

The Small School

Fore Street, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6AB

Inspection dates

10 March 2016

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the registration authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan. This was the school's first progress monitoring visit. It was conducted without notice.
- This inspection monitored the progress the school has made in complying with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'). The inspector met with teachers, trustees and parents and scrutinised the school's documents. The inspector had discussions with representatives from Devon local authority. The headteacher was not available during the inspection and some information, including that relating to leadership and safeguarding, could not be made available in her absence.
- At the previous inspection of 22 May 2015, the school was judged to be inadequate in all areas of its provision and several independent school standards were not met. The unmet independent school standards were related to the quality of education provided, pupils' welfare, health and safety, and the quality of leadership at the school. These areas were the focus of this inspection.
- The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education on 2 September 2015, to address the concerns raised. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 1 October 2015. It was found to require improvement because the proposed actions did not fully address all of the unmet standards.
- The school submitted a second action plan to the Department for Education on 27 November 2015, to address the concerns raised. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 22 December 2015. It was also found to require improvement because the proposed actions and timescales did not fully address all of the unmet standards.

Main findings

Quality of education provided

- In line with the school's action plan the headteacher has started to observe teaching and learning in lessons. Records show that this activity has been used to identify strengths and areas where individual teachers need further support or professional development. It was not possible to judge the impact that this work has had on raising teachers' aspirations and pupils' progress during this inspection visit. It was also not possible to see how effectively the headteacher and trustees are ensuring that pupils are making good or better progress.
- Teachers are now considering the different levels of pupils' ability in the classes they teach to plan activities and work to aid in improving pupils' learning. However, pupils' work shows that pupils do not learn quickly enough how to spell, punctuate and use grammar correctly.
- It was not possible during this inspection to determine how learning increases in depth over the three-year period of Years 7, 8 and 9 in all of the required areas of the curriculum. Each teacher has their own assessment system. In the records kept for physical education, it was clear to see the progress that pupils were making across a range of different physical skills; this was not evident for all the required curriculum areas. The school was unable to provide evidence to show how the headteacher and trustees are monitoring the impact of the curriculum on pupils' progress.
- Pupils now have a dedicated member of staff working with them as a mentor. Together they have drawn up individual targets for the pupils that are specific to their needs. These targets are

shared centrally, but are very new. It is not clear how the headteacher will check and monitor the targets to ensure that they are suitably challenging and are used to raise pupils' achievements.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- The school now has an appropriate sanctions and behaviour log in place. To date it has not been used.
- Records for the application of first aid are now appropriately kept. During this inspection they were witnessed by the inspector to be deployed appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Staff have now received appropriate training in first aid and safeguarding. The school has provided staff with further online training that also covers other aspects, such as assessment. The headteacher has rightly made some of the available training courses mandatory to all staff. It is not clear how she and the trustees intend to measure the impact of all of this training. The expected completion date for the mandatory courses was not clear.

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The school has taken some appropriate action in response to the previous inspection of May 2015. For example, personal, social and health education is now taught to all year groups, and policies have been reviewed and updated in line with statutory guidance. Staff have been willing to adapt to new ways of working. They and the trustee have given time to undertake further training. However, the outcomes still fall short of what is required to meet all of the independent school standards.
- Members of staff and trustees were collaborative and helpful during this inspection. However, in the absence of the headteacher, those in charge of the school could not provide the inspector with all of the required information relating to the quality of education provided, and the welfare, health and safety of pupils. This over-reliance on the headteacher compromises the health and safety of pupils and staff.
- Leaders and trustees are still not ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effectively implemented. Both the admissions register and attendance register did not contain all of the required information about pupils. There is an updated and appropriate risk assessment policy on the school's website, dated 31 August 2015. However, there was no evidence provided by the school to demonstrate that this document is being effectively implemented.
- Since the previous inspection of May 2015, the school has worked appropriately with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and to meet their individual needs. For example, pupils with a statement of special educational needs now have an education, health and care plan.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- Ensure that a written policy on the curriculum is drawn up and implemented effectively, and that it is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraphs 2(1) and 2(1)(a))
- Ensure that pupils are enabled to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- Demonstrate that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3(g))
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b))
- Ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15)
- Ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up

and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraphs 16(a) and 16(b))

- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs (34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	113611
Inspection number	10013146
DfE registration number	878/6036

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	Secondary day
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Small School
Chair	Mary Billson
Headteacher	Helen Finn
Date of previous school inspection	20–22 May 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,350–£2,750
Telephone number	01237 441672
Email address	office@thesmallschool.org.uk

Information about this school

- The Small School is a co-educational, non-selective independent school for students aged 11 to 16 years.
- The school was established in 1982 by a cooperative of parents and carers who wished to provide a secondary education on a small scale.
- The aim of the school is to 'promote education in a small community where learning takes place in a nurturing and creative atmosphere, where human scale values are promoted for the development of individual talent, the acquisition of new skills and a sense of social responsibility'.
- The school is located in former chapel premises in Hartland, North Devon.
- A board of trustees, which includes parents, has responsibility for the governance of the school.
- There are 13 pupils on roll. Pupils often join and leave the school at a variety of different times during the school year.
- There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not make use of any off-site alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected on 22 May 2015.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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