

Inspection of Aspris Telford School

The Upper Forge, Dale Road, Coalbrookdale, Ironbridge DE11 9LR

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Aspris Telford is a small school with a big heart. Care, kindness and understanding fill this school community. This is a place where pupils get a fresh start. At Aspris Telford, pupils find staff who believe in them and are driven to make a special difference in their lives.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. There are high expectations for what pupils should learn and when. However, some work remains to ensure that all pupils get the most from every lesson.

Pupils arrive with varying experiences of education in the past. For some, school life has been previously challenging; relationships and attachments have been even harder. However, at Aspris Telford, staff are attentive and act when pupils need help. Pupils told inspectors that they could rely on staff to help them. Consequently, pupils feel safe, and their behaviour improves quickly. This creates a calm and purposeful learning community.

Life beyond school is also nurtured. Trips to places such as Birmingham city centre, a safari park and a local ice rink enrich that sense of the world around them. Pastoral support and career advice help develop the pupils' vision for learning and the world of work.

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

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to leadership at Aspris Telford. The new leadership team has brought added enthusiasm and drive to the school. They understand what the school does well and areas it could be better at. Staff feel well supported and that the school is well led and managed. The school's capacity for making the necessary improvements to the quality of education is strong.

The proprietorial body is highly supportive of the school. Its members share the leadership team's ambition. There is a strong team around the school to provide the right support for the quality of education, facilitating links with other schools and monitoring the health and well-being of staff. All the independent school standards are met. The proprietorial body and school leaders have robust systems to ensure that these standards are regularly monitored and do not drop.

Recently, the school has made considerable changes to the curriculum. The Bridge and Forge curriculums have been carefully developed to provide lessons to fill prior learning gaps and ensure that pupils gain the necessary qualifications and experiences for the next steps into employment, training and education. Some staff are highly knowledgeable about what content should be included in the curriculum and how this should be taught. For example, in one lesson, inspectors saw staff skilfully developing teamwork skills through pupils building 'spaghetti towers'

together. However, not all staff are as skilled and knowledgeable about how the curriculum should be taught and adapted.

Pupils arrive at Aspris Telford with diagnosed complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. These needs have created barriers to learning for pupils in the past. Staff work hard with parents and carers and other services to fully understand these needs and identify the necessary support. One parent, whose views were echoed by others, told inspectors that 'It feels as if leaders know my family better than I do.' Some pupils also have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). While staff are highly skilled in meeting SEMH needs, not all staff are skilled in adapting the curriculum for pupils with SLCN. In some cases, too many words are used, or there are not clear enough systems to support pupils' understanding of new words and concepts.

In some subjects, pupils learn more and remember more because learning builds on what they already know. For example, in English, the pupils' work is based on what they already know and then carefully builds their knowledge over time. Personalised learning pathways not only fill gaps in knowledge but also adapt learning to how pupils learn best. For example, inspectors saw some pupils developing their understanding of different types of words because they needed this before moving on to more challenging tasks. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In some, it is not always clear how learning builds precisely on what individual pupils know and can remember.

Reading rightly has a high profile at the school. Leaders have worked tirelessly to identify the right systems to help those pupils who are not confident readers. Some staff have been well trained in early reading; others have training planned for later this year. Many high-interest, low-reading-age ability books have been purchased and are used daily with pupils. Opportunities for reading are also well planned in other lessons. For example, inspectors observed pupils reading in one lesson to develop their knowledge about equality and disabilities as they discussed the protected characteristics.

Behaviour is a strength at Aspris Telford. Some pupils' SEMH needs and SLCN make concentration and attention difficult. For others, past experiences have made building trusting relationships with staff hard. Staff are skilful in supporting pupils to regulate how they feel and then engage with learning, ensuring that sensory needs are met. For example, inspectors saw pupils using fidget toys to aid concentration and self-regulation. At Aspris Telford, pupils build strong attachments, secure relationships, and develop self-belief and confidence. Over time, pupils attend more and become increasingly focused on their learning.

Helping pupils to be ready for life in the modern-day West Midlands is a priority. Lessons in personal, social, emotional and economic education create an understanding of relationships, staying safe and the world around them. Work experience at a local farm, boxing gym, nursery and hair salon provides opportunities to develop an understanding of the workplace. Alternative provisions are used well to support pupils' learning programmes. For example, an inspector

visited a therapeutic riding provision to support those with SEMH needs and provide vocational learning opportunities.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has not yet ensured that all staff have had the training and support they need around subject content and pedagogy to implement the school curriculum. This means that the curriculum is not always implemented in a way that develops the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. The school needs to ensure that all teaching staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to implement the curriculum so pupils learn and remember more over time.
- How the curriculum is implemented does not always precisely match what pupils already know, can do and remember in all subjects. This means that pupils do not have the opportunity to consolidate previous knowledge and build new skills based on what they have remembered from the past. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum implementation and work provided for pupils precisely build on what they know, remember and can already do in all subjects.
- Some staff do not consistently ensure that their own speaking, interactions and communications support pupils' understanding of what is being taught. In those cases, well-intentioned interactions between staff and pupils are based on too many words that confuse some pupils. The school needs to ensure that all staff carefully and precisely use language to make instructions and communication clear for all pupils, including those with complex speech, language and communication needs.

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	146350
DfE registration number	894/6012
Local authority	Telford & Wrekin
Inspection number	10299247
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Limited
Chair for the Proprietor	John Anderson
Headteacher	Clare Davis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£79,562
Telephone number	01952 433637
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/aspris-telford-school/
Email address	telfordschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 November 2019

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 5 June 2019. This is the school's second standard inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is located in a rural setting near to the historic Shropshire town of Ironbridge.

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.

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

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- During the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, science and skills for employment and training. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, the chair of the proprietorial body and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- An inspector also spoke with representatives of the proprietorial organisation.

- An inspector held phone calls with parents to gather their views about the quality of provision for their child and communication between the school and home.
- An inspector also visited one of the alternative provisions to sample the school's use of that provision.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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