

Inspection of On Track Education (Mildenhall)

82 E & F Fred Dannatt Road, Mildenhall, Suffolk IP28 7RD

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Insufficient evidence
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

On Track Education Mildenhall is aptly named. Pupils have a fresh start here. They get back 'on track' with their education. Highly dedicated staff make a significant difference to pupils' lives. Many pupils are motivated to achieve well. Therapists work in tandem with teachers to deliver a bespoke curriculum that prepares each pupil well for adulthood.

Pupils appreciate the many opportunities and experiences they have. This includes pursuing alternative sports such as mountain biking and kayaking. Pupils find comfort in studying vocational courses that help build their self-esteem. They proudly show off their large-scale constructions and vehicle restoration. Pupils gain appropriate qualifications that secure their next stage of education, employment or training.

Staff have high expectations and positive relationships with pupils. For many pupils, this is the first time they have begun to attend school regularly and engage with learning. Pupils trust adults, feel safe and will share concerns when they arise. They learn social skills in a calm and accepting environment. There is little bullying. Pupils respect each other and understand difference in the community.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision. Many spoken to stated it is the first time they have seen their child succeed and be happy at school.

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

Leaders will leave no stone unturned to secure the best possible curricular pathway for pupils, many of whom have missed a significant amount of schooling. Leaders look closely at pupils' barriers and educational starting points so they can build their self-belief. The key message that pupils will learn and enjoy doing so permeates the work of staff at the centre.

Pupils experience a broad and ambitious curriculum while also pursuing their interests and talents. Curriculum plans are well structured. Pupils' subject knowledge builds step-by-step, and teachers provide regular opportunities to revisit key content. Pupils capture their learning in a variety of ways, and this helps to keep them motivated. Improving pupils' spelling and handwriting are regular features of lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding and readily amend tasks so pupils can access learning or move on more quickly.

Improving the status of reading is a work in progress. While pupils are reading more wide-ranging and ambitious texts in English, this is mainly through short extracts. This means that pupils do not develop reading stamina for lengthy texts. Some pupils will read for pleasure but not all will choose to do so. These pupils have not formed independent reading habits. Pupils who are learning to read are well supported. Staff teach the phonics programme effectively. Pupils become successful readers.

Staff are highly skilled at managing pupils' behaviour. Typically, classrooms are calm places where pupils focus on what they need to learn. Staff spot quickly when pupils may become upset. They teach pupils how to recognise and manage their emotions when this occurs. The consistent application of the behaviour policy is working. For example, staff consistently challenge pupils when they swear. Pupils are now correcting each other when they may lapse and forget expectations. The recent spike in suspensions is reducing.

Staff know pupils exceptionally well. They review regularly how far pupils have met their targets in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Staff benefit from wide-ranging training. They are confident in their knowledge, identification and management of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their therapeutic and warm approach encourages pupils to routinely attend school. Pupils feel highly valued and supported.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority. Leaders have a strong focus on developing pupils' self-confidence, resilience and independence. This is so pupils are prepared well for adulthood. They have, for instance, life skills lessons in the purpose-built apartment. They learn to cook, decorate and how to manage a home. The curriculums for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education are comprehensive. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to live in a democratic and multi-faith Britain. Leaders fully comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance. They have the opportunity to visit large businesses, as well as study for a trade in alternative provisions. Pupils appreciate the support they receive for career planning, such as preparing and writing their curriculum vitae and college or job applications.

The proprietor body ensures that staff are happy in their work and are well looked after. They recognise and value the highly complex work that staff do. Equally, they ensure that leaders are effectively held to account for the quality of provision. Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and that the school meets its statutory requirements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are thorough in their approach to ensuring pupils stay safe. They risk assess on a continual basis, making sure providers cater for pupils' needs when doing educational activities off site. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies and families, promptly seeking support and help for pupils. The proprietor body carries out the necessary checks on staff before they start employment.

Staff are expertly trained in the latest safeguarding information. They are acutely aware of the risks that pupils face. They are vigilant and record their concerns

according to the school's safeguarding policy. This is up to date and follows the latest government guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils have not yet formed independent reading habits. Some do not have the stamina for reading a lengthy text. This is limiting pupils' experience and enjoyment of reading for pleasure, as well as their ability to access the more demanding texts when they study GCSE specifications. Leaders should implement their plans for further improvement so that pupils benefit from an independent reading culture.

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	127003
DfE registration number	935/6083
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10254643
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	On Track Education Services Limited
Chair	Penny Harris
Headteacher	Mandy Taylor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,665 to £90,359
Telephone number	01638 715555
Website	www.ontrackededucation.com/mildenhall
Email address	mtaylor@ontrackededucation.com
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 January 2019

Information about this school

- On Track Education Mildenhall is an independent day special school which opened in April 2005.
- On Track Education Services Limited runs the school. The proprietor body provides the governance of the school.
- The school caters for up to 32 pupils aged 11 to 18 years of age. Pupils are referred by local authorities, typically because they have been excluded from mainstream schools, special schools or pupil referral units. Most pupils have experienced significant disruption to their schooling.
- Pupils have EHC plans relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs or for autism spectrum disorder.
- Although the school is registered to have students post-16, over time no student has attended for post-16 education. Hence, insufficient evidence and amnesty granted for the judgment of the sixth-form provision.
- The current headteacher took up the post in November 2020.
- The school uses three providers of alternative provision, one of which is registered.
- The last standard inspection took place in January 2019. At this time, the school was judged as good. All independent school standards were met.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the director of the proprietor body, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from Norfolk and Suffolk local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design technology and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated

safeguarding lead and spoke to staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, including those related to risk assessments, health and safety checks and the safer recruitment of staff.

- The lead inspector visited one unregistered alternative provision and spoke via telephone to another.
- Inspectors spoke to a sample of parents by telephone. There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View or the Ofsted online staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through group discussions and during social times.
- Inspectors toured the school premises, checked the school's website and scrutinised the admissions and attendance registers and a range of other documentation to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tessa Holledge

His Majesty's Inspector

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