

# Inspection of Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd t/a the Libra School

Edgemoor Court, South Radworthy, South Molton, Devon EX36 3LN

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Inspection dates:

28 to 30 January 2025

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## Overall effectiveness

## Outstanding

The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent  
school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in all that they do at The Libra School. Pupils have complex needs related to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). Many arrive having had negative and unsuccessful experiences of education elsewhere. Staff quickly get to know pupils. They take time to build excellent relationships with pupils to help them to flourish. Staff use their high levels of expertise to understand and support pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves dramatically alongside developing an enjoyment in their learning.

The school is calm and orderly because of the clear routines in place that pupils follow well. Pupils learn about positive relationships through the curriculum. As a result, they have no concerns about bullying. Pupils feel safe and know that the attentive adults will help them if they have any worries.

Staff have extremely high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum to help pupils gain success and be well-prepared for their next stage. Pupils rise to these expectations. They are proud of what they achieve and the difference the school has made to their lives. Parents share this view and they are highly complimentary about the school's work.

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

Staff are determined for pupils to shine. There is a relentless drive to make sure that pupils learn successfully through a well-considered curriculum. Pupils learn this appropriate to their stage of development. This enables them to achieve success in a range of qualifications, including GCSEs. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education, employment and training.

Staff invest time in understanding pupils' previous unmet needs and barriers to learning. Many pupils have experienced trauma. Expert staff provide regular focused therapeutic support to enhance pupils' well-being. This results in pupils developing their readiness to learn.

Staff receive regular bespoke training to enhance their expertise that supports curriculum teaching. They are clear what to teach pupils and when. Pupils understand how their prior learning helps them to build new knowledge. The work given to pupils consistently meets the aims of the intended curriculum. This ensures that pupils learn the curriculum exceptionally well. For example, in mathematics, pupils demonstrate confidence in forming and solving algebraic equations, which prepares them well for future examinations.

The school rigorously checks with accuracy how well the provision supports pupils to excel. The school knows how well pupils are learning the curriculum and how effectively their needs are being met. Staff swiftly identify and support gaps in understanding that may emerge. Pupils frequently review their targets with staff to

promote personal reflection. This helps pupils to understand and take ownership of how they are developing as learners.

The school supports pupils well to grasp the basics of reading. Staff receive training to expertly help pupils to learn to read. Staff take into consideration pupils' gaps in knowledge and adjust the curriculum to reflect these. Regular checks ensure pupils keep up. Staff provide time for pupils to practise, apply and embed their phonics knowledge in a variety of ways. For example, pupils revisit sounds they have learned before in 'fun phonics' to develop fluency and confidence in their reading.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show incredibly positive attitudes to their learning and consistently produce work of a high quality. Where pupils may struggle to manage their emotions, staff competently help pupils to refocus with the precise support they need. Pupils are proud of what they have achieved. Through a highly effective personal development curriculum, pupils show tolerance and understanding of each other's needs. As a result, they show high levels of respect for adults and one another.

Staff relentlessly strive to provide pupils with a range of experiences preparing them for the wider world. These experiences ensure pupils' character, talents and interests are developed extensively. The outdoor learning opportunities are at the heart of the curriculum. At the farm and forest provision, the school promotes a love of learning and readiness for the future. Pupils develop their understanding of animal care, sustainability and enterprise. For example, pupils are knowledgeable about business running costs and how to gain profit. The school raises pupils' aspirations through its work on careers. As a result, this work motivates pupils to continue their studies after leaving school because they have a thirst for learning.

The proprietor works effectively to ensure that the independent school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. School policies reflect the latest statutory guidance. The safeguarding policy and the relationships and sex education and health education policy are available on the school's website.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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>             | 133392                                                               |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 878/6202                                                             |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Devon                                                                |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10342035                                                             |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school                                     |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent school                                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5 to 18                                                              |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                                                |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 47                                                                   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Blackford Education (Schools) Limited                                |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Joan Wilkes                                                          |
| <b>Principal</b>                           | Kirsty Crosby                                                        |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £72,310 to £93,128                                                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01598 740 044                                                        |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://libraschool.co.uk">libraschool.co.uk</a>             |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:admin@libraschool.co.uk">admin@libraschool.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 1 to 3 February 2022                                                 |

## Information about this school

- The last standard inspection of the school was 1 to 3 February 2022. Since this time, there has been one material change inspection at the school. This linked to increasing the number of pupils the school could admit.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities with SEMH as their primary area of need.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan, funded by a range of local authorities.
- All pupils attend the school full time.
- Pupils spend some time learning at the school's farm and forest provision, which is located approximately 45 minutes away from the main site.
- The school is registered for 50 pupils between the ages of five and 18 years old. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no pupils over the age of 16 on the school's roll.
- The school currently uses one unregistered provider of 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.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar 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 created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime and breaktimes. In addition, the inspectors met with pupils formally and informally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Esther Best, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Rowe

His Majesty's Inspector

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