

Inspection of Sheridan House School

Thetford Rd, Northwold, Thetford, Norfolk IP26 5LQ

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Sheridan House School is now a safe and happy place to learn. Pupils arrive having known significant disruption to their previous education. Many have experienced trauma in the past. Staff ensure pupils here re-engage with education successfully. Their attendance quickly improves. Parents and carers praise the support pupils receive.

Behaviour is orderly. Pupils like gaining points for positive behaviour. They thrive in the culture of praise and rewards. When there are any behaviour incidents, these are dealt with promptly and effectively. There is not a culture of bullying. Consequently, pupils learn in a calm atmosphere.

Pupils get skilful help for their well-being. They receive a range of well-planned therapeutic support, including the much-loved therapy dog. This helps pupils settle and focus on their education.

Pupils benefit from the school's high expectations. They learn what they need to be ready for their next stage. As a result, they progress successfully to college or training.

There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to explore their interests. They value the clubs, from model railways to cooking. Year 8 pupils are enthusiastic about their rock band. The school council is active and persistent, such as requesting the recently installed benches. These experiences help pupils develop their confidence and independence.

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

The school has rapidly improved since the last inspection. The proprietor body and leaders have responded thoroughly to the areas identified for urgent improvement. There is now a well-defined ethos of high ambition for pupils. As a result, pupils are flourishing.

The curriculum is well-designed. The school identifies comprehensively what pupils need to learn, and when. This is then adapted carefully to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures staff have clear and incisive information about pupils' needs. Staff get regular and high-quality training. This means they are adept at supporting pupils with SEND. For example, teaching assistants understand when and how to provide bespoke support. Consequently, pupils make strong progress through the curriculum. They achieve well.

Teachers mostly deliver the curriculum effectively. They explain new content clearly. Teachers make helpful connections with prior learning. Therefore, pupils understand and remember it well. Often, teaching helps pupils develop deep and detailed knowledge. For instance, in English pupils create thoughtful, well-crafted writing.

However, sometimes teachers do not have high enough expectations for what pupils will learn. On these occasions, learning is checked less regularly and thoroughly. This means teachers do not always address gaps in learning as well as they might. Sometimes, pupils move on to new content without being secure in previous knowledge.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils who are learning to read get the help they need. Pupils build up their literacy. This means they have the required reading and writing knowledge to access all parts of the curriculum more confidently and secure a wider understanding across all subjects.

The school has an effective behaviour policy. This places a high focus on rewards. When sanctions are needed, they are used fairly and consistently. Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations for behaviour and attendance. They respect their peers and conduct themselves appropriately.

The school places personal development at the heart of its work. The curriculum teaches pupils about important issues, such as understanding those who are different to themselves. A coherent extra-curricular programme extends this. For instance, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer group is involved in the life of the school. They show visitors around and help interview new staff. Staff carefully enhance pupils' experience. An example is taking pupils to the cinema for their first time. Consequently, they are ready for life beyond school.

The proprietor body has supported the school well. They provide challenge where needed through probing questions. The proprietor ensures leaders and staff receive the training they require to be effective. However, the school's use of information is not always sufficiently strategic. Leaders do not analyse trends in areas such as behaviour well enough. This means some of their actions to improve provision are not as effective as they might be.

The proprietor body has made sure the independent school standards are met consistently. There is close oversight of safeguarding. Extremely thorough checks on health and safety ensure the site is safe and fit for purpose. Risk assessment is embedded into all aspects of the school's provision. The information that should be available is available to parents, carers and local authorities. Policies are suitable and up to date, such as those for safeguarding, and relationships and sex education. Pupils receive effective careers education. This includes independent careers advice and guidance. The school complies with equalities legislation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Teachers sometimes check on learning less regularly and effectively than they could. This means that pupils on occasion move on to new content without the secure foundation they require. The school needs to ensure that teachers get the guidance and support they need to check successfully that pupils have understood their learning.
- The school does not always use information effectively. It does not identify and analyse trends in areas such as behaviour well enough. This means opportunities are missed to improve provision even more than at present. The school should ensure it uses information strategically so leaders can target the most effective actions to improve the school for pupils.

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	121246
DfE registration number	926/6133
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10299169
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	61
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Phil Ringsell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000 to £77,000
Telephone number	01366 726040
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/sheridan-school-thetford
Email address	sheridanschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 to 21 October 2022

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspris Children's Services Ltd (formerly known as Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd).
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2023 in a consultant role. He became the substantive headteacher in May 2023.
- All pupils are in receipt of an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils have a range of needs, but most notably autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. Places are commissioned by Norfolk local authority.
- In July 2023, the school applied to the Department for Education (DfE) for a material change to reduce age range from 8 to 19 to 8 to 16. This material change was accepted by the DfE. The school no longer has a sixth-form provision.
- The school uses two unregistered and one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's inspection history:
 - In June 2006, Ofsted conducted the school's first standard inspection. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
 - In December 2009, Ofsted conducted the school's second standard inspection. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
 - In January 2010, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection. This was commissioned by the DfE. The material change was recommended.
 - In November 2012, Ofsted conducted the school's third standard inspection. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
 - In May 2016, Ofsted conducted the school's fourth standard inspection. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
 - In September 2017, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection. This was commissioned by the DfE. The material change was recommended.
 - In January 2019, Ofsted conducted the school's fifth standard inspection. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
 - In October 2022, Ofsted conducted the school's sixth standard inspection. The school was judged to be inadequate. Many of the independent school standards were not met.
 - In November 2023, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. All of the independent school standards were met.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders, staff and pupils. As part of evaluating governance, the lead inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the headteacher, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- As part of checking compliance with the independent school standards, and evaluating other areas of provision, inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the safety and appropriateness of the school site.
- During inspections, Ofsted seeks views through the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. In this inspection, there were too few responses to consider. Inspectors considered the free-text responses they received from parents. Inspectors considered the 28 responses to the Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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