

# Inspection of R.E.A.L. Independent Schools Mansfield

6 Woodhouse Road, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 2AD

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Inspection dates: 12 to 14 March 2024

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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

R.E.A.L. Independent Schools, Mansfield provides pupils with a fresh start to their education. Many have had a tough time in previous schools and have been absent from school for prolonged periods of time. As they walk through the door, a sign reminds pupils that it is a 'new day, new start'. Pupils appreciate the support they receive to re-engage in their learning. One pupil said, 'Everyone understands me. I am accepted here.'

The school wants the best for pupils. Staff spend time getting to know each pupil as an individual. As they develop the bespoke curriculum offer, staff take into account pupils' strengths and interests. Over time, the school patiently supports pupils to improve their self-esteem and change their attitudes to a 'can do' narrative.

Staff have a positive rapport with pupils. They are well trained to spot when pupils are feeling anxious or unhappy. They offer the right support at these points. This helps to establish a calm learning environment. Pupils trust the adults who support them. They agree that they feel safe in school.

Parents and carers are full of praise for the school. One parent said, 'The school has made a huge difference to our lives'.

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

The school's curriculum is designed specifically to meet the diverse needs of pupils. As pupils start at the school, their needs are assessed. The school uses this information well to assign each pupil to one of four pathways, designed to cater for their needs and stage of education. For example, there is a pathway for those educated at home. Furthermore, there is a pathway for those educated off site, for example in local libraries or cafes, the aim of which is to support pupils to ease back into attending the school setting. Transition from each pathway is planned with great care.

The curriculum all pupils study has been designed to be ambitious. On all four pathways, including the remaining two on-site pathways, all pupils study the core subjects and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Additional subjects are timetabled depending on pupils' interests and, where relevant, the targets in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Preparation for adulthood is prioritised for students in the sixth form. Leaders are aspirational that, whenever possible, students will gain the qualifications they need to continue into further education or employment.

Across the curriculum, subject planning is skilfully crafted. Key knowledge is identified with precision. It is sequenced to ensure that pupils' knowledge builds over time. The mathematics curriculum exemplifies this well. Teachers introduce new concepts clearly. They model learning. In one lesson visited, the teacher showed pupils how to use a protractor to measure angles and label them accurately.

Pupils were then given sufficient time to practise this skill. The work given was adapted so that all pupils were able to learn as well as they could. Leaders know that more training and support is required to enable all staff to make precise adaptations to how they teach the curriculum.

The school recognises that many pupils have large gaps in their knowledge as a result of significant absence from education. The spiral nature of the curriculum allows pupils to revisit prior learning so that they secure key knowledge. Teachers also check that pupils recall prior learning in lessons. For example, in a sixth-form PSHE lesson, students were asked to identify the difference between assault and harassment which had been covered in a previous lesson. Assessment is used well to identify gaps in pupils' learning.

The school has high expectations that all pupils will learn to read. They have introduced a phonics programme for pupils who still need to learn to read fluently. Staff have received training to deliver this programme. However, some still make errors in their teaching. The school promotes pupils' love of reading. Texts such as 'Gamer', 'Trash' and 'Refugee Boy' are part of the school's English curriculum. Pupils benefit from author visits and trips to the theatre. Despite this work, many pupils do not have a positive attitude to reading. They say that they do not enjoy reading and would not choose to read for their own enjoyment.

Preparing pupils for their next stage and for adult life is central to the work of the school. The PSHE curriculum underpins this work. Pupils learn about a wide range of topics that will help them in their present, and later, life. They learn how to maintain positive relationships with others, how to be healthy in body and in mind and how to respect different faiths and beliefs. The school does not shy away from teaching challenging subject matter in a manner that is appropriate to each pupil's age and level of maturity. Staff teach sensitive issues such as self-harm because they know that pupils need to have an understanding of these topics. The school has a well-coordinated approach to careers education.

Curriculum enrichment is planned to support pupils' needs, dependent on their pathway. The school challenges pupils out of their comfort zone with care and support. Pupils benefit from this. Their horizons are broadened and they are willing to try new things. Pupils, who in the past have struggled to leave their homes, engage in adventurous activities including an overnight stay.

The proprietor and the governors know the school well. They skilfully and intelligently hold leaders to account for the actions they take to improve the school. They ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards (the standards), including their statutory duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They have ensured that the school site is appropriate to support pupils in their learning. Leaders have ensured that staff implement all policies effectively, including those related to health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued and appreciate the consideration that is given to their workload and well-being. One member of staff reflected that it is 'a privilege to support pupils back into education'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- There are some weaknesses in the delivery of the school's phonics programme. This has the capacity to slow the pace at which pupils learn to read fluently. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to deliver phonics lessons with skill and confidence.
- Some pupils do not enjoy reading and do not regard themselves as good readers. They miss out on the joy that books can bring and the extra knowledge they can gain through reading for themselves. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive the support they require to overcome the barriers that are preventing them from reading for pleasure.
- Some staff do not have the skills they need to confidently adapt how they teach the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. This can lead to pupils struggling to access the intended learning as well as they should. The school should make sure that all staff know how best they can support pupils to access the intended curriculum and achieve as highly as they should.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142538
<b>DfE registration number</b>	891/6037
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322505
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	24
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	24
<b>Proprietor</b>	R.E.A.L. Education Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Adrian O'Malley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kirsten Gibson
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£56,045
<b>Telephone number</b>	01623 423411
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rismansfield.real-education.org">www.rismansfield.real-education.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@real-education.org">enquiries@real-education.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 15 July 2021

## Information about this school

- The proprietor of the school is R.E.A.L. Education Limited. The school is one of four independent schools operated by the proprietor.
- The school accommodates pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social, emotional and mental health needs and autism. Pupils have often been out of full-time education for long periods prior to admission.
- Almost all pupils have EHC plans.
- The school was last inspected in November 2021. This was a material change inspection. The school's last standard inspection was in July 2021 when the school was judged to be good.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school uses four unregistered providers at different sites that provide a range of practical and vocational courses. Three of these are run by the proprietor but are on separate sites to the school.

## 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the director of education and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and three directors, including the chair of the proprietorial board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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. Further discussions were held about the curriculum with subject leaders for computing and art.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke to pupils about their own behaviour and the behaviour of other pupils. A member of

staff was present when inspectors spoke with some pupils. This was agreed to support pupils to engage with inspectors and reduce pupils' anxiety.

- 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 completed a range of inspection activities to check the school's compliance with the standards. This included a review of relevant documentation and of the premises of all four sites operated by the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View and free-text messages. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys and during discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aoife Galletly

Ofsted Inspector

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