

Inspection of Flexible Learning School

23 All Saints Road, Hockley, Birmingham, Birmingham B18 5QB

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 May 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Flexible Learning receive high-quality and skilled support from a dedicated team of staff. Whatever challenges pupils face, the school sets high expectations for them. Pupils successfully re-engage with their education and study a broad curriculum. Pupils work towards a range of academic and vocational studies, and they achieve well. The school consolidates and extends pupils' learning from their mainstream education.

Pupils' behaviour is impressive. Staff quickly get to know pupils' individual needs, which helps them settle into school life. The focus is on learning, positive relationships and making the right choices.

The school provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to gain new experiences. Pupils enjoy the wide range of off-site sports activities and visits to places of interest. This develops skills that equip them well for life beyond school.

Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. The school goes above and beyond to make this a reality, for instance offering pupils access to a round-the-clock support helpline for academic or personal support. Pupils have staff to turn to if they are anxious or in need of guidance. The school's culture supports pupils to feel pride in their achievements and to take responsibility for their decisions.

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

There is ambition for all at Flexible Learning. Many pupils join the school with gaps in what they know and can do. The carefully designed curriculum is bespoke, with pathways planned to help pupils successfully overcome barriers to learning. Pupils build on what they know and develop their skills logically in the wide range of subjects on offer. Staff check pupils' understanding, and they use this information to adapt their teaching effectively. Staff tailor learning to specific targets for each pupil that suit their needs and future ambitions.

When pupils first arrive, the school checks how well they can read. Staff identify pupils who need extra help to catch up. This is effective. The school does much to develop pupils' reading and speaking skills. This enables all pupils to achieve well. The school quickly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and meets their needs skilfully.

Personal development is exemplary. It is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils learn about relationships and how to keep themselves safe in their everyday lives and online. The school works closely with external agencies to provide education on making choices as well as recognising and understanding risks in their local community. Pupils take part in many activities, including sport, bowling and visits to museums, shops and restaurants. Cooking lessons encourage pupils to develop their life skills and consider healthy lifestyle choices. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures to help them appreciate the diverse society in which

they live. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They increasingly grow in confidence and talk with enthusiasm about how the school supports them to develop their interests and talents. It is impressive.

The school is a calm place of learning. It has a robust system to support behaviour, which pupils, staff and families understand. Pupils earn positive rewards through postcards. These can be used to cancel out a 'strike' for negative behaviour. Relationships with adults are strong. The atmosphere in school is respectful and purposeful. Staff are patient and kind.

Attendance and punctuality are a high priority in the school. Many pupils have had disruptions to their education and did not attend their previous schools regularly. Leaders successfully work with families and external agencies to re-engage pupils in school life. Many pupils have vastly improved how regularly they attend Flexible Learning because of this vital aspect of the school's work. However, there are still pupils whose absence rates are too high. These pupils are missing out on valuable learning experiences and wider opportunities that the school offers.

The proprietor has created an open, reflective culture that supports staff and pupils in reaching new heights and succeeding. This extends beyond the school day. For example, pupils recently worked with a homeless charity during their half-term break. Giving of themselves, and thinking about others, strengthens pupils' empathy for people in the community.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act. Leaders ensure that staff understand safeguarding procedures and what to do when concerns arise. The proprietor works relentlessly to ensure that the independent school standards continue to be met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's work to improve attendance is not yet positively impacting on all pupils. This leads to some pupils missing out on valuable learning opportunities and continuity in their learning. The school should continue to work with these pupils and their families to make sure that all pupils attend school regularly.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	135561
DfE registration number	330/6128
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10374904
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Shamim Akhtar
Headteacher	Shamim Akhtar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12 per hour for pupils full-time (30 hours per week) £14 per hour for part-time pupils (less than 25 hours per week)
Telephone number	0121 554 7918
Website	www.flexiblelearning.org.uk
Email address	shamim.akhtar@flexiblelearning.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2022

Information about this school

- Flexible Learning is an independent day school for pupils aged between 13 and 16 who have experienced significant disruption to their formal learning. Many have been excluded from previous schools. The school provides alternative education for pupils who cannot attend mainstream schools.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of SEND needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs. Some of the pupils on roll have education, health and care plans.
- The school is multi-site, operating on two campuses in Birmingham:
Flexible Learning Hockley, All Saints Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5QB
Flexible Learning Northfield, 8 Manor Park Grove, Birmingham B31 5ER
- The school offers an online learning programme for pupils.
- The headteacher is also the proprietor and owner of the school.
- All pupils are dual registered.
- The school does not use alternative education 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the designated senior leader, subject teacher, learning mentor and administrative staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For deep dives, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the learning mentor with responsibility for the curriculum and subject teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, observed online learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors observed pupils reading in lessons.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times and talked to them informally about behaviour and welfare.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector toured the premises on both sites to check for compliance with the independent school standards. A number of key documents were also reviewed including policies relating to admissions, behaviour, curriculum, complaints, health and safety and safeguarding.
- The inspector spoke to two referring schools on the telephone.
- There were no responses to consider from Ofsted's online surveys for pupils, staff or Parent View.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gwen Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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