

Ebenezer House

c/o Castlecare, The Manor House, Squires Hill, Rothwell, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN14 6BQ

Inspection dates

7–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness

No judgement made

Leadership and management

No judgement made

Behaviour and safety of pupils

No judgement made

Quality of teaching

No judgement made

Achievement of pupils

No judgement made

Summary of key findings

- There was insufficient evidence to be able to make reliable judgements about leadership and management, students' current behaviour and safety, the quality of teaching and how well students achieve. A secure judgement on the school's overall effectiveness was thus not possible.
- Although there are currently no students on roll, the school is in a position to be able to educate and safeguard students.
- There is evidence that the school is well managed and led. Leaders have a clear vision and high expectations for students' work, attitudes and effort.
- Proprietors stringently hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of school performance.
- The premises meet requirements and provide a suitable environment for learning.
- Staff are well trained and give high priority to education, the management of students' behaviour and the development of good moral values and social skills.
- The school has helped previous students to do well and to make informed choices about their future and to progress to a place in mainstream education.

- There were insufficient arrangements for making documents relating to students' progress over time accessible and available to inspectors when required.
- Arrangements to assess and record students' progress on an ongoing basis are not as well developed as they might be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- Regulatory requirements were met where the evidence made it possible to make these judgements. The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The education and residential inspections were aligned and were carried out at a day's notice by one additional inspector and one social care inspector over a period of one and a half days in school. A report on the inspection of the residential provision is published separately.
- There were no students on roll at the time of the inspection. The inspection was carried out at the request of Ofsted because there had been two earlier inspection deferrals.
- The purpose of the inspection was to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards required for continued registration as a school, and to report on the extent to which the school is ready to educate and safeguard students who may be admitted, sometimes at very short notice.
- The school's policies, documentation and a few samples of work of students who had previously attended the school were thoroughly scrutinised. Discussions were held with the headteacher, care home manager, regional director and a former student.
- The school was in the process of interviewing candidates for a full-time teaching post which is presently vacant.
- There were no responses to Parent View and three members of staff returned questionnaires.

Inspection team

Peter Callaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ebenezer House is a mixed, non-association independent school which is owned by the CastleCare Group. It is governed by the directors of CastleCare.
- The school provides full-time education for up to three students aged between eight and 16 years of age who are in local authority care and have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Many students who attend have been out of education for months, or years in some cases, prior to admission. The school aims to build their self-esteem so that they can make sufficient educational progress to be able return successfully to a mainstream educational setting.
- Students undertake a full-time education programme which is tailored to their particular needs.
- The school was registered for education in 2007. Its last education inspection was in June 2009 when it had three students on roll and was judged to be a good school.
- There are currently no students on roll at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement more detailed arrangements for the assessment and recording of students' progress on a continuing basis.
- Ensure documents that record students' educational progress over time are accessible and available when required.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

No judgement made

- There was too little evidence for the inspector to make a secure overall judgement on leadership and management. Much of the documentation required as evidence for students' individual progress over time was securely archived and was not available for scrutiny. However, a few students' logs displayed evidence of participation in enrichment activities in line with the school's aims and policies. All of the independent school standards that could be checked were met. Evidence gathered indicates that the school is in a position to educate and safeguard students.
- An orderly and hardworking family community has been established. A former student said she felt safe and secure. There are robust systems in place to promote students' welfare, health and safety, which comply with government guidelines. The school promotes safe practices and a culture of safety. Leaders model good professional standards in all of their work.
- The executive headteacher and house manager ensure that all staff liaise closely through morning briefings, end-of-day handovers, and weekly meetings when individual plans and weekly timetables are set for each student. They also meet monthly to share best practice and discuss students' needs, calling on the expertise and support of other colleagues in the company. These include the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCO), therapists, Barnardo's, and other agencies. The executive headteacher is responsible for the quality of teaching in all regional schools. The full-time teacher is able to call on the services of specialist teachers in the company if needed.
- The executive headteacher and house manager have brought about many improvements in the school, including extending the provision for educational and cultural visits as well as opportunities for past students to become involved in local, national and international award schemes. These include achieving an International School Award, Get Set Olympics certificate, an ECO School award and the Green Flag award. Past students have also contributed to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Looked After Children and Care Leavers meetings at the Houses of Parliament. The school sponsors the education of a child in Ghana to whom students can correspond in writing. The school is giving effective support to a local school who has requested help for learning support for their students.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate and underpins plans to improve teaching and the curriculum. There are arrangements for students who arrive with no information on prior attainment to be assessed within 48 hours of their arrival. However, systems to assess and record students' progress in detail from this point on require improvement.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible enough to respond to the individual needs and interests of students. It focuses on the necessary priorities for students to be able to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Comprehensive and flexible schemes of work enable students to have tailor-made learning plans and a weekly timetable which aim to meet students' needs and interests. Appropriate strategies for ensuring that students receive effective career guidance and support are in place. The implementation of current plans could not be checked.
- Senior leaders 'lead by example' and focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning in their aim to improve students' life chances by being directly involved in every aspect of each student's educational experience.
- The premises meet requirements and provide a suitable environment for learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Proprietors hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Senior leaders attend a monthly supervision meeting and have an annual appraisal. The proprietors carry out their statutory duties and ensure clarity of vision, the establishment of a school ethos and strategic direction, including making checks on safeguarding and child protection.
 - The proprietors provide training for all staff to equip them to fulfil their roles in school and have in place rigorous arrangements to make checks on the quality of teaching.
 - Proprietors ensure that the school's financial resources are managed effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

No judgement made

- As there are no students currently on roll at the school, the inspector was unable to gather sufficient evidence from direct observation or through discussions with any students to make a secure judgement on the behaviour and safety of students. However, all of the independent school standards that could be

checked were met. The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that it is likely that all of the independent school standards for safeguarding, behaviour and safety will be met and that the school is in a good position to safeguard students.

- The school has clear policies for the management of behaviour and safety.
- The school and care home staff liaise closely over all aspects of students' lives. Records relating to past-students demonstrate that the school has been effective in preparing and enabling these students to have developed sufficient personal confidence and social skills to re-integrate successfully into mainstream education.
- The school provides many opportunities for students to take on responsibility for their own behaviour, to show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of others. Examples include selling poppies for the Royal British Legion, cooking a meal or cleaning up in the house. There are opportunities for students to meet new friends at the Regional Youth Forum and other sporting and cultural events.
- The school has up-to-date and suitable policies for managing behaviour and encouraging students to act responsibly. Incident logs and records of sanctions and rewards are kept and achievements are celebrated. All staff are trained to prevent all forms of bullying.
- There are opportunities for students to understand the impact of any poor behaviour on others and, where appropriate, to come to terms with their anti-social behaviour in the past and to discuss moral and social issues.
- The school's emphasis on developing students' self-esteem and life skills permeates the schemes of work for the teaching of personal, social, health and citizenship, education (PSHCE). Students have opportunities to go shopping, cook for themselves, go to a bank and library and visit local services. Expert advice and help are given by the Kenwood Trust and the NHS Stop Smoking Service which inform students about the dangers about drug and alcohol abuse.
- The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme aims to extend students' knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England. It promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. The school aims to encourage respect for democracy and actively supports students' participation in the democratic process. The school promotes respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England. The weekly citizenship programme and cultural awareness activities are an integral part of the curriculum and students are encouraged to attend voluntary community projects such as St John's Ambulance, children's forums and Sunday school.
- The school has clear and suitable policies for the welfare, health and safety of students in school and on educational visits. This includes robust risk assessments and regular site checks for hazards. Regular fire drills are carried out and logged appropriately, the first aid policy meets requirements and all staff have undergone first aid training. High staffing levels and appropriate deployment plans ensure that students are well supervised.
- All staff have received child protection and safeguarding training at the appropriate level.

The quality of teaching

No judgement made

- No lessons took place during the inspection. There was insufficient evidence of the impact of teaching over time on learning and progress to be able make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching. All of the independent school standards that could be checked were met.
- There is a clear curriculum which maps out areas of study across all age groups and is flexible enough to cater for individual students' capabilities, needs and interests.
- Great emphasis is given to the teaching of reading and writing well and to acquiring a sound understanding of basic mathematics. Much planned activity is devoted to developing students' life skills and preparing students for independent living. Resources are constantly being extended to meet the needs of students.
- Schemes of work are robust, comprehensive and provide a good framework for teachers and care assistants to plan work related to students' interests and skills. Housekeeping, photography, and gardening are used to enrich learning experiences and to encourage students to develop wider interests.
- A baseline assessment of students' attainment, undertaken soon after students arrive at the school, ensures that teachers set them suitably difficult work as soon as possible. However, arrangements to check and record students' progress over the time they are at the school are not detailed enough.

The achievement of pupils**No judgement made**

- The achievement of students was not judged as there are no students on roll. Documentation required as evidence for students' individual progress over time was archived and was not available for scrutiny.
- In many cases teachers have little or no prior knowledge of the skills or attainment of students when admitted to the school. Typically students have not attended a mainstream school for months or in some cases, a year or more and do not have a statement of special educational needs. The school's own initial assessments provide a starting point for evaluating students' progress.
- Students often arrive at the school with very low levels of literacy, numeracy and reading skills. The school showed inspectors a few copies of certificates of accreditation in English, reading, spelling and mathematics. The school has been successful in enabling some past students to be accepted on vocational courses of their choice, to obtain GCSEs, and to gain Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and AQA awards. A few past students have developed sufficient confidence and self-esteem to enable them to return successfully into mainstream schools or colleges and to live independently.

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

Unique reference number	135549
Inspection number	397651
DfE registration number	886/6128
Type of school	Independent
School status	Non-association independent school
Age range of pupils	8–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	0
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Castle Homes Limited
Headteacher	Marion Paige
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009

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