

Inspection of The Wildings

Royston Farm, Talaton, Exeter EX5 2RR

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 June 2024

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?

The Wildings significantly changes pupils' and families' lives for the better. Nearly all pupils have been permanently excluded from other settings prior to joining. Some have missed large parts of their education. The Wildings throws a protective blanket around these pupils and allows them to flourish. It does so by quickly getting to know their personalities, backgrounds and interests.

Pupils learn that staff will listen and care for them. Adults help them to feel a sense of pride and self-worth. They identify potential triggers or flashpoints to help reduce poor behaviour. As a result, there is demonstrable improvement in pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour over time. This has meant pupils have coped well with the recent raised expectations of the academic curriculum.

Pupils benefit from the extensive school grounds. Through the forest school, pupils learn about the environment and ways to manage it positively. They learn to take risks during off-site events, such as paddleboarding.

There is a strong pupil voice. During weekly meetings, pupils and staff discuss ways to improve the school. Through theme days, pupils learn about different religions and cultures. This helps to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

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

Strong leadership has driven the school onwards and upwards since the last inspection. The close-knit staff share leaders' passion to make pupils' time at the school a success. Staff feel they have a voice in the school. They feel senior leaders consider their well-being. Their workload is well managed.

The school has worked to improve its academic offer. It has strengthened its curriculum. Pupils acquire new knowledge through a well-sequenced and rigorous approach. However, the school has not lost sight of its moral imperative to ensure that pupils also learn the skills to help prepare them for learning in the classroom. While the school has high staffing ratios, adults skilfully work with pupils to develop their independence. Pupils thrive on the trust that is shown in them. For example, they confidently show visitors around the school or help with the washing up in the kitchen.

Due to pupils' differing past experiences, their knowledge and skills vary considerably on entry. The school checks what pupils can do when starting at the Wildings. It does so in a sensitive manner. It is aware that new pupils can have negative views of education. Staff use this information to help address gaps in knowledge.

Typically, the curriculum is implemented well. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They expect pupils to know and use subject-specific vocabulary.

Pupils usually show positive attitudes to learning. The school closely monitors their engagement to check for any trends where it has declined. As a result, pupils learn well over time. Through their individual 'pathways', pupils successfully achieve qualifications. However, some staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Some learning that is provided does not match the high ambition of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils do not build their knowledge as well.

All pupils have education, health and care plans. The school uses the information from these to help pupils be successful in their learning. This is because staff share detailed information about them regularly. Any necessary adaptations for pupils are made quickly and checked for impact.

Reading is prioritised in the school. Daily reading helps pupils to practise their reading skills. The school quickly identifies those who need extra support. Some changes to the reading curriculum are relatively recent. The school rightly identifies the need to further strengthen systems for supporting those pupils who need to catch up.

Pupils are taught fundamental British values through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and as part of school life. For example, democracy is promoted in the co-production of the school's code of conduct with pupils. Through the reading curriculum, pupils regularly read and discuss current affairs, such as the upcoming General Election.

Pupils receive independent careers advice. The school uses annual reviews, assessments and pupil voice to create bespoke work experience that links to their aspirations. However, at key stage 3, this work is not as well designed and considered. Consequently, pupils are not as well informed about potential next steps in education, training or employment as they could be. Leaders are continuing to develop this aspect of the personal development curriculum.

Many pupils have a history of poor attendance in previous settings. Staff work closely with families to ensure they come to school regularly. Consequently, pupils' attendance is higher than their historical figures. In some cases, significantly so. Parents and carers sing the school's praises. They value how the school listens to their views. Parents describe its positive impact on their child's well-being and home life.

The school has improved its systems for checking the quality of its provision. The school quickly identifies and addresses any weaknesses. The preciseness of monitoring has been a significant factor in improving the quality of education. The Wildings has a highly effective governing body. This is because it has deliberately sought to appoint people with specific expertise to help support and oversee the school's work. Governors make regular checks on the school's work, such as safeguarding and the quality of education. They know the school well.

The proprietor meets the independent school standards in full. They comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, some staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve, and the learning they give, are not high enough. As a result, pupils do not learn new knowledge as well as in other subjects. The proprietor should ensure that it supports staff to teach with the same high expectations of what pupils can do across the curriculum so that pupils learn new knowledge well.
- Pupils' access to high-quality careers advice and support at key stage 3 is not as well considered as it is for older pupils. As a result, pupils are not as well informed about potential next steps in education, training and employment as they could be. The proprietor should ensure that leaders implement their intended developments of the careers programme in key stage 3 to help pupils make informed decisions about their next steps in education, training or employment.

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	148180
DfE registration number	878/6085
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10322166
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	MiMe Heuristics CIC
Chair	Jonathan Gibson
Headteacher	Michael Rees-Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,000
Telephone number	01392 692212
Website	www.thewildings.co.uk
Email address	info@thewildings.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 June 2022

Information about this school

- The Wildings school provides places for pupils with a range of special educational needs, including those with autism spectrum disorder, or cognitive and learning needs. The school offers specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by their representative local authorities.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school is owned by MiMe Heuristics, a not-for-profit community interest company. The school principal is also a director of MiMe Heuristics. The school is managed by directors with key responsibilities for the running of the company. There is also a separate governing body.
- A material change inspection took place in January 2024 to increase the number on roll to 10 pupils.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior staff, groups of staff and two members of the governing board, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE education. 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 work.
- An inspector also met a senior leader to discuss some other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to confirm whether the independent school standards were met in full. This included health and safety checks of the

premises, risk assessments, record-keeping for behaviour management and attendance.

- Inspectors also spoke to some parents in person or by telephone.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Barnes

His Majesty's Inspector

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