

Inspection of The Spires

School Lane, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3YA

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils have missed a lot of schooling by the time they arrive at The Spires. However, through the carefully structured educational and therapeutic support, pupils thrive. Pupils learn to build strong relationships with staff and each other. Pupils learn the importance of empathy and kindness. As a result, they re-engage with learning and flourish.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn to read well. Consequently, they are equipped to learn a range of subjects. Staff nurture the interests of each pupil to 'hook them back' into learning. Pupils are therefore very positive about their experiences of school. One pupil commented, 'I have learned more in one month here.'

Pupils' personal development through the curriculum is impressive. They are prepared for the world beyond school very well. For example, pupils are very knowledgeable about the complexities of relationships. Through the curriculum, pupils become reflective and thoughtful.

Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Through, strong relationships with staff, pupils learn to manage their behaviour well. Pupils learn very strong citizenship skills through participating in the community of the school and the world beyond. There is a calm learning environment across the school.

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

The school has worked tirelessly to provide pupils with an effective curriculum. Leaders, including the proprietorial body, have a clear vision to enable pupils to overcome obstacles and learn well. The school assesses pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and educational needs effectively. Leaders structure a bespoke curriculum for each pupil that encompasses appropriate therapeutic support alongside subject specific learning. However, leaders acknowledge that in some subject areas, the knowledge that pupils need to learn is not as clearly designed and sequenced as in others. Consequently, in these subjects, pupils do not build on their knowledge as well as in other subjects.

Pupils are immersed in a range of reading texts. Through the English curriculum, in both primary and secondary phases, pupils learn to read well and enjoy literature. For example, pupils in primary enjoy reciting fairy tales such as 'Little Red Riding Hood'. The phonics programme is taught well enabling pupils to make clear links between letters and their corresponding sounds. Books are carefully selected to match the phonics knowledge of pupils.

Leaders and staff have the expertise to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Through the curriculum, staff develop trusted relationships with pupils enabling them to engage in learning. Leaders and staff provide very strong social, emotional and mental health support for pupils. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps.

Through the tailored curriculum, pupils develop their interests such as horse-riding, gardening and climbing. They learn to be resilient, resourceful, independent learners through the curriculum. The curriculum offers a breadth of exciting, stimulating and culturally rich opportunities such as visiting the theatre and historical sites. Pupils thrive in this learning environment. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum enables pupils to develop a very strong understanding of the world beyond school. Through the very well structured careers programme, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and employment. The personal development curriculum transforms the life chances of pupils at the school.

Pupils learn to behave well both in school and beyond. Through the carefully planned therapeutic and educational curriculum, pupils learn how to develop meaningful, trusting relationships. They learn how to manage their behaviour enabling them to learn well. Most pupils have experienced significant gaps in their schooling before attending The Spires. Leaders create tailored curriculums enabling pupils to gradually build their attendance to full time.

Leaders, including the proprietorial body, are very knowledgeable about the independent school standards. Overwhelmingly, staff are positive about working at the school and feel that their workload is managed well. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is not well designed in a few subjects. As a result, pupils do not learn key knowledge sufficiently well to enable them to learn more complex concepts. The school must ensure that the curriculum is well planned in all subjects so that pupils are able to build on their prior knowledge securely.

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	146166
DfE registration number	865/6051
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10286460
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Five Rivers Child Care Ltd
Chair	Mr David Howard
Headteacher	Kirsty Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£91,880
Telephone number	01722820970
Website	www.five-rivers.org
Email address	Spiresadmin@five-rivers.org
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 June 2019

Information about this school

- The Spires is an independent special school. It provides education for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The proprietor is Five Rivers Child Care Ltd. This is a social enterprise company that provides fostering, education and residential care services for pupils nationally. The proprietor employs a head of education and a compliance officer to oversee the work of its education provision.
- The great majority of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Local authorities place pupils at the school. Pupils have experienced significant disruption to their schooling prior to joining the school.
- The school uses four alternative providers, Wiltshire Outdoor Learning (an outdoor pursuits centre), Riverbourne Community Farm and GUL (an equine therapy centre. It also uses 1ACE, an outreach provision owned by Five Rivers Child Care Ltd.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with the chief executive officer and the chair of the proprietorial board of Five Rivers Child Care Ltd.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, early reading, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and physical education (PE). In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah O'Donnell

Ofsted Inspector

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