

Ashlea House School

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

1

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

1

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

1

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

1

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

1

Leadership and management

Outstanding

1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Students make at least good, and often outstanding progress over time in their learning.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding and motivates students, who have often missed significant periods of previous schooling, to give of their best and achieve high standards.
- The curriculum provides rich and memorable experiences in a wide range of subjects; it is extremely well-planned to ensure that students' achieve what teachers plan for them.
- Students are safe in the school. All aspects of their welfare, health and safety are given exemplary priority, both in the school and during off-site activities.
- The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The proprietor has appointed a team of exceptional teachers who take on extensive responsibilities to ensure that the students receive a challenging and rewarding curriculum.
- The work of the school is kept under constant review by senior leaders who maintain a critical focus on the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with half a day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons, including one off-site visit.
- Discussions were held with the students, members of the teaching staff, the headteacher and the proprietor.
- Questionnaires submitted by six members of staff were scrutinised. There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View for any evaluation to be made.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, including school policies, curriculum and planning documents, samples of students' work and extensive displays of students' achievements.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashlea House is a small special school registered to admit up to five boys aged between 11 and 18 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is owned by Full Circle Care Limited.
- It opened in August 2009 and provides education for boys who reside in accommodation owned by the same company.
- A small number of students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school's aims are, 'to provide a high quality education within a caring environment, adapted for students with specific needs' and 'to equip students with the skills, knowledge, experiences and attitudes to participate in, and contribute to becoming valued members of society.'
- The school was last inspected in June 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that strategies for assessment provide evidence of the extent of progress over time, based on a secure understanding of each student's starting points on entry to the school.
- Seek additional opportunities for enrichment activities which contribute to students' personal development and which enable them to take on increasing responsibility.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students make outstanding progress with their learning due to outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum. The achievement of students in lessons observed during this inspection was always at least good and often outstanding. Some students enter the school having had limited recent attendance at school resulting in significant gaps in their learning. Teachers provide interesting and motivating lessons which encourage them to engage in their learning and make rapid progress in catching up with their knowledge, understanding and learning skills. The school's records demonstrate that students make outstanding progress, for example with their reading skills, in a short time. The staff place a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, building up knowledge and skills in small, effective steps. Students enjoy the challenge of learning new vocabulary and applying interesting words in different situations.

There is similar evidence of outstanding progress among students who have recently left the school. Individual students have achieved higher grade GCSE examination passes in a short time, starting from a level of attainment which is well below expectation for their age. Those who enter the school with previous attainment in line with national expectations make outstanding progress, achieving for example, five A and B grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. Students develop understanding and skills in all the required areas of learning and apply these successfully to new learning in a variety of subjects. The curriculum ensures that all students study a range of subjects and enables them to make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science, in addition to, for example, art and music.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students make good progress with their personal development and managing their behaviour. They quickly learn to accept the requirements of the school and conform to expectations, for example wearing their school uniform and attending lessons on time. There are very few recorded incidents of aggression or deliberate disobedience and relationships between students and staff are characterised by mutual respect and good humour. Students' attendance at lessons over the last 12 months has been excellent and they demonstrate enjoyment in their learning. There is a calm learning atmosphere in classrooms and students act cooperatively and responsibly during off-site visits. Students are mostly willing participants and they contribute effectively to lessons, whether in answering and asking questions, taking part in role play or engaging in practical activities. Occasionally, there is compliance without overt enthusiasm, but attitudes to lessons are mostly more positive than this.

The school places a strong emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Students are encouraged to consider and respond to other people's views, feelings and rights. During the inspection, students demonstrated excellent sensitivity and interest in the impact of the Holocaust in discussion, questioning and a memorable visit to the Imperial War Museum. The curriculum provides students with an increasing knowledge of a variety of cultures and belief systems. Students respond positively to opportunities to take part in and learn from off-site visits and experiences although there are rather limited opportunities for students to develop independence and a greater sense of responsibility. The school's programmes of study for citizenship, and beliefs and values, widen students' awareness of public services and local facilities, in addition to challenging them to appreciate diversity in the wider community. The school provides balanced views and encourages students to develop their own values in aspects of political or religious sensitivity.

Quality of teaching**Outstanding**

The quality of teaching is outstanding and enables students to achieve outstandingly well. The teaching staff are very well qualified in teaching the full range of required subjects. They have an excellent awareness of students' individual learning needs and their lesson plans take account of the variety of starting points for each student. Staff have developed increasingly successful methods for identifying the individual levels of attainment of students when they enter the school, sometimes with limited information about their previous learning. Lesson planning is increasingly focused on individual outcomes for each student in each lesson. Students know what they are expected to do and to learn. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of students' involvement in lessons and teaching is paced appropriately to maintain students' interest. As a result each lesson has a strong impact, enabling students to make outstanding progress in their learning. Teachers' excellent questioning skills deepen and challenge students' understanding and encourage them to respond both orally and in writing. In all lessons there is a strong emphasis on literacy and students particularly enjoy success when learning new words and improving their fluency in reading.

There are excellent arrangements in place, implemented by all staff, for the continuous assessment of students' attainment. Teachers are skilled at adjusting their lesson content and planning to ensure that new learning builds on recent achievements. Teachers' secure assessment procedures are based on a good understanding of the National Curriculum level descriptors across the full range of subjects studied. The school has placed a strong emphasis on students' final attainment levels on leaving the school, without sufficient attention to the extent of progress made from their various starting points. Greater clarity is required about the levels at which students are working on entry to the school. The staff bring to the classroom extensive experience of teaching in both primary and secondary contexts and this contributes valuable expertise in identifying when students are working below the expected level for their age. Teachers use imaginative approaches to teaching and learning, including excellent teamwork within and beyond the classroom. The quality of display of students' work, whether in art, English, history or personal and social education, is outstanding and motivates students to maintain the expectations created. Behaviour is managed successfully through the high quality of learning experiences.

Quality of curriculum**Outstanding**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and provides clear expectations of success for students who, typically, have missed important experiences in their previous education. It enables them to achieve extremely well. All the required areas of experience are covered and students have access to a typical curriculum for the key stage in which they are studying. All students in Key Stage 4 are placed on GCSE courses in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Alternative accreditations, such as Level 1 and 2 qualifications in core subjects are available for students for whom these are appropriate. However, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and have demonstrated considerable success in enabling students to achieve higher level awards. Courses provided by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) are used successfully to motivate and reward individual students where the course content is appropriate to their needs and interests. This work is undertaken with the same expectations of quality, response and outcomes as lessons in the GCSE courses. The teamwork in classrooms, where teachers work together even with small groups of students, ensures that staff insights into students' progress are shared and built on across the curriculum.

The curriculum provides students with positive memorable experiences in aesthetic and creative subjects, including music and art, as demonstrated through classroom displays using a variety of media. Good use is made of specialist subject teachers and their expertise results in good motivation and suitable challenge for students across the age range of the school. Individual lesson plans are based on excellent long and medium-term plans for each subject which ensure that teachers provide learning experiences which build successfully on students' previous achievements.

The focus at Key Stage 4 on meaningful accreditation, and the excellent use of challenging targets for individual students ensures that they are well prepared to take up places in further education on completion of their compulsory school years. Students know that they are preparing for GCSE examinations and aspire to continue their studies in chosen areas as diverse as engineering, plastering and animal care. The school has developed successful partnerships with external agencies to provide meaningful and personalised careers education for individual students, and supervised work experience is provided for some students in Key Stage 4. Excellent use is made of off-site learning experiences for groups of students and for individuals. Levels of staff supervision are high and careful consideration is given to how students may develop independence. Students value the variety of activities, including visits to museums

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. All the required independent school regulations are met. The school provides an extremely safe environment for students' personal development and learning. Suitable policies for all aspects of students' welfare are implemented rigorously. The safeguarding of students and their care in the wider community are underpinned by suitable policies, for example for child protection, first aid, the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying. All members of staff are trained to the required levels in safeguarding students, including the designated person for child protection. Training records are maintained appropriately to ensure that staff are fully qualified and up to date in their understanding and implementation of their responsibilities. Exceptional care is demonstrated in lessons and on educational visits, mostly with one-to-one levels of supervision. Teaching staff have exemplary working relationships with the staff in the students' residences, ensuring a consistent approach to all policies and procedures. All the required checks on the suitability of staff are completed to the required timescales and entered in a single central register.

Risk assessments for activities, the premises, external visits and for individual students are thorough and appropriate. Arrangements for the management of fire safety are exemplary, premises evacuations are implemented at suitable intervals, and records are maintained and accessible for routine checks on fire safety equipment. Appropriate records are maintained of any incidents and sanctions, although incidents of concern within the school are rare. Suitable admission and attendance registers are completed and meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding and the proprietor has ensured that all the regulatory requirements are met and that students achieve outstandingly well. There is a clear sense of purpose within the school and a strong focus on learning and achievement, including an exemplary priority given to developing students' literacy skills. The proprietor has appointed staff of the highest quality and trusts them to implement their responsibilities effectively. He has an excellent awareness of the success that the school is achieving. School leaders have ensured that there is excellent planning for teaching and for the training of staff. The headteacher works collaboratively with all staff members to ensure excellent monitoring of all school activities and well-focused planning for future developments. There is a continuous high quality of dialogue among the staff regarding the development of teaching and learning. All members of staff demonstrate high levels of commitment and dedication to the school and its aims. The school ensures excellent communication with placing authorities and a commitment to improving the lives and future prospects of students.

The school premises provide an outstanding environment for learning. The classroom is clean, bright and presented to a high standard. Excellent use is made of the display of students' work to create high expectations of what can be achieved. The school plans well for the use of external facilities, including for physical education, to extend students' learning beyond the school site. Appropriate information, presented to a high standard, is provided for parents, carers and placing

authorities, including a website which is currently under review and further development. Copies of all school policies, including a suitable complaints policy, are made available to interested parties. School leaders maintain an appropriate self-evaluation of progress of the school. They have created a suitable development plan which identifies areas for further improvement and demonstrated clear evidence of the capacity to take the school forward successfully.

What inspection judgements mean

School provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135975
Inspection number	422813
DfE registration number	357/6003

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special school for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Full Circle Care Limited
Chair	Andrew Parish
Headteacher	Kim Parish
Date of previous school inspection	June 2010
Email address	kim@fullcirclecare.co.uk

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Piccadilly Gate
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