

# Lime Meadows

Co Hexagon Care Services, Unit 1 Tustin Court, Port Way, Preston, Lancashire PR2 2YQ

## Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders are successful in delivering their ambitious vision for the school where pupils achieve well both academically and personally.
- After some upheaval, leaders have brought stability to staffing and improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Outcomes for pupils are good despite most having large gaps in their education prior to arriving at Lime Meadows. This is because staff work successfully as part of a multidisciplinary team, focusing on pupils' needs in the widest sense.
- Teachers plan interesting and practical activities that motivate pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Attendance is good. Pupils behave well and have confidence in the adults who care for them.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. The therapeutic programmes that are offered build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- The school provides a secure setting where pupils feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding and welfare are implemented rigorously.
- Assessment systems and the tracking of pupils' progress are not precise enough. Consequently, some tasks set for pupils are not pitched at the right level.
- Independent careers advice is not always available to pupils.

### 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 leadership and management of the school by:
  - ensuring that pupils' attainment on entry to school is accurately assessed and that their progress is tracked effectively
  - providing pupils with independent careers advice so that they can make informed choices about their future education, training or employment.
- Improve teaching and learning so that:
  - activities are closely matched to different pupils' abilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Determined leadership has steered the school through disruption caused by staffing issues and personnel changes experienced over the last year. Following a period of consolidation, stability in staffing is paying dividends and teaching and learning are improving.
- Leaders' commitment 'to create a safe, secure, learning environment for our students who have complex, emotional needs', is successfully delivered. The school provides a secure and attractive learning environment where leaders expect pupils to achieve both academically and pastorally.
- The proprietor and leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are receptive to feedback provided to them from a range of sources. The recent deployment of an external adviser to evaluate the effectiveness of the company's schools has had positive benefits at Lime Meadows. Her report provides an accurate assessment of strengths and areas for improvement. It also makes suggestions about priorities for improvement and suggests strategies to be used. For example, the evaluation rightly identifies the need to improve assessment and tracking of pupils' progress.
- Positive relationships exist within the school and staff lead by example. The care and patience that they show contribute to the culture of respect and tolerance. Pupils commented favourably on this aspect of school life. 'I always get treated fairly and know I can say how I feel to any of my teachers' is typical of the comments made.
- The curriculum is broad and individualised. It prioritises filling the gaps in pupils' previous learning as well as developing their social, communication and life skills. As pupils settle into school, they are able to access a wider range of curricular activities successfully. Leaders make good use of specialist support, including therapists, to meet pupils' emotional and social needs. Regular trips, visits and extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- Teachers' performance in the classroom is monitored by leaders, including the head of education for the company's group of schools. This system is new but is proving to be a positive step forward. Training needs are identified and teachers are supported to make improvements. Also, the monitoring process enables their expertise to be shared with other schools.
- Pupils arrive in school with a wide range of previous learning experiences. Many have significant gaps, especially in their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Assessment and tracking systems are not always precise enough to diagnose pupils' individual needs, nor can they be relied on to set accurate targets for improvement. As a result, pupils find some of the tasks set for them in class either too easy or too hard.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are encouraged to make choices and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. British values are discussed during the citizenship programme and pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is successfully promoted throughout the curriculum. Consequently, pupils have a deep awareness of equality and equal opportunities. 'We all have the same rights here. It doesn't matter what you believe in' was typical of the comments made to the inspector.
- Pupil premium funding is well used to provide additional support and resources for each eligible pupil at the school. Expenditure provides access to mathematics and English intervention programmes, cameras for use on courses and music production software. Local authorities hold the school to account for how this funding is used and ensure that leaders evaluate the difference that it is making.

### **Governance**

- The school's proprietor, Hexagon Care Services, has improved its provision for governance. It is effective in both supporting the school and holding it to account.
- Governors regularly visit the school, ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and check information first-hand. For example, they seek the views of staff, pupils and carers to find out what could be improved further.
- Governors have a good understanding of what needs to be improved. They supported the school well during a recent period of staffing change.

### **Safeguarding**

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A safeguarding culture is at the heart of the school's work. Risk assessments are updated regularly and staff recruitment procedures are meticulous.
- Pupils thrive in this caring environment. They understand their responsibilities to keep themselves safe and healthy and can talk confidently about the risks that they face. Pupils know what to do if they are concerned and they are confident that their views will be taken seriously. Pupils told the inspector that they feel 'safe and secure'.
- Policies and procedures are comprehensive and meet the current government requirements. The safeguarding policy is not published on the school's website but is available on request. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and are tenacious when following up any concerns. Records are kept diligently.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- The new class teacher and the experienced headteacher form an effective team. They have brought a much-needed stability through their complementary skills. Teaching and learning in the school have been re-invigorated and are improving steadily.
- Pupils are treated fairly and consistently so that they understand expectations for their own behaviour and effort required in the classroom. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. They want the very best for them and know how pupils are likely to respond in different circumstances. This enables teachers to encourage any reluctant learners to complete their tasks without confrontation.

- Teachers work effectively to improve pupils' communication and mathematical skills. Most pupils have weaknesses in some or all of these areas. Pupils demonstrate growing self-confidence as they experience success in tackling mathematical problems or completing writing tasks. Pupils commented positively about their classroom experience when they spoke to the inspector. 'Teachers help us a lot here, much more than I'm used to. Most of us behave well now because want to learn more' was a typical comment.
- The curriculum is brought alive through practical experiences. Activities enthuse pupils because they are made relevant to everyday life. For example, pupils' topic on first aid allowed them to research how they should respond if someone collapsed. They were able to practise their life-saving skills using a dummy. Some pupils were able to explain how cardiopulmonary resuscitation could be used to keep a patient alive.
- Homework is used effectively to support and extend pupils' learning. Strong links and good communications with pupils' carers lead to tasks being completed accurately and on time.
- Learning is well planned and teachers show good subject knowledge across the range of opportunities on offer. Pupils find lessons interesting and engaging. As a result, pupils of different ages and abilities make good progress. No pupils in the recent past or currently in school are identified as being most-able.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment on entry to school and tracking of their progress over time have not been precise or rigorous enough. Consequently, there are times when the tasks set for pupils are either too hard or too easy, and this results in them making slower progress than they could.
- A new assessment and tracking regime has been introduced recently. It provides a more accurate view of pupils' abilities and identifies where there are gaps in their learning. In addition, improving links with other schools, owned by the same group, is giving some teachers valuable opportunities to check the accuracy of their assessments. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils talk with honesty and gratitude about the difference being at the school has made to them. They say how proud they are of their school. In some cases these comments come from pupils who have arrived only recently. Pupils quickly show improvements in their self-confidence and a growing maturity. This enables them to become more responsible and considerate towards others.
- Pupils benefit from the skills of a multi-agency team, including psychologists and therapists, which provides intensive support and guidance. Therapeutic programmes are carefully coordinated and tailored to the individual pupil.
- Staff are always on the alert for changes in pupils' behaviour or emotional well-being. Where necessary, pupils are referred to other professionals. The success of these programmes can be illustrated by improvements in pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.

- Pupils learn how to keep safe and are well aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter. 'None of that happens here but, if it did, I would know exactly what to do because we talk about it a lot with our teachers', sums up pupils' comments in this respect.
- Pupils communicate their feelings and thoughts very effectively. Staff have introduced regular sessions where pupils are encouraged to talk to the rest of the group. They learn to value and respect the views of others and to express themselves clearly. For example, they keenly debate the merits of the school's rewards system, based on positive encouragement. Most agree that it is fair even when their actions have resulted in sanctions.
- Staff work constructively with pupils' carers and with colleges and local employers. They have good local knowledge. This eases pupils' transition to the next stage of their education, training or work. In 2016, all Year 11 leavers enrolled at colleges to undertake academic or vocational courses. However, the school does not regularly arrange for external careers advice.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has very effective strategies in place that set clear boundaries for pupils. They enjoy the consistent approach adopted by staff and understand what is expected from them.
- Rare incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff are skilled and experienced in defusing situations quickly. Records of any incidents are kept meticulously and include any follow-up actions that might be necessary.
- Attendance levels are high and pupils arrive punctually, both at the start of the day and when they arrive for different lessons. They say they enjoy school and are reluctant to stay at home even when they are unwell.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite and well mannered. They were keen to talk to the inspector and happy to answer any questions that he had.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Outcomes for pupils are good.
- Pupils arrive at the school at various ages with mixed experiences of education. Many have complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as delays in their learning. A disrupted education is the norm for pupils before they reach Lime Meadows. Typically, pupils' starting points are below or well below expectations for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics. They develop confidence in speaking and listening and are increasingly able to contribute to sustained discussions.

- Staff successfully fill gaps in pupils' previous learning. They focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills through topic-based approaches. This strategy enables pupils to use and apply what they are learning in practical, 'real-life' situations across a range of different subjects. 'I know my English is improving because you can see just how much more I'm writing in my books now... and it's all correct. I wasn't able to do anything like this in my last school' was how one pupil was able to describe the improvements he felt he had made.
- Pupils' overall good rates of progress are confirmed by the volume and quality of their written work.
- Pupils generally tackle work that is appropriately challenging, but this is not always the case. For some pupils, progress could be faster. Weaknesses in assessment and tracking systems in the past have resulted in work not being pitched at the right level. The same tasks are sometimes given to the whole group and this means that some find it too hard while others are marking time.
- School leaders have recognised that the pitch of work is sometimes incorrect. They have recently introduced more rigorous and detailed assessments of pupils' attainment on entry. These are leading to improvements in the match of work to pupils' earlier learning and better tracking of pupils' progress across subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 4 successfully complete a range of accredited courses or training programmes. These include functional skills qualifications, entry-level certificates and GCSE examinations. Successful transition arrangements support pupils well as they move to the next stage of their education, training or work. In 2016, all school leavers enrolled on post-16 college courses.

## School details

Unique reference number	130913
DfE registration number	357/6056
Inspection number	10008892

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	Independent special
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hexagon Care Services
Chair	Fran Ashcroft
Headteacher	Karen Barber
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,000
Telephone number	0161 339 7368
Website	<a href="http://www.hexagoncare.com">www.hexagoncare.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:limes.education@northern-care.co.uk">limes.education@northern-care.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2012

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Hexagon Care group.
- The school transferred from Northern Care to Hexagon Care in 2014.
- The school caters for small groups of boys who have complex emotional, social and behavioural needs.
- It aims to provide boys with 'increased stability where barriers to learning can be removed, confidence and self-esteem built and opportunities to be given to reach their full potential'.



- The headteacher has been in post for 15 years. A temporary teacher was appointed in August 2016.
- Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils live in a residential children's home that is owned by the company.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected in July 2012.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in several sessions. Two of these were jointly visited with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the head of education for Hexagon Care, the headteacher, care manager, teacher and a range of other professionals. A telephone call was made to the proprietor.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He looked at their books and the school's records of their progress.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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