

Inspection of Buzz Learning School

8 Esther Court, Wansbeck Business Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 8AP

Inspection dates: 11–13 February 2020

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?

Buzz Learning provides a personalised and nurturing alternative for pupils who have found mainstream education difficult. The school caters solely for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. The staff provide a well-organised and predictable school day that suits its pupils well. Most pupils enjoy the atmosphere. Once they join the school, most pupils improve their attendance.

Although small, the school provides a broad curriculum. Teachers deliver lively lessons that re-engage the pupils. Most pupils find the lessons interesting. The teachers are good at breaking new learning down into small steps. Some parts of the curriculum are being taught more effectively than others. Overall, pupils are making good progress and are achieving accreditations on the courses they follow. Last year, pupils who left the school all found places in education, employment or training.

Pupils behave well and are respectful of the caring staff. Relationships are good. Pupils feel safe. Sometimes pupils find things difficult, including how they relate to one another. But the staff know the pupils very well and are quick to sort out any problems that arise. Activities such as the 'daily mile' walks provide good opportunities for the staff to get to know the pupils really well.

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

Buzz Learning School has made good progress since it opened in March 2018. Leaders took prompt action following the last inspection. They have addressed the unmet independent school standards. Pupils now have a suitable outdoor space to play in and to use for sports and games. The headteacher is providing effective strategic leadership. He understands the school's strengths and weaknesses. His rigorous planning has brought about considerable improvements. The proprietor and other school leaders have formed an effective team.

Leaders have recruited teachers who can teach a wide range of subjects. Each subject has coherent planning in place. The plans set out the knowledge that pupils will acquire. These plans are supporting teachers to prepare interesting and lively lessons. Teachers are good at checking what pupils already know about new topics. They make sure they introduce new content in small steps. Teachers reward pupils for completing the tasks they set. They have lots of information available that helps them to meet each pupil's needs. As a result, most pupils are enjoying learning again.

Pupils study for qualifications in a wide range of subjects. Teachers assess each pupil's ability carefully. They make sure that pupils take qualifications at an appropriate level. Last year, most pupils achieved their targets in English and mathematics. All pupils who completed Year 11 moved on to college or into employment. Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics. But their achievement

in other subjects is more variable. In addition, the school does not have enough books for pupils to read. Reading time is not used well enough to improve pupils' reading. Leaders are checking on pupils' progress. They are helping teachers to refine how they teach each subject. As a result, standards are rising. Leaders plan to broaden the curriculum further soon with the introduction of music.

Pupils behave well most of the time. Occasionally, they find it hard to maintain their concentration. The staff are patient. They spend lots of time talking to pupils and helping them to become more resilient. Pupils understand the school rules and conduct themselves well. Most enjoy doing the 'daily mile' walk and going to the leisure centre for physical education. They socialise happily with one another at social times. There are lots of interesting activities for them to do. They all say they feel safe at school.

Leaders give lots of time to personal, social, and health education (PSHE) because they want to help pupils to become independent adults. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations, about relationships and about different groups in society. In history, for example, pupils have studied how changes in the law have affected the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community. Pupils learn to cook healthy meals each week. They plan how to use public transport. They have made some visits to places of interest. But leaders know the pupils would benefit from gaining more experience of the world around them.

The proprietor and headteacher have fostered a strong team approach across the staff group. They provide teachers with plenty of planning time and training. Teachers feel their workload is manageable. They all display a strong sense of moral purpose. However, the governing body, established after the last inspection, is a weakness. Governors are not clear about their role. They have not met often and have not visited the school enough to be able to provide the scrutiny the proprietor would like.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are highly committed to keeping their vulnerable pupils safe. They ensure that thorough checks are made on adults who work in or visit the school. All aspects of the pupils' day have been risk assessed. Pupils are taught to use tools and equipment safely. The staff have received appropriate training and understand how to report any concerns they have. The staff talk to pupils across the day to check how they are feeling. Staff at the school have fostered excellent partnerships with parents and carers. Communication between school and home is strong. Leaders work effectively in partnership with health and social care professionals to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has a limited range of books for pupils to read. Some pupils have read all the books that they are interested in. This is preventing some pupils from developing a love of reading. Leaders must increase the range of books available. They must make sure reading sessions strengthen pupils' reading skills and foster a love of reading.
- The quality of pupils' work is more variable in subjects such as history and geography. Leaders need to raise expectations further in these subjects. Teachers need to ensure there are more demanding tasks that allow pupils to demonstrate what they know and understand about the topics they study.
- Pupils have limited experience of the world around them. To date, there have been relatively few trips out of school to places of interest. Leaders should introduce more trips to places of interest linked to the topics they cover in the curriculum. This should include places of cultural interest, such as museums and art galleries, as well as places of worship.
- The role of the governing body is underdeveloped. Governors need more training so that they understand their role and function. They need to become more active in holding leaders to account and steering the direction of the school.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	145184
DfE registration number	929/6004
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10126477
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Therese Timlin
Chair	Mark Fox
Headteacher	Robert Fairbairn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,398 annually
Telephone number	01670 852 244
Website	www.buzzlearning.co.uk
Email address	info@buzzlearning.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–4 October 2018

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in October 2018, shortly after the last standard inspection.
- The school has had some turbulence in staffing. It currently has three part-time qualified teachers and a teaching assistant who deliver the curriculum.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- We met the proprietor, the headteacher, other school leaders and the chair of the governing body.
- We focused on the quality of the curriculum in English, mathematics, geography and PSHE. We met with the curriculum leaders for each subject, visited lessons, talked to pupils, scrutinised a sample of books and held discussions with teachers.
- We also visited a food studies lesson and looked at curriculum planning in other subjects, including science, history and information technology. We looked at a range of other information about behaviour, attendance and wider enrichment events.
- We looked at pupils' punctuality, behaviour and conduct across the school day. We also talked to pupils informally during their social times. An inspector met with some pupils who have received sanctions in the past. We talked to most members of staff to gather their views about how well pupils behaved and conducted themselves.
- We looked at the checks the school makes on adults who work in or visit the school. We talked to the designated safeguarding leader about safeguarding arrangements. We checked records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk. We spoke to pupils to gauge how safe they feel and to what extent they know how to keep themselves safe. Inspectors also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school's safeguarding policy.
- We considered the views of the five pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey and the views of some parents who responded via Ofsted's free-text survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

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