Inspection of Neptune School

24 Poplar Road, Warmley, Bristol BS30 5JU

Inspection dates:	15 to 17 October 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	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm, welcoming and caring place. Pupils typically join the school having negative experiences of education from the past. Many have missed large parts of their education and have gaps in their knowledge. Staff take time to get to know and understand every pupil for the individuals they are. They have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. As a result, most pupils enjoy school and learn well across a range of subjects.

Pupils appreciate the time and care that staff show them. They understand how this helps them to feel safe. The school offers high quality therapeutic provision. This means that pupils receive individually tailored guidance to help them continue to develop socially and emotionally. Most pupils are polite, well-mannered and respectful. Many respond positively to the clear routines that are in place. As a result, there is a calm environment in classrooms.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities which help prepare them for life in the wider world. They enjoy the off-site learning experiences which build their independence. Pupils take their school council roles seriously. They understand how this develops their understanding of concepts such as democracy and helps improve their school.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has taken effective action to strengthen and raise the ambition of the school's curriculum. The curriculum makes clear the important knowledge and social skills that pupils need to help them become active members of society. For example, in English, pupils learn specific skills to enable them to write a balanced argument about school uniform.

Most teachers have the expertise they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. In mathematics, for example, teachers present new learning clearly and model ideas well. They use resources such as everyday objects to help pupils understand concepts such as place value. However, in a small number of subjects, staff subject knowledge is not as secure as it could be. As a result, some pupils struggle to remember key learning in the longer term.

All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The checks that the school make when pupils arrive are robust. As a result, teachers know pupils' needs and individual starting points well. As pupils move through the school, the school routinely checks on how well they are learning the curriculum. Most teachers use this information to provide pupils with the support they need. However, on occasions, the information on what pupils know and can do is not used well enough to inform future learning. Some pupils complete activities that are either too hard or too easy for them. As a result, they do not deepen their knowledge or understanding as well as they could.

The school prioritises teaching pupils to read. Pupils understand the importance of reading. They enjoy listening to and reading a wide range of texts which develop their understanding of the wider world. The school has recently put in place a structured phonics programme. This is helping pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read to develop their confidence and fluency. Staff use the training they receive well to ensure that the books that pupils read match the sounds they know.

Most pupils are eager to participate in lessons, answering questions or sharing their ideas with adults. If pupils struggle, staff know how to respond and do so swiftly. This enables pupils to return to their learning with minimum disruption.

Many pupils have a history of poor attendance in previous settings. The school uses its robust and effective procedures to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. As a result, the attendance of most pupils is higher than their historical figures. Where attendance dips, the school works effectively with families and a range of external agencies to remove any barriers to attendance that may exist.

The personal development offer is central to the school's work. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to develop their creative, sporting and artistic talents. They particularly enjoy cooking and understand how this helps them to be healthy. Pupils understand how 'Neptune radio' develops their understanding of important topics, such as knife crime.

Pupils receive helpful and appropriate careers advice. Younger pupils develop their social skills which helps them to prepare for life in the adult world. Older pupils enjoy their visits to local colleges. They understand how this helps them to develop their understanding of the careers and options on offer to them for their futures.

The proprietor body has a clear vision for the school. It offers challenge and support to further improve the quality of the provision. Staff are highly positive about working at the school. They value both the team spirit that exists and the investment that the school makes in developing their teaching expertise.

The proprietor body has clear processes in place to ensure that the school continues to meet the independent school standards in full. The checks that it makes ensures that the school building and grounds are well kept and safe. The proprietor board ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, teachers are not yet secure in their subject knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not build on their previous learning well enough. The proprietor should ensure that teachers receive appropriate support to strengthen their subject knowledge further and make sure that pupils learn well in all subjects.

- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment information well enough. As a result, some learning activities do not build on what pupils already know or can do. The proprietor should ensure that teachers routinely use information from assessment to design activities which are closely tailored to pupils' individual learning needs and help them to build up a deep body of knowledge.

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	148843
DfE registration number	803/6011
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10342190
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	25
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Phoenix Learning and Care Ltd
Chair	Jonathan Pain
Headteacher	Julie Norris
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,752 to £91,519
Telephone number	0330 1358135
Website	www.phoenixschools.org.uk/neptune
Email address	neptune@phoenixschools.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 16 March 2023

Information about this school

- There have been changes to senior leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2024.
- The school premises are a converted residential building.
- The school is for pupils with SEMH needs and/or autism.
- All pupils have an EHC plan and their places are funded by a number of local authorities. The school currently works with Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Somerset and Bath and North-East Somerset local authorities. The school is not approved under section 41.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 executive headteacher, headteacher, deputy headteachers, subject leaders, and the special educational needs coordinator. They also met with groups of staff, including the therapies team, and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the operations director, the regional education lead and the chief executive officer of the proprietor board. He also held telephone conversations with representatives from Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard pupils read and spoke to them about their learning.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View including the free-text comments. They also took account of staff's views through the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with some parents.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Hesketh	His Majesty's Inspector

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