

The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5HD

Inspection dates

3–5 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have not ensured that safeguarding is effective, nor have they ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Checks to ensure the suitability of all staff working at the school have not been carried out in accordance with current requirements.
- Not all staff have received suitable safeguarding training commensurate with the degree of responsibility they hold.
- The welfare of pupils has been compromised by shortcomings in arrangements to safeguard pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher leads the school with total commitment. She has ensured that most aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Consequently, most pupils make good progress during their time at the school.
- Staff support the social and emotional needs of pupils particularly well.
- The school's therapeutic approach to learning is effective at engaging pupils who have had negative experiences in education in the past.
- Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Most attend school on a regular basis.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The enrichment of pupils' experiences through the curriculum is particularly strong.
- All pupils leaving Year 11 go on to further education or training.
- Teaching and support staff are dedicated to improving the school. They strive for every pupil to become successful.
- The roles of middle leaders are developing, building greater capacity within the school's leadership team.
- The school's new assessment policy is effective, but needs more time to become embedded.

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?

- Ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are made effective by:
 - ensuring that checks on staff to confirm their suitability to work with pupils are fully compliant with current guidelines
 - ensuring that staff receive training in safeguarding pupils appropriate to their levels of responsibility
 - arranging for a suitably qualified deputy to be available in school when the designated safeguarding lead is absent.
- Ensure that teaching and support staff are fully conversant with the new assessment policy, so that they focus more clearly on assessing pupils' progress, to inform planning for next steps in learning.
- Complete the current review of middle leadership responsibilities as soon as possible in order to create capacity in leadership, especially when the headteacher is not available on-site.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraphs 18(2) and 18(2)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a register is kept which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question. The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (paragraphs 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii) and 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure 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
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and the board of directors have not ensured that all aspects of the safeguarding of pupils are effective. Consequently, not all of the independent school standards are met. Furthermore, because of shortcomings in the arrangements for safeguarding, in particular by not ensuring the suitability of all staff to work safely with children, the school has put the welfare of pupils at risk.
- Neither the school's designated safeguarding lead, nor the deputy designated safeguarding lead, have attended appropriate training to ensure that they are able to carry out their roles as effectively as possible.
- Not all the required checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are carried out. Specifically, checks to verify that no members of staff are prohibited from teaching have not been carried out when required.
- Although serious omissions have been identified in the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, it is clear that most aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection, reflecting the headteacher's determination and energy.
- The roles of middle leaders are currently under review. The headteacher knows that middle leaders do not have as much impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as they might. Reallocating key responsibilities offers the potential to create capacity for the headteacher to carry out her role in a more effective manner.
- Leaders track the academic, social and emotional progress of pupils well. Due to the very small number of pupils who attend the school, teaching and support staff know individual pupils well. Communication and information sharing are strong aspects of leadership, helping staff to cater for the pastoral needs of pupils exceptionally well.
- Most pupils at Lioncare have had unsuccessful experiences at previous schools, leading to disengagement and a certain degree of hostility to continuing education. However, the quality of the school's themed curriculum and a therapeutic approach to all aspects of day-to-day provision mean that, over time, most pupils are supported to become successful learners again.
- Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are a particular strength of the school. Pupils relish the weekly trips into the local community, which staff arrange in order to make learning more relevant. Beachcombing and sailing are recent examples that support current curriculum themes. Trips to galleries and museums, including day trips to major institutions in London, are the norm.
- Ensuring that pupils have suitable values to live by and are prepared for life in modern Britain is a constant focus for staff. Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong, although keeping the rules is often a challenge due to high levels of emotional need. Tolerance and respect for the views of others and an understanding of religious beliefs and different cultures throughout the world are all covered as part of the curriculum.
- Carers who spoke to the inspector or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire were very positive about all aspects of the school. One carer was particularly positive about the

quality of information sharing and the school's daily email updates.

Governance

- The proprietor has not ensured that those responsible for leadership and governance of the school are carrying out their roles to ensure that pupils are safe. Not enough care has been taken to ensure that current government guidance is fully implemented.
- The executive director works in close partnership with the headteacher and knows the school increasingly well. He is effective in monitoring most aspects of the school's performance on behalf of the proprietor, checking the quality of provision and offering appropriate levels of support and challenge to the headteacher. However, weaknesses in safeguarding had not been identified through monitoring.
- Directors are advised by an independent school improvement partner who visits the school to monitor provision and act as an impartial adviser to the headteacher. This arrangement enables school leaders to confirm key strengths and identify areas that need to be developed further. The ability of directors to manage the performance of staff, including that of the headteacher, is one area that has benefited from this partnership.
- Other than the specific areas of concern around safeguarding identified in this report, directors have ensured that all areas of the independent school standards are fully met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Not all staff have been trained at an appropriate level to ensure pupils' safety. There are also omissions in the way pre-employment checks are carried out on some staff.
- A suitable safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. Not all aspects of the policy, specifically the aspects with respect to staff recruitment and training, are carried out rigorously enough.
- Apart from the specific issues already identified, other aspects of the school's work to keep pupils safe are strong. Staff are experienced at dealing with pupils who often display heightened emotions and who have a high degree of complex need.
- Safeguarding training for most staff is up to date. This includes first aid training and training on issues such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. Fire risk assessments and other premises checks are also fully in place. The school buildings are maintained well.
- Staff care very much about pupils' well-being and have highly developed day-to-day systems to ensure that pupils are protected from a range of potential dangers, including when using the internet. Effective handover sessions allow staff to be fully briefed about individual pupils' needs. Communication with carers is strong.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and support staff know pupils very well. Despite the high level of pupils'

complex needs and the tension this causes in some classrooms, staff provide good-quality learning experiences tailored to the needs of each individual.

- Detailed baseline assessments of each pupil are carried out on entry. These enable staff to build a clear picture of the strengths of each individual as quickly as possible. Profiles are built using a wide range of information, including pupils' previous achievements, so that staff are well informed and better able to provide the academic support pupils require.
- Teaching and support staff are dedicated and determined. They go out of their way to counter the low self-esteem displayed by many pupils. Building pupil confidence is a daily requirement. Planning opportunities that promote success in learning, while providing pupils with the right level of challenge, is a constant balancing act which staff accomplish very well most of the time.
- Classrooms are lively places. Staff know that they need to engage the interests of pupils in order for learning to take place. Often, this is achieved with a degree of stealth, with pupils 'sucked in' to learning before they realise it is going on. During the inspection, this approach was used successfully on a number of occasions, with pupils engaging in learning after a slow start, to eventually make the progress required.
- The questioning skills of staff are well developed. Feedback to pupils, including verbal prompts or carefully targeted questions, enables pupils to make connections with previous learning and understand more easily what they need to do to improve their work.
- The school's assessment policy has recently been updated. This has the potential to enable teachers to make better use of day-to-day progress information and be more responsive to the needs of pupils. Leaders know that this aspect of teaching, learning and assessment needs to be better. This is extremely important if pupils are to make the rapid gains most of them need to make in order to catch up, particularly in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. The failure of leaders and those responsible for governance to ensure that safeguarding requirements are effective means that the welfare of pupils has the potential to be compromised.
- Teaching and support staff are highly aware of the complex needs of individual pupils. Consequently, promoting the physical and emotional well-being of pupils is afforded a high profile at all times. Levels of supervision are high. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly good, although many find that previous negative experiences in school or other settings present barriers to engaging fully. Staff work hard to overcome these difficulties. Consequently, it is clear that most pupils want to learn, and are slowly coming to terms with the fact that they can be successful again.
- The school's wider curriculum promotes pupils' well-being successfully. This includes daily 'community' meetings in which staff and pupils share important information, express their

views and voice any worries. These sessions are sometimes lively, but are run well and provide staff and pupils with an opportunity to communicate in an open way.

- Pupils are very aware of the potential dangers of using the internet and social media. Because of the high level of supervision and good relationships with staff, pupils are able to discuss their personal worries with members of staff they trust. Bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with in an open way when staff and pupils have concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Despite their complex social and emotional needs, pupils try very hard to behave in a way that is acceptable. Expectations of behaviour are high. Staff are good at de-escalating situations when tensions are rising. Pupils told the inspector that staff deal with difficult behaviour 'very well'.
- During the inspection, some pupils found the presence of the inspector difficult to cope with. However, positive relationships between staff and pupils, built on trust and respect, enabled inspection activities to be completed with the minimum disruption to learning, underlining the strength of this aspect of the school's provision.
- Attendance is good. Most pupils attend school well. Absence is monitored meticulously by leaders. Good communication between the school and pupils' carers ensures that staff always know why pupils are absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. This includes both academic progress and the progress pupils make in overcoming the considerable barriers to learning many of them have.
- All pupils study mathematics and English to at least functional skills level. Some pupils go on to achieve mathematics and English at GCSE level prior to leaving at the end of Year 11. Pupils also achieve a range of other appropriate qualifications during their stay at the school.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils have the opportunity to make progress in a range of subjects, including the arts. During the inspection, music had a particularly high profile, with pupils singing and playing instruments with confidence and enthusiasm.
- School leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. All pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11 go on to further education or training. This includes pupils who undertake apprenticeships before gaining employment.
- School leaders ensure that staff understand the importance of promoting pupils' life skills. This is especially important when pupils' past experiences impact negatively on their confidence. The school's therapeutic approach to all aspects of day-to-day life is successful in providing the opportunities pupils need to begin to overcome their problems and build a sense of self-worth.

School details

Unique reference number

131356

DfE registration number	846/6043
Inspection number	10033682

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	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Seafields Limited
Chair	Matt Vince
Headteacher	Sara Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,526
Telephone number	01273 734 164
Website	www.lioncare.co.uk
Email address	schoolmanager@lioncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–4 June 2015

Information about this school

- The Lioncare School is an independent special school for pupils who experience extreme behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school admits boys and girls and aims to help them begin to repair the emotional impact of previous experiences, including poor learning opportunities and a lack of belief in the value and benefit of education.
- The school is accommodated in a former printing workshop in a residential street in Hove.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school has been open since 1997 and is owned by Seafields Limited, trading as the Lioncare Group.
- The school is registered for up to 17 pupils aged between six and 16 years of age. All pupils are in the care of a local authority. There are currently 11 pupils on roll, aged

between seven and 16 years of age.

- Pupils have histories of severely disrupted schooling. Many have not attended education for long periods prior to joining the school.
- Most pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils come from across England and their places are funded by their local authorities. All pupils are entitled to additional funding through the pupil premium. Some local authorities retain the primary sports funding and pupil premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a number of classroom visits during the inspection, some in part accompanied by the headteacher. During classroom visits, the inspector assessed pupils' work and talked to them about the progress they were making.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a representative of the proprietor and those responsible for governance, teaching and support staff and two pupils as representatives of the school's pupil group. Telephone conversations were held with a pupil's carer, the registered manager of one pupil's home and the school's independent improvement adviser. The inspector also attended handover and 'community' meetings at the start of the school day.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school.
- The inspector took into account three responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, records and policies, including those regarding safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards. Minutes of meetings of those responsible for governance, notes of visits by the proprietor's independent improvement adviser, the school's own self-evaluation, improvement planning and information about pupils' outcomes were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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