

# The Old School House

**Inspection dates** 2–3 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Leaders and managers ensure that disadvantaged students are able to achieve well within a secure and affirming atmosphere.
- Students achieve a range of qualifications despite having missed extensive amounts of schooling prior to entry to The Old School House.
- Students are able to achieve well because they learn to control their strong feelings. As a result, their self-confidence blossoms.
- Students' behaviour is good. There are good arrangements for keeping pupils safe. Robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour skilfully and match activities well to individual abilities and circumstances.
- There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum. Students learn about a wide range of subjects.
- The sixth form is effective because appropriate courses are provided which are matched well to students' needs. Sixth form students are prepared well for the transition to adult life.
- Leaders and managers, including the proprietors, have improved the quality of teaching and achievement, and have plans in place to enhance the accommodation.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students are not always given opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to everyday situations.
- Teachers do not always explain to students clearly enough how to make their work better.
- Students do not always understand why new learning is important for them.
- Leaders and managers do not check the work of teaching staff sufficiently rigorously to acknowledge their achievements, hold them fully to account for students' success and provide further training.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed three lessons and visited additional lessons to check on the quality of teaching, students' learning and their behaviour.
- A wide range of students' work was closely examined and students were heard reading.
- Meetings were held with students from Year 9 and Year 12 and the inspector spoke informally to students during the day, for example during mealtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the company manager of the school and students' residences.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including the school's own self-evaluation, its development plan, policies, monitoring files and records, information on finance, safeguarding and performance management.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, but the inspector took account of responses to the school's questionnaires for students and parents and examined feedback in the students' annual reviews.
- The inspector analysed four responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a small school for residential students who have statements of special educational needs as a result of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All the students are White British and come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The proprietors have delegated oversight of the school and the students' accommodation to the company manager.
- Due to the small size of the school, there are no middle leadership roles within the staff structure.
- The school was last inspected on 9 March 2011.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and two new teaching assistants have been appointed.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - making links between subjects to demonstrate the value of new learning to students
  - ensuring that students always apply the new skills that they learn to relevant contexts
  - ensuring that students' next steps in learning are shared with them so that they understand how to make their work better.
- Improve leadership and management by implementing a rigorous system for checking the work of teaching staff that:
  - acknowledges their achievements
  - sets targets for improving the achievement of students even further
  - provides support for their further training and development.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership and excellent understanding of students' individual needs have generated a secure environment within which students learn to control their behaviour and push themselves to achieve well.
- Experienced managers ensure that students are well equipped for the next stage in their education. Recent appointments have strengthened the quality of teaching so that each student receives support that helps pupils to achieve well.
- All members of staff work closely together to provide secure boundaries within which the students thrive and flourish. Students' welfare and safety have a high priority.
- Work is well planned to cover the full curriculum for students in different key stages. Care is taken to ensure that students are secure in their learning before moving on. Students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 have access to good careers advice, work experience and independence training. They have are able to take externally accredited courses that are appropriate to their needs and aspirations.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Excellent relationships throughout the school, a very effective system of support through 'link' workers, and a comprehensive programme for students' personal, social and health education, combine to provide a secure grounding for life in modern Britain.
- Students learn to be respectful and tolerant, and develop sufficient confidence to mix with their peers in the local community. Their understanding of different cultures and practices is extended through visits, such as those to France, and visitors who talk about their experiences.
- Students are helped to understand their abilities and interests through the work of the school and a careful selection of work experience. There are ample opportunities for students to discuss their thoughts regarding the next stage of their education, and transitions are sensitively managed. Links with outside agencies, for example a clinical psychologist, are strong and effective.
- Leaders and managers are vigilant and determined to ensure continued high standards throughout the school. Safeguarding arrangements are a priority; systems are robust and meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained and aware of current guidance.
- The curriculum is extensive and provides students with opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills. There are interesting opportunities to develop their scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative understanding. The students are not always aware of how their literacy and numeracy skills could be used to help them to become more successful in other lessons.
- There is a close working relationship between the headteacher and manager, and clear targets are set for the headteacher in terms of leadership and management of the school. The headteacher has identified the need for a formal system for checking on the work of all teaching staff in the school development plan. There are too few formal opportunities to recognise the headteacher's achievements and to provide further training to continue to improve the achievement of pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors are well informed through full reports from the company manager. All the independent school standards are met. The school's accommodation is adequate although the outside space is limited. There are plans in place to extend the premises to cater more fully for the wide range of needs presented by students. Parents and carers receive full and regular details about the progress and welfare of their children. A suitable complaints procedure is in place, but has not been required. Regular meetings ensure that all staff are aware of developments. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities for further improvement.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Leaders and managers ensure that those students who have previously spent considerable lengths of time out of school learn to control their outbursts and persevere well in lessons. They attend school every day and wear school uniform.
- There are consistent routines for helping students to manage their behaviour. Students learn to take responsibility for their behaviour because staff help them to understand their feelings and to find ways of dealing with their strong emotions.
- Lessons are orderly and students are eager to get on with work and improve. Where younger students have not yet learned to fully control their behaviour, they are sensitively handled to ensure that work is eventually completed. Other students are not easily deflected by these occasional outbursts. As a result, those students who have built habits of work avoidance are gradually encouraged to make progress.
- Students are proud of their growing confidence and maturity. They reflect well on what they have achieved as a result of learning to trust staff and understanding the school's clear boundaries on behaviour.
- Through discussion in personal, social and health education, and regular contacts with their link workers, students become increasingly tolerant and respectful of differences in lifestyles. They understand different forms of bullying and harassment, reporting that there is none in school.
- All students contribute to decision making in school. They become increasingly articulate and sufficiently confident to express their feelings and opinions in a responsible way and in a variety of settings. They are fully involved in agreeing classroom rules at the beginning of the year.
- Mealtimes are extremely pleasant and sociable. Students have good experiences of eating a range of different and healthy foods, prepared by staff or other students. At this time, they learn good table manners from their peers and the staff who eat with them. Students learn to become hospitable and aware of the needs of others.
- Students have strongly positive views of the school. The school is orderly and well maintained. Students increasingly present their work carefully and with pride. Older students contribute to maintenance of the school's facilities.
- There are good opportunities for students to reflect on their own behaviour through their behaviour plans. They develop a clear understanding of the value of rules of law in the wider world when discussing events in the news. Regular discussions in personal, social and health education help students to understand the benefits of an orderly community and British values, such as, tolerance. Students learn about conflicts in religion and respect for others through their visits and their work in religious education, history and geography.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel entirely safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe while out of school and when using the internet. Students, staff and parents are happy with the school's provision.
- Leaders and managers ensure there are robust procedures for the appointment of staff, their training in safeguarding and first aid. Regular routine checks on fire safety are completed and recorded appropriately.
- There are clear risk assessments in place for activities in school and visits out of school. Visitors are appropriately checked before coming into the school.

- Students are increasingly aware of the damaging effects of derogatory language relating to disability, racism and homophobia. As their independence grows, they learn to calculate risks relating to their behaviour and that of others.
- Students are given additional opportunities to join events in the local community as they learn to become more responsible. Belonging to out-of-school clubs, such as trampolining, provides good opportunities for students to mix with their peers beyond school.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- The quality of teaching has been improved through the introduction of a systematic approach to literacy and numeracy. The majority of students are proud of their good achievement in their reading, writing and mathematics.
- Work is well matched to individual needs and students have effective one-to-one support from staff, where necessary. There are regular opportunities to practise and reinforce reading, spelling, writing and mathematics. The more able students present their work carefully, especially when its purpose is well understood. They relish challenges and take great pride in their growing abilities.
- All students have a history of failure before entering this school, but they are delighted to take on increasingly challenging work as their confidence grows. Teachers skilfully manage the balance between ensuring success while increasing the difficulty of the work.
- The poor behaviour of any recently-arrived students is well handled to minimise disruption. Teaching assistants have a common approach and work seamlessly with the teacher.
- The new headteacher has introduced a range of ways to make learning more appealing to de-motivated students. Students have good experiences of a range of subjects through the curriculum. A wider range of reading books is available, as are educational games and activities. The school is beginning to make better links with residential staff through homework tasks.
- Nevertheless, activities are not always put into contexts that help students to understand why they need the skills being taught, and links are not always made between subjects. As a result, there is extensive evidence of students practising skills, but little to show the application of those skills in different contexts. For example, spellings are not used in sentences to describe their work in other lessons and the calculation of numbers is not applied to real life situations.
- Students' work is regularly evaluated. A new scheme for recording students' progress is helping better planning. However, the next steps identified from the marking are not always sufficiently specific to help students to understand their strengths and how to improve their work. Students are not given sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning by reflecting on how to make it better.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Students enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy due to extensive periods of missed lessons due to their behaviour and reluctance to attend previous schools. Many arrive with very low levels of self-esteem and believe that they cannot learn.
- Students read and calculate numbers confidently as a result of effective teaching of reading and numeracy. Teaching staff ensure that these skills are well grounded through regular and frequent practice.
- Students who have been in school for some time marvel at what they can now do compared with how they were when they arrived. Some significantly exceed nationally expected rates of progress in two years. All Key Stage 3 students complete ASDAN certificates and their successful achievement prompts them to strive for further success.

- Older, more-able students work on design problems in design and technology, applying their literacy and numeracy skills to the production of excellent work, such as 'boom boxes' or lamps. They use a range of equipment, follow recipes and calculate amounts in food lessons. They learn to use an atlas to find different countries.
- Excellent behaviour management by staff and their support for students to control their behaviour builds students' confidence exceptionally well. While they are reluctant to engage in learning in any way on arrival, as their trust and confidence grows they gradually become increasingly articulate and well engaged by activities.
- The school effectively meets the requirements of the independent school standards relating to the curriculum and assessment.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- Good leadership and management ensure the curriculum is well matched to students' individual needs and appropriate preparation for further training and work. Students who were not ready for external examinations in Year 11 have opportunities in Year 12 to take GCSE at entry level.
- Those who arrived in school unable to read or write, and with little confidence that they could achieve, produce work of good quality. They make good use of computers to present their work well and write extended stories that hold the reader's attention.
- Students work with local maintenance personnel and catering staff to learn how to decorate, shop and prepare healthy meals. Students' growing skills and expertise further promotes their confidence in their ability.
- Students have excellent attitudes to their work. They have huge appreciation of the support they have received from the school. They have mature and realistic approach to the future because they have been very well counselled and advised. They are good role models for younger pupils in terms of their behaviour and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Teachers' skills and awareness of individual needs and abilities ensure students reach the highest possible level. They are encouraging and enabling while challenging students to make their work even better.
- Students benefit from excellent relationships with school and residential staff in the school and good careers advice and guidance. Good links with social workers in local authorities help to ensure transitions to further education are successful and good arrangements made for suitable accommodation.

## What inspection judgements mean

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133651
<b>Inspection number</b>	446392
<b>DfE registration number</b>	873/6032

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	3
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	1
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Chris Wright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debra Eason
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 March 2011

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