

Inspection of Lyme Brook Independent School

90 King Street, Newcastle-Under-Lyme ST5 1JB

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

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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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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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?

Pupils are happy and safe in this school. There is a calm atmosphere where they can concentrate and work. Pupils know there is someone to talk to who will care about any concerns they may have. On arrival in the school, pupils soon settle down to learning because they develop very good relationships with the headteacher and other staff. They respond well to the high expectations of their teachers, saying, for example: 'I am really learning in this school. Even though you are struggling, the teachers will pick you up. They push you higher and higher and higher.' Bullying is not tolerated and is rare. Pupils enjoy going out on educational visits, as well as taking part in a variety of sporting activities. Breaktimes are enjoyable because pupils and staff have the chance to chat informally and play table tennis. They enjoy academic lessons as well as art and cooking. They are proud of their work, proud of their sporting skills and proud of their cooking skills. Pupils are rarely absent because they enjoy school.

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

School leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The director of care for Prestige Adolescent Care and Education Limited and the business director supply strong support and challenge to the headteacher and staff. Between them they provide effective experience and practice in managing the care of pupils. All three leaders are committed to securing pupils' well-being. Excellent relationships exist between teachers and those who care for the pupils at home. All stakeholders hold the school in high regard.

Teachers are skilled at supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. As a result, pupils quickly settle down to work and fill the gaps in their learning. Pupils benefit from supportive therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy when they need it. This helps pupils to become more aware of how to manage their own behaviour.

Teachers create a personalised, and well-ordered learning plan for each pupil that provides a broad and rich curriculum. This is based on initial assessments of the pupils' knowledge and skills. Most teachers have good subject knowledge for the subjects that they teach. The headteacher has planned well-sequenced schemes of work for every subject that build on pupils' previous learning. For example, in geography pupils learn about natural hazards like volcanoes. They follow this by learning about the effects of these hazards upon people. Teachers make good links between subjects. For example, in a science lesson about speed, pupils used their mathematics skills to calculate miles per hour.

Teachers make effective use of good resources. In addition to these, the school plans to purchase a piano, and other musical instruments, and bring in a visiting science laboratory to school in the spring.

Experienced teachers have good ideas for ensuring that pupils learn and remember more in all subjects. They are also skilled in encouraging pupils to become confident speakers. They encourage them to give opinions and ask questions in all lessons. Pupils read in all lessons as well as in reading sessions three times per week. Teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils building wide vocabularies. However, leaders have not yet identified the minor weaknesses in the way some aspects of the curriculum, such as writing, are delivered. Leaders have not made sure that inexperienced teachers enhance their skills in delivering subject-specific content.

Pupils' personal and social skills are developed well. For example, they prepare meals for others, taking care to cater for individual needs. They also shop for ingredients and in this way develop an awareness of budgeting. They know how to lead a healthy lifestyle, saying: 'You need to be fit and walk. Don't put a lot of fat in food.'

Pupils learn about different religions and fundamental British values. They can talk about, for example, similarities between Muslims and Christians. They are knowledgeable about equalities and the rule of law. They are aware of people's needs and differences in relation to, for example, gay, lesbian and transgender people and people with disabilities. A typical remark was: 'Everyone is equal.' Pupils visit the local museum and library where they have the chance to socialise with local people. At a coffee morning for pensioners at the library, they are able to help out and to chat about cooking. A range of educational visits, such as those to the cenotaph in Newcastle-under-Lyme and to Jodrell Bank, enhance their learning experiences.

A comprehensive plan for careers education ensures that pupils have good opportunities to think about their future lives. Careers visits, visitors and work experience in Years 10 and Year 11 prepare pupils for the world of work.

Leaders comply with paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. They have an accessibility plan that considers the physical environment, the curriculum and the sharing of information.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders teach the pupils about the dangers of criminal exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. They make sure that they teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations and online. Staff have received all the training they need to ensure that they know how to safeguard the pupils in their care effectively. The school's safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website. It meets government requirements. The school site is safe, secure and well-maintained. Risk assessments are completed for the site and for trips and visits. Leaders make sure that staff are suitable to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not been rigorous enough in checking the way the curriculum is implemented. This means that leaders are not always fully aware of minor inconsistencies in the quality of delivery, for example, in the teaching of writing. The school should do more to identify where improvements could be made so that the delivery of the curriculum is always of the highest quality and pupils become even better writers.
- There has been insufficient focus on improving the skills of inexperienced teachers. Training has not developed their skills in delivering subject content effectively. This has meant that there are some relative weaknesses in the way the curriculum is delivered. Leaders should ensure that inexperienced teachers have the necessary expertise to deliver subject-specific curriculum content confidently and proficiently.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	146982
DfE registration number	860/6051
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10119168
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Prestige Adolescent Care and Education Limited
Chair	Adrian Colerick
Headteacher	David Cantillon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01782 987520
Website	www.lymebrookschoo.org.uk
Email address	dave@paceuk.net
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2019

Information about this school

- This was the school's first standard inspection, following the pre-registration inspection on 16 May 2019. The school was first registered in June 2019.
- The school is situated in former domestic premises, which were extended, then later converted to offices. The school is a short walk from the centre of Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire.
- The school is part of Prestige Adolescent Care and Education (PACE) Limited.
- The school caters for pupils aged eight to 16 who are children looked after, some of whom have social, emotional and mental health needs.

- Most pupils are likely to have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many have missed substantial amounts of schooling and have significant gaps in their learning.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- We held meetings with the headteacher, the director for care and the business director from Prestige Adolescent Care and Education Limited. We also held meetings with individual teaching assistants.
- We considered the quality of education. We looked at English, mathematics, computer science and geography in more detail. This involved meeting with subject leaders and teachers, scrutinising curriculum plans, looking at pupils' books and talking with pupils about their experiences and learning. We also visited several lessons.
- We visited a food technology lesson and an art lesson. The lead inspector also scrutinised science books.
- The lead inspector toured the premises with the headteacher to ensure that the school provides an appropriate environment for pupils.
- We examined several policies, schemes of work and plans as well as documentation related to health and safety.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the headteacher and the director of care to discuss safeguarding procedures and scrutinised safeguarding documentation. She spoke to other staff about their knowledge of safeguarding procedures.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to representatives of the local authorities who place pupils at this school.
- The lead inspector considered written findings from Ofsted Parent View.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire or to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mike Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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