

# Engaging Potential

Progress House, 79 Gaywood Drive, Newbury RG14 2PR

## Inspection dates

27–29 June 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school is well led. The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has ambitious plans to continue to improve. She carefully governs all aspects of school life. Day-to-day management by the centre manager is highly effective. Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their challenging behaviours and anxieties reduce during the time they are at the school. This is because staff effectively help pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Teaching is good. Effective use is made of the school's assessment system to carefully plan work that meets pupils' needs.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's work. Staff have formed good links with parents and regularly inform them about their child's progress.
- Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics as well as in a range of other subjects. They achieve a variety of suitable qualifications from entry level to level 2. Pupils leave well prepared for their next stage of training or employment.
- The provision in the sixth form is good. Staff are ambitious for learners to do well. The school provides a large range of work experience and work-related learning opportunities.
- Those who are subject leaders do not take enough responsibility for pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.
- Pupils do not always make strong enough progress in writing in all areas of the curriculum.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve pupils' progress in writing across the curriculum.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders so that they take more responsibility for pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor, ably assisted by the centre manager, has created a culture where pupils make good progress in their learning. When pupils arrive at the school, they often have little faith in their own abilities. The school often succeeds in its aim of re-engaging pupils, because staff work hard to help pupils to develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- The proprietor has established clear systems and processes that ensure the smooth running of the school. The recently introduced monitoring of pupils' personal and academic progress is very comprehensive. Self-evaluation is detailed and thorough. Leaders have an accurate view of the next areas to develop. For example, they recognise the need to develop the role of subject leaders in the school. This is so that there is clear responsibility for the progress pupils make in each subject.
- Teaching is good. Senior leaders demonstrate that they know precisely how to help teachers develop further. Leaders make effective use of external consultants to monitor teaching and pupils' progress.
- Parents and carers are supportive. Many speak of the positive changes they have seen in their children since they started the school. They value the regular communication and advice provided.
- The curriculum is well organised and supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. All the required areas of learning for independent schools are carefully covered, together with a range of topics that provide valuable experiences. For example, pupils study the culture and customs found in the different continents of the world. Recently they studied Asia, and enjoyed making Asian food and studying the religions of the region.
- Leaders have been highly effective at developing a range of supportive and useful partnerships and extra-curricular activities. This has had a positive impact on pupils' personal development because it helps them to re-engage in learning. Each pupil has an individual programme which reflects his or her personal interests and needs. For example, pupils have the opportunity to spend some time each week on a farm where they develop the skills to tend animals and crops. Additionally, by helping on the farm, pupils have the time to reflect on their lives from a wider perspective and many start to make positive plans for the future.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Equality and diversity are promoted exceptionally well. Pupils develop a growing understand about the importance of valuing and respecting the views of others.
- Careers advice and guidance is effective. The school provides an extensive work-experience programme. Pupils' skills and abilities in areas such as mechanics and precision engineering have been rewarded by apprenticeship offers.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that all the required regulations for independent schools are met.

## Governance

- The proprietor provides effective governance for the school. She has good oversight of the school's procedures and a clear strategic vision. Her regular visits and telephone calls ensure that she is fully informed about the day-to-day running of the school. She has a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching and the amount of progress that pupils are making.
- The proprietor has made sure that policies available to parents are fully up to date. The school has just developed a new website and this has ensured that more information is easily accessible.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All pupils who were spoken to said that they felt safe at the school. School leaders and staff are very aware of the vulnerability of pupils and prioritise their welfare and well-being. Effective links and regular communication with outside agencies ensure that each pupil is given the support they need. Parents and carers who were spoken to during the inspection said that their children were well cared for at the school.
- Those who are school mentors go to extensive lengths to ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, both in and out of school. Issues such as e-safety and drugs awareness are covered in great detail.
- The school has an effective safeguarding policy, which is published on the website. It is fully compliant with current government guidance.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching is good. When pupils arrive at the school a careful assessment is made of each pupil's skills in English, mathematics and information technology. Based on this data, teachers plan work that builds on pupils' existing abilities.
- Assessment practice is strong. The school has developed a system that is effective in identifying the amount of progress, both academic and personal, that each pupil is making.
- All staff, including mentors, contribute to the assessment system and, as a result, a very detailed picture is created of each pupil's skills, abilities and interests. Feedback from work experience placements is also logged onto this system. Information gathered is used to carefully explore possible future work and training opportunities.
- Teachers demonstrate a strong subject knowledge. This was seen across a range of subjects, including in geology when a teacher explained how different rocks were formed.
- In mathematics, pupils' skills are carefully developed across the curriculum. For example, in food technology pupils measure and weigh ingredients.
- However, pupils' skills in writing are not so carefully developed across the different subjects. In some instances, this is having an adverse effect on the amount of progress pupils make with their writing overall.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- It is clear from case studies and the comments from parents and carers that, since coming to the school, the lives of many pupils have been considerably improved. While each pupil has a different journey, many change from being anxious or withdrawn into more confident individuals with clear plans and aspirations for the future.
- Much of the school's success in this area is due to its highly effective mentoring system. Each pupil has a mentor whose role is to build a trusting relationship and help pupils to improve their emotional well-being. Mentors act as gentle guides; they have the skills to recognise the challenges that pupils may face. They signpost pupils to a range of different agencies effectively.
- Over time pupils develop a growing awareness of what they need to do to become successful learners.
- All pupils who were spoken to said that they felt safe at the school. None said that there was any bullying. They all felt able to talk to staff about issues or concerns. Some pupils said that, 'Staff at this school believe in us and that helps us to do well.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- When pupils arrive at the school, many display very challenging behaviours. The school has put in place an effective behaviour management system, which provides incentives for good work and behaviour. In many cases, pupils' behaviour improves over time.
- Teaching staff and mentors form a highly effective team in managing pupils with challenging behaviour. In lessons, most pupils work well and follow the teacher's instructions. A few pupils are sometimes more resistant to learning; however, because staff are highly experienced, pupils usually quickly re-engage.
- Attendance is improving. Most come to school regularly to enjoy all the opportunities that are provided for them. A few pupils have medical issues and this sometimes affects their attendance adversely.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils join the school at various ages. Some have had considerable periods out of education. Despite these issues, most pupils make good progress in a range of subjects from their various starting points.
- All pupils have a special educational need and/or disability. They make good progress because staff plan carefully to make sure that the academic targets in each pupils' education, health and care plan are met effectively.
- Other groups, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. Work is well matched to the needs of those few pupils who are

most able. For example, some pupils had written moving accounts after reading the diary of Anne Frank.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills and are typically confident readers by the time they leave. Pupils develop effective comprehension abilities. For example, they showed empathy and understanding when reading about the character of Oliver Twist when he was alone in London.
- In mathematics, staff are careful to check where a pupil has gaps in their learning. Pupils make good progress, particularly when working on mathematics in real-life settings, such as when calculating the cost of buying groceries. Pupils enjoy participating in challenges, for example measuring the distance that a woman in Gambia has to walk for water every day.
- In science, pupils enjoy practical activities, particularly when linked to sport. For example, books show that they made good progress in their understanding of the effects of physical exercise on lung function. Many pupils complete entry-level qualifications in science. Last year some pupils passed science GCSE.
- Progress in sport is good. Pupils develop core muscle groups in their swimming, boxing and gym work.
- Pupils make strong progress in art. Last year many obtained a Bronze Arts Award. Work shows that pupils are skilled at making models and creating watercolour paintings.
- Pupils do well in developing their practical skills. Some develop the skills to be capable bike mechanics; others are careful furniture restorers.
- Pupils typically obtain level 1 certificates in English, mathematics and information technology. Last year, a few pupils obtained level 2 qualifications in thinking skills and problem-solving. Some pupils are successful at passing GCSE qualifications.
- Pupils are well prepared for the future. Last year all pupils went on to college courses or apprenticeships. This year, all pupils who were spoken to had clear plans for their future that involved further training and apprenticeships.

### **Sixth form provision**

**Good**

- The small number of post-16 learners make good progress from their starting points. They typically obtain a range of external accreditations from entry level to level 2 qualifications.
- Leadership of the sixth-form provision is strong. A bespoke curriculum is planned for each learner. It ensures that there is sufficient opportunity to develop core skills in English and mathematics, while also providing a large range of additional subjects, experiences and work-related learning.
- Learners are well supported to develop their independence. Activities such as travel, shopping, money management and cookery are carefully planned to help learners to become more confident. Mentors play a key part in assisting learners to develop these skills. Staff ensure that the transition between school and college or work is as smooth as possible. They keep in regular contact, well after learners have left.

- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Leaders have established strong local networks and consequently they are able to offer a large variety of different work-experience opportunities. Depending on their interests, learners have the chance to work in numerous occupations. The taster sessions have proved to be very useful for those who are unsure of their future paths.
- Teaching is good. Learners are able to make good progress because teachers understand the next step that needs to be made. Relationships between staff and learners are very positive. Behaviour is good and learners feel safe and well cared for.
- Staff ensure that learners visit different colleges so that they are well informed about what is on offer. Staff provide effective help to assist learners in selecting their future pathways. Typically, learners move on to colleges and apprenticeships.

## School details

Unique reference number	139963
DfE registration number	869/6017
Inspection number	10033958

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Tracy Watson
Chair	Tracy Watson
Headteacher	Tracy Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,430
Telephone number	01635 524113
Website	<a href="https://engagingpotential.com">https://engagingpotential.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:tracy@engagingpotential.com">tracy@engagingpotential.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–10 July 2014

## Information about this school

- Engaging Potential is a small school which caters for up to 14 pupils between the ages of 13 and 19. Currently, there are 14 pupils on roll. The local authority of West Berkshire places pupils at the school.
- All pupils who attend have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils who have complex difficulties and challenging behaviours that have prevented

them from regular attendance at previous schools. Typically, pupils have social, emotional or mental health issues. Some have other issues associated with autism. When they arrive at Engaging Potential, some pupils have had significant periods out of education.

- The school's headteacher is the proprietor. She is in school once a week and is in regular contact with the school during the rest of the week. There is also a full-time centre manager.
- The school occupies a large building in an urban location in Newbury, Berkshire. There are a range of large and small classrooms. There are specialist classrooms for food technology, art and photographic developing.
- All pupils follow their own curriculum programme. Each pupil has a mentor, who provides guidance on aspects related to social and personal development.
- The school makes use of local leisure centres to provide physical education.
- The school's aims are to 're-engage students by providing individual learning opportunities and positive life experiences, through teaching and mentoring whilst promoting personal and social development.'
- The school uses no alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons and conducted learning walks, often with members of the senior leadership team. Several discussions were held with pupils about what it was like to be a pupil at this school. The inspector looked at pupils' work in books and folders.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, the centre manager and other members of staff. She visited two of the school's many partnership organisations: Upper Lodge Farm and Shaolin Tigers Gym.
- Parents' and carers views were considered in several ways and, in total, two thirds of the parents and carers who have a pupil at the school responded. There were five responses to a telephone survey that the school conducted during the inspection. There was one response to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. The inspector also spoke to three parents and carers by telephone.
- The views of eight staff were also considered.
- The inspector reviewed documents in order to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These included: the school's self-evaluation, development plan, external reports, behaviour and incident logs, safeguarding records, examples of pupils' work and progress information.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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