

iMap Centre

Unit 4a, Barrowmore Estates, Barnhouse Lane, Great Barrow, Chester, Cheshire CH3 7JA

Inspection dates

22–24 November 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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have worked successfully to raise standards and provide a nurturing environment for pupils. iMap Centre is now a good school. It has improved rapidly. Leaders have focused on constant improvement since the last inspection.
- The school is a warm and caring place where pupils flourish. The personal development of individual pupils is woven throughout all aspects of school life. The progress pupils make in this area is a particular strength of the school, although some other aspects of learning are not as well thought out.
- The rich curriculum is carefully personalised for each pupil. Activities are adapted to suit the needs of individuals, ensuring that they make good progress in acquiring skills. The adults in school know each pupil exceptionally well so that all their educational, social and emotional needs are met.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- The behaviour of pupils is good and they are proud of their school. They enjoy the carefully thought-out programmes of work that capture their interest. Consequently, the school is a calm and safe place to learn and one which pupils like to attend.
- Staff provide exemplary care for pupils. They consistently apply the well-considered behaviour, welfare and safeguarding policies. Pupils feel safe, and staff boost their confidence and help them to learn well.
- Performance management is not routinely carried out, but plans are in place to make procedures more systematic.
- Plans for improvement are not clearly linked to the school's own reviews of pupils' achievement.
- Although teaching is good, teachers' questioning of pupils is not as effective as possible.
- The sixth form is effective. Students are prepared well for their next stage.

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 to accelerate learning and progress by:
 - developing the skills of teachers and teaching assistants to ask questions which are well matched to pupils' previous learning and enable individuals to make progress at a pace that is appropriate for them
 - build on the good practice demonstrated in teachers' planning for, and teaching and assessment of, pupils' personal development so that all aspects of their learning reach a similar high standard.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - performance management is used routinely to hold staff to account
 - leaders use the information they gather about the school's effectiveness more effectively so that school development planning is sharply focused on improving pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The proprietor, head of education and the headteacher know the strengths and areas for development well and are determined that pupils will leave the school well equipped for their next steps.
- The headteacher has been highly efficient in revising systems and policies to ensure that the school fully complies with all of the independent school standards. Information is readily available and clearly presented.
- A very strong, person-centred ethos supports each pupil's individual development very well. The school ensures that all pupils have the resources and support they need to learn, including their own personal and learning assistant (PAL). As a result, the school is highly successful in re-engaging pupils with education.
- Pupils know that discrimination is not tolerated and are taught to understand the impact of bullying. The school celebrates its pupils' diversity with them and is highly successful in engaging them with education. This also ensures that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are fully assessed when they join the school, even though information provided about their previous education is sometimes limited. Appropriate provision is then set out in well-considered plans. This supports teachers to plan learning that is suited to each pupil, enabling good progress to be made from the time that they join the school.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life after school through carefully chosen and planned activities in personal, social, health and economic education. Themes, including mini-enterprise, help pupils develop an understanding of democracy, the rule of law, respect and tolerance of others different from them.
- Staff and pupils are rightly proud of their school. Opportunities to share and celebrate success are frequent. Pupils think staff are 'amazing' and, as a result, they feel safe when they come to school.
- Parents and their representatives who expressed their views are very supportive of the school. Arrangements for annual, and other, reviews ensure that parents and local authorities, who place pupils in the school, are kept informed about pupils' progress and well-being.
- The focus on communication and independence in the curriculum ensures that the students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next steps in their lives.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by a rich curriculum that provides varied and interesting experiences and activities tailored to meet each pupil's needs. The school's cultural calendar celebrates festivals and events from different faiths. Pupils are supported to understand artistic influences that have shaped our culture, including the work of Antony Gormley, Henry Moore and Damien Hirst.

- Although supervision meetings are frequent and well structured, the performance management arrangements for staff are not consistent. For example, performance management was not completed last year. Plans to address this are at an early stage.
- The school's self-evaluation, while detailed, does not consistently identify the areas that need to be developed, such as relative weaknesses in aspects of pupils' achievement. Consequently, the school improvement plans focus on short-term activities rather than strategic, longer term areas for improvement.

Governance

- The proprietor and head of education provide strong leadership and direction. Since the previous inspection, they have clarified their roles and made clear what they expect of leaders within the school. They have arranged for external consultants to validate their judgements and provide them with effective feedback.
- The commitment of company managerial staff is demonstrated through their recognition of the need to improve the school environment. They have relocated the school to better premises and fully refurbished it to suit the needs of learners who have autism spectrum disorder. The carefully designed space ensures that pupils' anxiety levels are reduced and they feel safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The safeguarding policy is up to date and reflects the most recent statutory guidance. It is available on the school's website. Vetting and appointment procedures for new staff are rigorous and all staff are required to take part in safeguarding training frequently. This ensures that staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- The personal and emotional well-being of pupils is prioritised. If pupils are feeling vulnerable, their programmes of learning are quickly adapted. Pupils trust adults and know that they can talk to them if they need help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good. Staff think very carefully about the ways in which they can help pupils to learn. Lessons are planned with very close attention to the way each pupil learns best. Well-thought-out activities and resources secure pupils' interest and help them to understand what they are going to learn.
- Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' communication skills across all subjects. They keep a strong focus on making explanations to pupils clear. Visual and written cues are routinely used to promote sound understanding and rapid progress against pupils' targets.

- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils are underpinned by a strong culture of mutual respect and care. These carefully fostered relationships are instrumental in building pupils' resilience.
- Information on how pupils are doing is gathered in every lesson to help plan and prepare for their next steps. This information is used to monitor the progress of pupils and to tailor work more closely to their needs.
- Assessment procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection. Records of pupils' learning show information about the progress of each pupil. Teachers assess pupils' social interactions and social behaviours as well as their attitudes to learning and academic progress. The school has detailed tracking systems for monitoring the progress that pupils make in their learning, behaviours and attitudes.
- Behaviour is very well managed in lessons because staff appreciate the difficulties that pupils who have autism spectrum disorder face. Staff concentrate on helping pupils recognise and understand their own and other people's emotions and behaviours. The high levels of adult support mean that pupils are not distracted from their learning. Pupils are able to focus for increasingly longer periods, which helps them to learn and make progress.
- Most support staff are highly skilled and add significant value to the progress that pupils make. This is because they know pupils' individual learning needs very well. The support they offer helps promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem so that pupils are more ready to learn. On the rare occasions when this support is less effective, pupils are not given enough opportunity to show what they know and can do.
- When teaching, adults do not always ask questions that help pupils to make the progress they could. For lower ability pupils, questions are not always worded in a way which helps them understand what is expected, while the most able pupils are not always challenged to think and reason for themselves.
- The school's cross-curricular approach to teaching the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils need for different subjects is usually successful. However, the level of detail seen in the planning, teaching and assessment of attitudes to learning and learning behaviours is not consistent across all subjects. This means that opportunities for pupils to build up their learning in small, incremental steps are sometimes not used as well as possible.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Very strong and supportive relationships are founded on a deep understanding of the pupils' needs and the challenges they have faced to date. Before arriving at the iMap Centre, many pupils have had negative school experiences and disruptions to their learning. Through the sensitive approach of staff, pupils become interested and re-engage with learning. Their self-esteem and confidence develop rapidly and this has a positive impact on the progress they are able to make.

- Attendance rates are very high. The school has established rigorous routines so that pupils know and understand what is expected of them. This helps to reduce any anxiety from pupils as they come to school.
- Pupils arrive on time and ready to learn. They receive a warm welcome on arrival and then enjoy school. The school's self-registration system helps to develop independence and the feelings board supports pupils to self-regulate their emotions.
- Pupils begin each day by reviewing a carefully designed and bespoke programme of activities and personal development targets. This is presented to them in written and visual plans which allow all pupils to access the information they need. Supported by their personal assistant, they are encouraged to read the plan to check that they understand what they are expected to achieve that day. This attention to detail is highly supportive for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder and they benefit greatly from knowing what success will look like.
- Success is celebrated at the end of every day during the learning review. Pupils reflect on their achievements and also consider targets they might like to work towards on the following day. This self-evaluation supports pupils to understand the progress they are making and what more they need to do to reach their learning goals.
- Pupils are taught to understand democracy and teamwork through the school council. They have been involved in developing school rules and assist in managing them. As a result, pupils accept the ethos the school has established for managing behaviour. They are encouraged to regulate their emotions through visual reminders and support from staff that helps pupils to identify when their behaviour needs to be modified.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils make considerable strides in the management of their own behaviour and in their personal development. This is because of the high expectations of staff and the consistency with which school staff manage any instances of inappropriate behaviour that might occur. Excellent transition arrangements as pupils join the school mean that pupils settle very quickly and, for some, the transformation in their behaviour is remarkable.
- In lessons and around school at lunchtimes, pupils conduct themselves very well. They greet adults cheerfully and often with a friendly exchange of words. Pupils' politeness is a reflection of the respect and excellent relationships modelled by adults in the school.
- The rapid progress pupils make in improving their behaviour reflects the very good work the school does. A bespoke approach is taken for each pupil. Such approaches are based on well-researched methods of positive behaviour support. Staff use a range of effective strategies to support pupils' good behaviour.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are rare and there have been none so far this year. This represents a significant improvement over the last two years. It has been brought about because the school has revised the strategies and approaches used to help pupils manage their own behaviour. Pupils value and understand the reward system and say that it motivates them to keep on task.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive with very low starting points. Many have been out of education for significant periods because they have been excluded or have refused to attend their previous schools. The iMAP Centre is very successful in engaging pupils with their learning and enabling them to make good progress.
- Pupils' good achievement is supported by the individual attention they receive and the school's success in helping them to turn around their attitudes to learning so well. The school prioritises self-regulation as the key to supporting pupils to modify their behaviour and enabling them to succeed.
- Pupils show a growing preparedness to interact with others and to experience unfamiliar situations. They become increasingly calm during their time in school and engage more quickly with the work provided for them.
- Despite their lower starting points and lack of confidence in key skills such as reading, writing and mathematics on entry to the school, pupils leave the iMap Centre having made good progress in these areas.
- The iMap Centre engages well with the community and pupils are encouraged to use local facilities in the area in which they live, for example, accessing the gym, parks, shops and cafés. This helps to prepare pupils for life after school.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Outcomes in the sixth form are good. Students make good progress from their starting points. These are often much lower than those found in mainstream sixth-form settings.
- Numbers in the sixth form are small and study programmes are bespoke for individuals. Students are provided with relevant and practical activities that are suited to their needs and aspirations. This helps to secure their interest and enhance their skills for the future. For example, the mini-enterprise topic allows them to plan and carry out fund-raising activities. Money raised is used to support charities and activities for other students to enjoy, such as a celebration meal in a restaurant at Christmas.
- Students gain confidence and are provided with opportunities to use their skills through daily activities promoting their progress and attainment. For example, they use their mathematical knowledge and understanding of money to estimate how much they might need to buy the ingredients for a meal. They also plan for the quantities of food and cooking times they would need. Following their shopping trip, they evaluate the accuracy of their estimations.
- Students are given opportunities to attend taster days at local colleges to help them make choices about their future. The school uses the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme and offers accreditation for students in small units. The school recognises students' achievements and progress at a very personal level.

- Work-experience placements are arranged through partnerships with a local charity and include opportunities to learn how to repair bicycles. Some pupils have learned how to care for animals at a local farm. Students expressed great enjoyment of these opportunities. However, leaders recognise the need to expand the range of experiences in order to enable all students to develop their skills and knowledge.

School details

Unique reference number	131792
DfE registration number	896/6028
Inspection number	10006084

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 special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed (boys at the time of the inspection)
Proprietor	Martin McKevitt
Chair	Martin McKevitt
Headteacher	Sharon Beddow
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,000
Telephone number	01829 741869
Website	www.imapcentre.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@imapcentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 October 2012

Information about this school

- The iMap Centre was last inspected in November 2012.
- The iMap Centre is a small independent special school that caters for up to 10 pupils aged 11 to 19. It is sited on the Barrowmore Estate, which is set in 84 acres in a rural part of Cheshire. The school has moved premises since the last inspection.
- It provides education for pupils who have severe autism spectrum disorder, and associated severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school offers flexible placements, including 38 weeks and 52 weeks depending on the complexity of pupils' needs.

- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and most are looked after by the local authority.
- At the time of the inspection, all of the pupils were boys but the school also caters for girls.
- Pupils usually arrive after periods of disruption in schooling, which contributes to their typically low prior attainment.
- The school does not currently receive any additional funding such as the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the proprietor and the head of education.
- The inspector spoke to a placement officer from the local authority.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector analysed pupils' work in books and files.
- The inspector spoke with parents, pupils and staff to gather their view of the school.
- The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised information about achievement, behaviour and attendance and looked at a wide range of school documents and records relating to self-evaluation and the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The inspector took account of feedback from staff surveys, the views of parents and from records kept by the school.

Inspection team

Cathy Parkinson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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