

The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5HD

Inspection Dates

13 September 2017

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The previous inspection found that not all staff, specifically the designated safeguarding leader and deputy, had had all of the appropriate training for their roles. The school's proposed action plan detailed arrangements for the relevant training. It also outlined a strategy for tighter monitoring and review of all safeguarding arrangements.
- The designated safeguarding leader and her deputy have both now had suitable training. The training undertaken has not only drawn on the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, but also wisely taken account of the school's specialist setting. The depth and quality of leaders' reflections on their training reflect starkly the seriousness attached to keeping young people safe, and that this has not been a 'box-ticking exercise'.
- Apart from specific issues relating to training and pre-employment checks, the standard inspection found that the school's work to keep pupils safe was strong. A thorough safeguarding policy is readily available on the school's website. The scheduled review of it, since the previous inspection, is complete. The policy makes explicit reference to the relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It also contains the names and contact details of a wide range of relevant professionals and agencies for the protection of children and young people. This includes who to refer to within the school, the wider organisation and beyond.
- The extent and detail of the safeguarding policy, thought through in the specific context of this school, suggests a high priority is given to safeguarding. Staff convey depth to their understanding of a wide range of safeguarding implications in the school's particular context. They feel able to challenge and debate leaders' stance on safeguarding. Staff reported that this is a constant and 'dynamic' discussion that threads through all of their work.
- A new safeguarding monitoring group has been created and has already met twice. It has a clearly defined purpose, focused initially on checking the impact of the policies and practices on individual pupils by reviewing the handling and outcomes of incidents or concerns. The headteacher is keenly aware of the potential risk that this group

could become too responsive as opposed to strategic. She is already steering the thinking and dialogue of the group to ensure that the culture and balance is right. Leaders have also secured the services of an external safeguarding consultant for additional quality assurance.

- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(b), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(b)

- At the time of the previous full inspection, not all of the required checks on the suitability of adults to work with young people were in place. The proprietor and leaders had not checked whether staff were prohibited from teaching. In response to the inspection findings, the proprietor and leaders proposed shifting responsibility for recruitment, pre-employment checks and the single central register from the organisation's central office to the school. The proposed action plan also outlined relevant training for leaders and staff in safer recruitment practices and arrangements for tighter monitoring of policies and procedures.
- All necessary pre-employment checks have been completed. The single central register meets requirements.
- The process and accountability for carrying out all of the necessary checks on the suitability of adults have been moved from the head office to the school. A number of staff, including both those responsible for making the checks and the leaders responsible for overseeing them, have had the appropriate training to carry out these roles. As a result they have a very clear understanding of the different types of check and the associated processes. Leaders plan to train more staff in due course.
- There have been no new appointments since the standard inspection, but leaders are creatively using the promotion of a current staff member to 'road test' the tightened procedures.
- The school's revised safer recruitment policy references the relevant guidance from the Secretary of State. Suitable processes for safer recruitment and selection are outlined step by step, clearly assigning who is responsible and outlining specific monitoring arrangements. All of the required checks, including prohibition checks, are detailed in the relevant sections.
- Plans are in place to use an external and independent safeguarding consultant to audit the policy and practice to check whether they are robust and followed diligently upon the first staff appointments.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The standard inspection found that lapses in other parts of the independent school standards showed that the proprietor, leaders and managers were not effective in making sure that the independent school standards were met consistently. Despite other notable strengths, shortcomings in arrangements to safeguard pupils were a

potential risk to pupils' welfare.

- The proposed actions to strengthen leadership and devolve accountability were judged to be acceptable. However, the plan required modification because the stated actions did not refer specifically to the prohibition checks that were not previously in place. At the time of this inspection, all necessary checks had already been completed and a revised safer recruitment policy, specifically referencing prohibition checks, was already in place.
- The specific safeguarding issues that previously had the potential to undermine the otherwise effective work of the school to promote pupils' welfare have all been rectified.
- Despite their obvious disappointment, leaders have responded well to findings of the previous inspection. There is a strong sense of moving forward. Leaders have not focused narrowly on purely addressing the identified weaknesses. They have acted strategically to ensure that there can be no further lapses and that other aspects of the school continue to improve. Strengthening governance to ensure that monitoring, evaluation and compliance are effective is part of this drive. Steps have been taken towards forming an advisory board to fulfil this role. An increase in the commissioning of external and independent scrutiny and oversight of the school's work is intended to keep directors better informed.
- The leadership review that had begun at the time of the previous inspection continues to advance and is close to being finalised. Arrangements are already in place to reinforce leadership of safeguarding and delegate responsibility for managing the school in the absence of the headteacher.
- The standard inspection found that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes, were good. The report suggested how these aspects could be further improved as part of the school's drive towards outstanding. The middle leader responsible for assessment has further refined the policy and approach to the ongoing assessment of pupils. Training for staff has begun and is ongoing. Initially, this has been about emphasising the importance of clear learning objectives for all activities and sharpening the focus and understanding of the small steps towards achieving the intended targets. The leader is keen to ensure that all staff are fully involved in assessing pupils' small steps of progress and finding a manageable and effective way of recording these so that they are not lost.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures 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 ensures 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 ensures that a register is kept which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to this school. The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1 May 2007, whether a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act; and whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii) and 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures 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)).

School Details

Unique reference number	131356
DfE registration number	846/6043
Inspection number	10040672

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Seafields Ltd
Chair	Matt Vince
Headteacher	Sara Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,256
Telephone number	01273 734 164
Website	www.lioncare.co.uk
Email address	schooladmin@lioncare.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	3–5 May 2017

Information about this school

- The Lioncare School is an independent special school for pupils who experience extreme behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All pupils are in the care of a local authority.
- 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.
- Pupils have histories of severely disrupted schooling. Many have not attended education for long periods prior to joining the school.

- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- Most pupils admitted to the school 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.
- The school has been open since 1997 and is owned by Seafields Limited, trading as the Lioncare Group.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was on 3 to 5 May 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was conducted without notice.
- The Department for Education accepted the school's action plan with modifications on 30 August 2017.
- The inspector had discussions with the headteacher, middle leaders, teachers and other staff, and the executive director as a representative of the proprietor. He scrutinised the single central register and other documentation relating to previously unmet standards. He accepted the headteacher's invitation to attend and observe the morning 'community meeting' involving staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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