

Coln House School

Horcott Road, Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4DB

Inspection dates

24–26 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Inadequate
Quality of care and support in the residential provision	Inadequate
How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision	Inadequate
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have not implemented and monitored the school's safeguarding policies and systems effectively to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff lack the necessary training and guidance they need to ensure that pupils are safe in school and in the residential provision.
- The number of incidents of physical restraint continues to be high and the recording of incidents of physical restraint is of a poor quality. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to reflect on and improve their behaviour following restraint.
- The capacity of senior leaders to drive improvement is inadequate. The school has only recently identified members of staff with the skills to support the headteacher in her work. Currently, the headteacher is alone in bringing about improvement.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Standards identified as unmet at the previous inspection of the residential provision continue to be so.
- The school's work to provide effectively for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate. Systems to identify and manage potential risk, both in the school and in the residential provision, are underdeveloped and putting pupils in danger.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable from lesson to lesson and across different subjects.
- Until recently, staff have not received the training and guidance they need to improve the quality of their work. As a result, pupils' progress is not consistently good in all subjects.
- The curriculum is not effectively focused on building pupils' self-confidence and resilience. Pupils have little access to therapy to ensure that they make progress in their personal as well as academic development.
- Governors' work to safeguard pupils in the school and the residential provision is inadequate.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's focus on improving pupils' attendance has resulted in fewer absences in the current academic year.
- The quality of work in art and design and in technology is very high. Pupils achieve high standards in these subjects.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Compliance with national minimum standards for boarding schools (if BS)/residential special schools (if RSS)

- The school must ensure it meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools that have not been met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of the school's policies to safeguard pupils and for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors robustly check that the school's agreed policies are being effectively implemented
 - risk assessments are recorded, are of high quality and are regularly checked by leaders
 - pupils are fully involved in the actions taken following a serious incident, including incidents involving physical restraint, to ensure that their behaviour improves over time
 - staff analyse and record information following incidents where pupils display challenging behaviour, particularly those involving physical restraint
 - staff receive the training they need to be able to keep pupils safe in school and in the residential provision.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - a robust leadership structure that clearly identifies leaders' roles with clear lines of accountability is established immediately
 - leaders develop their skills so that they can support the headteacher effectively in checking and improving the learning, progress and behaviour of pupils
 - the school's improvement plans include precisely focused targets with clear timescales so that leaders and governors can frequently and rigorously check the impact of their actions
 - leaders hold staff to account for improving their pupils' academic achievement and personal development
 - the curriculum is effectively planned to support pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing high-quality training for all staff, and especially those new to the school, to enable them to develop their teaching and behaviour management skills further
 - sharing the best practice already in the school
 - ensuring that teachers' planning and the work set are based on accurate assessments of what pupils know, can do and understand
 - ensuring that the school's agreed approaches to giving feedback help pupils to understand how to improve their work.

■ The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

5.4	Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them.
6.2	The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
6.3	The school ensures 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.
9.3	Reasonable protection is provided for children's personal possessions and for any children's money or valuables looked after by the school. (This is in relation to personal possessions and valuables being available to the young people in their rooms, but safely secured.)
10.2	Children take part in age appropriate activities as would normally be permitted by the parent in relation to their children or as outlined in any placement plan. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put children at risk of harm. Decision-making should be undertaken from the perspective of a reasonable parent.
11.1	The school ensures that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and ■ such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
12.1	The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying and to promote positive behaviour; ■ school rules; ■ disciplinary sanctions; ■ when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and ■ arrangements for searching children and their possessions.
12.3	Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidents of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed.
12.4	Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of restraint, including reasonable force. Restraint, including reasonable force, is only used in exceptional circumstances to prevent injury to any person, including the child, or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person, including the child's, or to prevent the child leaving the school's premises where this may lead to the child injuring themselves or others. Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate.
12.5	All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by.
12.6	A written record is kept of all major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (This is in relation to records of restraint not showing young people's views, or how learning gained from a record of restraint informs risk assessments for children and young people.)

13.1	The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
13.6	Staff with management responsibilities have an adequate level of experience or training in the management and practice of boarding to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
13.7	The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1.
17.2	Active steps are taken to enable all children to make their views known, to make everyday choices and to maximise their opportunities to develop independence. The school should not assume that any child is unable to communicate their views and should support children to participate in important decisions about their lives using means appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
21.1	The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan specifies the needs of the child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the local authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plan, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision is inadequate

How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They have not implemented robust policies and systems and provided the training to enable staff to keep pupils safe. Incidents which occur often result in physical restraint. The response to these incidents lacks analysis, detailed recording and effective follow up to improve pupils' behaviour, compromising pupils' safety in the school and in the residential provision.
- All aspects of the school's performance have declined sharply since the previous inspection. A lack of skilled senior leaders, combined with long-term absences of key staff and ineffective external support, has contributed to this decline. The newly appointed headteacher immediately identified the serious shortcomings in the school's effectiveness. She has set about improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with the support of the school's newly appointed school improvement adviser. However, the capacity of other senior leaders is limited. Their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. This is slowing the pace of improvement.
- Health and safety procedures are inadequate. The inspectors found that leaders do not check that risk assessments, and particularly those for off-site visits, are in place to keep pupils safe.
- The newly appointed headteacher's focus on raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has identified areas for improvement. She is aspirational for the pupils. However, other leaders do not support the headteacher in checking the quality of learning and the progress pupils make. As a result, teachers are not receiving the ongoing feedback and training they need to ensure their teaching is at least typically good or better.
- The headteacher has planned how the identified improvements can be made. However, the plans lack precise intended outcomes and recorded timescales. Leaders are not able to check the impact of their actions frequently and rigorously. Systems to hold staff to account for the academic and personal development of their pupils are not being implemented effectively. As a result, the pace of improvement is too slow.
- It is strongly recommended that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The headteacher has identified staff ready to 'step up' to senior leader roles. However, this work is at the early stages of development and has not yet had any impact on improving the school's performance.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are in place. However, these arrangements have not brought about the rapid improvements required in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better across the school.
- The curriculum is not meeting the needs of all the pupils. The focus on developing pupils' academic achievement is improving outcomes. However, the curriculum is not effective in developing pupils' personal and emotional skills. They do not receive the support they need to learn how to manage their frustrations and develop the emotional intelligence and resilience they need to achieve in both their academic and personal development. This is not preparing them well enough for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Leaders plan opportunities to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Assemblies cover topics such as learning about other religions and understanding democracy and British values. The school is planning an election to cover the European Union referendum to deepen pupils' understanding of the importance of voting. In addition, the school council has made decisions to improve the school. This work is enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding effectively to support pupils' learning in English. As a result of good teaching, work in pupils' books confirms that they are making faster progress this year and making up lost ground from previous years.

- Pupils receive physical education teaching each week from a specialist instructor. Although pupils learn a range of new skills and sports, this work is not having sufficient impact on pupils' personal development and behaviour.
- The local authority recognised that the school required significant support. However, the support provided by the local authority has not led to sufficient improvement in the weaknesses identified.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. This is because governors have not ensured that effective policies are being implemented and their impact is being monitored rigorously to help keep pupils safe. They do not check robustly that record-keeping is of a high quality or being used successfully to plan strategies to improve pupils' behaviour. As a result, the frequency of incidents is not reducing.
 - The headteacher, school improvement consultant and governors have worked together effectively to identify the school's serious shortcomings in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Minutes of meetings confirm that the chair of the standards committee is using her personal experience and significant expertise to plan appropriate actions to improve the work of the school. Although the quality of teaching and learning is improving, the pace of improvement is being slowed by the lack of support available to the headteacher from other leaders.
 - The governors are involved in the performance management of the headteacher and staff. This year, they have not shied away from taking difficult decisions. Also, they have ensured that the pupil premium and catch-up funding have been used to good effect to improve pupils' outcomes.
 - Training provided by the local authority for the governing body has not resulted in robust and effective safeguarding arrangements.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Following her appointment, the headteacher prioritised the need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment urgently. Although improvements have been made, the quality of teaching remains variable across and within subjects. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress they are capable of in all subjects.
- The headteacher has focused on developing teachers' skills to assess pupils' learning accurately. Teachers now establish pupils' starting points and check their progress termly. They increasingly plan activities which build on what pupils know, can do and understand. The most able pupils are being challenged to achieve higher standards. This is helping to prepare them for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Nonetheless, further training is required to ensure that all teachers, and especially those new to the school, can use assessment information to consistently plan activities which result in good learning and progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows that not all teachers are using the school's agreed approaches to providing feedback to pupils. Consequently, pupils do not always know how to improve their work.
- Adults work hard to build effective relationships with pupils, which most pupils acknowledge and appreciate. However, where lessons lack challenge and do not interest and engage pupils sufficiently, pupils do not behave well and this poor behaviour is not dealt with consistently by staff. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The governors have recently recruited several new members to the teaching staff. Although some initial training is in place, this is not sufficient to ensure that teachers can effectively 'hit the ground running'. When they start at the school, they are not equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the school's approaches to teaching and learning or the management of pupils' behaviour. This is slowing improvements in teaching.
- The headteacher has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and learn. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils carefully to extend their thinking and understanding. For example, in English, the teacher planned a series of lessons to develop vocabulary, sentence construction and accurate use of punctuation. As a result, pupils learn to write confidently and at length, applying their skills with increasing confidence. Work in pupils' mathematics books confirms a similar picture. Pupils are building their skills steadily and are achieving higher standards than in the previous year.
- The school has developed links with the local secondary school in Fairford. As a result, teachers share good

practice, such as joint moderation of pupils' work in art. In addition, teachers from Farmor's School come to Coln House to deliver specialist teaching, for example in food technology. Inspectors observed high-quality work and outcomes in this subject. Almost all pupils achieve well at GCSE in art or design and technology.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. The school does not ensure that all significant risks have been carefully assessed and actions put into place to reduce possible dangers. As a result, pupils are not being kept safe at Coln House School.
- Leaders use the services and agencies such as mental health services available in Gloucestershire to support pupils' personal development and welfare. However, not all pupils receive the therapy they need to support their personal development needs. For example, few are receiving support to learn to manage their anxieties, frustrations and challenging behaviour. This is not supporting positive improvements in their behaviour and self-esteem.
- Some staff working in both the school and in the residential provision reported their individual concerns regarding pupils' safety through the staff questionnaire. These responses confirmed that they have worries that pupils are not being kept safe at this school.
- The school's personal, social and health education programme is preparing pupils for the next stage of their education. However, although pupils told inspectors that staff do deal with any bullying, not all pupils report that they feel safe and listened to.
- The school has recently held an e-safety learning day. Pupils can clearly explain how to stay safe when using the internet and gave inspectors mature and sensible suggestions.

Behaviour

- The management of pupils' behaviour is inadequate.
- The school has focused on reducing the very high number of incidents involving physical restraint, particularly in the school. Records show the number of incidents is reducing. However, the school's approach to recording incidents is of poor quality. No helpful analysis is carried out to spot patterns or triggers in pupils' behaviours which result in physical restraint. In addition, staff do not seek pupils' reflections to contribute to reviews of incidents. This does not help pupils to feel valued or to help them understand how to change or modify their behaviour.
- Pupils proudly accepted rewards and certificates for good behaviour and achievement in an assembly during the inspection. This contributes successfully to developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. However, the lack of clear systems for staff to follow when more serious incidents occur does not provide consequences and a very clear structure that pupils need to ensure that their behaviour markedly improves over time.
- Behaviour at lunchtimes and breaktimes is variable. During the inspection, inspectors observed pupils going onto the school roof. Analysis of record-keeping confirms that the school's policies to follow up these incidents are not effective in reducing their frequency. Consequently, pupils are not being kept safe.
- As a result of a focus on attendance, records show a marked improvement. Most pupils now attend regularly. Pupils in Year 11 who spoke to inspectors had a clear plan in place for when they leave school. Improved outcomes are helping them to achieve their aspirations. The school avoids using exclusion where possible.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are variable. Where teaching is typically good, pupils settle and learn effectively in subjects such as English, art, and design and technology. Where teaching does not engage and interest pupils, lessons are interrupted by poor behaviour, slowing the progress of individual pupils.
- Parents who completed the online questionnaire are mostly pleased with the education their children are receiving.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The headteacher's priority to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes. Many join the school with English and mathematical skills well below those expected for their age. In addition, some pupils have been out of education for significant amounts of time. They are not 'ready to learn' and take time to settle and develop resilience and a positive attitude to learning. Where teaching is typically strong, pupils are calm and make progress.
- The work seen in pupils' books, during lessons and displayed in classrooms, confirms pupils are now making faster progress in English and mathematics. Pupils in Year 10 sat GCSE mathematics early during the inspection. The headteacher has high expectations and expects all pupils to achieve a GCSE in English or mathematics, or accreditation relevant to their ability. This is resulting in pupils attending regularly and being increasingly well prepared to access the more challenging qualifications.
- The most able Year 11 pupils are on track to achieve the higher grades at GCSE. They told inspectors that they plan to go on to local colleges or to the secondary school in the town to do A levels. Pupils now have higher expectations of what they can achieve. The number of pupils going on to the next stage of education, training or employment has improved this academic year.
- Pupils do not make the same good progress in all subjects. As a result of changes in staff and high levels of staff absence, pupils are not receiving the high-quality teaching they require across the curriculum.
- Pupils in the primary phase join the school with significant learning and behaviour needs. However, the work seen in their books shows that most pupils build knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, pupils wrote letters persuading the school to have a puppy. They learn to write in sentences and use simple punctuation. In mathematics, pupils begin to use their understanding of number to solve problems. Over time, pupils make at least expected progress from low starting points.
- Pupils learn to read, although some are reluctant to read for pleasure. Pupils in Years 6 and 10 read to inspectors during the inspection. They read with fluency and understanding, using their knowledge of the sounds letters make to decode unknown words. The school's focus on supporting all pupils to read is helping them to successfully access the curriculum in other subjects.
- The progress of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is tracked using the school's more rigorous assessment systems. The school's information and work in books show that these pupils make at least expected progress from their starting points, with some making more than expected progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Standards in art and design and technology are very high. Pupils respond extremely positively in these lessons and make very good progress. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11, who show an interest in these subjects, are on track to achieve high grades in GCSE examinations.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision

is inadequate

- The safety and protection of pupils in this school is not given a high enough priority and their welfare is not assured. As a result, the provision is inadequate.
- The residential provision is not well organised. Managers do not fully understand the emotional, social and welfare needs of pupils. Attachment issues are not fully understood and there is no clear understanding of what constitutes good care.
- Effective strategies are not in place to manage difficult behaviour. The quality of reflective practice following serious incidents does not support a reduction in restraint or improvement in the behaviour of pupils. Behaviour management and incident records are not consistently accurate and do not provide sufficient detail to allow for effective independent scrutiny.
- One of the residential areas has been recently refurbished to a reasonable standard. The majority of residential accommodation remains of a poor quality and does not provide a homely setting for residential pupils.
- A breakdown in relationships with some local authority partners and agencies adversely impacts on effective working together to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.
- National minimum standards are not fully met.

Quality of care and support in the residential provision is inadequate

- Residential pupils' individual support and development needs are not identified. The school does not have residential care plans or personal and social development targets in place for residential pupils. It is not clear what, if any, preparation for independence is in place. In particular, there is insufficient planning and review to ensure that residential pupils have the opportunities to develop the emotional, social and interpersonal skills needed to make a success of adult life.
- Recreational activities are limited. There has been some improvement that has enabled a small number of pupils to gain access to community youth groups. Regular opportunities to learn new purposeful leisure skills and interact with peers in the local community remain limited.
- Additional care staff have been employed to support and supplement the numbers of experienced and qualified staff available to residential pupils. This has improved the number of adults available to support pupils.
- The dining facilities offer a good range and choice of food to pupils and staff.
- National minimum standards 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 21 and 22 are not fully met.

School details

Unique reference number	115812
Social care unique reference number	SC040533
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10017558

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential special school
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of boarders on roll	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Knox
Headteacher	Debra Henderson
Telephone number	01285 712308
Website	http://colnhouseschool.org
Email address	headteacher@colnhouse.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- Coln House School provides for pupils with social, emotional or mental health needs.
- The majority of the pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- All pupils attending Coln House School have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2015.
- The school had its last inspection in February 2013. At this time, the overall effectiveness was judged to be good. The most recent inspection of the school's residential provision took place in January 2016, when the overall experiences and progress of children and young people were found to require improvement.
- The school does not make use of any off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms on both days of the inspection to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, in the residential provision in the evenings, at break and lunchtimes and during lessons and spoke with pupils and staff throughout the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding, the school's plans for improvement and information about pupils' achievement. They also looked in detail at pupils' work in a range of subjects in all year groups when in lessons and during a work scrutiny, carried out with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector analysed 17 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and spoke with a social worker and foster carer. In addition, 31 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

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