

Olsen House School

85-87 Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool, L23 5TD

Inspection dates

18–20 March 2014

Overall effectiveness

	Adequate	3
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Adequate	3
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Staff work hard to ensure that students engage in learning; this is often a challenge to achieve. A few students are hard to motivate which impedes their achievement and progress.
- The school has good systems for managing students' behaviour. However, these are not always fully effective in controlling exceptionally challenging behaviour.
- Teachers plan learning which is supported with a good range of classroom resources and activities. However, a few students remain disinterested and disengaged.
- Although the school offers a good range of subjects and activities for students to succeed, not all students take full advantage of opportunities to learn and prepare for the future.
- Students complete baseline assessments when they join the school. However, systems to track progress throughout their time at school are not fully embedded.
- The school leaders' system for observing lessons does not consistently challenge teachers to improve their teaching. As a result, some opportunities to raise standards of learning and achievement are missed.

The school has the following strengths

- The subjects offered by the school are enriched with activities and trips that meet the needs and interests of students well.
- Welfare, health and safety are good; staff provide very high levels of care.
- Systems for students to assess their own progress and plans for school development are good; senior managers and staff are taking steps to improve the school.

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 inspection was carried out with a full day's notice.
- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by four different teachers. The inspector looked at students' work and held meetings with the proprietor, headteacher, senior managers, teachers, students and service providers.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, assessment records and records pertaining to the training of staff. He checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed in eight questionnaires returned by staff during the inspection. He considered six responses from students and eight responses from parents and carers to surveys distributed by the school in Autumn 2013. There were no Parent View responses for the inspector to consider.

Inspection team

Chanan Tomlin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Olsen House School occupies a former local authority primary school in Crosby, Merseyside. It is located on a busy main road surrounded by residential and commercial properties. The school was purchased by Kedleston Schools Ltd in April 2013. A new acting headteacher was appointed in January 2014.
- The school can admit up to 30 boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties between nine and 16 years of age. Currently, there are 17 students in Key Stages 3 and 4, the great majority of whom have previously experienced severe disruptions to their education. All have a statement of special educational needs. Four students are looked after by their local authorities.
- The school aims to prepare students for the future through a number of subjects that meet their individual needs. The school sets out to provide 'an honest environment' where students are valued and supported. It desires to present opportunities for them to reach their full potential in life through the application of its motto of 'life-long learning and achievement'.
- Students are encouraged to attend courses at local colleges; the school currently uses off-site provision for courses in catering, plumbing and hair and beauty and for some work-experience placements.
- The school opened in April 2010. The school's last inspection took place in January 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify more effective ways of getting all students to engage fully in learning and to respond more positively to what is offered, to raise their levels of achievement.
- Establish better systems to manage behaviour when it is most challenging.
- Ensure that teachers plan lessons that provide high levels of challenge to ensure the better participation of students with different abilities.
- Raise standards in literacy and numeracy by increasing opportunities for these skills to be developed across different subjects.
- Ensure that leaders and managers:
 - improve the quality of teaching and learning by using a system of lesson observations which fully challenges teachers to improve
 - establish opportunities for teachers to share good practice
 - improve the overall effectiveness of the school by embedding systems for the tracking of students' progress over time
 - seek ways to improve rates of attendance.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Achievement is adequate as a result of teaching and a range of subjects and activities that are only adequate. The school caters for students that are often very difficult to engage in learning. Many have not attended school for long periods of time; as a result, they do not all appreciate the importance of learning and education and distrust educational establishments. Staff encourage students to engage in lessons but do not always succeed.

The majority of current students only joined in January 2014; these students have completed baseline assessments. The levels and quantities of work completed by these students so far indicates that they are making adequate progress overall in all subjects. Students that have been in school longer are achieving well and are making good progress over time considering their starting points. Current students are enrolled in GCSE or equivalent courses in a good range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education (PE). Most also take courses at local colleges and one is doing construction work on a work-placement organised by the school. Two of the current students are completing the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. School records indicate that these students are making at least adequate progress in these courses of study.

Data for past students indicates that overall they achieved adequately and made adequate progress in all subjects considering their low starting points. These students were enrolled on GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science but only one achieved a grade at A* to G in mathematics. Some achieved Entry Level pass marks in these subjects.

Students that engage in lessons, quickly acquire knowledge and a secure understanding of the subjects that they are taught. They develop and apply a range of skills including those for reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. Students that attend school consistently and take an interest in their education succeed and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Adequate

Behaviour and personal development are adequate. Apart from the rare occasions when students exhibit extremely challenging behaviour, behaviour in and around school is adequate. However, despite the efforts of staff to encourage all students to engage in learning, a few have poor attitudes, refuse to engage and end up wasting time. Learning is often adapted to address students' moods and whether they decide to engage or not. For example, during a Key Stage 4 English lesson, students interacted well with teachers, took an interest in the subject, achieved well and produced high-quality work. However, during a Key Stage 3 lesson, students refused to engage and so made little progress.

Students learn about the different forms of bullying and the harm that bullying causes; as a result, bullying is rare. They learn about acceptable social behaviour and how to control anger through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and through frequent discussions with staff. Students visit a local prison; they are visited by the police and 'Bully-Busters' who conduct workshops about bullying. Supervision and levels of care are very good and students feel safe at school. Attendance is below average but improving; the school day and all lessons start punctually.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is adequate. Students learn about spirituality through religious education (RE), trips to places of worship and places of natural beauty. An 'Opening Minds' series of activities promotes social and moral development especially well. The school has achieved the International Schools Award and this has been effective in helping students learn about different cultures and ways of life. Students receive important

information about multicultural Britain aimed at promoting tolerance and mutual respect. However, effective implementation is sometimes dependent on how engaged and interested students are.

Students improve in self-confidence and self-esteem when they are praised and rewarded for good achievement and progress during assemblies. They contribute to the local community through charity work such as clearing flower beds for the local church and raising funds for charity by washing cars. Students are encouraged to develop attitudes that will enable them to make a positive contribution to society. During citizenship lessons, they are offered balanced presentations of opposing political views.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

Teaching is adequate and leads to adequate achievement overall. Teachers are keen for students to achieve and make good progress. However, they do not always plan lessons that provide high enough levels of challenge to ensure that students with different abilities are always fully engaged. As a result, levels of achievement and progress overall are not good. Teachers often help students to learn quickly and support learning with a good range of activities and resources. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled, for example, at reshaping tasks and explanations according to students' responses during lessons. However, teachers and school leaders have not identified fully effective ways of improving the engagement of all students in learning. As a result, students that are hard to engage in learning do not consistently respond well to the efforts of their teachers and their achievement and progress overall are only adequate.

Teachers are very patient and usually remain calm in lessons through following the school's systems for managing behaviour. However, they are not always successful in managing behaviour when it is most challenging. Teachers focus on developing students' reading, writing, speaking and mathematics skills; students that engage, achieve well and make good progress in these areas. Teachers assess learning and progress regularly. They mark work accurately, complimenting students for good work and pointing out areas that need to be improved.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The subjects offered by the school are adequate and lead to adequate achievement overall. The range of subjects, activities and opportunities for personal and academic development are well-organised. They are supported with detailed planning that charts a progression in learning. However, successful implementation of everything that the school offers occasionally depends on the degree of engagement of learners. A few students are disinterested and do not take full advantage of what is offered to them; these students make only adequate progress. Students of varying abilities and aptitudes that do engage have plenty of opportunities to make good progress and to gain qualifications that will help them in the future.

The subjects studied provide good opportunities for students to develop skills and make progress in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. However, standards in literacy and numeracy are only adequate because opportunities for students to practise and apply these skills across a range of subjects and activities are limited. The curriculum is enriched with a good variety of activities and trips that are designed to stimulate students' interests and to provide them with experiences that they can apply to different aspects of their learning. These include workshops with famous poets and trips to museums, places of historical interest and sporting activities such as fishing, horse-riding and kayaking. Students are suitably prepared for their future economic well-being through a strong focus on English and mathematics and through work on citizenship. A careers advisor visits regularly and provides students with valuable advice for the future; Year 11 students frequently attend careers events and college 'open days'. Provision for PSHE is good, but as with a few other subjects, its effective implementation depends on the extent of student engagement.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good and all of the independent school standards are met. The school has established policies and procedures that are in keeping with current legislation and national guidance, are reviewed regularly and are implemented effectively. These include policies for anti-bullying, health and safety and first-aid. During this inspection, a small number of very minor omissions were found in some policies; these were brought to the attention of senior leaders and were rectified immediately. The school has a suitable behaviour policy and has established good systems to promote good behaviour. However, these are not always implemented effectively. As a result, conduct during lessons is not always good. When lessons are disrupted, a few students lose concentration and find it difficult to engage.

Arrangements for safeguarding are robust, are reviewed regularly and the school implements its child protection policy effectively. All staff and the proprietors have received enhanced clearances through the Disclosure and Barring service to work with children; these and all other required checks are included in a comprehensive single central register. Two designated persons for child protection and all staff have attended the required training at the required levels. Arrangements for the recruitment of new staff are robust and ensure that they are well-aware of child protection procedures before they commence work. The school has a good level of fire safety. A detailed risk assessment is in place and equipment is checked regularly. Fire drills are regular events that are duly recorded. Risk assessments for the premises and school trips are detailed.

Staff are committed to ensuring that students are well-cared for at all times and undertake a good range of training related to health and safety; all staff are trained to appropriate levels in first-aid. The school works well with parents, carers and external agencies to ensure that students are always safe. Supervision around school and on trips is consistently good. Students agree that they feel safe and that bullying rarely occurs. Students learn about healthy lifestyles and nutrition through PSHE and PE. As a result of gaining an understanding of the importance of keeping healthy, some students are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Leadership and management**Adequate**

Leadership and management are adequate. Senior leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations and ambition. The proprietor challenges school leaders to improve what the school offers students, together with their results and standards. Staff and resources are deployed well for the benefit of all students. Staff have full confidence in the newly appointed senior management team. In the short time since their appointment, they have secured improvements to many aspects of what the school offers students. However, leaders and managers have not fully established ways to improve the quality of teaching in order to secure the involvement of all students and their good achievement. For example, the school has yet to develop a more consistent system of lesson observations that challenges teachers to improve. Similarly, the school has yet to establish more opportunities for teachers to share good practice. As a result of these factors, a few students' achievement and progress are only adequate because they do not engage in lessons regularly. Senior leaders have not fully embedded systems for tracking the progress of students over time, throughout their time at school. As a result, teachers do not always have enough information to plan lessons that provide high levels of challenge for all students in all subjects.

Leaders and managers appreciate the importance of self-evaluation as a vehicle to identify weaknesses and secure improvement. They work well with parents, carers and external agencies to secure benefits for students. They have developed policies that promote progress in all skill areas such as literacy. The subjects offered by the school and its arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are well-organised. The school's system of values promotes positive behaviour and personal development. However, the full implementation of plans and policies is limited because the students that do not engage well in learning do not

achieve sufficiently well and do not make good progress. Although attendance is improving, it is still below the national average and senior leaders have not established a system to address this issue effectively. Plans are developing positively in this regard. The premises and accommodation adequately support the activities offered by the school; all areas of the school are well-maintained and suitably decorated. The school meets all of the requirements related to the provision of information to parents and carers, and the complaints procedure includes all of the required details. The proprietor and school managers have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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 the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136088
Inspection number	441440
DfE registration number	343/6134

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	Independent School
School status	Independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
Age range of pupils	9–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Schools Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Alison Ford
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,042
Telephone number	0151 924 0234
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