

Fairlight Glen Independent Special School

Verona House, 45 Station Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5QQ

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have been too consumed by the day-to-day running of the school. Although provision remains effective, several elements of leadership have not been well enough maintained, which means that improvements have been too slow.
- There are no formal arrangements for accountability at the school. Performance management is not used to improve teaching.
- Leaders' evaluations are not sharp enough. They know the individual pupils exceptionally well, but do not systematically check what patterns there are in how well pupils do as a result of leaders' actions.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are underdeveloped because they are not based on a thorough enough analysis of the effectiveness of the school.
- There are currently no governance arrangements at the school. The proprietor meets regularly with school leaders, but this is too informal to hold leaders well enough to account.
- Leaders have not ensured that all policies have been kept up to date. Some policies do not reflect the good practice that happens in the school. This means that some independent school standards are not met. Leaders are not routinely reviewing the impact of what they are doing and where improvements could be made.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Pupils benefit from a well-planned, individualised curriculum. This means that lessons and experiences meet their needs very well. Consequently, pupils' behaviour rapidly improves during their time at the school and they achieve good outcomes.
- Pupils speak very positively about the difference the school has made to their learning. They develop excellent self-awareness, which helps them reshape the view they have of themselves as learners. Consequently, they quickly develop improved self-esteem.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent. They enjoy school and report that they are cared for very well.
- Leaders have successfully built an ethos of ambition and high expectations for the pupils that they serve. Staff work very well together to allow pupils to thrive.
- The management of behaviour is very strong. Excellent relationships, clear boundaries and positive reinforcement of good behaviour lead to a calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- The school complements the work of the care homes run by the same proprietor exceptionally well. There are excellent systems of communication and collaboration between the school and the homes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - introducing formal governance arrangements to properly hold leaders to account
 - developing formal performance management for all staff
 - implementing rigorous monitoring processes
 - strengthening the quality of improvement planning
 - ensuring that all the independent school standards are met.

- Improve the quality of personal development and welfare by ensuring that systems for monitoring and evaluating school policy effectively and consistently promote pupils' welfare.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- Ensure all health and safety policies are up to date and reflect current practice in the school (paragraphs 11, 13, 16, 16(a))
- Ensure where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(h))
- Ensure that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints (paragraph 33, 33(f) and 33(g))
- Make sure that the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b))

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher has left the school. This led to a restructuring of staffing, and the new headteacher was appointed from within the teaching team. He has brought about many improvements to the day-to-day running of the school. However, a lack of structured leadership time, along with poor systems for accountability, have limited how well leaders review the school's effectiveness. Consequently, leaders are not clear enough about how to move teaching from good to outstanding. Some policies have become out of date and do not reflect the school's current practices, and some complacency has crept into leaders' evaluations.
- A lack of formal appraisal for staff at the school has limited leaders' impact on improving teaching. Although the quality of teaching remains good, staff are not challenged or supported well enough to improve teaching further. Similarly, the headteacher is not held to account to ensure that improvements are made in a timely fashion.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning are limited to informal discussions with staff. No formal observations of teaching currently take place. This means that teaching, although good, is not improving further.
- Leaders have not consistently ensured that policies and procedures are in place to ensure that all the independent school standards are met. However, this has not had a detrimental impact on the overall quality of education or the personal development and behaviour of pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are effective, but leaders have not ensured that all policies reflect practice. Therefore, the promotion of pupils' welfare cannot be judged as good.
- Leaders have successfully developed a culture of high aspiration and effective teamwork among staff. Consequently, staff work closely with pupils to improve their behaviour, attitudes and outcomes. Leaders and staff know the pupils exceptionally well and all benefit from positive relationships. As a result, teaching is good, as are the management of pupils' behaviour and the promotion of their personal development.
- Leaders and teachers plan individualised curricular experiences for pupils. They ensure that pupils benefit from lessons and experiences that link directly with their specific interests. For example, pupils who demonstrate an aptitude in music are encouraged to make the best use of their skills to secure future placements at local colleges. Leaders are rightly focused on ensuring that the school curriculum is built around the holistic needs of pupils. The school is very well resourced to support the ethos and delivery of the curriculum on offer. For example, there are bespoke music, art and technology rooms. Good use is also made of the local area to enhance learning opportunities.
- Leaders make good use of the pupil premium grant. They use the extra funds that they secure to supplement what is needed for the individual curriculum that they deliver for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Pupils' achievements, once they settle at the school, are in stark contrast to the limited successes they have experienced in their previous settings. This helps to ensure that their attendance significantly improves and they make stronger progress from their starting points, diminishing the gap between their attainment and that of their peers nationally. However, leaders have rightly identified the need to do more for the most able disadvantaged pupils to secure outstanding outcomes in the future.

- Leaders ensure that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Fundamental British values are promoted very effectively. For example, pupils benefit from carefully developed schemes of work about being a British citizen, in which they are challenged to discuss questions such as 'what does it mean to be a model citizen?' and 'what does diversity mean?'

Governance

- There are currently no recognised governance arrangements at the school. Since the last inspection, the governing body has been disbanded. Consequently, the proprietor now acts as the line manager of the headteacher. Despite having established useful and formal systems for holding care managers of the homes to account, there are not similar processes for the headteacher. This means that, although the headteacher is successfully managing the day-to-day running of the school, he is not being held to account to improve teaching or to ensure that systems for reviewing the school's effectiveness are robust. As a result, the school is not being led strategically. Some policies are out of date and not being regularly checked.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is an appropriate safeguarding policy for the school, which is available to parents on request. This makes useful reference to the latest version of the government guidance 'Keeping pupils safe in education'. Staff benefit from appropriate training to ensure that they can implement the policy appropriately. They know pupils exceptionally well and build close, but professional, relationships with them. There are clear lines of responsibility for staff and they follow them diligently. Care home staff work closely with school staff. This is supported well by excellent systems for communication between the school and the homes. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that they provide appropriately for the needs of the vulnerable young people who attend the school. Checks on staff suitability upon recruitment are appropriate and recorded on an appropriate register. However, nearly all staff have worked at the school for many years.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Leaders have established an open culture where people feel easily able to share concerns if they have them. Pupils were clear about what they would do if they were worried or did not feel safe. This helps to ensure that everyone looks out for and after each other.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching at the school is good and sometimes better. Staff make excellent use of assessment and work closely with pupils to get to know them exceptionally well. Consequently, pupils benefit from lessons that are strongly focused on their individual academic and social needs. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the calm, safe and purposeful atmosphere. As a result, pupils feel valued and enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with low self-esteem and with low aspirations for what they can achieve. However, the success of staff in ensuring that learning is relevant to pupils' interests and ability quickly turns this around. Teachers make exceptionally good use of pupils' strengths and plan schemes of work that build on them. Consequently, pupils make good use of their lessons to make progress, both academically and personally.

- Teachers make very good use of other adults. They contribute to the positive atmosphere in lessons because they also work hard to build positive relationships with the pupils. Teachers are creative in their use of other staff, so that lessons are sociable and effective. For example, in a lesson in key stage 4, the teaching assistant learned alongside the pupil during the lesson. This allowed for broader discussions about the mathematical concepts being covered, as well as modelling the attributes of an effective learner very well. Consequently, the lesson was collaborative and fun and pupils strengthened their understanding of shape, space and measures.
- Reading is taught effectively and promoted well across the school. For example, leaders have ensured that there are areas devoted to reading. Pupils report that they feel well supported in developing their reading skills. Those who struggle to read benefit from one-to-one attention on a daily basis. They are helped to find books that are of interest and help them to learn in their particular areas of interest.
- The teaching of mathematics is similarly strong. Teachers ensure that lessons are accessible, relevant and fun. They skilfully question pupils to help them deepen their understanding of key concepts.
- Teaching in key stage 2 is generally less secure, particularly in mathematics. Leaders have rightly identified the need to focus on improving teaching in this area, particularly for the most able, to ensure that pupils secure mastery of mathematical concepts before they enter key stage 3.
- There are particular strengths in the teaching of art, music and languages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Although there are many strengths in how well pupils' personal development is promoted, leaders have not ensured that school policies are robust enough to promote the welfare of pupils consistently. For example, although staff carry out regular and appropriate risk assessments, there is no policy detailing the expectations on staff. This means that leaders are not well enough placed to review their practices to ensure that pupils' welfare is systematically promoted.
- Each pupil benefits from a bespoke curriculum planned to meet their individual needs, strengths and interests. Consequently, pupils develop a better self-image and aspire to achieve more through their learning than was often the case in their previous educational settings. Leaders and teachers directly build careers advice around the success of pupils' experiences. This helps to ensure that pupils develop a significantly improved attitude to learning and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe when using alternative provision.
- Pupils are unanimously positive about the success of the school. All those spoken to by inspectors agreed that the school has had a significant impact on their educational experience and their self-esteem. Pupils look to make a positive contribution to the school and recognise their place as members of the community. They are helped to develop a broader understanding of what it means to live in a multicultural country.
- Pupils' attendance is exceptionally high, including when in alternative provision. Many pupils join the school having gone through long periods of non-attendance in their previous provision. The effectiveness of the school in meeting individual needs and

helping pupils to feel valued can be seen in pupils' excellent, and often full, attendance at the school.

- Pupils report that they feel safe and believe that they are very well looked after. They are clear about who they could speak to if they have a concern. One pupil commented on how trustworthy he believed staff at the school were. This reflects how well school staff help pupils to form positive attachments to the people who work with them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' individual needs and circumstances are very well understood by staff at the school. This helps them to develop considered plans to support pupils to manage their own feelings and attitudes to learning. Consequently, their behaviour improves significantly over time.
- Pupils settle into the school quickly and learn to enjoy lessons. They benefit from regular positive reinforcement and this helps them to learn to be more resilient and able to cope with challenge. As a result, pupils show very good attitudes to learning in lessons and take pride in the presentation and quality of their work.
- Positive relationships are central to the success of the school. Pupil numbers are very small and so the staff make up the majority of the school community. Knowing this, staff work exceptionally well together to model how to share positive interactions and take interest and care for one another. Pupils quickly respond to this by following the lead of staff and they soon feel members of the close community. This helps to engender the calm and warm atmosphere at the school.
- There are no issues with bullying at the school. This is because staff work very closely with pupils and are quick to pick up when there are issues. There are useful community opportunities built into the school timetable, such as when pupils arrive at the school. These are used very well to promote positive interactions and to discuss with pupils issues that make them upset and how they can deal with them.
- Leaders' records of serious incidents demonstrate that these decline rapidly for pupils as they settle into the school. Exclusions are infrequent because leaders have developed effective systems for monitoring and responding to pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils come to the school following major turbulence in their lives and with fragmented experiences of education. Leaders and teachers quickly use their assessment systems to identify pupils' interests, as well as where they have gaps in their knowledge. This information is used to ensure that pupils benefit from personalised programmes of study that meet their specific academic, social and emotional needs. Due to the very small numbers in the school, staff use this information to give intensive and effective support to help pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils make rapid gains in their personal development. Staff work with pupils and support them very effectively. There are excellent systems to communicate with care staff and managers, and this helps ensure that the school is well set up to respond to pupils' specific and rapidly changing needs. Pupils learn to understand their own needs and this helps them to regulate their own behaviour. This ensures that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training by the time they leave the school. Pupils successfully secure and sustain placements on the courses they have been guided to take by staff.

- Pupils make good and sometimes better progress. This is because school staff have become particularly good at ensuring that programmes of study meet pupils' individual needs. Leaders have rightly identified that there is more to do to ensure that the most able pupils make the same rapid and sustained progress as other pupils, particularly when they are in key stage 2. However, high expectations and well set up systems ensure that pupils have made very good progress by the time they leave the school. Many achieve entry-level qualifications that take them on to secure successful placements in other colleges. Some successfully transfer back into mainstream education.
- Work in books and displays throughout the school show that pupils try hard and take pride in their work. They make strong gains in their reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in art are particularly high.
- Disadvantaged pupils do very well at the school and make similar, if not better, progress compared to their peers. The gap in their attainment is successfully narrowed by the school, because they learn to attend better, show better attitudes to learning and therefore make better progress than was the case in their previous settings.

School details

Unique reference number	135623
DfE registration number	886/6132
Inspection number	10006350

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Pilgrims Corner Education Ltd
Headteacher	Chris Cordes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,600
Telephone number	01227 741 113
Email address	edu@pilgrimscorner.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 February 2012

Information about this school

- Fairlight Glen is an independent special school located in a residential area of Herne Bay, Kent. All pupils are looked after and are in the care of the proprietor, Pilgrim's Corner Ltd, which operates four children's homes that are open 52 weeks a year.
- The school, which opened in 2008, provides education for 38 weeks a year. Nearly all pupils have needs associated with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, alongside associated learning difficulties and autism.
- The school is registered for up to 12 pupils aged between eight and 18 years. Prior to attending this school, some pupils had been out of formal education for significant periods. Currently, the school makes use of one alternative provider.
- Pupils have been referred by local authorities nationally. The school's aim is to re-engage pupils in education so that they can achieve as much independence as possible. The last full inspection of the school was in February 2012.

Information about this inspection

- This was a full inspection, which took place at a day's notice.
- The inspector observed four lessons or parts of lessons. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school was observed, as well as behaviour during lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences at the school.
- Meetings were held with leaders, those who have responsibility for safeguarding, and the proprietor.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, policies, records of serious incidents, pupils' work in books, assessment information kept by leaders and paperwork relating to individual pupils.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures were scrutinised. Records linked to work with other agencies were reviewed, as well as those relating to how the school has responded to complaints.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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