

The Corner House

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2014

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|--------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- The pupils who enter this school quickly become very enthusiastic learners. Teachers engage pupils in learning, make it fun, interesting and relevant to the needs and interests of each pupil.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and past pupils have moved on to further education. Successful pupils on roll may also attend a local middle school on a part-time basis.
- The very strong relationships that all staff build with the pupils create a very positive learning attitude and produce outstanding behaviour.
- Rates of progress have been maintained since the last inspection.
- The pupils stated that they feel very safe and happy and all staff support and help them.
- The proprietor and education co-ordinator have a clear vision for the school. They have continued to improve the school since the last inspection.
- The proprietor and education co-ordinator have improved the quality of teaching leading to rising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The leadership team has created a wide and varied range of subjects, which are supplemented by those provided at the local middle school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the baseline assessment system provides a good starting point for each pupil entering the school it does not fully take account of national standards. This means that planning is not always based on national expectations.
- Attainment is not yet high enough.
- Teacher assessments of the pupils' progress and attainment are not currently checked. This means that occasionally, future learning is not based on an accurate view of a pupil's ability.

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 one day's notice.
- The inspector observed several lessons both at the local middle school and educational provision at the school. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work, documentation related to pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding regulations.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, education co-ordinator, a member of staff from the middle school and the middle school headteacher. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. Several informal conversations took place with pupils and several of their classmates in the middle school.
- Documentation related to planning, welfare, health and safety and the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools were all scrutinised and checked.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. The inspector took account of the views expressed in seven questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Corner House School is part of a very small residential provision for pupils between the ages of nine and 19 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and/or learning disabilities. Pupils have a history of poor attendance and were unsuccessful in previous placements.
- The school aims to overcome the learning barriers with which the pupils enter the school, re-engage them in education and where possible return them to mainstream education.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. None currently has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected in February 2011 when the overall effectiveness was judged as being good and all but one of the regulations were found to have been met.
- The school works in close collaboration with a local middle school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by further developing the baseline assessment systems in place to take account of national comparative standards, in order to increase the accuracy of these assessments.
- Improve teaching further by carrying out external checking of pupils' work to ensure accuracy of assessments and that future planning always provides for the pupils' learning.
- Raise achievement further through the use of more accurate assessment of information on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The proprietor and education co-ordinator have a clear vision for improvement and have created a positive learning environment. This stimulates the pupils to learn and to go on to successfully complete further education. At the same time as developing the pupils' academic abilities, they provide excellent support in developing the pupils' social, personal and behavioural attributes. The local authority regularly checks the school to make sure it fulfils its aims and meets the needs of the pupils. The representative of the local authority was highly positive about the school's work in developing the pupils' social, personal and behavioural aspects.
- Although a very small provision, the leadership team has created a wide range of activities covering all the key subjects. Their close links with other schools and particularly the local middle school means that any missing subjects are catered for. This has resulted in pupils re-engaging in their learning. Pupils were seen actively engaging in a number of activities during their attendance at the middle school. For example, during the inspection pupils were observed during both an ethics and mathematics lesson. Earlier they had attended a swimming lesson with their peers.
- For older students, the leadership team has created a good range of academic subjects, work and college placement opportunities as well as a range of vocational courses.
- Staff in both the pupils' residence and educational provision work closely together to ensure that all staff are fully aware of any issues the pupils may have. They support each other to ensure that all safety aspects are fully considered. This has led to safeguarding arrangements meeting requirements. Policies and procedures result in outstanding practice in the school. All risk assessments are very detailed and take account of all possible issues. This is one reason why the middle school is happy to work with the school as they feel fully supported to help meet the pupils' needs.
- The leadership team works well with the middle school to ensure that staff are fully aware of any barriers to learning which may arise. Both provisions keep each other fully informed as to the rates of progress and attainment the pupils are making. However, the initial assessments made on entry to the schools vary, as The Corner House does not always take full and accurate account of the extent of pupils' ability compared with national averages. For this reason leadership and management are not yet outstanding.
- The leadership team's self-evaluation is generally accurate and based on good evidence. This means that they know the strength and weaknesses of the school well and take positive and rapid steps to make any improvements necessary.
- The education premises on both sites are in a good state of repair, bright and well lit and provide a positive learning environment. The senior leadership team and proprietor work closely with families and ensure that they are fully aware of the complaints procedure. This procedure is well documented and all required systems are in place to ensure that if a complaint is made all procedures are followed effectively.

■ The governance of the school:

The proprietor ensures that the financial management of the school is effective and the performance of all staff is well linked to their pay and training. This in turn means that the staff feel valued and well supported. Staff comments in their questionnaire were highly positive and several stated they feel the leadership cares for both them and the pupils alike.

The school's reports to the placing local authority give a clear picture of the work the school does and the impact the school has on each of its pupils. The school works well with the local authority to provide an external review of the work it does. This enables the proprietor and educational co-ordinator to improve the provision they make for pupils.

The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Due to the excellent relationships the staff build with the pupils, they quickly begin to gain self-esteem, self-confidence and a desire to improve their lives. In turn they develop a highly positive attitude to learning and their behaviour is excellent. The pupils were highly positive throughout the inspection and more than happy to tell the inspector how happy they were and how much they enjoyed school.
- The school's first aid, behaviour and restraint logs are well maintained and linked well with each other. They do show that on initial entry there are issues with pupils, however, these quickly reduce as the pupils settle into the school.
- Throughout the inspection any discussions with the pupils were highly enjoyable, as they were very polite and eager to help with any information requested of them. They demonstrated excellent responses to their peers in the middle school and to all other adults. This enjoyment and positive attitude have resulted in attendance rising rapidly both at The Corner House and the middle school.
- The staff ensure that pupils have a good understanding of e-safety and the various forms of bullying. The school actively promotes British values, together with an understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This in turn means that pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were highly positive and feel that behaviour and safety are excellent. All the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.
- All staff are highly trained in child protection requirements and so, for example, all risk assessments made for all visits are excellent. All necessary checks and procedures in relation to staff recruitment and the premises, including fire safety, are exemplary.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is at least good and at times outstanding as it is developing the pupils' love of learning and increasing their rates of progress. The education co-ordinator regularly assesses all aspects of the pupils' progress and levels of attainment. This information is then used to plan future learning which is mostly well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils.
- Teaching staff at both The Corner House and at the middle school keep in regular contact to ensure that the work they are both doing is co-ordinated and developmental. Strengths on both sites include the questioning skills of the staff to make sure that the pupils fully understand their work. An assistant from The Corner House works with the pupils while in attendance at the middle school. They provide a valuable link between the two schools as well as providing continuity for the pupil. During a mathematics lesson observed the assistant was excellent at defusing a potential situation when a pupil was reprimanded by the teacher. The pupil also responded quickly and apologised for the mistake and continued to work really hard.
- In all lessons observed teachers demonstrated excellent subject knowledge, good questioning and discussion skills and carried out their duties very effectively at all levels and so Teachers' Standards are being met.
- Pupils' progress in reading is good and at times better; writing skills are less well developed but improving. Skills and understanding in mathematics are good and progress has been consistently good. The teachers in both schools record and monitor progress well. However, the education co-ordinator at The Corner House does not as yet have their assessments externally checked to ensure they are in line with national expectations. This in turn occasionally leads to learning not always being closely matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils.
- Teachers in both schools work well together to ensure that the pupils' individual education plans are followed carefully and linked in with their general care plans. This makes sure that pupils progress in all

areas of their development. This in turn reflects the good relationships between the two organisations.

- All the staff have high expectations and aspirations for the pupils who attend The Corner House. This has led to each pupil who has attended moving successfully onto further education. When at The Corner House they achieve a range of qualifications appropriate to their development, such as awards with the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), GCSE grades, and Oxford, Cambridge and RSA awards (OCR).
- In The Corner House the activities taught are more practically based and focus highly on the individual pupil's interests. This results in the pupils being eager to learn. In one lesson observed the staff used a range of games, practical activities and computer programmes to teach a range of English, language and communication skills. This was rapidly followed with a range of mathematical skills being taught. Throughout, the pupils participated fully and were highly motivated.
- All staff provide a range of feedback to the pupils and this ranges from verbal discussions to written comments in the pupils' books. These approaches mean that pupils know how to improve their work and are given the opportunity to make their work better.
- A review of books and other work clearly shows that pupils attending The Corner House make good progress from their very low starting points. The Teachers' Standards, the professional standards framework for teachers, are being met.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils have experienced a long period of disruption to their previous education and prolonged periods of absence from their schools. This in turn leads to the pupils having very low starting points. Pupils, however, improve quickly resulting in achievement being good in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the good teaching and the range of learning activities they receive.
- Pupils' attainment is below that expected for their ages due to the gaps in their education; however, these are closing quickly. This is due to improvements in their self-confidence and self-esteem, which in turn boost their positive attitudes to learning.
- All groups of students, regardless of their background or ability, make good progress in their mathematical, reading and writing skills. Historically pupils have gained a variety of external qualifications appropriate to the various levels of learning for each pupil and demonstrated that each achieved a good level of progress. The current pupils on roll are on track to not only catch up on the gaps in their learning, but in some areas such as reading and number to exceed those expected for their ages.
- The local authority reviews the work of the school annually and their checks confirm that pupils make good progress over time. Discussion with a representative from the local authority confirms that they are happy with the progress made. This is especially so in the progress students make in their attendance, social, personal and behavioural development.
- The school uses a range of alternative learning activities such as horticulture and outdoor education to motivate and encourage pupils to participate in their learning. In the past this has resulted in pupils gaining a range of NVQ, AQA and GCSE qualifications at Level one and Entry level, with some gaining higher awards.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their language and communication skills, as all staff model good language structures and correct any misconceptions the pupils may have. The pupils' development in physical education is excellent as the school provides a wide range of activities to promote physical activity. In discussions the pupils were more than happy to explain how they had lost weight, felt fitter and knew how to stay healthy, all thanks to the excellent teaching by the school.
- The education co-ordinator carefully monitors the pupils' progress, and the planning based upon this ensures that pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve. However, the internal school assessments

which are not part of the local authority reviews, do not include any form of independent, external check on the pupils' progress and success. This in turn means that progress is not always assessed in relation to national age-related levels, and so occasionally slows progress.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | |
|---------|----------------------|
| Grade | Judgement |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136025 |
| Inspection number | 446283 |
| DfE registration number | 885/6038 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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.

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| Type of school | Day special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and/or learning disabilities |
| School status | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 9–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Stephen Rintoul |
| Headteacher | Stephen Rintoul & Tamsin Clixby |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 February 2011 |
| Annual fees (day pupil) | £26600 |
| Telephone number | 0844 335 1722 |
| Email address | tamsin@thecornerhouse.uk.net |

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