

Kestrel House School

104 Crouch Lane, Crouch End, London NW8 9EA

Inspection dates

3–4 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress from very low starting points.
- The interim headteacher, staff and governors are passionate about ensuring that all pupils receive a personalised curriculum that meets their personal needs as well as securing good academic outcomes.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and staff are proactive in providing timely support for any pupil presenting poor behaviour.
- Pupils' safety is a priority and they are made aware of 'stranger danger'. They know that they should say no to those who ask them to hurt others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. They have many opportunities to develop their understanding of fundamental British values.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide effective support and challenges.
- Early years provision is good.
- Leaders have ensured that the school complies with all the independent school standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers are confident in teaching science.
- Younger pupils are not always provided with activities that enable them to make rapid progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide a range of activities that engage and motivate younger pupils to learn so that they make the best possible progress.
- Provide training so that all staff have the necessary skills and confidence to teach science effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **is good**

- Leadership and management are good. The interim headteacher has significant experience and an excellent understanding of how best to meet the complex needs of pupils. She works very closely with senior staff, who share her ambition to achieve excellence in all aspects of the school's work.
- The interim headteacher has provided good training opportunities for the lead teacher in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, thus developing her role as a middle leader. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- New staff are well supported to improve their teaching skills. However, further training is needed to ensure younger pupils are given a range of stimulating activities to motivate them to engage and improve behaviour and learning.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are thorough. Staff are set targets that are closely linked to pupils' outcomes. Staff training and development are very effective and are linked to school priorities as well as to teachers' own individual needs. Staff morale is high, as demonstrated by the overwhelmingly positive response in staff questionnaires.
- The range of subjects is well matched to pupils' needs. All pupils have their individualised programmes that are tailored to their needs. There is a good focus on teaching basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and science. As a result pupils make good progress. Commercially produced programmes are used effectively to enrich and extend pupils' personal development to enable them to achieve externally accredited courses.
- The school's assessment procedures are robust. Pupils are assessed when they join the school both for their behaviour needs and academic competency. Progress is monitored regularly and the school's information shows that most pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the commercially produced curriculum and celebrations such as Chinese New Year. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about fundamental British values when they learn about different occupations, and visit museums and local places of interest, such as shops, libraries and museums.
- Welfare, safety and security are good. All pupils, particularly those who find it hard to distinguish between what is safe and what is not, are regularly made aware of 'stranger danger' and reminded to say no if anyone asks them to hurt others. Staff make pupils aware of the danger of radicalisation and extremism through this concept.
- The school prepares audited accounts for the income and expenditure in respect of the fees the local authorities pay for a placement at the school.
- The interim headteacher works closely with a nearby maintained Catholic school, which provides very good opportunities for pupils to extend their social skills.
- There were two responses to the online parents' questionnaire, but the inspector spoke to three parents. They are happy with the education and the safety of their children.
- Leaders including the governors have ensured that all the required regulations for independent schools are met.

The governance of the school

- The governors are very closely involved in the work of the school. They are very knowledgeable and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas still to be improved. They have high expectations and support and challenge leaders robustly in all aspects of their work.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All policies and procedures are regularly updated and well implemented. These are put on the website to keep parents informed. Leaders ensure that all the required checks are made on staff before they start work at the school. All staff have attended appropriate training for child protection. Fire evacuations are completed termly and most staff are trained in first aid. Arrangements for recording admissions and destinations of pupils who leave the school are accurately recorded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teaching is good across the school. The high pupil to staff ratio is used effectively to support learning and behaviour. Staff know their pupils' needs well and quickly support them before any behaviour deteriorates; consequently lessons are not interrupted.
- Staff use their good subject knowledge to plan engaging activities that keep pupils interested in their

learning. They have an accurate understanding of what level pupils are working at and provide appropriate tasks and activities. As a result pupils make good progress. For example, in one session pupils were fully engaged in playing with water – observing it going down the water wheel, sieving it to see it raining and filling a bucket with a cup. This engagement led to good behaviour and learning.

- Well-developed learning arrangements in the outdoor area for younger pupils are not used effectively to capture their interests and enrich learning. All staff do not use materials and resources effectively to consistently engage younger pupils in their learning.
- Assessment procedures for both behaviour and academic progress are rigorous. Staff use assessment information to plan next steps in pupils' learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and pupils are helped to develop good attitudes towards their learning.
- The development of the pupils' language and communication skills is central to staff's work. All staff are skilled in using a wide range of signs and pictures, as well as verbal communication, to make sure that pupils fully understand their work and the tasks set. This enables pupils to make good progress.
- Staff continually reinforce the development of good numeracy and literacy skills. In one lesson, pupils were observed to learn the sound and the name of the letter 'd' and were given a range of resources to practise writing that developed their engagement and enjoyment of learning.
- Teaching is not outstanding because not all teachers use assessment information well to set work at the correct level for all younger pupils. When this occurs, pupils' progress slows.
- Staff use a range of visits to the local areas and museums to further enrich learning. Visitors are also invited to talk about their life experiences, such as employees from a local bank.
- All independent school standards for teaching, learning and assessment are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Policies and procedures for the welfare of pupils are implemented effectively. There is a calm atmosphere in the school and pupils enjoy being there.
- Pupils' personal development is delivered through an effective programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils are made aware of how to keep themselves safe from bullying or extremist behaviour. The school's records show that there have not been any exclusions. Incidents of challenging behaviour are recorded and information is used effectively to monitor and support those needing additional help.
- Relationships with staff are strong, pupils like coming to school and their attendance is good. They all come to school on time. Thus learning time is used effectively.
- The school has good transition procedures in place and these prepare pupils well for the next stage of their learning when they leave the school.
- Parents and staff agree that school keeps their children safe.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards for personal development, welfare and safety are met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All pupils enter the school with complex needs. Most settle down quickly because staff are well trained in managing behaviour and emotional needs.
- Staff are proactive in supporting behaviour. Positive behaviour is rewarded and once pupils achieve their targets they are given opportunities to choose activities that relax them so that they are ready for the next task. A pupil was seen to play with dough and another used a laptop. This motivated the pupils to get ready for the next activity.
- Pupils' behaviour during breaktime is outstanding. The outdoor area is very attractive, with a colourful surface and attractive climbing equipment. Staff supervision is very good and adults join in with pupils' games. One adult was seen blowing bubbles that captivated pupils' attention and they hugely enjoyed chasing them. Pupils enjoy eating their packed healthy lunches in the hall. The whole atmosphere was seen to be calm and peaceful.
- Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Any lapses in concentration are handled well. The behaviour is not yet outstanding, as some younger pupils are not consistently given activities that engage them well in learning.
- All the independent standards for this aspect of the school are met.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. When pupils join the school, they have very low levels of attainment and poor standards of behaviour. All pupils are assessed in both their personal and academic abilities. As a result, a programme is drawn up that is tailored meet their individual needs so that they behave well and make good progress.
- Staff help pupils to be able to communicate and they do this successfully through the use of signs and symbols. For example, during the inspection staff were observed teaching members of the student council how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism. Here staff showed pupils how to use symbols and words, appropriate to their ability, in order to say no to those who want to hurt others.
- The basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are measured against P scales and National Curriculum Levels. Older more able pupils are able to read simple storybooks fluently and can add and subtract numbers beyond 20 and know the names of simple shapes.
- Younger pupils make good progress in their communication skills and can point out pictures that teach them 'good sitting' and 'good listening'. They learn to concentrate and engage in work, when given appropriate and exciting activities.
- Older pupils take accreditation in PSHE through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) curriculum. The school has introduced accreditation in literacy and numeracy through the Assessment Qualification Alliance (AQA) Unit Award Scheme. This is a recent initiative and it is too early to assess its impact.
- Monitoring information shows that there is no difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils in the school. This includes those who learn English as an additional language, and those who are from different ethnic communities. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Pupils visit the schools they are going to join and have many opportunities to meet their new teachers.
- All the independent school requirements related to pupils' outcomes are met.

Early years provision

is good

- There is currently only one child on roll in the early years provision. The child is following an individualised curriculum tailored to needs, interests and abilities.
- It is not possible to comment on the achievement or behaviour of the child, as it would identify the child.
- The strengths and weaknesses outlined in the other sections of the report apply equally to the early years provision, which is good.

School details

Unique reference number	135683
Inspection number	10008529
DfE registration number	309/6002
Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Graham McEwan
Headteacher	Rosalind Norton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,950–£48,000
Telephone number	020 8348 8500
Website	www.kestrelhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@kestrelhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2013

Information about this school

- Kestrel House School is an independent special school which was registered in September 2008 and is a part of the Acorn Care and Education group of schools. It is located in a large detached house which had previously been a stage school, in a residential area of north London.
- There are currently 23 pupils on roll of which there are five girls and 18 boys. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. These are related to autistic spectrum disorders and associated difficulties and conditions, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mood disorders, mental health issues and other learning difficulties.
- Some pupils have been out of full-time education prior to attending the school.
- Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities.
- Over half the pupils come from minority ethnic communities and one in 10 pupils speak English as an additional language. There are no pupils who are eligible for the premium pupil funding.
- The interim headteacher was appointed in September 2015, having previously been the deputy headteacher in the school from September 2014. She will remain as an interim headteacher until the end of the academic year.
- An on-site multi-disciplinary team consists of a senior occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist and a clinical psychologist.
- The school does not use off-site training.
- The school's aim is to value, support and empower individuals with autism to reach their full potential in life through multi-disciplinary intervention and personalised education.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed eight lessons, and a learning walk was conducted through all classes. All but one lesson was observed jointly with the interim headteacher. Pupils' work in folders and in learning journeys was evaluated.
- Teachers' planning and assessment information was scrutinised.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed throughout the inspection days, including break and lunchtimes. Records of behaviour in incident books and the use of physical intervention logs were also examined.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors, interim headteacher, senior lead for teaching and learning, the school psychologist and a member of staff responsible for risk assessments.
- School policies and other documentation were examined on the website and through hard copies presented in the school.
- A meeting was held with the school councillors in the presence of the senior teacher and a teaching assistant.
- The views of 15 staff who returned their questionnaires were analysed.
- The inspector spoke to three parents, two on the telephone and one in person. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate any meaningful analysis.

Inspection team

Kanwaljit Singh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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