

Inspection of Expanse Learning Wigan School

Tyrer Avenue, Worsley Mesnes, Wigan WN3 5XE

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

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?

Pupils are happy and confident learners. Classrooms are calm places where pupils work on their own or with their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) catch up with their learning after periods of considerable absence from school.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They said that staff manage pupils' behaviour well. There are positive relationships between pupils. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. This helps pupils to manage their own emotions effectively.

Pupils show high levels of respect towards adults. Parents and carers comment positively on how pupils' happiness and well-being improve over time. Pupils told inspectors that staff care for them. They said that any bullying or falling out is dealt with quickly by staff.

Pupils' learning is enriched through a wide range of opportunities. Pupils take part in a variety of clubs during the school day, such as chess and mindfulness. Members of the school council are proud of their work to introduce a school uniform and improve recycling within the school.

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

Leaders have developed an interesting and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum maps out how pupils' subject knowledge and skills will be developed in a logical order. Assessment information gathered when pupils join the school helps leaders and staff to identify any gaps in pupils' learning. They use this information to plan learning which meets the needs of pupils. Teachers know pupils well, especially those with SEND. They use information in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans) carefully to help meet pupils' needs. Pupils' learning is supported effectively, and pupils achieve well over time. Along with highly effective pastoral support for pupils, the delivery of the curriculum helps pupils to re-engage with education.

Leaders place high importance on pupils' reading and communication skills. Reading is promoted well across the curriculum, with dedicated reading time. The recently improved library includes a diverse range of books. Pupils read regularly and often in many subjects. Staff have worked to develop pupils' vocabulary, alongside their speaking and listening skills. These actions contribute effectively to pupils' improving comprehension skills and their reading fluency.

Subject leaders monitor their subjects effectively. They have ensured that the curriculum is carefully sequenced so that pupils build on what they already know. Staff are confident in delivering the curriculum. They have strong subject knowledge. They are also clear on what pupils should learn and by when. This helps pupils to know and remember more in all subjects. However, at times, pupils are not

supported to make links between their learning in different subjects. As a result, some pupils do not deepen their understanding over time.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and the relationships and sex education curriculum are well planned. They comply with statutory guidance. There is a strong emphasis on helping pupils to understand their emotions. This helps them to manage their behaviour and become responsible members of society.

Staff's high aspirations help to improve pupils' outlook on their futures. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment. Work experience and days at local colleges help them experience different choices for their future. In addition, teachers provide support for pupils when they apply for jobs or college courses.

Staff provide many opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the importance of equality of opportunity for all. They enjoy a wide range of additional experiences such as visits to museums and developing life skills, for example by using public transport. Visitors to school further enrich pupils' learning and help them understand their role as responsible citizens.

The strong pastoral support that leaders provide helps pupils to develop into successful learners. Staff skilfully adapt their support to meet pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning over time. They concentrate on their learning in a focused environment, relatively free from any disruption.

Leaders have created an environment where all staff and pupils are cared for and feel valued. Leaders work closely with the local authority. The school provides the necessary information in regard to provision for pupils with EHC plans.

The proprietor body and governors provide an effective strategic overview of the school. They have a strong understanding of the school's strengths. Their support and challenge contribute to the improvements in the curriculum.

The proprietor body has also ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met. The proprietor body ensures detailed risk assessments of the premises. For example, the surface of the outdoor area has recently been improved. Leaders also ensure that the school has an accessibility plan that complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding practices and procedures are secure. Staff's knowledge of how to keep pupils safe is exceptionally strong. They follow the school's clear

guidance. Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are adapted precisely to the needs of the pupils. The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. The school's safeguarding policy is available to parents via the school's website.

Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' vulnerabilities and respond rapidly to their changing emotions and needs. This means pupils are kept as safe as possible. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the internet. This helps to develop pupils' understanding of the importance of keeping themselves safe.

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

- Pupils access a well-planned curriculum. However, leaders do not readily make links in pupils' learning between some subjects. This means that some pupils do not routinely apply their prior knowledge to different contexts when learning something new. Leaders should ensure that pupils know how to make connections between their prior learning when learning new concepts and ideas. This will help to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

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

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| Unique reference number | 145289 |
| DfE registration number | 359/6003 |
| Local authority | Wigan |
| Inspection number | 10210361 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 31 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Expanse Group Ltd |
| Chair | Tony Brown |
| Headteacher | Ed Hanley |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £25,000 |
| Telephone number | 01942877715 |
| Website | www.expanselearning.co.uk |
| Email address | hello@expanselearning.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 22 to 24 January 2019 |

Information about this school

- The school received its last standard inspection on 22 to 24 January 2019. The school also received a material change inspection on 13 January 2022.
- The school uses four alternative providers; of which, three are unregistered.

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.

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 headteacher and senior leaders of the school. Inspectors also met with leaders from the proprietor body. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from Wigan local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, PSHE and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by reviewing records, checking the safety of the school site, talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe and checking the school's single central record. They met with the school's designated safeguarding lead.
- The lead inspector checked all survey responses, including those from pupils, staff and parents. This included taking into account responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Barbara Dutton

Ofsted Inspector

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