

Inspection of Fortitude School

Seggs Lane, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5HJ

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Fortitude School is a warm, welcoming and inclusive school at the beginning of its journey. Many pupils who attend have experienced disjointed experiences in previous settings. The school understands this and takes careful account of pupils' needs.

There is a firm belief that every pupil can attend and succeed. This is beginning to be realised. The school's three core values, 'courage, compassion and commitment' thread through every aspect of school life.

Pupils generally behave well. They are polite to visitors and build friendships with their classmates. For example, more confident pupils kindly help their friends when caring for the farm chickens. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and know that staff in school care for them.

Pupils benefit from the therapeutic curriculum at a working farm. Here, the school's work to enable pupils to shine is most apparent. From building dens together to knowledgeably grooming the donkeys, pupils learn important life and social skills. Pupils are beginning to make a difference in the local community, for example by litter picking. Whole school trips, such as to the zoo, provide pupils with new experiences and help them to develop resilience.

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

All pupils who attend Fortitude School have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school quickly and accurately identifies pupils' needs. Staff work together with parents, carers and other professionals to meet these needs. The school uses information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. It also ensures that individual in-school plans identify resources and strategies to enable pupils to succeed.

The school is currently developing its curriculum to suit its pupils. There is a real determination to ensure that the curriculum is broad and ambitious for all. The school is beginning to identify precisely what pupils are to learn. Where this is more successful, the curriculum sets out small steps of learning. However, in places, this is not the case. As a result, teachers sometimes choose activities which do not enable pupils to learn the right things or learn them well enough.

The school's work to overcome barriers to pupils' learning is successful. Pupils who have previously missed large periods of time in school now successfully settle in classrooms alongside their peers. However, some checks on pupils' understanding are not as effective as they could be. This means that, sometimes, learning is not accurately matched to what pupils can do and need to learn next.

The school ensures that developing pupils' communication skills is a priority. Pupils at the earlier stages of communication learn to use symbols to express their needs and wants. Pupils learn how to identify and manage their own emotions. They are taught how to recognise emotions in others and to empathise. For example, pupils learn how to take turns when using equipment in the sensory garden.

Many pupils in school are at the early stages of learning to read. The school is beginning to ensure that these pupils learn the skills which will help them when they begin to learn phonics. For example, they learn to enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Trips to the local library are proving to be successful in developing pupils' love of books and stories as well as providing opportunities to be part of the community.

Staff calmly and patiently support pupils in learning how to identify and manage their own behaviour. They identify signs that a pupil might need support and often intervene effectively. The school's determination for pupils to attend regularly has paid off. A careful transition programme ensures that pupils settle into school effectively.

The therapeutic learning at the off-site farm is particularly effective. Here, pupils develop empathy and understanding of others, including the many animals that they help to care for. Staff here are skilled in maximising learning opportunities, for example to expand pupils' vocabulary when tent-building or handling animals. Pupils' behaviour at the farm is excellent. They are given opportunities to excel, and they relish doing so.

The school is creating a programme for pupils' development beyond the important skills that they learn at the farm. For example, pupils learn about their place in the community through visits to the local museum. The school's personal development programme is helping pupils to become active, responsible citizens. A newly-acquired allotment provides further enrichment opportunities. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They learn life skills such as cooking, cleaning and using money. This is preparing them well for life beyond school.

Leaders' care extends to staff and visitors to the school. Staff appreciate consideration of their well-being and are beginning to benefit from the staff development on offer. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Many parents speak very highly of the school. They appreciate the care shown to their children, many of whom have had negative previous experiences.

In the short amount of time since it opened, leaders, the proprietor body and local governors have worked together to ensure that systems and information are in place to help drive school improvements. The school has focused on the right things, in the right order. Pupils are settled and enjoy attending, which was an important priority. However, leaders and the proprietor body recognise, rightly, that the school is very new. Some of the information the school has is not used as sharply as it could be. This means that the school had not identified some areas for development

as quickly as it might. That said, leaders have ensured that statutory duties are met. The school consistently meets the independent school standards ('the standards') and complies 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)

- The curriculum does not set out precisely what pupils should learn. This means that, sometimes, teachers do not select the right activities and pupils do not gain a deep enough understanding of what they need to know. The school should ensure that the curriculum identifies clearly what pupils are to learn, so that all pupils can learn as well as the school intends them to.
- The school is in the early stages of assessing what pupils know and can do. This makes it difficult for teachers to identify pupils' different starting points and ensure that learning is carefully matched to their next steps. The school needs to ensure that teachers have a secure understanding of how to check pupils' learning and ensure pupils' next steps are appropriate to their needs.
- The school does not use the information it has to focus school improvement sharply enough. As a result, the school, on occasion, does not know what is working well and what needs to improve. The school needs to ensure that there are effective systems in place to establish an accurate and well-informed view to drive forward further improvements.

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	151231
DfE registration number	937/6049
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10395741
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Fortitude Education Ltd
Chair	Abide Zenenga
Headteacher	Jodie McCracken
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000 - £70,000
Telephone number	01789 638337
Website	www.fortitudeschool.co.uk
Email address	head@fortitudeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education on 19 November 2024. It is registered to admit 35 pupils.
- The school is registered to provide education for pupils aged 5 to 11 who have SEND. Pupils are referred to the school by a number of local authorities, including Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Solihull.
- All pupils attending the school have EHC plans. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and health needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school delivers therapeutic education at a working farm owned by the proprietor body, Fortitude Education Ltd. It is sited at Thornborough Farm, Redhill Road, Birmingham B38 9EH.

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.
- 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also spoke to the chair of the proprietor body and the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with school staff.
- Inspectors considered the quality of education in a number of curriculum subjects. 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day. They spoke to pupils and considered behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school policies and the school's website.

- The lead inspector made checks relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered responses to Ofsted Parent view and spoke to some parents at the school gate. They considered the responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Henrick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dan Owen

His Majesty's Inspector

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