

The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, BN3 5HD

Inspection dates

2–4 June 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

- With calm determination, the headteacher has built a persuasive vision for the school which staff and students have embraced. As a result, during their time at the school, students make good gains in their learning.
- Students join the school with a history of fragmented school attendance and very significant gaps in their academic learning and social development. Despite this, during their time at the Lioncare they achieve well and grow to value greatly what the school can offer.
- Students' behaviour is good. Over time teachers and other adults work skilfully to help students rebuild their learning and self-esteem.
- Teachers and other adults know each student exceedingly well. Students benefit from a secure and well-resourced environment in which they feel confident to make mistakes in their learning and try again.
- Leaders and those in positions of governance have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know what needs improving in teaching, achievement and leadership and management and have taken necessary steps to address these effectively.
- There is a strong and successful emphasis on preparing students for their careers and life in modern Britain. This is very effectively re-enforced through enrichment opportunities which are linked to what the students study during the day.
- Teachers and other adults are excellent role models. Their calm and consistent approach to their interactions with students ensures that students new to the Lioncare quickly improve their social skills and coping mechanisms.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and other adults are very reflective. Their self-evaluation reflects a determination to support students' learning through self-knowledge and self-improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding achievement.
- Opportunities to develop further the middle leadership of the school are not yet exploited fully.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher (known as the school manager), the Executive director and an external school partnership adviser commissioned by the local authority on behalf of the proprietor. Meetings were also held with middle leaders and other staff, including managers from the Lioncare residential provision, working alongside teachers within the school.
- Inspectors observed each of the three classes at work across a range of subjects. They also spent time, at length, scrutinising exercise books to evaluate students’ work standards in depth.
- Students were spoken to individually or in small groups throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included information relating to students’ academic progress and welfare, including students’ education plans, risk assessments and admissions information including on-entry assessments.
- Inspectors evaluated leaders’ self-evaluation and school improvement plans, a range of policies, including health and safety, safeguarding and child protection procedures, behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff were checked. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum policy and schemes of work.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View survey for the inspectors to consider at the time of the inspection. Staff questionnaires were taken into account, alongside staff views gained through formal meetings and informal conversations.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Matthew Barnes	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Lioncare School is an independent special school for students who experience extreme behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school admits boys and girls and aims to provide 'a facilitating learning environment following the therapeutic community approach for children who have experienced severe emotional damage and trauma in infancy and early childhood'.
- The school is accommodated in a former printing workshop in a residential street in Hove.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school has been open since 1997 and is owned by Seafields Limited, trading as the Lioncare Group who also own the nearby children's homes in which all, but two, of the students live. All students are in the care of a local authority.
- The school is registered for up to 16 pupils, aged between seven and 16 years.
- There are 14 students on roll, aged between 7 and 16 years. Students are grouped in one of three class phases, according to their ages and stages of development.
- Students have histories of severely disrupted schooling and most have not attended education for long periods.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and healthcare plans. Pupils come from across England and their places are funded by their local authorities. All students are entitled to additional funding through the pupil premium. Some local authorities retain the primary sports funding and pupil premium funding.
- In September 2010, the Lioncare Group reorganised the school's curriculum and staffing, changed its name and brought in an increased emphasis on therapeutic aspects.
- The headteacher (known as the school manager) was appointed shortly before the last Ofsted inspection of the school in February 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that all teachers:
 - factor enough time in lessons to develop further students' creative writing skills
 - systematically follow up on errors of grammar, spelling or punctuation identified through their marking of students' work
 - build on best practice in exploiting fully opportunities to develop students' numeracy skills.
- Strengthen further the expertise and capacity of middle leaders and teachers by providing them with routine opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere, including in mainstream provision.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- 'The headteacher has transformed the ways in which school and residential staff work together to improve students' learning.' This view was consistently expressed by all staff with whom inspectors met. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, no student was entered for a formal examination of any kind. One staff member commented, 'In the past, we didn't do achievement, now we do.'
- All staff share a resolute vision to enable Lioncare students to leave fully equipped with the skills to succeed in the world of work and enjoy happy lives. Despite the significant barriers to learning that all students present on joining the school, staff members' response is consistent and unequivocal.
- Equality of opportunity is an important principle. Unacceptable behaviours or attitudes never go unchallenged; discrimination is not tolerated. For example, leaders do not use exclusion or withdrawal of enrichment activities as sanctions. As a result, students gain both in resilience and confidence.
- Over time, students' abilities to challenge themselves in their learning develop rapidly. In 2014, students were entered for GCSE examinations for the first time. This year, Year 11 students are attempting GCSE and other formal examinations, with maturity. Younger students now aspire similarly.
- Training to support teachers' understanding of how to manage effectively students' behaviour is thorough, well researched and valued by all. Similarly, the support provided by the headteacher to develop pedagogy and improve teachers' abilities to move students on in their learning has been well received. The latter did not take place in the past because academic achievement was not considered a priority.
- The teaching team is small and growing in expertise and effectiveness. Training and supervision are provided by the headteacher. Middle leadership is delivered through three teachers, each of whom is responsible for one of the three classes within the school. The team is well led by the headteacher who has empowered each team member to develop approaches that are tailored to the needs of their particular classes. However, opportunities to help these teachers learn from best practice in other schools are not yet routinely provided.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The range of subjects and activities on offer is broad and well suited to students' interests and future needs. A strong contribution is made to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including through enrichment activities; for example, a recent visit to a Catholic church was designed to provide students with an opportunity to understand the concept of spirituality, which one student described to inspectors as 'thought provoking'.
- There is a clear focus on promoting personal, health and citizenship education, as well as preparing students for their future lives and careers. Adults continually explain the relevance of learning and developing strong social skills to students' future employment prospects. Careers guidance is provided frequently by school staff in lessons and through review meetings. This helps students to develop ambition and to make informed choices.
- The suitability of staff to work with children is assured through safe recruitment practices and an up-to-date single central register of the adults employed. The school has effective systems in place for child protection to ensure all students are fully safeguarded. It meets statutory requirements.
- All students are entitled to additional pupil premium funding. Those in Key Stage 2 are also entitled to the primary sports premium funding. However, the school does not receive this funding for every student through the fees that local authorities pay. Nevertheless, leaders evaluate closely the impact spending has on each student's progress.
- Leaders work closely and effectively with placing authorities and foster families. Annual reviews and personal education plan reviews are convened according to appropriate timescales, and students' files are kept up to date with the most recent information. The school maintains regular telephone contact with carers, and handovers for those students who live in Lioncare residential homes are rigorous. Written reports, that include consideration of students' personal development, behaviour, relationships with peers as well as academic attainment, are completed three times per year.
- Schemes of work and policies are up to date, appropriate and regularly reviewed. A suitable complaints procedure is in place. School leaders demonstrate an acute awareness of the need to ensure that compliance with the Independent School Standards is maintained. A system of review to ensure compliance continues to strengthen is being implemented and monitored by the headteacher and director.

■ The governance of the school:

Governors are clear about the strengths in teaching and achievement. Since the previous Ofsted

inspection, governors have sought input from Brighton and Hove local authority to provide an external eye in moving the school forward. A school support adviser, commissioned on governors' behalf by the local authority, has provided judicious support and challenge. This has enabled governors to support the headteacher fully in strengthening performance management to address inadequate teaching and identify robust targets for all staff. Governors ensure that finances are well managed and that costs are clearly explained to placing authorities. They also ensure that the premises and accommodation of the school are maintained in good condition and the resources available to students and staff are suitable. In particular, the impact of resourcing, including primary sports premium and pupil premium funding in relation to each student's individual progress, is routinely evaluated.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- Students' behaviour is good. During students' journey through the school, teachers and other adults provide effective support and challenge to students in developing good attitudes and considerate behaviour at all times.
- Over time and as a result of other adults' and teachers' support, students respond positively and increasingly take responsibility for self-correcting and supporting each other to learn more effectively.
- Attendance is above average. Students trust their teachers and understand the value of learning how to self-regulate, so as to move forward to gain the social and academic skills and knowledge that they have been denied in the past.
- Leaders do not exclude students. Where incidents arise, staff show skill and expertise in their use of de-escalation techniques. In particular, whole school community meetings held at the beginning and end of each day, in which students express their fears, anxieties or positive thoughts, ensure their voice is heard and adults are able to respond quickly.
- Over time, teachers and other adults are highly effective in supporting students to improve their behaviour. This is demonstrated through the significant reductions in the need to physically restrain students on an individual basis.
- The behaviour policy emphasises the role of adults in helping students to learn. Students are encouraged to recognise the impact of their behaviours on others and what triggers an inappropriate response. The policy is consistently applied and understood by all. As they progress through the school, older students act as positive role models to the younger ones who, in turn, take their lead.
- The Independent School Standards relating to the development of positive behaviour, such as enabling students to learn right from wrong and respecting the law as well as regulations relating to the management of behaviour, are fully upheld.

Safety

- Leaders' work to keep students safe is good. Most students have had unhappy experiences of many schools prior to joining the Lioncare. All students demonstrate a keen sense of belonging, as evidenced in their excellent attendance.
- Students attest to feeling safe and place great trust in the staff, who they feel know them extremely well.
- Students enjoy opportunities for trips and enrichment activities. These are risk assessed robustly and adjusted where necessary. Each student has a personalised risk assessment which staff are able to use to recognise what triggers poor behaviour and what steps need to be taken should an incident arise.
- Students understand about the dangers of bullying, including homophobic bullying and cyber bullying. They know who to speak to should they experience such behaviour and actively challenge poor attitudes in each other, such as on a trip to a sports centre in which inappropriate comments were challenged.
- The Independent School Standards relating to safety are fully met.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good. Students are assessed on entry to the school and set social academic and academic targets in mathematics, literacy, reading, science and other subjects. Teachers use students' targets to inform their planning. In lessons, students show an awareness of their targets and are keen to progress and know how well they are doing.
- During lessons, across a range of subjects, teachers are adept at maintaining challenge and keeping students on task. They do not settle for second best or sub-standard levels of work. For example, in question and answer sessions, teachers seek amplification and other examples successfully. However, in a

few instances, not enough time is afforded to develop students' skills to write creatively at length.

- Inspectors found that students' work is regularly marked and assessed, with helpful feedback on what needs improving. However, in a few instances, where grammar and spelling are weak, these errors are not revisited for correction, either in the students' books or in the lessons observed.
- Teachers use their knowledge of individual students, combined with their subject expertise well, to move students forward in their learning. Classroom displays reflect the importance leaders attach to developing students' literacy, reading and mathematical skills. Observations of teaching and a full scrutiny of students' work revealed further examples of how teachers exploit effectively opportunities across all subjects to develop these necessary priorities.
- Leaders do not use supply staff. Instead they have taken the decision to train and utilise staff employed within the residential care provision to support students in their lessons. This works very well. Excellent communications between carers and teachers at morning and evening handovers, have created a shared understanding of how best to support and challenge students on an individual basis. As a result, over time, students grow in confidence and are better equipped to respond positively to unfamiliar concepts.
- Teachers' files reflect a strong commitment to evaluation of what works best with individual students. Lessons are carefully planned with the intention of capturing students' individual interests, while developing the necessary skills and knowledge. For example, during a humanities session, a student with a keen interest in weather systems was able to tell inspectors about his work on hurricanes, referencing the overnight tornado strike on a Chinese cruise ship which had capsized as a result.
- Full-time supervised education is provided. Leaders aim to foster self-motivation and focus on providing students with essential skills to succeed in their future lives. The Independent School Standards concerning the quality of teaching are met.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders set students challenging, but realistic, academic targets and monitor their progress towards them at regular intervals. This process ensures that students make good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects. In some instances, students' progress is excellent.
- Standards of attainment are below national norms for Key Stages 2, 3 and Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, gaps in the achievement of Lioncare students and others nationally are narrowing because students are now entered for GCSE or other formal examinations, whereas they were not entered for formal examinations at all in the past. Equally, target setting systems introduced since the previous inspection across both key stages ensure that, where students fail to progress, effective interventions are triggered.
- The more able students are identified and are supported to achieve well. Teachers provide them with additional challenge through a range of different tasks. In each of the classes they work confidently, often independently, seeking additional support where necessary.
- Each student at The Lioncare School has a statement of special educational needs. The requirements of their statements and healthcare plans are known to staff and are reflected in individual lesson plans, provision of resources and additional adult support. Students' progress in relation to their education and health plan targets is good because teachers routinely check how well each student is doing and adjust their teaching accordingly.
- All students at the Lioncare are disadvantaged and therefore entitled to pupil premium funding. As GCSE examination entry is relatively new to the school and numbers are small, it is not yet possible to compare students' GCSE results with those of other students nationally.
- In mathematics, exercise books of the students demonstrate that they have completed a significant quantity of work this academic year and are making progress at a pace that is helping them to make up for slow progress before joining the school. Overall, students' attainment in mathematics is low when compared to the expectations of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 nationally.
- Students' work in English demonstrates that, despite extremely low standards on entry, initial assessments are providing staff with a clear picture of the gaps in students' learning. Over time, schemes of work are followed and gaps in individual students' learning are addressed. Inspectors found evidence of good or rapid progress from very low starting points, enabling students to be able to aspire to GCSE examination entry by the time they reach Year 11.
- Residential care workers take a keen interest in supporting students to achieve well. Outside of school time, students are supported to complete homework and develop essential literacy, reading and numeracy skills. For example, the compilation of shopping lists and trips out to buy groceries provide

genuine opportunities to promote communication and reading skills, as well as experience of using money.

- Leaders have recently appointed a new sports coordinator. Students commented on the range of activities available to them, extending from boxing to badminton. These activities are valued highly by students because they know there will be an activity that has a personal appeal for each of them.
- The Independent School Standards relating to the achievement of students are met. In particular, the school's promotion of fundamental British values is a strength. The content of the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme has been reviewed and additional resources secured. Students have the opportunity to learn and make progress in academic and vocational subjects.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	131356
Inspection number	462875
DfE registration number	846/603
type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part time pupils	NA
Number of boarders on roll	12
Proprietor	Seafields Ltd.
Chair	Matt Vince
Headteacher	Sara Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 February 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,408
Telephone number	01273 734164
Email address	Schoolmanager@lioncare.co.uk

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