

# Inspection of The Fitzroy Academy

Cruckton, Shrewsbury SY5 8PR

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Inspection dates:

31 January to 2 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The high level of care and nurture that staff provide for pupils is the hallmark of this school. Leaders and staff know the pupils exceptionally well. They understand the complexity of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils feel safe because staff look after them.

Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff maintain clear routines and understand pupils' emotional triggers. As a result, staff deal with any issues quickly and successfully. They support pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour well. Bullying is unlikely to happen due to the high level of supervision. However, staff are alert to any signs that bullying could occur and step in quickly if needed.

The proprietor body and leaders have introduced a range of positive changes across the school since it opened. Changes reflect the high expectations they have for all pupils and staff. However, there is more to do to improve the curriculum and the quality of education across the school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. In particular, they appreciate the fact that their children are happy and that staff know their children 'inside out'. Parents are relieved and assured that their children are cared for.

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

Leaders organise a range of checks on pupils' starting points and learning behaviours when they join the school. The clinical team supports this process. Staff use the findings from these checks, alongside targets from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, to set learning outcomes for pupils. This supports leaders' aims for every pupil to experience a personalised curriculum.

Pupils with the most complex needs experience a curriculum that focuses sharply on developing their communication and language skills. Every learning opportunity supports pupils to communicate their needs and emotions in a variety of ways. The range of topics, including 'independence' and 'good health', provide interesting backdrops for pupils' learning experiences.

Other pupils follow a more traditional curriculum. In a range of subjects, including personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and art and design, leaders have thought carefully about the order of learning. As a result, what pupils learn builds on what they already know and prepares them for future learning. However, in other subjects, including English and mathematics, this is not the case. In these subjects, learning is not as well connected and pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary do not build as well over time.

Most subjects are taught by subject specialists and teachers have secure subject knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants explain new learning clearly in a step-

by-step manner. They use questioning well to promote discussion and develop pupils' vocabulary. However, in subjects where the order of learning is not well mapped out, pupils struggle to link new learning to what they have learned in previous lessons.

Where staff routinely check how well pupils understand new learning, this helps them to pinpoint any key knowledge that needs revisiting. However, this is not happening consistently well across the school. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not being filled. Leaders have introduced a checking system that provides them with an overview of how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum. However, some staff use it, some staff do not, and some staff are unclear how it works.

Leaders recognise the importance of reading. They have placed it at the heart of the curriculum. Staff have assessed pupils to identify any gaps in their phonics knowledge. Leaders have introduced a phonics curriculum, but staff are struggling to engage pupils in this. Staff do all they can to encourage a love of reading. In daily reading sessions, pupils enjoy quality texts.

The school's ethos is linked to pupils 'being the best' that they can be. Leaders and staff work as a team in pursuit of this. Leaders, supported by the proprietor body, have devised a whole-school approach to pupils' personal development. It is entrenched in the PSHE curriculum and tutor time activities. Enrichment activities link to community engagement and other aspects of a pupil's personal development. Whether it is a visit to the theatre, lunchtime clubs such as art, fundraising events for charity, or celebrating Chinese New Year, pupils enjoy these events immensely. Leaders harness pupils' interests and talents where possible. As a result, pupils really look forward to the weekly visits to the horse riding stables. Leaders make sure that pupils have a voice. The school council's actions have led to extending the lunchtime break and introducing arrangements for recycling.

Leaders recognise the importance of preparing pupils for adulthood. They have well-thought-out plans linked to further developing careers, information, education and guidance (CIEAG) across the school. Plans are underpinned by the recent purchase of a careers programme and the appointment of an external careers adviser. However, these plans are in the very early stages of development and are not yet having an impact on pupils.

The proprietor body and school leaders are working well to improve the school. With the ongoing support of the proprietor body, there is capacity to improve even further. Improvements are evident in different aspects of school life, such as the wide and varied enrichment offer. However, leaders' checks on the curriculum and how well it is delivered are just starting. As a result, weaknesses in the curriculum are not identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Staff value the training they receive, especially the breadth of the induction programme. They state that workload has been 'full on' due to establishing a new

school. However, most staff add that leaders have an open door policy and are considerate of their well-being.

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

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is everyone's priority and everyone's responsibility. Leaders and staff understand the increased vulnerability of pupils due to their complex needs. The proprietor body has made sure that all staff are well trained. Consequently, staff are alert to any signs of abuse and they know how to act if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Training includes updates linked to government guidance as well as specific aspects, such as child-on-child abuse. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe when online through ongoing, bitesize reminders.

The safeguarding policy meets current government guidance and is available on the school's website.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects, including English and mathematics, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is well sequenced. In these subjects, pupils' learning is not well ordered or connected, and pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should map out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn in these subjects.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff use assessment strategies effectively in order to check how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. In these instances, staff are unclear how well pupils are understanding and remembering their learning and where gaps in knowledge remain. Leaders should make sure that all staff understand how to use assessment strategies consistently well across the school.
- The proprietor body and school leaders are in the early stages of making checks on the quality of the curriculum. As a result, some weaknesses in the curriculum are not identified and addressed in a timely manner. Leaders should prioritise making checks on the quality of the curriculum across the school to discover what is working well and what needs to improve.
- The new CIEAG programme is in the very early stages of implementation. Currently, it is having little impact on pupils. Leaders should continue to implement and subsequently embed the CIEAG programme in order to prepare pupils for future learning and the world of work.

## How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148831
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6044
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254707
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	7
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	1
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Reflexion Care Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim McConnell
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£58,500 to £70,200
<b>Telephone number</b>	01939 210040
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.reflexionseducation.org.uk/the-fitzroy-academy/">www.reflexionseducation.org.uk/the-fitzroy-academy/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:kim.mcconnell@newreflexions.co.uk">kim.mcconnell@newreflexions.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Fitzroy Academy is an independent residential special school that caters for pupils with a range of SEND, including pupils with complex needs.
- The school is located on a site that was a former independent school for pupils with SEND. The school is in Shropshire and is surrounded by extensive picturesque grounds and woodland.
- The school is in the same grounds as a children's home, which is also owned by Reflexion Care Group Ltd. Currently, all of the pupils who reside at the children's home attend the school. The school also admits day pupils. The children's home is inspected separately.
- The school received a pre-registration inspection in January 2022 and a material change inspection in August 2022. The school admitted its first pupils in September 2022.
- The school is registered to admit up to 40 pupils. Pupils can join the school at different points in the school year.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. A range of local authorities place pupils in the school.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.

## 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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 school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, pupils' attendance, CIEAG and pupils' behaviour.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art and design and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Wherever possible, inspectors spoke to pupils informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check its suitability.
- Safeguarding documents were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. Inspectors checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- Inspectors were unable to consider responses to Ofsted Parent View, due to the small number of responses received, but they considered the free-text responses received during the inspection. An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from the children's homes that the pupils attend. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent during the inspection.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records and minutes of meetings held by the proprietor body.

### **Inspection team**

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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