

Inspection of Sheiling School (Thornbury)

Thornbury Park, Park Road, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire BS35 1HP

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Sheiling School (Thornbury) provides a calm and nurturing environment. Many pupils have arrived from multiple failed placements elsewhere. Parents are very positive about how their child is cared for and accepted as an individual. Pupils enjoy school. This is demonstrated in their high attendance. They feel safe. The school ensures pupils receive high levels of support and supervision.

The school wants pupils to succeed. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school understands these individual needs of pupils well. The school places high importance on the curriculum, which includes an individualised therapeutic approach. However, the curriculum is not designed well across many subjects. Pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Many pupils show positive attitudes to their learning, including in social situations. When pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour, staff take effective and supportive action to enable pupils to re-engage with their learning.

Pupils know they have a voice. High-quality pastoral support and positive relationships with adults enable pupils to feel valued. Pupils express their views on a range of local and national issues. They understand about healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.

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

The school ensures pupils know that despite any individual challenges, everyone has something to give and learn. Learning is designed through the narrative of the Steiner approach and linked to pupils' developmental stages. However, the school does not have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve across the curriculum. The curriculum in most subjects is not well enough designed to build on what pupils know and can do. Pupils do not yet benefit from a high-quality education.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to listen to and select books of their choice to read. The school understands the importance of pupils learning to read fluently. Pupils' individual starting points have been carefully considered in reading. A systematic approach to the teaching of phonics has recently been implemented. Relevant training has been provided for most staff. However, not all staff use effective phonics strategies to support those pupils who struggle with their reading. As a result, some pupils make slower progress when learning to read.

Pupils receive a broad curriculum across a range of subjects. In mathematics in key stage 4, learning is broken down into small steps to support pupils' understanding of a range of mathematical concepts. Staff ensure misconceptions are addressed. They adapt learning and select suitable resources to help pupils succeed. However, this is not the case in other key stages or subjects. Learning does not build on what pupils

have been taught before. In subjects across the wider curriculum, the explicit knowledge pupils need to learn is not broken down into important steps of learning. Assessment in these subjects is not used well to check on pupils' learning. As a result, the school is not clear if pupils understand and remember what has been taught.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. They respond well to the ways staff model good behaviour. Behaviour incidents have reduced over time. Staff and pupils build trusting relationships. Pupils know staff listen to them.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from a well-considered curriculum. They know it is good to have different opinions. Pupils are taught how to form positive and healthy relationships. The school provides pupils with carefully designed opportunities to become active citizens. These include enrichment programmes, trips and work experience placements. Pupils are ambitious about what they want to do beyond school. Staff think carefully about the skills pupils need to become independent. The careers programme supports pupils to have rich experiences within the wider community. This develops pupils' self-awareness and self-confidence.

Those responsible for governance know more work is needed to ensure the school provides a strong and effective curriculum. They have started to take steps to support and challenge the school. However, this work is in its infancy. The proprietor meets the independent school standards in full. It 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)

- Some aspects of the school's curriculum are not designed well. Pupils do not build their knowledge well over time. The school needs to ensure that small steps of learning are well sequenced so that pupils build on what they already know and can do.
- The school's approach to assessment is underdeveloped. This means the school does not have a secure understanding of how well pupils learn the curriculum. The school needs to ensure that teachers understand how to check what pupils know and can do when implementing the curriculum to assure itself that pupils remember the most important knowledge.
- Pupils who struggle to read do not receive the precise support they need. As a result, they do not build their phonics knowledge to read with accuracy and fluency. The school need to ensure that all staff provide effective support to those pupils who find reading more challenging.

- The school does not have an accurate view of what is working well and what needs to improve in relation to how pupils learn the curriculum. As a result, areas for development are not clearly identified. The school needs to ensure they put systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and the impact on pupils' learning.

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	109353
DfE registration number	803/6000
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10286862
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Thornleigh Camphill Communities Ltd
Chair	Anthony Nowlan
Headteacher	Dean Frances-Hawksley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£80,000 to £90,000
Telephone number	01454 412194
Website	www.sheilingschool.org.uk
Email address	mail@sheilingschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 March 2020

Information about this school

- Sheiling School (Thornbury) is an independent special school. The school caters for pupils with a range of SEND needs. These include social, emotional and/or mental health needs, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as pupils with high sensory needs.
- The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.
- A new executive principal took up post in October 2023.
- Pupils are placed at the school by six local authorities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

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 headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, other school staff, those responsible for governance and the local authority designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. 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.
- Adults were present when inspectors spoke with pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils in key stages 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- 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 an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to check the school's compliance with

the independent school standards, including the safety and suitability of the premises. They scrutinised risk assessments and associated policies.

- Inspectors considered the six responses from parents who completed the online free-text aspect of the Ofsted Parent View survey, as well as the 42 responses from the staff survey. An inspector met with a group of parents.

Inspection team

Heather Barraclough, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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