

Victoria House

C/o Castlecare, The Manor House, Squires Hill, Rothwell, Northants, NN14 6BQ

Inspection dates	21–22 May 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	No judgement made	
Quality of teaching	No judgement made	
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because

- Although there are currently no pupils on roll, the school is in a position to educate and safeguard pupils effectively.
- It gives high priority to education. Within a clear overall framework, teachers' planning of lessons and tasks shows the flexibility to suit each pupil. The school has helped pupils to make informed choices about their future and progress to a place in a mainstream school or college.
- It has a well-trained and stable team of staff who model respect and good manners. The encouragement of pupils to manage their behaviour and develop good moral values and social skills is given a high priority.
- It is well led and managed. There is a clear vision for the school and high expectations for pupils' work, attitude, effort and behaviour. The systems for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety meet requirements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about the quality of the teaching and how well pupils achieve.
- It does not have the systems to assess and record precisely enough the small amounts of progress pupils make on an on-going basis.

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.¹

¹ Compliance with the regulations in Part 1 was not judged as there were no pupils on roll.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the lead teacher and other members of the staff team.
- The inspector examined the school's documentation, including policy statements, schemes of work, teachers' planning, registers and records. She also considered the limited records available of some former pupils' progress and achievement.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for a conclusion to be drawn. No questionnaire responses were available from local authorities. The inspector spoke to staff about their views.

Inspection team

Jane Cooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Victoria House is a small independent school which is owned by Castlecare. It was first registered in 2006 to provide education on a full-time basis for up to five pupils aged from eight to 16 years who are in the care of the local authority, display social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and usually have a statement of special educational needs.
- At the time of the inspection there were no pupils on roll, but the inspection went ahead as it had already been deferred twice. Its purpose was to check the school's compliance with the standards required for continued registration and to report on the extent to which it is ready to educate and safeguard young people. There have been no pupils at the school since July 2013.
- The school's main aim is 'to provide pupils with a warm, safe and supportive learning environment and an individually adapted curriculum which enables them to engage in learning with a view to successful integration into a mainstream school, college or alternative age-appropriate provision'.
- The last full inspection took place in May 2010. A short monitoring inspection in October 2010 checked the school's progress against its action plan and found that the school was meeting all the required standards for independent schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the current assessment procedure so that small amounts of progress made by pupils can be identified on a regular basis to form a more detailed record from which to plan lessons and tasks.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

No judgement made

- The achievement of pupils was not judged as there are currently no pupils on roll.
- As the school aims to integrate pupils successfully into a mainstream school or college as quickly as possible, typically young people do not spend a long period of time at the school. One measure of its success is, therefore, that of the six young people who were on roll at various times in the last academic year, five have remained in education and moved on to places in other schools or colleges.
- There is very limited evidence of the achievements of pupils who have spent a longer time at the school. Where it exists, this evidence shows that such pupils arrived with extremely low levels of literacy and made good progress in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics so as to narrow the gap between their achievements and those of young people of a similar age. While standards in English and mathematics remained well below the national average, pupils were able to gain accreditation for their achievements and access suitable vocational courses of their choice at college.

Quality of teaching

No judgement made

- As no lessons took place during the inspection and there was insufficient evidence of the impact of teaching over time, no judgement of the quality of teaching was made.
- The school has a clear curriculum policy as required by the independent schools regulations. Detailed schemes of work demonstrate that, when in session, the school can provide a broad, balanced and full-time programme of study which covers all the subjects in the National Curriculum and fulfils the requirements of pupils' statements of educational needs. Appropriate emphasis is given to teaching pupils to read and write well, understand mathematics and gain life skills. The school ensures that current affairs are presented in a balanced way. Education and care staff work well together to uphold the school's aims and support the pupils. Communication between them is good.
- The schemes of work provide a good framework from which teachers plan individual lessons and tasks for each pupil which are relevant to their interests and stage of development. The flexibility of individual planning is likely to help pupils to see the importance of learning. The shared expectations of residential and educational staff reinforce pupils' understanding. Good use is made of staff interests and talents, such as music and gardening, to help pupils develop interests of their own. The resources for teaching and learning are suitable.
- The school can be operational at any time as the lead teacher and two qualified learning support assistants are permanent members of staff. Most of the curriculum is covered by in-house staff, but there is recourse to the services of other specialist teachers in the company if needed. The executive headteacher is responsible for the quality of education in all regional schools.
- Assessment has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are assessed in reading, mathematics and spelling on entry to provide a baseline from which to judge their progress and as a basis for planning their work. Formal testing occurs on a six-monthly basis and shows good progress for pupils who have remained in the school for a longer period of time. The school provides detailed monthly reports on pupils' educational progress, but it needs to improve the current system for assessing and recording the small gains which pupils make over a shorter timeframe.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The school has a 'no exclusion' policy. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions, including 'time out', which has been used appropriately to help pupils manage their behaviour. All staff have been trained in physical intervention, but its use in school has been rare. The

school takes bullying extremely seriously and gives clear guidance to staff to ensure that it is handled consistently. Incidents of bullying in school have been infrequent, but were logged appropriately and resulted in appropriate sanctions. At the same time, care is taken to help young people understand the impact of their poor behaviour on others and, where appropriate, to come to terms with their anti-social behaviour in the past. Lesson plans in history and English, for example, teach young people to empathise with others. Staff model good manners and respect. Discussion of moral and social issues is planned to help pupils to develop good moral values. Records indicate that with the stability of regular routines and the consistent expectations of familiar staff, their behaviour improves over time.

- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The education staff have received training at the appropriate level in safeguarding and have been checked for their suitability to work with young people. The evidence for these checks is held on staff files and recorded properly on the school's single central register. The proprietor pays close attention to pupils' safety online. Access to undesirable internet websites is blocked effectively. Pupils are taught about the potential dangers of internet use and are supervised appropriately when using the computer.
- The school has clear policies and effective procedures for pupils' welfare, health and safety in school and on educational visits. This includes sensible risk assessments, regular checking of the premises for health and safety hazards and the servicing of equipment. Regular fire drills are carried out and logged appropriately. The first-aid policy meets requirements and all staff are trained first aiders. Pupils' medication is stored and recorded appropriately. High staffing levels indicate that pupils are well supervised when the school is in session.
- There is a comprehensive scheme of work for citizenship and personal, social, health and careers education. It has a strong focus on developing pupils' self-esteem and life skills by ensuring that they can all shop, cook and take care of themselves and do their own laundry. Pupils are informed about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme extends their awareness of public institutions and services in England. It fosters pupils' knowledge of and respect for cultures, beliefs and lifestyles in modern British society. It encourages respect for democracy and the rule of law, and prepares pupils to lead worthwhile lives as responsible citizens. Well-planned careers education enables them to make realistic and informed choices about their future.
- The admissions and attendance registers are completed appropriately. They record that pupils have started at the school with levels of attendance which are well below the national average. Nonetheless, after an initial period of settling in, most improved their attendance appreciably and were able to move on to mainstream education.

Leadership and management

are good

- Proprietors, leaders and managers have set out a clear vision for the school. High expectations of pupils' work, attitude, effort and behaviour are upheld by staff and communicated effectively to pupils, parents and carers, key social workers and local authorities. The school fulfils its aim of improving pupils' life chances by helping them to gain confidence in their academic ability and preparing them well for their next stage of education. Most are successfully helped to gain a place on a course of their choice.
- The proprietors have ensured that all of the independent schools' standards are met and that the school is in a position to educate and safeguard pupils. There are robust systems in place to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety which comply with government guidelines. Staff are well trained and can be deployed effectively. There are clear procedures for assessing pupils when they arrive and for planning work to encourage individual progress. Reports provide a clear evaluation of pupils' achievements, behaviour and personal development.
- There is an appropriate system in place for staff to have a regular appraisal of their work. Teaching is monitored regularly when the school is in session. The outcomes of monitoring and appraisal are used to develop staff effectively. The company has a good record of staff development and all staff have received appropriate training for their roles in school.
- The school's own self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. It identifies clear priorities which are

acted on in a planned way.

- Very good links have been established with local authority officers and with the agencies that provide learning, therapeutic and personal support to pupils. Good links are also maintained with social workers and, where appropriate, with parents and carers. All receive the information to which they are entitled. The complaints procedure meets requirements. The premises of the school are clean, orderly and well maintained as a suitable environment for learning.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate
<p>Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the <i>Non-association independent school inspection handbook</i> which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.</p>	

School details

Unique reference number	132101
Inspection number	422743
DfE registration number	886/6115

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	Small day school
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	0
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Castle Homes Ltd
Executive Headteacher	Marion Paige
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 May 2010

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