

Columbus House

Old Hall, Moor End, Halifax HX2 0TX

Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently use information about pupils' starting points or attainment to plan lessons. Consequently, too many pupils are not working at a level appropriate to their abilities or making enough progress.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that systems are in place to track pupils' attainment and progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that behaviour and attendance are monitored carefully enough so that trends and patterns can be identified.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and managers have not monitored the quality of teaching or the role of all adults robustly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The majority of pupils make improvements in their behaviour and attendance.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They receive effective guidance on how to keep themselves safe and take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Teachers plan a wide range of activities and lessons for pupils so that they are interested and eager to learn.
- Teachers build good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils read well and fluently.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - behaviour incidents and attendance are monitored more rigorously so that trends and patterns can be identified and appropriate action taken
 - information about pupils' prior and current attainment and progress is tracked and made available to teachers so that they can plan for pupils' learning more appropriately
 - the quality of teaching and the responsibilities of all adults are monitored more rigorously so that adults can be held to account and given appropriate support when needed.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teaching staff use information about pupils' prior and current attainment and progress more consistently to plan lessons.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

The proprietor must ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3, 3(a)).

The proprietor must ensure that teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d)).

The proprietor must ensure that teaching demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3(g)).

The proprietor must ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b))

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not ensured that a clear framework is in place to gather information about pupils' prior abilities, starting points and current progress so that teachers can use this information to plan lessons. They have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Teaching staff record information about behavioural incidents, participation in lessons and attendance well. However, leaders and managers do not monitor this information carefully so that any possible trends can be identified and appropriate action taken.
- Leaders and manager have not monitored the quality of teaching to ensure that teachers are taking into account the different abilities of pupils in their class. Neither have they ensured that all adults have the support and training required to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the diverse curriculum is well planned so that pupils are excited and stimulated through a range of activities and subjects and are interested in learning. A wide range of activities, for example visits to the local library, museums and places of worship, enhances the pupils' learning experiences.
- Adults' desire to develop pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of British values pervades the school day. The school provides a well-planned citizenship curriculum which gives these topics discrete learning times. The citizenship lessons allow for pupils to gain some knowledge of the career options available to them. Visitors are planned for later in the school year to give more guidance to older pupils in particular.
- Leaders and managers have taken steps to resolve issues raised in a recent complaint. Other issues were found to be unsubstantiated or dealt with appropriately.

Governance

- Although the proprietor and other directors receive regular information about school life, they have not always challenged this information rigorously enough. Consequently, some information has not been monitored carefully enough and this has affected the quality of teaching. The proprietor has ensured that a number of policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the pupils are secure in an appropriate learning environment. The proprietor has also ensured that the school building is well decorated. Extra classrooms are already available if it is necessary to teach the current pupils in smaller groups. The completion of an extension, which was ongoing during the inspection, means that the school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards with regard to the material change application. The school has agreed to send the Department for Education (DfE) electronic photographic evidence of the windows, once fitted, to confirm that the extension has been completed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Staff receive regular training and information to help them keep pupils safe. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe in the environment they are learning in, either at school or when off site, are rigorous. Adults involved in the pupils' welfare have weekly meetings where discussions around the safety of pupils take priority. The safeguarding policy contains all the required information and guidance and is made available for parents and carers should they request it. Links with other professionals that support the pupils are good.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently gather or use information about pupils' achievements to set appropriate learning activities for pupils. Consequently, at times, work is not well matched to ability levels and some most-able pupils are not learning at an appropriate level.
- Teachers plan activities carefully so that learning objectives are clear. They are flexible in their approach so that activities can be modified to keep pupils engaged and learning. However, occasionally this means that most-able pupils are given work that is not challenging enough.
- Teachers make sure that learning is fun and that pupils take part in activities that engage and excite them. Visits to various places such as science museums are used as a stimulus for work that takes place when pupils are back in the classroom. Teachers are dedicated to engaging pupils in learning, particularly those pupils who have previously been disengaged.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of physical education activities such as skiing and swimming. This supports positively their physical well-being as well as their personal development.
- Teaching assistants support pupils extremely well. They question pupils skilfully to extend their learning and keep them on task. They have excellent relationships and have a good knowledge of the pupils' needs.
- Teachers manage behaviour well. They deal with any minor disruption in a calm and decisive manner.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is very effective and positive learning attitudes are encouraged.
- Teaching assistants take every opportunity to promote pupils' good personal development. A discussion around forced marriage and female genital mutilation led to the clarification of the difference between culture and religion. This also led to a discussion about English law, British values and how they are there to protect us all.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the choices they make on a daily basis. The consequences of those choices are also made clear, such as why we should wear a seat-belt.

- Pupils' knowledge of how to look after themselves and keep themselves healthy and safe is evident in their everyday activities.
- A clinical psychologist meets the pupils on a regular basis to support them with their emotional welfare.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know that they are prevented from accessing particular online sites and know the reasoning behind this. Pupils say that instances of bullying are rare and adults deal with situations immediately.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils arrive at lessons promptly and ready to learn. The learning environment is calm. Pupils confidently discuss and share their ideas and how they are tackling the work set.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and conduct.
- Teachers quickly and calmly tackle any racist or derogatory language or stereotyping.
- Relationships are good. Occasionally, relationships, behaviour and attendance are disrupted for a short period of time when new pupils arrive in school.
- The majority of pupils have seen marked improvements in their levels of attendance and participation in lessons, which are now generally high.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Adults lack information on pupils' starting points to make informed opinions of the progress pupils have made since joining the school.
- Pupils' work in books demonstrates that too many pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are not working at a level of which they are capable.
- In English, pupils learn a range of literacy skills which they are then encouraged to include in written work completed in other subjects. The presentation of pupils' work is generally good and in some cases exceptional.
- In mathematics, pupils make better progress and have completed a number of problem-solving activities, for example furnishing an apartment with a limited budget. However, the most able pupils are not always working at a deeper level than the least able pupils.
- Pupils make better progress when they learn through topics that interest them, for example animal care. In these instances, pupils gain knowledge in a range of subjects and practise skills learned previously in English and mathematics lessons.
- Pupils read extremely well, particularly the most able pupils. They read with fluency and demonstrate good comprehension skills. Although there are few books in school, pupils have the opportunity to visit the local library and read when completing research online.
- Pupils are becoming better prepared for the next stage of their education as they become more engaged in learning and develop further their social skills.

School details

Unique reference number	143098
DfE registration number	381/6018
Inspection number	10025946

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 school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Kamron Abassi
Chair	Kamron Abassi
Acting headteacher	Tariq Verpalen
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,000
Telephone number	03455 215155
Website	n/a
Email address	tariq.verpalen@care4children.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Columbus House is an independent special school. It was registered by the DfE following a pre-registration inspection in July 2016 and opened in September 2016.
- The school specialises in providing education and care for vulnerable pupils. No pupils currently on role have an education, health and care plan.
- The school operates on one site and does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- The inspector met with members of the teaching staff and the director of education. Telephone conversations were also held with the proprietor and placing authorities. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally at different times during the school day. Inspectors also heard pupils read and considered the work in books in all subjects for all pupils.
- The inspector examined school documentation, including a range of policies required as part of the independent school standards. Documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and welfare, as well as health and safety documents, were also studied.
- As part of the inspection, the DfE requested inspectors to consider the school's material change application. The school would like to increase the capacity of the school from two pupils to six pupils. Therefore, the DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out this standard inspection earlier in the cycle than previously planned.
- As part of the inspection, the DfE also requested inspectors to consider issues around pupils' safety and welfare that were raised following a complaint received.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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