

Child First School and Learning Centre

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Child First School and Learning Centre is a special school that was established in January 2008. It has recently relocated to new premises in Worthing.

The school provides education for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including those who have experienced a fragmented education as a result of their disruptive and challenging behaviour. The majority of pupils have had extended periods out of school prior to admission. They are placed at the school by several local authorities. Eight pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection the school's registered capacity has risen to 13 pupils and the age range is now from six to 16 years. There are currently nine boys attending, one of whom is looked after.

The school aims 'to work towards ensuring the pupils are safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and enjoying economic well-being'. The school was last inspected in June 2009.

This inspection also considered the school's request for a material change in relation to the suitability of its new premises.

Evaluation of the school

Child First School and Learning Centre provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. As a result of effective teaching and a good curriculum which matches pupils' specific needs, pupils make good progress. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their welfare, health and safety, are good. All requirements regarding safeguarding are effectively met. The school has improved its assessment procedures and the quality of information it provides to parents and others since the last inspection and meets the vast majority of regulations.

The Department for Education is recommended to accept the request for a material change subject to confirmation that the school has suitable facilities for those who are ill.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. All of the required areas of learning are provided and good account is taken of the National Curriculum and associated guidance in the plans and schemes of work. In Key Stage 4, accreditation is offered at appropriate levels in core subjects through GCSEs, unit awards and the Award Scheme Accreditation and Award Network (ASDAN) courses. The school is rightly seeking to extend the range of accreditation. The Key Stage 2 curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, with a suitably strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Each pupil's statement of special educational needs is addressed effectively through their detailed individual education plan (IEP) which ensures statement objectives are fulfilled. Education plans are suitably reviewed on a regular basis. New targets are set in the light of pupils' progress and annual reviews are thorough and well documented. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned and is age appropriate, as is the provision and guidance for careers education. When deemed suitable for pupils' academic and social development, places are secured at a local college of education. The curriculum is enhanced through suitable enrichment activities and visits outside school and visitors to the school, which have recently included community police officers and the community drugs education team. There are currently few extra-curricular options at lunchtime and after school, although homework is provided in support of examinations.

Teaching and assessment are good. Provision is not outstanding because the curriculum, teaching and learning are not outstanding and outcomes are not better than good. The pace of most lessons is well matched to pupils' ability levels. Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants, although occasionally their desire to assist sees them intervene too readily when pupils experience difficulties. The proprietor has identified appropriate training courses in classroom support for teaching assistants. Staff give regular oral feedback to pupils and the quality of marking is good and gives pupils guidance for further improvement. They also make good use of open questions that encourage the pupils to give thoughtful responses. For example, whilst studying the novel *Private Peaceful*, the pupils were asked to gauge soldiers' characters from photographs. After reflection, one of the pupils suggested that it may not be possible to judge a person's character from a photograph that is literally a snapshot. Thematic learning is used well, for example, the current focus in secondary English literature includes studies of *War Horse* and other novels which relate to history lessons on the First World War. A similar age-appropriate approach is used with primary pupils. Staff enjoy good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well and work effectively as a team to ensure prompt resumption of learning when there are occasional lapses in focus. The pupils respond well to practical activities, for example younger pupils making Ancient Egyptian date cakes as part of their topic work. Staff are sensitive to the need to encourage collaborative learning despite some pupils' difficulties in relating positively to their peers. There is a good range of books to support the curriculum, although there is a shortage of resources in information and communication technology to develop control and modelling skills. Science resources are also limited and are predominantly web-

based, supported by worksheets, with few opportunities for practical work. Similarly, there is only a narrow range of tools to work with resistant materials in design and technology. Staff assess the pupils' learning well during lessons and offer opportunities for self-assessment. Teachers have developed the use of assessment well since the last inspection. Tests and assessment data show that pupils make good progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school and show positive attitudes in the majority of lessons. One said, 'I really do enjoy being here. Before I came here I was out of school for three years.' Attendance is good overall and all pupils show attendance improvement when compared to their previous placements. The school monitors attendance closely and seeks to promote full attendance through an incremental approach, especially where engagement in full-time education has proved difficult for some individuals.

Behaviour management systems are effective and ensure behaviour is good. Pupils acknowledge the need for sanctions and generally agree that those that are adopted are fair. All pupils have experienced difficulties in managing relationships and in maintaining appropriate behaviour in a range of settings. A minority still finds a change in routines unsettling, for example when pupils are taught by staff they do not know very well. Nevertheless, the pupils make good progress in developing their social skills and managing their behaviour.

Pupils effectively develop their cooperation and social skills in lessons and some older pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils by reading stories and hearing them read. Other roles of responsibility are few and opportunities to take responsibility in school are limited. Visitors to the school provide a varied range of experiences that assist the pupils' understanding of English public institutions, personal development and safety, for example the police and fire services, St John's Ambulance and local artists. The curriculum includes studies of other faiths, currently Sikhism, and visits to places of worship. Such a programme of activities and the school's ethos encourage the pupils to respect their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare health and safety is good. The school has all the required policies, including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, fire safety and first aid. The policy documents are informed by the latest national guidance and are implemented effectively. Staff are trained at appropriate levels in child protection, including that for designated child protection officers.

There are well established links with external agencies to support the pupils. The staff recognise the importance of pupils' engagement in their own welfare. All pupils are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings that concern their welfare and

onward destinations. The school has clear guidelines for risk assessments, for fire safety, the premises, educational visits, and off-site activities and these are implemented effectively. Pupils are properly supervised at all times. They receive appropriate guidance about the importance of staying safe and adopting healthy lifestyles, including exercise, diet and avoiding harmful substances. The comprehensive tracking of behaviour and detailed record keeping ensure that all staff are well informed about how effectively their behaviour management systems are working. Staff are fully trained in first aid and fire safety. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and secure at school and appreciate the support that they receive to improve behaviour and relationships with others. They unanimously report that bullying is rare and any incident is dealt with immediately. The attendance register is maintained regularly, although the admissions register does not include all of the required information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has completed appropriate checks on staff and others to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school's central register contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The new premises and accommodation provide well for safe and effective learning. As the school does not have appropriate facilities for those who are ill, the material change is recommended subject to this weakness being remedied. There are sufficient classrooms for the number on roll. All classrooms offer adequate space for the different class sizes and activities offered. There is an adequate number of washrooms and furniture and fittings are suitable for primary and secondary aged pupils. The large garden contains fixed play equipment and offers adequate space for safe play on hard and grassed areas. Good use is made of the local community for social and cultural visits and other facilities including a college of further education, sports centre and swimming pool. The premises are shared with the proprietors' children's services administration department and there are no issues that compromise health or safety or the school's effectiveness.

Provision of information

The school meets all of the requirements for the provision of information to parents, carers and others. A detailed prospectus draws attention to the existence of all the necessary information and policies which are up to date and available on request. Parents and carers are suitably informed about the attainment and progress their children make through termly and annual reports. Other reports for annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs and those for looked after children are of good quality.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy meets most requirements with the exception of allowing for complaints to be made informally in the initial stages of a complaint.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that there are classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and that they are used effectively (paragraph (3f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the admissions register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints procedure allows for complaints to be made and considered initially on an informal basis (paragraph 25(d))
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for a formal complaint to be made in writing if parents are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint (paragraph 25(e)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Consider offering the pupils more opportunities for assuming responsibility in school.
- Consider the provision of extra-curricular options at lunchtime and after school.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties social		
Date school opened	January 2008		
Age range of pupils	6–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 0	Total: 9
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 8	Girls: 0	Total: 8
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£22,800		
Address of school	1a Seadown House Farncombe Road Worthing West Sussex BN11 2BE		
Telephone number	01903 608750		
Email address	natalie.gale-chambers@child-first.co.uk		
Headteacher	Natalie Gale-Chambers		
Proprietor	Terry Goble		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

30 November 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Child First School, Worthing, BN11 2BE

Thank you for helping me to learn about your school last week. I enjoyed my visit and it was good to meet you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what I found. Your school provides you with a good education which helps you to make good progress in your learning. Your school meets most government requirements. I was interested in your views about the hardships and friendships set at the time of the First World War when discussing the novels in English. I also enjoyed seeing the younger pupils measuring objects in the classroom using their hands as well as tape measures and I know you enjoyed the Ancient Egyptian date cakes!

I learned from speaking to you that you have not always enjoyed the schools you went to before. You told me that you enjoy being here, feel safe and appreciate the staff who work hard for you. You also told me that you like your new school building and I agree that it is most suitable and just needs a medical room. There are some other things that must be improved, for example the complaints policy must make provision for complaints to be dealt with informally if needs be and the admission register must contain all of the required information.

I am asking the school to provide more equipment so that you can do more practical work in science, information and communication technology and design and technology. It would also be good to offer you some responsibilities around the school and to give you some more options and activities at lunchtime and perhaps after school.

You can help by attending school as much as possible and trying your best in all your lessons. I wish you all every success in your new building.

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell
Lead Inspector