

The Evolution Centre

Holyhead Road, Bicton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 8EQ

Inspection dates

26–28 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leadership is inspirational and dynamic. The school is responsive to pupils' needs.
- The flexible approach to teaching interests and motivates pupils. Pupils progress well from their starting points.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils arrive with significant gaps in learning. Through careful planning and targeted support, they are able to catch up. Pupils who left last year achieved a wide range of qualifications.
- Staff are highly vigilant about safeguarding. Nothing is left to chance when it comes to the welfare and safety of pupils. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- Every aspect of the school's work is focused on pupils' needs and aspirations. Pupils develop social skills, learn about healthy relationships and benefit from high-quality careers education. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education or employment and training.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and designed to cater for individual needs. It combines formal learning with off-site activities. As a result, pupils thrive through personalised routes that are carefully planned to meet their needs.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are proud of their achievements and proud of their school.
- Attendance for a small number of pupils is still low. However, there is a significant improvement on their attendance at previous settings. The school's work is effective in reigniting a love for learning.
- Leaders provide purposeful and meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. As a result, pupils learn about and value difference. A few pupils miss too many of these sessions through absence. Therefore, they miss chances to participate in this worthwhile work.
- The headteacher and the proprietor have made sure that all the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to build upon the strong personal development and behaviour of pupils by:
 - making sure that pupils who miss enrichment activities due to absence have the chance to participate in this learning
 - sustaining the positive engagement with parents, carers and external agencies to promote good attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders and the proprietor have made sure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leadership is highly effective. The headteacher is inspirational and wants the best for all the pupils. Leaders at all levels are highly aspirational for the pupils. They encourage all pupils to be the best that they can possibly be, regardless of their starting points, which, for some, are low. The school's vision and ethos are clear and shared by all members of the school community. As a result, all staff are determined that all pupils succeed.
- Leaders know their pupils well. They have carefully created a curriculum that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils readily participate in learning activities that are wide ranging, balanced and matched to their individual requirements. Alongside core subjects, pupils can study vocational subjects, including art, food technology and computing. They also have access to a variety of experiences outside the classroom, including water sports and music workshops.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher sets exceptionally high standards for this and is not afraid to tackle underperformance. Targets for staff are clear and linked to whole-school development. Feedback is precise and drives improvement. As a result, teaching is of a consistently high quality.
- Representatives from local authorities who place pupils in the school speak highly of the provision. Local authority commissioners say that the school focuses well on both academic outcomes and pupils' social and emotional development. As a result, the pupils they place make strong educational and holistic progress.
- Most pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. Pupils are fully supported by adults who know them well and understand their needs. Interventions are timely and appropriate. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that specialist work is reviewed and adapted regularly to ensure that pupils can learn and that they make strong progress.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the school. They cannot praise the school enough. They say the school is well led and managed. They feel communication is effective and staff quickly address any issues they raise. They would not hesitate to recommend the school to others.
- Staff who met with the inspector said that leaders support them well. They appreciate the wide range of professional development opportunities available to them. They say that leaders are considerate of their well-being.
- Leaders provide rich, purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils are allocated to house groups to provide a sense of identity and belonging. They experience a wide variety of visits, including to Warwick Castle, and to outdoor-education and activity venues and water sports. Checks are carried out on the venues used and staff always accompany pupils. Pupils also participate in music workshops and visits to the theatre. They learn about other cultures. They know about, and respect, differences in faith and belief. Many pupils join the school late into their

school years, some as late as Year 11. Therefore, these pupils have fewer opportunities to participate in enrichment activities.

Governance

- The proprietorial board takes responsibility for governance of the school. The board holds school leaders to account for the school's performance. The proprietor is ambitious for all pupils and has a clear understanding of each pupil's personal learning journey.
- The headteacher regularly produces comprehensive, detailed reports for governors. The board meets frequently. This enables governors to have a clear oversight of all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors, supported by appropriate external professionals, strike an effective balance of support and challenge. They accurately understand the school's strengths and have a firm grasp on areas that need to improve. As a result, they make sure that all pupils have appropriate opportunities to succeed academically and socially.
- Governors are highly involved in curriculum planning. Governors fully recognise the need for adaptability and flexibility when it comes to meeting the needs of their pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy. It makes clear what to do in the event of a concern about a child. The policy is published on the school's website and is available in paper format for those who do not have access to the internet.
- The designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained. They are aware of their responsibilities and have a wide knowledge of risks in the local and surrounding areas. They maintain clear records and follow up concerns with tenacity and rigour.
- All staff are highly vigilant. They know their pupils well and are quick to respond to any changes in behaviour. They know the signs of abuse and neglect and report their concerns quickly. Processes for reporting concerns are clear. All staff are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to keeping their pupils safe.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know how to keep safe online and are aware of the associated risks when using the internet. They have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and know about different types of bullying. Pupils told the inspector that there was always someone to talk to and that they felt safe at school.
- There is a high level of supervision to ensure pupils' safety, both on site and when pupils are accessing off-site educational experiences.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Strong relationships between teachers and pupils underpin positive learning experiences. Prior to joining the school, most pupils have not engaged in formal learning for a considerable amount of time. From the moment they arrive at the centre, teachers make sure that pupils feel supported and cared for. As a result, pupils want to come to school and engage well across the curriculum.

- The school provides a nurturing environment coupled with a strong focus on achievement. Teachers are highly aspirational for all the pupils. They want the pupils to succeed. As a result, pupils achieve well in a calm, supportive environment. They make strong progress from their individual starting points as a result of well-planned, engaging activities.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They understand what pupils already know and what they can already do. They use this information well to plan learning activities that interest pupils and inspire them to learn. They ensure that the most able are sufficiently challenged. They quickly identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and make sure that they catch up where possible. Pupils value the support they receive from staff, which helps them to do well.
- Teachers use their secure subject knowledge and skill at questioning to deepen pupils' understanding in lessons. As a result, pupils enjoy learning because it is appropriate to their individual needs and linked to their personal interests. They become curious learners who are keen to know more.
- Pupils read widely and often. They read aloud confidently with expression and appropriate intonation. They enjoy a variety of genres and speak enthusiastically about classical authors, including Dickens and Shelley. The inspector saw pupils who were excited to read 'The Picture of Dorian Gray', having studied an excerpt from the introduction. They are keen to learn and broaden their literary horizons. Teachers harness this excitement and reignite a love of reading.
- Pupils typically arrive as reluctant writers. Through careful planning and immersion into a language-rich environment, pupils develop strong literacy skills over time. They write confidently for a range of purposes. They enrich their work with grammatical features and higher-level vocabulary. They craft convincing arguments and extensive pieces of creative work as a result.
- Pupils arrive with variable mathematical skills. Teachers carefully plan appropriate learning to meet their differing needs. Over time, most pupils recall previous learning well. They use this effectively to build on new skills and extend and deepen their knowledge. They apply their growing knowledge to solve more complex equations and problems. Pupils who require additional support use creative opportunities to secure their learning and apply their skills in real settings; for example, making clocks and telling the time.
- In art, teachers have created an expressive, safe environment. Pupils are happy to explore emotions and apply these to their work. They are confident to share ideas and show immense pride in their work. As a result, pupils produce impressive work in an inspiring environment.
- Teachers celebrate pupils' success regularly. Pupils' high-quality work is displayed, and pupils are keen to talk about what they have learned. Pupils are extremely proud of their personal achievements.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Most pupils arrive with limited social experiences and, on occasion, prejudiced views on a variety of themes. Pastoral support is exceptional. Staff tackle potentially challenging themes through open discussion and the sharing of life experiences. Pupils learn to reflect and respond appropriately. Tolerance and acceptance are key focuses of school life.
- Bullying is not acceptable, and differences are celebrated. This extends to the learning environment, where pupils show respect and consideration for differences of opinion and belief. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said they had found 'ways of managing their differences with others'.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is strong. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, budgeting and keeping safe. They also learn about current affairs, including youth crime, personal identity and gambling. Teaching of these topics is effective. Pupils engage well and express relevant views. They debate with consideration and show respect for the opinions of others. As a result, they develop a secure understanding of the world around them and are well prepared for growing up in modern Britain.
- Staff are highly responsive to the needs of their pupils. They are adaptable and make sure that pupils benefit from opportunities to reflect and take time out if needed. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that the school was different from their earlier experiences because staff 'understand us as individuals'.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality impartial careers advice. They engage in focused employability sessions to help them prepare for working life. Pupils have clear ideas of their future plans. A few have already accessed college interviews in preparation for next year. Pupils value the support and guidance they receive from their teachers and support staff. A small number of pupils stated they wanted to do youth work as a career so that they could 'be that person for someone else'.
- Alongside the taught curriculum, the school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop social and emotional skills. Pupils who have completed the Duke of Edinburgh's Award told the inspector they 'would never forget the experience', which enabled them to learn how to work as a team and achieve things they never thought possible. The school goes 'above and beyond' to provide experiences where pupils come out of their comfort zones and develop self-confidence and resilience.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A high proportion of pupils arrive at the centre having had negative experiences in previous settings. They are often disillusioned with education and struggle to engage in learning. Through a personalised induction, staff quickly get to know pupils and build positive relationships. Staff identify areas of need and work to formulate individualised plans to support pupils into learning. As a result, pupils benefit from a highly personalised approach that helps them to re-engage in learning.

- Leaders have established high expectations for positive behaviour. The behaviour policy is clear and implemented consistently by all staff. Pupils understand the policy and know what is expected of them. Pupils told the inspector that they are proud of how their behaviour has improved since first joining the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. Well-established routines and expectations ensure that pupils arrive at school ready to learn. Teachers carefully introduce new challenges and experiences that build on previous learning. As a result, pupils develop resilience, confidence and a 'can-do' attitude. Teachers expect work to be well presented. Pupils' books show they respond to this and take pride in their work.
- Pupils who met with the inspector said that school helps them to understand one another and form positive relationships, resulting in very little bullying. The school's records support this view.
- Leaders are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of low attendance. They work closely with parents, carers and external agencies to follow up absence effectively and promote good attendance. Nevertheless, attendance for a few pupils, while improving, remains low.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Prior to joining the school, the vast majority of pupils have attended a number of different schools. Often, pupils have experienced disruption to their schooling. Consequently, most pupils arrive with starting points that are low for their age and with significant gaps in their learning.
- Pupils can join the school at any time during the academic year. Some pupils arrive at the school as late as Year 11. Teachers quickly identify where pupils will need additional support and make sure they have appropriate opportunities to make outstanding progress. These pupils make rapid gains in learning and sit GCSE and equivalent examinations. Given the short amount of time teachers have with these pupils, they make significant progress.
- The vast majority of pupils who left during the previous academic year achieved their predicted outcomes in English and mathematics. All pupils achieved a range of purposeful qualifications, including GCSEs and functional skills. As a result, all pupils who left school last year moved on to further education colleges to access a variety of courses.
- Pupils with SEND make up the vast majority of the school's roll. They make strong progress towards their EHC plan outcomes because teachers make sure they have plenty of opportunities to develop and practise skills. Professionals who place pupils at the school speak highly of the progress pupils make towards achieving the targets set out in their individual plans. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.
- The work in pupils' books is often impressive. Across the curriculum, a high proportion of pupils make notable progress from their starting points. English is a key strength of the curriculum. Over time, pupils' literacy skills develop well. Pupils become confident writers who can write for a variety of purposes and audiences. They learn quickly from misconceptions and produce detailed work to an exceptional standard. The progress they make from their individual starting points is significant. As a result, they apply their

writing skills across other areas of the curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	135511
DfE registration number	893/6107
Inspection number	10092455

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 school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mandy Clarke
Chair	Mandy Clarke
Headteacher	Jacqui Brooks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,140 to £46,180
Telephone number	01743 850517
Website	www.evolution-centre.co.uk
Email address	jacqui.brooks@evolution-centre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–28 April 2016

Information about this school

- The Evolution Centre is a small, independent day school located near to Shrewsbury in Shropshire. It is housed in a former village school. The school is part of the New Reflexions Group and offers places to pupils aged 11 to 18 years. The school admits pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have missed long periods of formal education and have a history of poor school attendance.

Prior to joining the school, many pupils have experienced multiple placement breakdowns. Pupils, therefore, can join the school at any time, with some pupils arriving as late as Year 11.

- The school is registered for up to 28 pupils. Pupils are placed at the school from a variety of local authorities, including Shropshire, Manchester and St Helens. Most pupils are children looked after. Most pupils have an EHC plan, and all pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Pupils access external education opportunities within the local and wider community to enhance their learning experiences. These include white water rafting, climbing and outdoor education.
- The school rarely offers places to post-16 pupils. The school makes arrangements for pupils to remain on roll at the school where possible if they are not yet ready to transition into further education. The school offers appropriate courses and qualifications for such learners. At the point of inspection, the number of post-16 pupils was extremely low. Consequently, there was insufficient evidence about teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for the sixth form. No judgement was made about this aspect of the provision.
- The school was last inspected in April 2016 when it was judged to be outstanding in all areas.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. Pupils take part in physical education at a local leisure centre. They also participate in outdoor experiences at Lower Bush Rural Skill Project, Wyldwoods, The Hive and Safe and Sound Outdoors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with notice of one day.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the proprietor, who is also the chair of governors, and teaching staff. The inspector also spoke with a commissioner from a local authority responsible for placing pupils at the school. A meeting was held with a group of pupils.
- The inspector toured the premises and considered the school's health and safety procedures, including first aid, fire safety and risk assessments.
- The inspector observed lessons across key stages 3 and 4, including English, mathematics, science, computing, food technology and art. The majority of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' books across a variety of subjects were also examined.
- The inspector scrutinised key policies, including safeguarding, behaviour, admissions and complaints. The inspector also reviewed checks carried out on staff prior to them joining the school.
- Six responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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