

Inspection of Options Trent Acres School

Alrewas Road, Kings Bromley, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire DE13 7HR

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders do all they can to create the very best of environments for pupils who attend Options Trent Acres School. They ensure that pupils are nurtured and welcomed. Adults are patient. They take time to get to know pupils really well and learn about their interests. Leaders use this information to personalise the curriculum, lessons and opportunities. All of this helps pupils to thrive both academically and personally.

The school atmosphere is calm and relaxed. Pupils form strong and trusting relationships with their key members of staff. This helps them to feel safe. Pupils know it is important to be kind to each other. If pupils fall out, adults help them to resolve any disagreements quickly. Should bullying arise, leaders have effective procedures in place to deal with it.

The school goes beyond the expected to give pupils a wide range of experiences. For example, many animals are on site, including ponies, reptiles and a therapy dog. Pupils relish taking part in activities such as animal care. A striking feature of this school is how these animals are used to support pupils in their learning. Pupils told inspectors that the animals are 'amazing'.

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

Many pupils who join the school have had negative experiences of learning in the past. Leaders recognise this but maintain very high expectations of all pupils. They ensure that pupils study a curriculum that prepares them well for their next steps and adulthood. This curriculum is carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual needs and aspirations. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects in depth. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their training and education by the time they leave the school.

Subject leaders have set out the essential knowledge they expect pupils to know and remember in each subject. Staff teach this content in a logical order and this helps to build pupils' knowledge over time. For example, in mathematics, teachers ensure pupils are secure in their knowledge of number bonds to 20 before learning how to do simple addition.

Leaders know that pupils are likely to have significant gaps in their learning when they join the school. Adults take sensible and well-thought-out steps to identify pupils' knowledge and abilities before deciding what pupils need to learn next. This includes identifying any gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Staff use this information to set precise targets for each pupil. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are achieving these targets. In addition, teachers are highly skilled in spotting when pupils are stuck. They act quickly to ensure pupils get the help they need to be successful. This helps pupils to make substantial progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders pay serious attention to promoting a love of reading. A wide variety of books that match pupils' interests are available in school. When a pupil is interested in a book or topic the school does not have, teachers go out of their way to ensure it is available. Adults take creative steps to encourage pupils who are reluctant readers. These varied approaches are working exceptionally well. For example, some pupils who have previously refused to read now enjoy reading regularly to various animals in the school.

Staff consistently model calm, patient and respectful behaviour. This helps to create a relaxed and purposeful learning environment. Every pupil has a behaviour support plan. These plans include helpful information about the early signs a pupil is anxious or upset, and ways to support pupils. Leaders regularly review these plans so that they include the most up-to-date information. Adults use the information in these plans consistently well. All of this means that individual pupils' behaviour, over time, dramatically improves.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. Through ongoing work, staff find out about pupils' aspirations and wishes. Leaders use this in-depth knowledge to provide meaningful opportunities for pupils. They deliberately match these opportunities to pupils' interests and needs. For example, some pupils develop important communication skills and confidence by undertaking work experience in the local community. These opportunities are wide and varied. In addition, leaders ensure that all pupils learn about careers. These approaches are helping to prepare pupils well for their futures.

The proprietor body has a strong oversight of its responsibilities. They use well-embedded systems and processes to check that they are consistently meeting the independent school standards and that their vision for the school is fully realised. Governors support the work of the proprietor body well. They receive detailed and helpful information about the school from the headteacher. In addition, governors regularly visit the school to see it in action. As part of their visits, they talk to staff and pupils about their experiences. This means governors know the school well. They fulfil their statutory duties. For example, the safeguarding policy, which has regard to the latest government guidance, is published on the school's website. Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know that some pupils in the school may find it hard to communicate any worries they have, so they ensure that all staff understand the signs a pupil may need help. This means, for example, that adults are vigilant to changes in pupils' behaviour. When staff notice any changes, they pass their concerns on quickly. Leaders work highly effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils get the right help when needed.

As part of the curriculum, pupils learn various topics to help them keep themselves safe. Adults know pupils extremely well. This means that they match the safeguarding topics pupils learn to their individual needs.

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	131004
DfE registration number	860/6029
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10254644
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Proprietor	Outcomes First Group
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Melanie Callaghan-Lewis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,285-£88,945
Telephone number	01543 473772
Website	www.optionsautism.co.uk/school_home/options-trent-acres/
Email address	melanie.callaghan-lewis@optionsautism-ld.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 to 18 October 2018

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was in October 2018. A material change inspection took place in July 2022.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a change to the proprietor body. The school is now part of Outcomes First Group.
- The school started to provide sixth-form provision from July 2022. There are currently a small number sixth-form students accessing post-16 provision at the school. Inspectors did not report on this aspect of the school's work separately.
- The school is situated in the rural village of Kings Bromley, Staffordshire. Most pupils travel to and from school by local authority funded transport.
- The school caters for pupils with specific needs linked to autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties or social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provider.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. In addition, inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and the managing director of Outcomes First Group.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and personal, social, health and economic education. As part of this focus, they met with subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons accompanied by the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also looked at pupils' work and did an off-site visit.
- The lead inspector took a tour of the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by checking safeguarding records, checking the safety of the school site, reviewing physical intervention records and talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s staff survey. They also reviewed responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also spoke to some parents.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the inspection cycle than previously planned.

Inspection team

Christopher Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gwen Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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