

# Inspection of Nugent House School

Carr Mill Road, Billinge, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 7TT

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Inspection dates: 3–5 March 2020

## **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

**Good**

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

Nugent House is a place where pupils are 'loved fiercely' and helped to overcome their considerable barriers to learning. Pupils' personal development is nurtured, and they thrive in the care of dedicated staff.

Pupils rise to the high expectations of teachers and other staff. They enjoy their learning and achieve some success. However, pupils do not do as well as they could do. This is because the knowledge they need is not ordered logically within the curriculum.

Pupils who spoke to us told us that they get on well with staff. They appreciate all the help that adults give to them. They say that the way they are treated makes them feel valued. Pupils told us that they feel safe in school and that their classmates behave well around the school. Bullying is rare. Pupils' considerable needs can sometimes overwhelm them and lead to inappropriate behaviour. Staff deal effectively with these incidents with sensitivity and compassion.

Pupils relish the wide range of activities that the school offers, such as horse riding. Other opportunities, such as gardening, help pupils learn about food and nutrition. Work experience provides older pupils with opportunities to develop the skills they will need for their future lives.

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

New leadership has reinvigorated Nugent House School, and following a period of decline the school is on an even keel. Leaders have taken swift action to successfully improve behaviour and safety. However, leaders' work to strengthen the academic curriculum is not finished.

Leaders are knowledgeable about the independent school standards. By the end of the inspection the school met all the independent school standards. At the start of the inspection some routine maintenance checks were not completed. Swift action by the proprietor resolved the issues.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils. They have a deep understanding of pupils' personal and academic needs. The curriculum covers an appropriate range of subjects. Pupils develop their understanding of a range of different cultures and beliefs well. They learn how to show tolerance and respect for people with protected characteristics.

Pupils learn to overcome barriers to learning and succeed. This is because specialist staff, including an educational psychologist, work with them to increase their resilience and develop their social skills. Lilly the therapy dog helps pupils to learn how to calm down and often listens to them as they read. Therapists for speech, language and communication help pupils to explain their views and opinions.

The school's academic curriculum is not as strong as that for personal development. This is because the order in which knowledge is taught is not organised well enough. Pupils sometimes begin to learn about more complex ideas before being taught the prior knowledge they need to understand them. Teachers do not plan their use of links to other subjects systematically. This means that pupils may miss out on opportunities to apply what they have learned. For example, pupils learn about angles of reflection in science before learning about how to use protractors to be able to measure them.

Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They have a detailed knowledge of the subjects they teach. They use their subject knowledge well to make learning interesting and fun.

Subject leaders are starting to develop their new roles. They are eager to bring about improvements. However, they have limited experience of leading developments in their subjects. They have some gaps in their knowledge of how to effectively evaluate the impact of their proposed actions. Consequently, they do not check how well the curriculum improvements are working. Leaders know what needs to be done to develop subject leaders' knowledge and skills, but these actions are at an early stage of development.

Leaders' recent actions have strengthened the quality of education for primary-aged pupils. Primary classes are now organised well to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders recognise that reading is the key which unlocks learning in other subjects. Reading is a core part of the school curriculum. Staff inspire pupils' love of books by engaging in events such as World Book Day. They dress up in imaginative costumes and discuss their characters with pupils. Pupils use texts that are well matched to their abilities and interests. Pupils read with adults frequently and develop their fluency well. Secondary pupils' reading tasks are well matched to their needs. Pupils study a wide range of texts, including classic novels and the work of Shakespeare. Staff help pupils to overcome their reluctance to read aloud. Many pupils achieve nationally accredited qualifications in English, including GCSEs.

Most pupils attend regularly. Leaders have acted to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. Through these initiatives more pupils are attending regularly, and many more pupils are getting to school on time. Despite leaders' best efforts, a small number of pupils' attendance is poor. Leaders make sure these pupils get the support they need to continue to learn away from the school site.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of exciting activities. Horticulture, taught by an expert, nurtures pupils' social skills beyond the classroom walls. Older pupils develop their self-confidence by completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils learn empathy and care skills by tending to animals such as rabbits. The extensive school grounds provide appropriate space for physical education and play. Pupils undertake many visits beyond the school gates. For example, visiting Liverpool's Chinatown during the Chinese New Year as part of a study into other cultures. These visits also develop pupils' knowledge of the different cultures found in modern Britain.

Through detailed reports and opportunities to meet staff, parents and carers are well informed about their children's achievements. The local authorities that place pupils in the school also get the information they need. Staff in the care homes told us that they appreciate the frequent contact with school. Older pupils receive impartial advice and guidance about careers from external experts. This allows them to make informed choices about their future. Pupils are aspirational about possible careers, including engineering and animal care. Older pupils attend vocational work placements to develop their skills in readiness for employment or further training. Leaders and staff routinely visit these establishments to ensure that pupils are safe and taught well.

Staff who spoke with us say they welcome the clear direction that the new leadership has given them. They feel valued and safe in school. Staff say leaders look after their welfare and check their workload effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and all staff at Nugent House School are committed to keeping pupils safe. They are vigilant and receive up-to-date training. All appropriate checks are completed to ensure the suitability of staff. Leaders keep meticulous records of any concerns they may have about pupils' welfare or safety. They share this information with the right people when it is necessary to protect pupils who may be at risk of harm. The proprietor makes sure that the school's internet connection is subject to appropriate monitoring and filtering to keep pupils safe from online threats.

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

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

- Leaders have identified that the school's curriculum does not sequentially build on what pupils already know. As a result, pupils' learning is not ordered well enough for them to develop a secure knowledge of the subjects in depth. Leaders should complete their work to refine the curriculum and ensure that schemes of work, which systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, are implemented fully in all subjects.
- Subject leaders are new to their roles. They do not have appropriate experience and knowledge to enable them to check the impact of the proposed changes to improve the curriculum, and whether they are working. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders develop a secure understanding of how they can evaluate the impact of the changes they make.
- At the start of the inspection some routine maintenance requirements had not been completed. The proprietor had not ensured that the systems in place for site maintenance were responsive enough to resolve any issues quickly and ensure that pupils were taught in a high-quality learning environment. Once faults were identified, the proprietor acted swiftly to resolve all issues. The proprietor must

ensure that pupils benefit from a high-quality and well-maintained learning environment. They should improve the rigour of maintenance procedures to ensure that routine maintenance is completed in a timely manner and that the response to resolve faults is swift.

## **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 Ofsted Parent View information 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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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 104839   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 342/6004   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | St Helens  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10128766   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7 to 19  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 40   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Nugent   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jo Henney  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Sarah Gregory  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £52,000  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01744 892551   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.nugenthouse.co.uk">www.nugenthouse.co.uk</a>             |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:nugent.house@nugentcare.org">nugent.house@nugentcare.org</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 4–6 July 2017  |

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- There are very few pupils currently on roll in the school sixth form.
- The school uses Parbold Stables, Activate, Motive8 and Mike Edwards Services as alternative providers for part-time vocational education placements for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

We 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.

- During the inspection, we looked in detail at English, including reading; personal social, health and economic education; science; and mathematics. This involved discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils. We also listened to some pupils read. We also visited other departments, including horticulture, and scrutinised their planning.
- We spoke to the headteacher and other senior leaders within the school. We also met with the chief operating officer and the chair of governors, who is also the compliance director.
- We reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, including the checks carried out during the appointment of staff. We also looked at records of pupils' attendance. In addition, documentation and information relating to the independent school standards were also scrutinised.
- We considered the one free-text response to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and the 26 responses to the staff online questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. A telephone discussion was held with a local authority educational officer who places children in the school. A meeting was also held with three care home managers who have children attending the school.

### **Inspection team**

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Naomi Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector

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