

Inspection of ASPIRE: Lifeskills

Town Hall Chambers, Town Hall Passage, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3EB

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 June 2022

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 thrive at this welcoming and inclusive school. They behave well and attend frequently. Pupils are respectful of visitors, staff and each other. They are confident that the adults would help them if they had a worry. Pupils say that they are kept safe and that they feel safe. They are happy here. One pupil said, 'It's like a home from home.'

Staff are skilled in managing pupils' various and complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils receive well thought out and effective therapeutic support. This help enables them to engage readily with their learning. They enjoy the comfort and responsibility that is brought by Holly, the school's therapy dog.

Pupils gain an appropriate mix of qualifications and life skills. These include functional skills, GCSE and A levels. They particularly look forward to working on the weekly food van. Here, pupils are taught how to communicate more effectively, shop, prepare food and understand how to run a small business.

Parents and carers who shared their views wholeheartedly support the school. Typically, one parent said, 'The staff go over and above what is expected. They have changed our child's life.'

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

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Pupils study subjects and courses that are appropriate to their specific individual needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They ask challenging questions that help to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils concentrate, listen well and work hard. They are keen to succeed. They are being prepared well for their next steps. This includes the students in the post-16 provision.

There is a sensible approach to assessment. Pupils are often given small quizzes and tests to help them remember what has been taught before. They say these are useful. Larger, end-of-unit tests highlight areas of the curriculum that pupils need to revisit.

Pupils are confident and fluent readers. There are appropriate books and texts from which they can choose. However, leaders have not fostered a love of reading. Pupils do not read as widely and as frequently as they should. This limits them from improving their vocabulary and writing skills.

Leaders prioritise personal development to promote pupils' self-esteem and build their character. This provision is comprehensive and well thought through. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of relationships and sex education. They can access a range of activities such as horse riding, golf, sewing and rock climbing. They have a sound understanding of British values. They can explain how tolerance helps stop discrimination because of a person's race, gender identity or sexual

orientation. Pupils know about faiths and cultures that are different to their own. They are accepting of others. Pupils receive independent careers information, education and advice. They experience the world of work through the food van and other local businesses. Pupils are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders and staff are experts at meeting the complex needs of each pupil. They are quick to spot and give extra support to pupils with additional needs. Leaders have created their own 'early help' offer. This allows pupils to access yoga, small-group work and mental-health coaching. The sensory room is available for pupils who need a safe space. There are strong links with a wide range of appropriate external agencies. These links ensure that pupils access the right help.

Leaders are effective in their roles. They are knowledgeable about the school and its pupils. Staff work closely with other schools and providers. They share good practice and moderate pupils' work. Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the training opportunities available. Staff say leaders are appreciative of their workload and well-being.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. The building is maintained to a good standard. There is a suitable medical room. Pupils can access a nearby park and other local amenities. There are suitable risk assessments in place. The school meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The necessary policies are appropriate and are made available to parents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have had up-to-date safeguarding training. They know the potential signs of abuse and neglect. Staff are knowledgeable about county lines drug trafficking and the 'Prevent' duty. Pupils' safeguarding records are detailed. Leaders have links with external agencies, such as the early help team, social care and the police. The safeguarding policy is on the school's website. It refers to the necessary national guidance.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a variety of ways. These include learning about online safety and the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse.

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

- Leaders recognise that pupils do not have a love of reading. Nor do pupils read widely and often. This limits pupils from improving their vocabulary and

developing their writing skills. Leaders should provide pupils with opportunities to read more frequently and foster a love of reading.

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	142779
DfE registration number	855/6037
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10232292
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Proprietor	Vivienne Boulton
Headteacher	Vivienne Boulton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,500
Telephone number	01509 269441
Website	www.aspirelifefskills.co.uk
Email address	office@aspirelifefskills.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 March 2018

Information about this school

- ASPIRE:Lifeskills is an independent special school for pupils aged 11 to 19 years. There are currently 23 pupils on roll, 15 of which are in the sixth form.
- The school operates from the Town Hall Chambers, Town Hall Passage, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3EB. The school also operates from adjoining premises which has the same address, and is called The Hub.
- The capacity of the school was increased from 15 to 20 pupils in June 2019. The Department for Education agreed to a further increase in numbers to 23 in 2021.
- The headteacher is also the proprietor.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils typically have complex SEND. These include autism spectrum disorder and communication, behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

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 held various meetings with the headteacher and a selection of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into mathematics, psychology and personal, social and health education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for each subject with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised curriculum documents in some other subjects. They checked compliance with the independent school standards.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central register. Inspectors checked staff training and their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors looked at pupils' safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, and Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Stevens

Her Majesty's Inspector

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