

# White Trees Independent School

Tile House Farm, Birds Green, Ongar, CM5 0PN

## Inspection dates

24–26 February 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

**2**

Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- The school is well led. The school's proprietor, headteacher and staff share a clear vision and provide good care, learning experiences and individual student support.
- The headteacher has created a good teamwork approach that allows students to follow individual programmes well, both in the school and additional locations, by effectively co-ordinated travel plans.
- Students make good progress from their starting points and develop positive attitudes to learning. This contributes strongly to their good achievement and well-being.
- The school keeps students safe, and behaviour is well managed. Students respond to the school's code of conduct and routines by settling down to work quickly and with good application. Attendance is regular.
- The good teaching offers consistently high expectations. It challenges students to improve their behaviour, skills and self-confidence. As a result students make rapid progress, closing the gaps in their prior learning.
- Assessment and recording of students' daily activities are detailed and effective. Students' changing needs continue to be met through regular reviews about their progress.
- Leadership of teaching is effective. Checks on teaching ensure that any weaknesses are quickly dealt with.
- The range of learning experiences stimulates learning. The balance of physical activity, social and vocational learning with core skills studies is well matched to students' needs.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Older students are not given sufficient opportunities to develop writing skills necessary for recording all their achievements.
- Teachers occasionally do not focus sufficiently on developing students' social and communication skills.
- Efforts to ensure students' punctuality are not fully effective.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The lead inspector visited three half-day learning sessions together with short further observations. These observations were carried out so that the headteacher and staff could be seen working singly or as a team with students.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and proprietor.
- Discussions with students were conducted over lunch on two days.
- Responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were too few for an analysis to be made. The lead inspector took account of school parental surveys and spoke to parents or carers directly.
- A range of school documentation was analysed. This included the school's prospectus, information about students' progress, the school's development plan and its own evaluation of its work. Students' portfolios and workbooks were scrutinised. Records relating to admission, attendance, behaviour, fire safety, health and safety, safeguarding and welfare were examined.
- The lead inspector took account of the four staff questionnaires received.

## Inspection team

Sa'ad Khaldi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- White Trees Independent School is a day special school providing for boys and girls who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school opened in February 2014.
- The school is registered to take up to six students in the age range 11 to 16 years.
- There are currently five students on the roll of the school, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of additional off-site locations regularly for art (pottery), library services, physical education, sports, and vocational courses. The school has a transport plan.
- The school's vision is 'to provide a systemic approach by ensuring its students' physical, emotional and educational well-being is developed through a nurture-based curriculum'. It provides individualised weekly teaching programmes for each of its students.
- The school received a pre-registration visit inspection report in December 2013, before it opened.

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

- Develop strategies to improve students' punctuality.
- Extend and accelerate students' learning by:
  - developing students' social and communication skills more effectively
  - developing students' writing skills to enable them to record all their personal achievements.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher and the proprietor ensure that all the required regulations are met because White Trees Independent School is well led and managed. It has a warm and welcoming atmosphere that encourages staff to teach well and students to make good progress. Students' social needs, including their day-to-day challenges, are dealt with well, so that behaviour is good and their self-anxiety is reduced. This prepares students well for learning.
- The subjects offered cover a broad and effective range of opportunities. There is a clear statement of aims and how good student learning behaviour over time can be achieved through a nurture and therapeutic approach. The school uses a wide number of partnerships to make this successful. Students and staff make effective use of off-site locations within a travel plan, and older students can experience short work placements, along with advice and guidance, to broaden their understanding of possible careers
- The headteacher and individual key workers check on the daily progress of each student through tracking individual weekly learning plans. All students have targets for emotional, behavioural and social learning taken from their statements of educational needs or education, health and care plans. This 'small steps' approach is effective over time. Students also benefit from personal sports plans that ensure regular physical activity.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well. Cross-curricular literacy and numeracy opportunities are plentiful, through personal, social, citizenship and health education themes. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well and enables them to show good improvement from their starting points.
- Staff induction is good and the headteacher has forged a whole team approach to management. All staff make an effective contribution. Performance management and accountability are well embedded, with the school's educational psychologist asked to offer an independent view by joint observation of the school's practice. Training in safeguarding, risk assessment, and health and safety have a good impact.
- The safety of students is managed rigorously. Staff are vetted carefully before appointment. The child protection policy and procedures are carefully assured by good management oversight. The headteacher is supported by wider central office support services provided by the proprietor, so that the school administration of communications and policies is efficient.

### ■ The governance of the school:

The proprietor has oversight of the school through checking performance data, policies, routines and procedures. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and the targets for teacher performance and what is done to tackle any underperformance.

The proprietor checks the school's self-evaluation and its strengths and areas for improvement. Both the school development plan and staff action plan are reviewed annually to ensure priorities are met in a specified time and with clear success criteria.

The proprietor fulfils all the regulatory duties well, ensuring all regulations are met, including safeguarding requirements. The proprietor visits to participate in student commendations and presentations, and is well informed about day-to-day events and welfare at the school.

The obligation to provide suitable and well maintained premises is fully met. Suitable information for parents and carers is provided. Procedures and practices for handling complaints are effective.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. There are strong relationships between staff and students due to the good impact of nurture and a focus on personal development. The school's records show a clear

reduction in the number and nature of incidents of serious misbehaviour over time; students comment positively on the progress they have made with their ability to manage periods of frustration and anger.

- Attendance has improved to the point that all students attend regularly and well. There are now no long breaks in any student's attendance patterns.
- Individual learning plans sometimes require particular learning behaviour characteristics from students. For instance, bird watching in a nature reserve hide requires patient observation as well as pleasure in new and interesting findings. The school demonstrates considerable success in re-engaging students from previous disaffection and non-attendance with interesting activities.
- Staff ensure that groups and pairings are made up by gender or literacy and numeracy working levels so that co-operation and communication are at matched levels. The individual student plans allow for the whole school to meet on celebratory or assembly occasions, or over a shared meal with staff that has been prepared by students. This supports good social sharing.
- Students' good behaviour is due largely to good leadership and management. All students attend a weekly tutorial with a member of staff who acts as a key worker and the headteacher, who has oversight of personal progress. New targets and interests are discussed; careers information and guidance are shared well. Incident logs are also reviewed and communications with parents and carers are noted, including praise and commendations that occasionally include specific rewards.
- Punctuality is variable, notwithstanding that all students have above-average length journeys to make to get to the school. The staff agree that this does not yet prepare them well for college or employment and that a further target needs to be set for older students as a next step.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students when interviewed confirmed that they feel safe and that restraint is rarely used by staff and always recorded. Students are required to reflect on consequences that might be unsafe for themselves and others. They still need the support of adults to help them reflect on safety through use of a consequences log.
- Some students have prior patterns of misusing information and communications technology before coming to the school. They are being re-introduced to its use after a period of disapplication, in a safe and structured way. In discussions, they confirmed that they understand now how to keep themselves safe and use it for information research and writing in a positive way.
- Students are able to travel safely because travel plans are effective. They are learning well how to stay safe in differing situations. They are learning to appreciate the need for tolerance and the rule of law.
- The school teaches its students about how to avoid bullying. Students say there is no evidence of bullying.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching provides students with patient encouragement and high expectations as well as good levels of support. Students arrive with significant gaps in learning. The teaching helps them to re-engage with education to catch up with basic skills. Teachers have the confidence to stand back, where appropriate to do so, and allow students to make mistakes, so that they can learn from them and develop personal resilience.
- Teachers ensure that students have good access to varied activities through carefully constructed individual learning plans. Reading for pleasure and research is encouraged. This means teaching encourages students to understand information and develop their interests in topics chosen for later discussion.
- Teachers are not yet tracking or varying the types of social communication in the planned learning

situations. Students' skills of extended writing are not well developed, they can compare, but they do not write critically for another reader. Students' work is kept in portfolios so that it can be assessed regularly by teachers. However, older students are not given opportunities to reflect sufficiently on their personal achievements or develop writing skills needed to present their achievements effectively for college or future employment interview.

- Teachers' good training enables them to provide good levels of nurturing and therapeutic support. Their links with supporting welfare and safeguarding services are strong. This means that they meet students' needs effectively. The headteacher teaches all five students regularly and so leads this process through her own direct student contact and personalised understanding. The staff team together to determine student weekly timetables and change them according to students' needs and next steps. This underpins the good teaching which leads to the good progress students make.

### **The achievement of pupils**

**is good**

- Students make good progress from their starting points and develop positive attitudes to learning. This contributes strongly to their good achievement and well-being. All students enter the school with overall levels of attainment below those expected for their age or significant gaps in learning.
- All students are working on the BTEC 'My skills' units in catering. Assessment portfolios show consistent good progress. For instance, students showed good developing skills and understanding in their preparation of recipes. They prepared lean chicken with couscous and peppers followed by shortbread biscuits and a chocolate dipping sauce. They knew the main course was Moroccan and the dessert a variation on a Scottish recipe. They offered realistic estimates of what it might cost to purchase at a restaurant, based on value for money and presentation.
- The good tracking of students' progress shows that in all aspects of learning, over a range of subjects, they make good progress.
- Students make good progress through the school's careful exploration of their interests and aptitudes. Timetables include off-site locations, local visits and short-term work placements and these encourage students to develop interests and good skills beyond the academic.
- The school is now introducing standardised tests in English and mathematics to help it benchmark students' achievement further to assist with apprenticeship and college applications. These new assessments are already making a good impact on students' learning because they pinpoint precisely what the next steps should be.

## 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.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140655
<b>Inspection number</b>	454306
<b>DfE registration number</b>	999/1587

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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>	Secondary special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	SureCare Residential
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tess Boyes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£39,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01277 899955
<b>Email address</b>	Tess.boyes@surecareresidential.com



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