

Inspection of Pace Education

Black Horse House, 3 Porthill Bank, Porthill, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffordshire
ST5 0LS

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

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	Good
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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 enjoy attending this friendly school where staff listen to them and care about their progress. The classes contain a small number of pupils, so teachers can spend plenty of time working with each of them. Pupils settle in easily because of the welcoming atmosphere. Pupils and staff get on well together and treat each other with respect. Pupils say there is rarely any bullying and if it did happen, staff would sort it out.

Staff are very well trained to care for pupils with anxieties. They consider the individual needs of each pupil. Pupils soon feel less anxious and can get on with their work. Pupils are keen to work hard to get qualifications for the future. They learn lots of new subjects, as well as improve their mathematics and English. They especially enjoy opportunities to learn outdoors.

Pupils enjoy collecting points for their reward system. They think that this system is good fun and fair. They say, 'It is a bit like playing a game!' The points they collect build up to class rewards. Pupils say that their behaviour has improved since coming to this school. Staff are pleased with this improved behaviour because it means that pupils will be more likely to reach their potential.

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

Leaders have high expectations for their pupils. They have created an environment where pupils feel listened to, valued, respected and safe.

The curriculum is appropriately broad. All lessons have well-sequenced schemes of work. This means that teachers teach pupils the right things in the order leaders want. Teachers use assessment well so that they identify gaps in pupils' learning. They adapt lessons to the needs of each individual learner. As a result, pupils become more confident and begin to develop their independence.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teachers present subject matter clearly, promoting appropriate discussion about the topic being taught. They regularly give praise for work well done. They also give direct feedback to move pupils' understanding on. Teachers regularly recap prior learning. This helps pupils to know and remember more. Pupils make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education as a result of effective teaching.

Pupils improve their reading in English lessons and across the curriculum. Teachers assess their reading ability on arrival so that they can choose books at the right level for them to read. Leaders have recently introduced a phonics programme to support the few pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. Teaching assistants support some pupils with reading, but they are not sufficiently skilled in how to do this effectively.

Some teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary to support their learning. However, this is not consistent across all lessons in the school. Pupils make slower progress where this is the case.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's ethos and curriculum. The wide range of outdoor educational activities, such as hiking, orienteering and fishing, bushcraft and BMX biking, support pupils to become more confident and resilient. Through activities such as 'Black History Month' and visits to places of worship such as a mosque and a cathedral, pupils gain a wider understanding of the world. Pupils also develop respect for others and understand that they should respect differences. Leaders have put in place a programme of relationships and sex education for the pupils. Staff consulted parents before this learning began.

Pupils learn about democracy, for example when teachers and leaders ask their opinions about how things should be done. They learn about keeping themselves safe in personal relationships, as well as online. Through opportunities to volunteer in a range of activities, like cleaning up the local canal or volunteering in a charity shop, pupils learn to contribute to wider society.

Leaders aim high and have the capacity to improve this school even further. The headteacher has brought together a very experienced team of leaders. They know what needs to be done and how to do it. They have strong shared values.

Teachers welcome the professional development that leaders put in place for them. Leaders reach out to other agencies, such as the speech and language service, to support pupils when necessary.

Staff say they love working at the school. They say that leaders care about their personal well-being and are mindful of their workload. Parents are delighted with the progress their children are making at the school. They are glad that leaders and staff are so supportive of their children and have helped them to settle after difficult times in previous settings.

Leaders make sure that all pupils have access to careers education. Older pupils have good opportunities to learn from work experience. Former pupils progressed to college to study a range of subjects, including agriculture, social care and construction.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the requirements of all the independent school standards. He visits the school weekly to support and challenge leaders. Leaders welcome the support of experienced professionals at the Edison Group. The proprietor ensures that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff are appropriately trained to be vigilant for their pupils' safety, including preventing radicalisation and child exploitation. The safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website. It meets government guidance.

All staff care deeply about their pupils' safety. There are clear systems and processes in place for following up on all concerns. Leaders work closely with relevant local authorities so that pupils get the right help and support. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Detailed risk assessments are in place to mitigate any identified potential risks.

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

- Teaching assistants support some pupils to improve their reading but they do not have all the skills in order to do this. Consequently, they do not know some of the teaching strategies to use and the pupils learn more slowly. Leaders should make sure that teaching assistants have the appropriate skills for their roles in supporting pupils.
- Not all teachers place the same emphasis on pupils' learning subject-specific vocabulary. This means that pupils do not widen their vocabularies quickly enough and cannot always understand what they read. Leaders should ensure that pupils are given opportunities routinely to extend their vocabularies.

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	136245
DfE registration number	860/6443
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10220405
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Tommy MacDonald-Milner
Headteacher	Louise Riley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	01782 616660
Website	www.pace-education.co.uk
Email address	louise.riley@pace-education.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 May 2018

Information about this school

- Pace Education is registered to admit up to 30 pupils between the ages of 13 and 16.
- The school operates from a large, Victorian house close to Stoke on Trent.
- The last full inspection of the school was in May 2018.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have previously been out of education for some time or excluded from mainstream schools.
- The school has no chair of governors or proprietor board.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provisions.

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.

- Inspectors met with all school leaders: the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education and science as part of this inspection. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and other teachers of these subjects. They talked to pupils and visited lessons accompanied by leaders. They also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included: school policies, safeguarding records, curriculum plans, pupils' attendance and behaviour records, health and safety records and the single central record, as well as a variety of emails.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of different classes and at different times of the day. They talked to pupils informally about bullying,

behaviour and welfare.

- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

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