

Inspection of School for Inspiring Talents

College House, Ashburton Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 1NH

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2021

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?

The School for Inspiring Talents is led with a strong moral purpose. Leaders and staff share a deep commitment to caring for pupils who have faced significant challenges in their lives. This helps pupils who have struggled in other schools to re-engage in learning. Pupils respond well to the high expectations staff have of them.

At College House, the focus is on emotional support. Small class sizes, safe spaces to use when feeling anxious, and time to learn how to manage their emotions helps pupils settle back into education.

At Place House, the focus moves onto academic learning. Pupils use the strategies that they have learned at College House to engage in lessons.

At both sites, staff give pupils lots of time and attention. Help is always on hand to reassure pupils. An extensive team of expert therapeutic staff support pupils and their families. This team also provides teachers and support staff with detailed training.

The skilful staff team manage behaviour consistently. As a result, pupils feel safe at school. If bullying occurs, staff deal with it promptly. Leaders identify the reasons behind the behaviour and support pupils to address the issues raised. Pupils learn to respect each other.

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

Leaders are clear about what they want to provide for pupils. They aim to support pupils who have experienced significant challenges to achieve their full potential. All staff have a clear commitment to this aim. A range of well qualified and experienced therapists support the teaching team. This helps staff to understand and cater for each pupil's needs. Consequently, the school provides a highly nurturing environment. This helps pupils to conquer their difficulties. In addition, the school's well-established routines further promote pupils' personal development.

Leaders have developed a broad curriculum for pupils. Helping pupils become fluent and confident readers is a school priority. Disrupted education in the past means that pupils' reading skills vary when they join the school. Teachers use a range of approaches, including effective phonics teaching, to help pupils to read. Staff share books with their classes every day. This widens pupils' experiences of literature. Teachers choose these books carefully to promote pupils' understanding of various topics. In mathematics, teachers have thought about how to build up pupils' knowledge and skills. Learning follows a logical sequence. It is well organised and consistently taught in all classes. Activities such as swimming and cooking help to build pupils' confidence and equip them with important life skills.

Pupils' personal development is well promoted. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, including relationships education, helps pupils to understand respect, equality and tolerance. The work of the therapeutic team helps pupils to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to find out about a broad range of future careers. This impartial careers advice and guidance allows pupils to make informed choices about what they do now and in the future and plan their next steps.

Throughout the curriculum, pupils have opportunities to debate and discuss ideas. They explore the rights and responsibilities that we have as citizens and consider issues from different points of view. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to think about how racial segregation affected American soldiers during the Second World War.

However, some curriculum plans do not set out the knowledge that pupils will learn in sufficient detail. This is particularly the case in subjects taught in the topic curriculum. In these subjects, learning is less well organised. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of improving this part of the school's curriculum.

When pupils join the school, teachers and therapeutic staff carry out detailed assessments. These checks identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and identify how best to support each pupil's social and emotional needs. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves during their time at the school. Skilful staff help those who struggle to manage their behaviour when they first arrive to find strategies that support them. Over time, pupils' engagement in lessons increases. At all times, staff expertly manage behaviour to limit its impact on the learning of other pupils.

Teachers continue to use assessment to check on pupils' learning. They change their plans to suit pupils' needs to help them know and remember important learning. Therapeutic staff also continue to assess pupils' social and emotional needs, so that they receive the right help as their behaviour improves.

The school is well-led. Regular meetings take place between the proprietor and executive principal. The executive principal works closely with the heads of school. The school has established processes for reporting incidents and safeguarding concerns. Leaders and the proprietor understand the requirements of the independent school standards. The school also complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Secure systems are in place to ensure that the school continues to meet these standards. The proprietor challenges and supports school leaders so that the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is at the heart of the work of the school. In lessons, teachers help pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Leaders and staff have a clear

understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders have had training in safer recruitment to help ensure that all adults are safe to work with children. Regular training ensures staff are well prepared to identify pupils who may need help. Leaders document concerns meticulously and share them appropriately with other agencies. Safeguarding staff diligently follow up reports to other agencies to ensure pupils and their families receive the support that they need.

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

- There is not enough guidance for teachers about what pupils must learn when they are completing topic work. This means that pupils do not know as much about these subjects as they should do. Leaders should set out clearly what they want pupils to know and remember in each subject of the topic curriculum and check that this learning takes place.
- The topic curriculum is not planned and sequenced well enough. As a result, teaching does not support pupils to build learning in these subjects effectively over time. Leaders should ensure that learning in the topic curriculum is carefully sequenced so that pupils build on what they know and can do.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	141515
DfE registration number	878/6064
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10201953
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Life Chance Education Ltd
Chair	Mark Escott
Headteacher	Pete Jenkins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,131.58 to £71,574.69
Telephone number	01626 244086
Website	www.sfit.org.uk
Email address	admin@sfit.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February to 5 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school still operates on two sites, but both have changed since the last inspection. The school is now based at College House in Newton Abbot, which also contains the head office of Life Chance Education Ltd, and at Place House in nearby Ashburton. Both sites were previously used by local mainstream secondary school sixth forms.
- The headteacher at the time of the previous standard inspection is now the chair of Life Chance Education Ltd. Each school site has a head of school. They are overseen by an executive principal.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed at the school by local authorities. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, in particular those who have had adverse childhood experiences and have experienced trauma.
- The school does not accept pupils after Year 7.
- This is the school's third standard inspection.
- The school does not use 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.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the chief executive officer of Life Chance Education Ltd, the executive principal, the chief operating officer and the heads of school.
- Inspectors also had telephone conversations with a parent, a representative from Devon County Council and an external consultant who advises the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors conducted deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies and procedures related to safeguarding and health and safety, behaviour and attendance records, and other information provided by school leaders.
- An inspector had a tour of the school sites with the executive principal and head of operations to check that the school still meets the independent school standards relating to premises.

- Inspectors considered 45 responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff and 26 responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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