has clear processes in place to ensure that the school continues to meet the independent school standards in full. Together with those responsible for governance, it understands its statutory duties and ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor body has supported school well during a time of rapid change. Staff praise leaders for the care and concern that they are shown.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The Osbournby site has been recently established. On this site, the English curriculum does not clearly identify what pupils need to know. This makes it hard for teachers to plan lessons which enable pupils to learn as well as possible. The school should continue to refine the curriculum so that it specifies exactly what pupils need to know and be able to do as their knowledge builds.
- Occasionally, teachers do not ensure that the work that pupils complete is matched to what they know and can do. This means that pupils do not get the chance to practise and secure important foundational knowledge. The school should ensure that all staff adapt activities so that pupils can become more successful in their learning.
- The school's approach to the development of pupils' knowledge of different faiths and cultures lacks precision. Pupils struggle to remember what they have learned about religious and non-religious beliefs. The school needs to ensure that the planned experiences in the curriculum allow all pupils to gain a firm understanding of a range of different faiths and cultures.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148356
DfE registration number	925/6059
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10374827
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	9 to 20
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Holton Sleaford Independent School Limited
Chair	Luke Hollingworth
Headteacher	Daniel Laughton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,500
Telephone number	01529 410111
Website	www.holtonsch.uk
Email address	enquiries@holtonsch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, material change inspections took place on 6 November 2023 and 27 March 2024. An emergency inspection took place on 18 July 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school admits pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. A proportion of these have other additional needs.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- A second site of the school opened in September 2024. This is based at Ensign House, High Street, Osbournby, NG34 0DG.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into the following subjects: early reading; mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened as pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence about other curriculum subjects such as outdoor education and religious education.
- Inspectors spoke with parents. They also considered the views expressed through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with members of staff throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke with groups of pupils including during non-structured parts of the day such as playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with members of the local governing body and the proprietor.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, heads of school, the deputy head teacher and the assistant head teacher and considered a range of documents.

Hazel Henson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Adrian O'Malley

Ofsted Inspector

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