

Buzz Learning School

8 Esther Court, Wansbeck Business Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 8AP

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met because pupils currently have no access to outside space at break and lunchtimes.
- School leaders have a clear plan for moving the school forward. However, at the start of the inspection these plans and systems to record self-evaluation were not fully detailed.
- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement. This is because leaders have not ensured that planned learning accurately reflects the needs of all pupils.
- Safeguarding practice is strong within the school; however, the quality of documentation associated with this does not always reflect this.
- The level and breadth of needs of pupils registered at the school have been greater than anticipated. Leaders have been slower than they could have been at ensuring that the correct curriculum is in place to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Pupils currently do not make sufficient progress in reading. This is because school leaders do not offer pupils enough opportunities to read, particularly for pleasure.
- Pupils' attendance is improving, but it currently remains lower than it should be for some pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are aware of the next steps they need to take to bring about improvement.
- Although the school has only been open since September, staff are beginning to bring about improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Staff are beginning to develop a clearer understanding of pupils' needs and this is reflected in ongoing revisions to the curriculum.
- Support for pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff and leaders ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - pupils have adequate access to an outside area at break and lunchtime
 - the quality of safeguarding documentation is improved so that it reflects more accurately the practice within school and the requirements of the government guidance, Keeping children safe in education 2018
 - the curriculum more accurately meets the needs of pupils, particularly the most able
 - systems to record the school's self-evaluation and planning for future improvement undergo further development
 - pupils are given more opportunities within school to read, particularly for pleasure.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders have not been successful in ensuring that all aspects of the independent school standards have been met. The area identified in the pre-registration inspection as a potential recreational area for pupils at break and lunchtime is currently not available for this purpose. As a result, pupils are not able to access an outdoor area.
- School leaders have a clear vision for the future of the school. At the start of the inspection, this vision was not clearly articulated through a school development plan or the school's self-evaluation. By the end of the inspection, this documentation was available. However, systems to record the school's self-evaluation and planning for future improvement are not fully developed. Leaders recognise that the appointment of a new headteacher is pivotal to moving forward. Applications for this post have already been received. However, no starting date for this post has yet been set.
- At the time of the pre-registration visit, school leaders had not employed staff for their new school. A delay in the recruitment of pupils further delayed the appointment of new staff. At the start of this inspection, some staff had only been in post for a very short period of time and were still in their probationary period. Despite this, much of the quality of work seen in pupils' books and of teaching observed in classrooms was effective. However, leaders are aware that the stability of the teaching team remains a concern which they are hoping to address through the appointment of a new headteacher.
- The school curriculum currently meets the requirements of the independent school standards. Pupils are offered an appropriate range of subject areas. However, at the time of the inspection, the organisation of the timetable means that subjects are being taught for one half day block a week. Leaders are clear that this is an interim measure designed to reduce the number of lesson changes. Reducing the number of lesson changes has improved the behaviour of pupils. However, leaders recognise that pupils can miss a whole week of learning in one subject by just one absence. No date for a change to a more flexible timetable has yet been set.
- During the pre-registration inspection, leaders explained they had planned a curriculum for pupils with similar needs to those who attend the sister college based on the same site. However, the group of pupils who currently attend the school have different needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs. School leaders have worked with staff and have made appropriate changes to the curriculum and timetable to meet the needs of these pupils more closely. The needs of the most able pupils are currently not met as closely as they could be, as work set sometimes lacks sufficient challenge for this group. Presently, there are too few opportunities for pupils to improve their reading skills. Both of these issues slow pupils' progress.
- School leaders have developed a personal, social and health education curriculum, which has as its main focus preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Visits from the local MP, whose constituency office is very close to the school, have enabled the pupils to gain a clear insight into the process of British democracy. Similar sessions are planned for the pupils, and include a wide variety of other visits and experiences, designed to ensure that they develop a clear understanding of what is needed to be a successful citizen in modern Britain.

Governance

- School leaders have yet to appoint a governing body. They have contacted a number of potential governors from a range of different backgrounds, including education and politics. Email evidence seen during the inspection shows that all have agreed to undertake this duty.
- A date for formally constituting the governing body has yet to be set. However, discussion with school leaders shows that they are planning to model the roles undertaken by governors on the role of governors in a mainstream school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school website is currently under construction so is not yet available for parents and carers. However, the entry pack the school has put together for parents clearly gives them a route of access to required policies, including the safeguarding policy.
- At the start of the inspection, the safeguarding policy did not meet the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders very quickly updated the policy to reflect current legislative requirements. Leaders recognise that some minor alterations are needed to the way in which incidents are recorded.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the importance of keeping pupils safe at all times. Recent training has ensured that they are aware of new legislation on, for example, forced marriage and what to do if they suspect pupils may be involved with gang culture or the exploitation of children to sell drugs.
- Leaders have ensured that recently recruited staff appointments have been made in line with the requirements of the government guidance, Keeping children safe in education 2018. Senior leaders have also put in place a single central register which shows that the school has ensured that all staff have been subject to disclosure and barring checks.
- Pupils spoken to were clear, even after the short period of time they have been attending the school, that they are safe and well cared for in school and understand who to speak to should they have a problem.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning, overall, requires improvement. Planned learning is beginning to match learners' needs more accurately. For example, English work in pupils' books shows that most are starting to make progress. Similar progress could be seen in mathematics and science. However, in other subject areas, little progress was evident due to the short time the school has been open and the levels of pupils' absence.
- Pupils' books show work set does not always meet the needs of the most able pupils. A lack of challenge in some tasks set slows the progress of this group.
- Some of the pupils spoken to during the inspection said they enjoyed reading. Some said they were not keen to read. Leaders accept that more opportunities need to be put in

place for pupils to read both formally and informally.

- All pupils who currently attend school have not been to school for at least eight months. Some have been absent from school for up to five years. Unsurprisingly, school leaders and staff have had to work hard to re-engage these pupils. As pupils have begun to trust and respect staff, their engagement and enjoyment in learning have increased and their progress is improving.
- Staff are adept at assessing pupils' starting points. School information gathered from assessments shows nearly all pupils' attainment to be much lower than others of similar ages nationally.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Nearly all pupils arrive at school with high levels of need. This is often related to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff and school leaders have strong pastoral skills and, as a result, the curriculum for pupils' social and emotional needs is a strength of the school.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection explained how coming to this school had made a difference to their attendance and desire to learn. Comments such as: 'People here care and listen to me' and 'I feel I fit in here' reflected pupils' views well.
- Pupils also described how staff made them feel safe and how, through internet safety lessons, for example, they learn how to keep safe.
- Pupils reported that they felt that incidents of bullying had not occurred in school and should they occur in the future, they knew how to seek help and support.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Once pupils settle into the routines of the school their behaviour improves overall. Some take longer than others, but school records show that incidents of difficult behaviour have reduced since the beginning of term.
- Staff take time to understand pupils' needs and take particular note of any barriers encountered by pupils. For example, nearly all pupils travel to school by taxi or with parents. One or two pupils find travelling this way stressful and often arrive in school behaving in a way which reflects their unhappiness. School leaders are good at listening carefully to pupils' concerns and taking appropriate action, such as helping pupils to obtain a bus pass, thereby promoting independence and ensuring a calmer start to the day.
- As many pupils have been out of school for so long they are unused to attending regularly. School leaders and staff are working hard with parents and pupils to improve attendance overall. Currently, all eight pupils have increased their attendance since starting the provision. However, overall, attendance remains below that of other schools

nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The school's analysis of data shows that pupils arrive at the school with levels of knowledge and understanding below those of others of their age nationally. This is because they have not attended school for long periods of time.
- The very small number of most-able pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunity offered to stretch their thinking and learning in most areas of the curriculum. Leaders are aware that this issue needs addressing and are planning to work with staff on the best way to achieve this.
- Currently, pupils have too few opportunities to read for pleasure. Leaders accept this inspection finding and are planning to provide pupils with reading materials such as magazines and books in social times.
- School leaders have put together a system for evaluating pupils' starting points which not only measures their academic levels but also evaluates their social and emotional attitudes and behaviour. This enables staff to tailor learning to the learning styles identified for each learner.
- Work in books shows that pupils are beginning to make progress, particularly in English and for some in mathematics and science. Work in books also demonstrates the barriers to learning seen when pupils' attendance is lower than it should be. Missed work is slowing some pupils' progress.
- There are currently only eight pupils in school who currently all work together. The school plans to introduce smaller groups to increase support for individual pupils. However, until attendance improves, the class is often small and pupils are supported effectively.
- School leaders have already established with pupils their future goals. These are used to encourage pupils' engagement. Leaders also intend to ensure that each pupil has access to impartial careers advice. These actions are intended to ensure that pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	145184
DfE registration number	929/6004
Inspection number	10053842

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Buzz Learning Ltd
Chair	No governors have been appointed
Headteacher (acting)	Margaret Castro
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £16,848
Telephone number	01670 852 244
Website	Not available at the time of the inspection
Email address	info@buzzlearning.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is housed in a business unit in a business park in Ashington in Northumberland.
- The school is registered to meet the needs of up to 25 pupils.
- The school was registered with the Department for Education in March 2018. Leaders initially planned to open in the spring term; however, due to low pupil numbers the school opened in September 2018.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.

- At the time of the inspection the school did not use any external alternative provision to educate pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning across the school and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with members of staff, pupils, leaders, parents and the proprietor.
- The inspection team took into account the responses from staff and pupils spoken to during the inspection.
- The inspectors scrutinised policies and documents necessary to fulfil the requirements of the independent school standards. These included the curriculum policy, the school's behaviour policy and records of incidents, the complaints policy and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided to enable-
 - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.

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;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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