

White Trees Independent School

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

Inspection date

5 November 2015

Overall outcome

Unmet independent school standards identified

Reason for the inspection

- This emergency inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) following a complaint about the behaviour and supervision of pupils at the school.
- The school was given no notice of this inspection.
- The focus of the inspection was the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school.
- The HMI met with the Principal, a member of the proprietorial body and staff. Discussions were held on the phone with local authority representatives. Pupils were observed during a lesson and at informal times. Documents were scrutinised, including health and safety policies, logs of incidents and accidents, and the single central register of checks on staff.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in February 2015 and was the school's first inspection. At that time, all aspects of the school's work were judged as good.

Main findings

- Staff do not have sufficient written guidance to inform them of their responsibilities to protect pupils from harm, including exploitation and radicalisation. The safeguarding policy on the school's website explains some of the arrangements made to safeguard pupils. Staff have been given most of the recent guidance to safeguard pupils, and have had recent training to update their knowledge and understanding of what is required. But the safeguarding policy is misleading and incomplete because much of the guidance it refers to is significantly out of date.
- The behaviour policy is suitably clear about the school's approach and practice for managing pupils' behaviour but it has not been implemented effectively. This, compounded by over-reliance on a succession of supply staff, led to significant deterioration of pupils' behaviour between June and October 2015.
- On too many occasions, pupils' behaviour and poor supervision by staff put pupils and staff in danger of significant harm. On several occasions, emergency services were called to attend to disorder, injuries to staff and pupils, and damage to property.
- The school closed for a day in September 2015 to repair damage to the building.
- The Principal and proprietors acknowledge the shortfalls in behaviour management and supervision of pupils. Staff's practice has been reviewed, new staff appointed very recently, and new monitoring arrangements have been put in place by the Principal and proprietors.
- On the day of this inspection, there was a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Pupils' behaviour was managed appropriately and staff said they feel confident to manage pupils' behaviour. The accommodation was clean and tidy and there were hardly any signs of damage. Resources were in good condition. Displays and other examples of pupils' work showed care and pride in what was produced.
- There have been no incidents of serious inappropriate behaviour since October 2015 but it is too soon to determine whether the improvements are sustained.

- Written records of accidents and incidents are not completed well. There is often insufficient detail to provide a clear, impartial record of what took place and what happened after the event.
- There is a suitable risk assessment policy but the proprietor identified recently that risks are not identified or followed up systematically. This has been addressed through more frequent monitoring by the Principal and proprietor.
- Risks are identified and plans put in place to address pupils' anxieties but, since the previous inspection, the plans have not always been adhered to well enough. The Principal has worked with staff recently to revise pupils' individual risk assessments and behaviour plans.
- The single central register of checks on staff members' suitability to work with children shows most of the checks. The Principal and proprietor explained the checks made to determine whether staff are disqualified, barred or prohibited from working with children. These checks are kept in staff members' files but are not recorded, as required, on the single central register.
- The single central register shows that all staff and proprietors have appropriate checks for their identity, qualifications, right to work in the United Kingdom, additional checks if they have worked abroad and an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils at the school have regard to any guidance issued by the secretary of state (paragraph 7, 7(b)).
- The proprietor must promote good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that the written behaviour policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9, 9(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff (paragraph 14).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the effective implementation of the written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- The proprietor must keep a register which shows that a check was made to establish whether each member of staff is barred from regulatory activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act; whether each member of staff is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such direction; and whether each member of staff is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which each check was completed (paragraph 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(6)).

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- The school opened in February 2014 and is registered with the DfE as an independent day special school for a maximum of six male and female pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years with behavioural, emotional and social needs.
- There are currently five pupils on roll and each pupil is looked after by a local authority.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

School details

Unique reference number	140655
Inspection number	10008583
DfE registration number	881/6053

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Proprietor	SureCare Residential
Chair	Simon Barr
Principal	Tess Boyes
Date of previous school inspection	24–26 February 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01277 899 9355
Email address	tess.boyes@whitetrees-school.com

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