

Short Stay School for Norfolk

The Locksley School, Locksley Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 6LG

Inspection dates

7–9 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, while improving, is inconsistent.
- Despite efforts by leaders, there have been considerable difficulties in recruiting permanent staff required for this oversubscribed school.
- Leaders have not yet embedded centralised monitoring systems which allow them to assess their impact effectively across all the sites.
- The curriculum for the most able pupils at key stages 3 and 4 is not yet challenging enough, so that they can achieve as well as they could.
- Some administration of safeguarding by leaders does not reflect the high-quality practice that goes on to keep pupils safe.
- Although well cared for, children looked after do not yet have a full 'voice' in their provision, for example in the spending of their additional funding.
- Despite exhaustive efforts by leaders, there is insufficient next-step or specialist provision in the locality. As a result, there are too many pupils who do not reintegrate into next-step permanent provision as quickly as they could.
- The outdoor provision across the sites does not provide creative and vibrant learning spaces for the younger vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders, including governors and the trust, have been inundated by the significant site-based issues that they have faced. Consequently, there is a variation in the quality of the learning environment across the eight sites of the school.
- While most staff are positive about the school, especially towards the recently appointed executive headteacher, there is a noteworthy minority whose morale is low.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed executive headteacher is bringing greater stability and consistency to the school.
- There are some effective examples of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Leaders, many of whom are new to post and/or the school, are insightful about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision, and are acting to address these issues.
- Parents and pupils say that leaders and staff go 'above and beyond' to support them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to work with the local authority and other stakeholders to:
 - ensure that the school has the appropriate site, staffing and facilities to support the large numbers of pupils being admitted to the school
 - find suitable next-step permanent and sustainable provision for pupils when they are ready
 - ensure that children looked after are given every opportunity to have their 'voice' heard, especially in their personal education plans and in how their additional funding is used.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - further developing the key stage 3 and 4 curriculum, including alternative provision, to maximise the achievement of pupils, especially the most able, or those who show potential to achieve more
 - streamlining and embedding monitoring systems, especially those around assessment, so that leaders and governors can more easily compare their effectiveness across the sites, and intervene with pupils more rapidly.
- Bring further consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and achievement, by:
 - sharing the stronger practice across the sites to raise the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school
 - using assessment information more routinely to ensure that the most able pupils, and those who show potential to achieve more, are challenged more effectively in their learning, especially in key stages 3 and 4.
- Further refining the personal development, behaviour and well-being of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all administration of safeguarding reflects the high-quality, intensive and extensive work that goes on in the school to keep pupils safe
 - developing the outdoor areas so that they provide a vibrant and creative learning environment for pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have faced significant barriers to improving the school since it opened in 2014. Growing numbers of pupils coming in, not enough schools to reintegrate pupils into, increasing problems with site maintenance, and a restructure to manage funding challenges, have been unwelcome distractions for leaders trying to ensure that vulnerable pupils have a high-quality educational provision.
- Leaders have created additional classes to try to accommodate the growing number of pupils in the local area that need their support. This has led to the school being oversubscribed by a mammoth 179 pupils in summer 2016. Additionally, leaders have struggled to recruit permanent staffing to ensure that pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching.
- Alongside the growing number of pupils, leaders have not been able to secure appropriate next-step provision for pupils, despite their very best efforts. Too often, pupils are well supported while at the school, but become disengaged when they cannot find a permanent school in the locality. This results in too many pupils who remain at the school for far longer than the two terms that the school usually provides for.
- The number of pupils who remain at the school for longer means that leaders are having to create a longer-term curriculum for pupils, particularly at key stages 3 and 4. Leaders have identified this and are in the processes of redesigning this curriculum. However, this is not yet well developed and, too often, pupils are accessing provision which is not sufficiently stimulating for them, or repeats knowledge and skills that they already have.
- Leaders continue to face significant issues with some of the sites that they are using to teach pupils. Site maintenance on some buildings is becoming increasingly challenging for leaders, and incredibly costly. Consequently, staff are working in facilities where they have to focus on ways to overcome basic inadequacies in the site, which is a distraction from the other vital work that they need to undertake.
- Most staff are incredibly proud and positive about the experience that pupils get in the school. However, there are a significant minority who highlighted dissatisfaction with the support provided by leaders. A number commented directly on the impact of the recent restructure and redundancies as a cause for concern.
- The appointment of the executive headteacher in September 2016 is beginning to bring much-needed improvements. She, alongside her talented senior team, are very insightful about the strengths and weaknesses in school's provision, and are acting on each area for improvement diligently and with rigour. She is committed to the young people in her care, and has the highest expectations of her staff. Consequently, she is beginning to raise standards through meaningful improvements. However, these require more time to see their impact across the provision.
- Leaders use the additional funding for sports that they receive for primary pupils well. This is being used to provide teaching by specialist sports coaches and access for pupils to facilities that the site does not currently provide. There are also a significant

number of 'outdoor' excursions provided for primary-aged pupils, which raise their participation in exercise while also enriching the curriculum, for example through lessons where pupils work as part of a team to build a camp, while applying their scientific knowledge to their learning.

- Leaders have identified that their systems for monitoring assessment, and intervening where pupils are underachieving, are not yet streamlined or centralised enough for them to be the most effective they could be. These are being developed, but require further embedding before they can be used with routine effectiveness by leaders and governors.
- The chief executive officer to the Engage Multi-Academy Trust has been 'hands on' in his support of the school. He has worked with the local authority and other external groups to try to secure the future, and funding, of the school. He has also supported the school heavily during the recent restructure and reorganisation. As a result, leaders who are new to the school, or recently appointed, are being given guidance to embed into their new roles.
- The assessment unit at the Locksley site undertakes a range of rigorous assessments for secondary-age pupils on entry, to ensure that the school has an accurate picture of the 'whole' child when they enter the school. They also provide this service for pupils on roll at local schools. The leader of this base ensures that pupils, who often have been permanently excluded from their previous school, or been out of education for some time, have a positive experience and a supported transition back into their education at one of the sites in the school.
- Leaders have implemented effective interventions for developing pupils' literacy skills, especially in reading, through their 'arrow' programme. Although only recently implemented, this is already having an impact in raising pupils' ability to access their curriculum with greater skill and confidence.

Governance of the school

- Governors, including the local governing body and governors from the trust, are becoming increasingly effective in their roles. They have, since opening, recruited well to their team, and have used their expertise to their advantage. For example, they have recruited governors with a background in children's safeguarding. These governors have undertaken a robust audit of the quality of safeguarding provision, which accurately identifies areas of strength and for improvement.
- Governors visit the school regularly and use this, alongside an array of other information, to question leaders about the evidence of pupils' progress. They are passionate about the quality of education for the most vulnerable children in the locality, but also remain unequivocal in their aspiration for pupils' futures, especially children looked after.
- Governors have ensured that leaders review their spending of the additional funding that they receive with increasing effectiveness. Leaders have undertaken a thorough review of their spending in 2015/16 and have identified where the spending had the intended impact and where it did not. Subsequently, they are now allocating this spending alongside more bespoke interventions for individual pupils, and using their new monitoring systems to review this spend more routinely. They continue to use

some of this funding for the intensive and highly effective therapeutic support for pupils in the specialist school sites.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record of the suitability of staffing meets requirements. Staff training is up to date with the most recent statutory guidance, including guidance about how to ensure that pupils are not vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff use this guidance to make regular and appropriate referrals when they have concerns about pupils.
- Leaders work tenaciously with local agencies over child protection. They not only make referrals, but act as the 'voice' for pupils when they feel that more support and care is required from external agencies. They work meticulously to keep these pupils safe.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is constantly reviewed to meet the ever-changing needs of pupils around their understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils say that they are taught how to stay safe in the community and online, and feel safe and well looked after by staff.
- While the safeguarding work undertaken by leaders and staff is determined, constant and rigorous, some of the centralised administration around this work does not reflect the scrupulous efforts made by adults. Leaders had identified this prior to the inspection, and are integrating new recording systems to help bring further refinement to their systems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, it is still variable. This is especially apparent where the school face challenges to recruit permanent staffing. In those classes where the school has needed to employ temporary staffing, pupils do not have consistency in their learning over time.
- Teachers are not using a shared understanding of assessment across the sites to ensure that they plan consistently well for pupils' next steps in their learning. Although new leaders are developing moderation and line management systems which are improving teachers' understanding of assessment, this is still variable.
- Some teaching does not have high enough expectations about what pupils can achieve. While teachers use the school's individual learning plans to fill gaps in pupils' learning, too often they pitch lessons to the least able. As a result, teachers do not notice quickly enough when pupils are ready to move at a faster pace or to a higher level.
- Leaders and teachers are developing a curriculum for the increasing number of pupils who are spending longer periods of their education in the school. Leaders have identified that increasing numbers of the most able pupils are now accessing the provision. As yet, however, teachers do not routinely challenge pupils to achieve more, or to deepen their knowledge and skills to achieve higher standards when they are ready. Older pupils comment that they would like greater challenge in many of their lessons.

- Leaders acknowledge that the information around pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities is not always as sharp as it could be in guiding staff's planning. Consequently, pupils' specific needs are not met consistently effectively by teachers.
- There is a core of strong practice in teaching, learning and assessment in the school, especially, although not exclusively, at key stages 1 and 2. Where practice is more effective, teachers use their in-depth understanding of the new national curriculum and age-related expectations to plan appropriately for pupils' learning over time.
- Where teachers exhibit a deep-seated knowledge of all the key stages, they use this knowledge to plan learning that allows the least able pupils to catch up quickly in basic literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in a key stage 1 class at Locksley, the skilled teacher and teaching assistants work together seamlessly to build on pupils' prior knowledge. They use their understanding of the early years foundation stage, and early phonics development, to help the youngest pupils to catch up with their previously missed learning.
- The array of subjects being developed in the curriculum that ensure that pupils receive therapeutic, as well as academic, support is very effective in helping pupils to achieve. Music, art and drama are being used with increasing effectiveness with this twofold purpose. As a result, the Year 10 artwork seen in the school is of exceptionally high quality, reflecting the pride, care and commitment exhibited by the young people undertaking the GCSE qualification.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. In particular, although leaders and staff are vigilant and keep pupils safe, leaders' administration of aspects of their safeguarding work does not reflect the highly effective practice and work that is undertaken.
- Leaders and staff work diligently to support and monitor the quality of provision for pupils who access alternative provision off-site. Staff routinely check on the safety, attendance, provision and parental views. Leaders have identified that a proportion of this alternative provision is not of the quality required and/or does not lead to sufficient qualifications for pupils. Consequently, leaders are currently undertaking work to bring much more of this provision 'in house' in 2017/18.
- The learning environments across the sites are variable. On the best sites, displays are vibrant and well maintained, and support the academic and social and emotional needs of pupils. The additional rooms for therapeutic and mental health support also offer a calming atmosphere. However, this is not consistent for pupils, especially in the Earthsea site. Equally, the outdoor learning environments across the provision do not offer opportunities for pupils that consistently enhance the curriculum that they have on offer.
- Children looked after are very well cared for throughout the school. Their learning and well-being are made a priority by all staff. In particular in the specialist units, the

ongoing work with external agencies, including residential homes, to support the specific needs of pupils is thorough. However, pupils' personal educational plans do not currently have sufficient opportunity for pupils to vocalise their thoughts. Moreover, leaders do not currently access all of the additional funding available to these pupils. Consequently, pupils do not have a 'voice' in how this money is allocated and spent.

- The therapeutic support for pupils, particularly in the specialist units of Earthsea, Compass Belton, Compass Lingwood and Compass Pott Row, provides a variety of specialist support for incredibly vulnerable pupils. Support from clinical psychologists and medical professionals, alongside art, drama and music therapy, are just some of the ways in which pupils' very specific needs are being met outside of the classroom.
- Social times are well supported by adults to ensure that pupils develop important skills about how to talk, and socialise with one another, especially in the 'breakfast mornings'. Pupils learn appropriate communication and interaction during these well-supported sessions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils normally arrive at the school after significant turbulence in their previous schooling. Consequently, most staff use a supportive and resolution-focused behaviour system to help pupils when they are struggling to cope. As a result, more pupils are increasingly interacting well and developing an understanding of how to behave appropriately in all aspects of their lives.
- When pupils are ready to reintegrate into mainstream provision, and that provision cannot be found, pupils can become disheartened, and this impacts on their behaviour. Leaders have identified that this is also often linked to the fact that the curriculum does not yet fully meet their needs over an extended period of time.
- Although the number of behaviour incidents are reducing, there are noticeable occasions where large influxes of new pupils, in an already oversubscribed school, can lead to higher instances of poorer behaviour. Equally, where the school has to rely on some temporary staffing, this can also impact negatively on behaviour.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance since the academy opened. Consequently, there have been consistent, and notable, year-on-year improvements in the school's overall attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- From their starting points, the progress made by pupils across the school is uneven. Generally, but not always, pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make more rapid progress than in key stages 3 and 4. Where progress is less rapid, this is often linked to temporary staffing, the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- In 2015/16, the most able pupils, especially in key stages 3 and 4, including those who were disadvantaged, did not make the rapid progress of which many were capable. While pupils in key stage 4 achieved qualifications in English, mathematics, science,

ICT and other subjects, they did not achieve the highest standards or qualifications that they were sometimes able to.

- While off-site alternative provision is chosen and monitored carefully, leaders have identified that, too often, this provision does not meet the specific aspirations of pupils. Most notably, pupils are not undertaking the relevant qualifications on a consistent basis that prepare them for the next stage in their education.
- In 2015/16, the least able pupils across the key stages, including those who were disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, made better progress from their various starting points. In key stage 4, the range of qualifications, such as functional skills, which are offered alongside GCSE, meant that these pupils were supported well to catch up with the previous gaps in their learning and achieve in standardised tests.
- The proportions of pupils at key stages 1 and 2 who make good progress from their various starting points in reading, writing and mathematics is steadily rising. Many pupils, who enter the school with limited skills in reading, writing and mathematics, are well supported individually to develop basic skills. This includes the increasing numbers of pupils who are being taught to use phonics appropriately to access their learning.
- Pupils at key stage 1 and 2 access a broad and balanced curriculum, based around themed topics. Pupils develop a wide range of knowledge about science, humanities, languages and much more. This comprehensive curriculum also gives pupils opportunities to apply their developing literacy and numeracy skills.
- The transition support that staff give to pupils when they are ready to move into permanent schools or specialist provision ensures that most of these next steps are sustained well by pupils. However, leaders are rightly frustrated by the significant numbers of pupils who are ready for this next-step provision when it cannot be found in the locality.
- The guidance and transition support that leaders and staff give to pupils for their next steps in education, training or employment mean that, increasingly, numbers of pupils achieve an appropriate post-16 destination.

School details

Unique reference number	140753
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10023363

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.

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Des Reynolds
Headteacher	Victoria Setters
Telephone number	01603 508520
Website	www.theshortstayschoolfornorfolk.co.uk
Email address	exec@engage.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Short Stay School for Norfolk opened in April 2014. It is now part of the Engage Multi-Academy Trust. It is an alternative provision academy for pupils.
- There are eight sites in total that make up the provision.
- Three sites are specialist units designed to support the very specific needs of the pupils, in liaison with NHS medical teams. These are Compass Pott Row, Compass Lingwood and Compass Belton. A fourth specialist site, Earthsea, works with the national care provider Childhood First.
- The additional four sites are short-stay provision for pupils who are vulnerable to permanent exclusion or who have been permanently excluded. They also provide education and support for pupils who are missing from education, or who are struggling to access mainstream education.

- Pupils arrive throughout the year, through a referral system and in liaison with the local authority.
- The current executive headteacher was promoted from deputy headteacher to her current role in September 2016. Alongside this promotion, a number of appointments to the senior team were made.
- There is currently a redundancy and reorganisation procedure going on within the school, which is due to be complete by the summer 2017.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- Typically, pupils enter with attainment that is significantly lower than expected for their age, often owing to extended periods of absence from their previous schools.
- A significant number of older pupils access off-site alternative provision. The school use 23 alternative providers across Norfolk.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all eight sites in the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and senior and middle leaders (including those with responsibility for the operational running of the individual sites). Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the Engage Multi-Academy Trust, as well as governors from both the local governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from primary and secondary pupils across the sites in English, mathematics, phonics, topic books, science, art and information communication technology.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding records, physical intervention logs, alternative provision information, pupil progress information and school policies and procedures.
- There were not sufficient numbers of surveys completed on Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), so inspectors spoke to a selection of parents via the telephone and on-site.
- Inspectors analysed 113 responses from the Ofsted's online survey of staff, plus the school's own survey. Inspectors also spoke to staff about their experiences of working at the provision.
- There were no pupils who completed Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils at break, lunch and in lessons. Inspectors also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences.
- Inspectors also spoke with representatives from the local authority and a number of alternative providers.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Webb	Her Majesty's Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Dominey	Ofsted Inspector

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