

Inspection of Sketchley School

Manor Way, Sketchley, Burbage, Leicestershire LE10 3HT

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite and welcoming. Staff know, understand and care for pupils very well. Staff nurture purposeful, calm and respectful relationships with pupils.

Pupils feel safe. They are confident to share any worries they may have. They know that staff listen and help. Occasionally, pupils are unkind to each other. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. They know that when it does happen, staff sort it out.

Most pupils enjoy their time at school. They are proud to be part of the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' learning. Pupils engage well in their learning. They are prepared well for their next steps. Pupils appreciate the range of experiences and opportunities that support their personal development. They enthusiastically recall the recent trip to Aston Villa Football Club.

Pupils learn to recognise when they feel unsettled. Staff help pupils manage their behaviour. Staff support pupils to become self-regulating and resilient. Pupils' behaviour improves during their time at the school.

Parents and carers are mostly positive about the school. One parent, whose comments were typical of many, said, 'My child has developed so well in terms of education, communication and management of his emotions. He has also developed good relationships with staff, and made solid friendships.'

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum across a range of academic and vocational subjects. They have developed a strong focus on pupils' personal development throughout the curriculum. Leaders build various therapies into pupils' learning. They have created different pathways for pupils to follow through the curriculum. Pupils are suitably challenged regardless of which pathway they follow.

Leaders have developed ambitious subject curriculums. These curriculums identify the key knowledge and skills pupils need to know and when. Pupils' learning is stepped and builds gradually over time. For example, in science, pupils learn about light, reflection, refraction and lenses. In mathematics, pupils build their fluency of number before deepening their understanding of more challenging mathematical concepts. However, leaders have not ensured that all subject curriculums build learning from one school site to another and across different key stages. Senior leaders plan to bring greater coherence across the different key stages in the different school sites.

Teachers deliver the intended curriculum well. They explain concepts clearly. They ask questions skilfully to check pupils' learning and to deepen their understanding. Staff adapt the curriculum to address gaps in learning from previous settings. They make sure pupils learn the basics before moving the learning on.

Leaders and staff know very well the additional needs of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that they take into account targets set out in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. They provide clear guidance that breaks these targets down into achievable steps for each pupil. Staff adapt their teaching and activities they set pupils to enable pupils to learn well. Staff often recognise and celebrate the smallest steps of learning and progress.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They have developed a culture that fosters pupils' love of books and texts. Teachers teach phonics knowledge well to pupils who are at an early stage of reading. This helps those pupils to catch up. Pupils read a range of literature and texts. They deepen their reading skills. Staff and pupils bring stories to life.

Students enjoy the sixth form and achieve well. They show maturity and increasing independence. Leaders provide students with a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs and capabilities. For example, students access specialist A levels and vocational learning in local colleges and schools. They are prepared well for the world of work and their next steps in education and independence. For example, students learn about work, pay, tax and national insurance payments. Others develop their cooking knowledge and skills.

Many pupils have had high absence rates at their previous school settings. Leaders use approaches that improve pupils' attendance. This includes well-thought-through transitions, and creating part-time timetables that move to full-time timetables. Most pupils show positive attitudes and engage well with staff.

Leaders focus strongly on all pupils' personal development. They ensure that the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is supported by discrete spiritual, moral, social and cultural lessons. Pupils benefit from planned opportunities to learn about physical and emotional health. They are supported to become self-aware and respectful. They learn age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Teachers ensure that pupils learn about equality and diversity and about different cultures and religions. For example, pupils visit different places of worship, including a church, synagogue and a temple. Leaders ensure that pupils develop independent living skills. Pupils engage with charities and support a local food bank. Staff support the pupils' personal development by providing strong pastoral care. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

School leaders lead with a clear focus on the school's values and principles. Leaders have a good understanding of the independent school standards. They meet the standards securely and consistently. The premises are well maintained. Risk assessments identify potential hazards and control measures. Leaders ensure that pupils' welfare, health and safety are paramount. They make sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and that policies, including the safeguarding policy, are readily available on the school's website.

The proprietor's officers know the school well. They check the school's provision regularly. They support and challenge leaders appropriately. The proprietor fulfils their statutory responsibilities.

Staff value opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge and skills of teaching and leadership. Most staff feel valued and are proud to be part of the school. Typically, a member of staff commented, 'It's like a caring family.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff fulfil their responsibilities. They know pupils very well. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained. Staff know what signs to look for. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns raised. They work well with external agencies to provide additional help when it is needed. Safeguarding records are well maintained. Leaders complete all pre-employment checks before an adult starts working with pupils.

Pupils learn to understand potential risks and how to be safe, including when online.

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

- Leaders have not ensured that all subject curriculums seamlessly build pupils' learning at transition points from one school site to another and from one key stage to the next. This means that teachers do not know what pupils have learned previously, and what needs to be built on in subsequent learning, in all subjects. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums are coherently sequenced across transition points so that pupils know more and remember more over time.

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	135217
DfE registration number	855/6026
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10254650
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Susanna Craig
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,950 to £89,950
Telephone number	01455 890023
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/sketchley-school-leicestershire
Email address	sketchleyschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 February 2019

Information about this school

- Sketchley School provides education to pupils with SEND. Pupils' additional needs include severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school became part of Aspris Children's Services Ltd in January 2021.
- The school is registered to admit 65 pupils. There are currently 73 pupils on roll, all of whom have an EHC plan. Some pupils are in the care of local authorities.
- The school has three sites in Leicestershire. They are: Sketchley School, Manor Way, Sketchley LE10 3HT; Forest House, Forest Road, Narborough LE19 3QE; and Progression House, Station Road, Hinckley LE10 1AP.
- There have been many changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher was appointed in January 2020. The senior leadership has been restructured.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in February 2019.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspection was brought forward in the inspection cycle due to a material change request from the school, and due to concerns raised with the Department for Education (DfE) relating to pupils' welfare. These welfare concerns were thoroughly considered as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, heads of school and the assistant special educational needs coordinator. They met with a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with company officers, including the chief operating officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with teachers and curriculum leaders, visited sample lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, and spoke with pupils. They listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other subjects, including cooking, geography, swimming and technology. They visited a therapy session.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including policies relating to safeguarding, curriculum, teaching, health and safety, and complaints. Inspectors reviewed the single central record and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors toured the three premises to review the suitability of the accommodation.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They considered the text comments submitted by parents. They reviewed responses to the staff questionnaire.

The school's proposed changes to the age range and the maximum number of pupils

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

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented.**
- The school has requested a material change to extend the age range to include pupils aged seven years.
- Leaders have built additional accommodation and have reconfigured some of the existing premises since the previous inspection. There is sufficient and suitable accommodation available to accommodate the additional pupils proposed in this material change request.
- Leaders have clear plans in place to increase teaching and welfare staff as numbers of pupils increase, subject to approval of the material change. Leaders intend to increase the number of teachers from 18 to 21, and staff in the welfare provision from 42 to 45.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the curriculum that would be provided for pupils in this year group.
- Leaders have given careful thought to the proposed changes. They are mindful that any changes should not impact adversely on the pupils currently at the school. They plan to increase the number of pupils on roll gradually.

Information about the material change inspection

- The proprietor has requested a material change to extend the age range to include pupils aged seven years. They have also requested to increase to 80 the maximum number of pupils that the school is registered to have on roll.

- The inspector met with school leaders to discuss the material change application. The lead inspector considered curriculum plans and other documentation relating to leaders' plans to extend the age range to include seven-year-old pupils.
- The lead inspector considered the capacity of the school sites to cater for an increase in the number of pupils on roll when undertaking a tour of the premises.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Imtiaz Patel

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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