

My Choice School – Ocean Pearl

2 Yeomans Nursery, Warningcamp, Arundel BN18 9QY

Inspection dates

19–21 September 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school with energy and determination. Her strong partnership with the head of education has ensured that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection.
- Teaching and support staff are dedicated to improving pupils' outcomes. They fully understand pupils' complex backgrounds and persevere when others might not.
- Most pupils make good or better progress because teachers plan learning that meets their needs well. This is particularly the case in mathematics and English.
- The school provides well for pupils' social and emotional development. Staff understand that breaking down barriers to learning is key to pupils' future development.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are vigilant and understand the potential dangers pupils face, both in and outside school.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is sound. However, the links between this key aspect of leadership and school improvement planning are not as effective as they could be.
- On occasion, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of. When this is the case, pupils do not make the rapid progress they could.
- Teaching assistants are sometimes underutilised in the classroom. Their care of pupils' emotional needs is strong, but more could be done to support pupils' learning.
- The behaviour of most pupils is good. Staff have high expectations. Policies and routines take into account the high levels of need pupils have.
- Leaders and those in positions of governance have ensured that all 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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the process of self-evaluation and how it informs improvement planning, so that leaders and those in positions of governance are more keenly aware of the school's strengths and the key priorities for improvement.
- Ensure that teachers are more consistent in planning learning which offers appropriate levels of challenge, so that opportunities for pupils to make good or better progress are not lost.
- Fully utilise support staff in classrooms, so that they make more of a contribution to improving pupils' academic outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school with a quiet confidence. She fully understands the unique challenges faced by staff in providing high-quality provision for pupils with severe and complex needs. Because of this, relationships are strong and pupils benefit from the positive and very nurturing environment this creates.
- The head of education (who also has responsibility for the proprietor's other school settings) is heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the school. Together with the headteacher, she has ensured that the school has continued to improve since moving to its new site just under two years ago.
- School leaders and those responsible for governance know the school well. They are effective in ensuring that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have a firm grasp of the quality of teaching and learning. They work hard to motivate staff, as well as providing them with appropriate levels of challenge. Leaders are successful at providing support when aspects of classroom practice need to improve. Consequently, outcomes for most pupils are good or better, because the majority of teaching closely matches their needs.
- The school's curriculum meets the needs of its pupils well. It allows staff the flexibility to focus on pupils' strengths and personal interests in order to engage them in learning as fully as possible. This leads to individualised and bespoke timetables, which pupils enjoy.
- Pupils also enjoy the school's wider curriculum, which is supplemented by placements at local colleges where appropriate. Visits into the community help pupils to hone their social skills, as well as develop their knowledge and understanding in real-life situations. Pupils told the inspector how they enjoy the extra sporting opportunities on offer, including ice-skating and trampolining.
- Helping pupils to better understand society and its conventions is given a high priority. Respect and tolerance for others are taught through the school's citizenship, and personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, although some readily admit to breaking the school rules on occasion.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to be developed. However, the linking of self-evaluation to development planning, including identifying the key priorities to improve the school further, is not as effective as it could be. This means that strengths are not as readily acknowledged as they could be, and priorities for improvement are not as focused as they should be.

Governance

- Those in positions of governance take their responsibilities seriously. The head of education acts on behalf of the proprietor to monitor the quality of education in the school. This allows the proprietor to have clear oversight and ensures that the headteacher is held to account for all aspects of the school's provision. This includes safeguarding, compliance with health and safety legislation, and meeting the independent school standards.

- Regular meetings with the directors and other member of the proprietor's senior leadership team enable school leaders to draw on the expertise of specialists for advice and guidance. These also allow the directors to have regular updates on the school's priorities for improvement, as well as academic progress and the social and emotional development of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils. This includes publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.
- Staff are attentive and constantly aware of the vulnerabilities of the pupils in their care. Good communication between staff and other professionals helps mitigate the risks faced by both staff and pupils, especially when pupils' emotional needs are running high.
- Daily routines and procedures are sound. Policies are fit for purpose, understood and implemented. Levels of supervision are high. The ratio of staff to pupils is constantly assessed by leaders, and increased if and when required. Risk assessments of the site and for individual pupils also help staff to provide a safe and caring environment at the school.
- The single central record of staff checks is sound. Staff training is thorough and up to date and has recently focused on key national priorities to keep vulnerable pupils safe.
- Professionals from two different local authorities who place pupils at the school told the inspector that they feel pupils are safe and well cared for at the school. Staff who replied to the Ofsted staff questionnaire also expressed an opinion that pupils are safe in school. Pupils who talked to the inspector said they felt safe in school, but said they were worried when other pupils' emotional needs ran high.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff know pupils very well because communication between school leaders and teaching and support staff is strong. When pupils join the school, baseline assessments of their academic ability and social and emotional needs are comprehensive. Staff waste no time in gathering this information. They know that many pupils will stay at the school for a relatively short period of time.
- Most of the time, teachers plan learning that matches the needs of individual pupils well. As a result, the majority of pupils make good or better progress, especially in developing their mathematics and English skills. For many pupils, progress is rapid as staff quickly break down barriers and pupils enjoy becoming successful learners once more.
- Pupils enjoy the personalised aspect of their lessons. Teachers try hard to match learning to pupils' strengths and particular interests. Classroom visits showed good evidence of this. One pupil told the inspector how she 'hated' history in her last school, but that she enjoyed it now because the teacher made it interesting.
- Expectations of pupils' participation and engagement in classrooms are high. Teachers make constant reference to prior learning and successful outcomes in previous lessons. This helps to enthuse pupils, as well as develop their confidence and build self-esteem.

- Sometimes, teachers plan learning that isn't challenging enough. Consequently, opportunities for pupils to enjoy the rapid gains and excellent outcomes they are capable of are lost.
- On occasion, teaching assistants are not as active in supporting learning as they could be. Leaders are aware of this. However, more needs to be done to ensure that this aspect of classroom practice is given a higher priority for improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils show good attitudes to learning, especially when teaching engages them and allows them to make connections with real life.
- The pastoral care of pupils is a strong aspect of provision. Breaking down barriers to learning and rebuilding pupils' self-confidence are given a high priority. There is a strong culture in the school of providing the personal support each pupil needs to become a success and make a positive contribution to society.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to stay safe. Internet safety and the potential dangers associated with social media are covered. Visiting professionals, including social workers and the British Transport Police, also contribute to different aspects of teaching pupils to stay safe in school and in the wider community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff have high expectations and tackle poor behaviour in a consistent manner across the school. As a result, the number of incidents recorded by school leaders has fallen since the school moved to its new site two years ago.
- Despite pupils' complex needs, staff are successful at not letting inappropriate behaviour get in the way of learning. They are skilled at de-escalating situations which might potentially lead to more problematic behaviour.
- The school keeps detailed records of pupils' attendance. These include the reasons for absence, as well as the impact of actions taken by the school to improve attendance. Individual education plans and the school's monitoring shows that most pupils' attendance improves dramatically after joining the school. Leaders are steadfast in their approach when this is not the case.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good progress from their very varied starting points. This is particularly the case in mathematics and English, where some pupils make rapid gains within a short period of time after starting at the school.
- Baseline assessments of pupils on joining the school are comprehensive and accurate. Teachers use this information to plan learning which addresses the substantial gaps in knowledge and understanding many pupils have. As a result, pupils' work shows good

progress over time. This is especially the case for pupils who have been at the school for longer periods of time.

- Leaders expect pupils to make good or better progress in a range of subjects, even if the steps in progress are small. As a consequence, pupils acquire a number of useful qualifications prior to leaving the school. This includes qualifications in functional English and mathematics skills, as well as a range of vocational qualifications that give pupils skills for life and future employment.
- All of the pupils that left the school at the end of Year 11 in the last two years went on to further education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135111
DfE registration number	938/6272
Inspection number	10026024

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	My Choice Children's Homes Ltd
Chair	Alex Hyland
Headteacher	Susan Evans
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000
Telephone number	01903 898060
Website	www.my-choice-homes.com
Email address	a.murphy@my-choice-homes.com
Date of previous inspection	27–28 November 2013

Information about this school

- My Choice School – Ocean Pearl is a very small independent day school catering for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have had a disrupted education prior to joining the school. Many display challenging behaviour and have complex learning needs.
- The school was last inspected in November 2013, when it was found to be good and met all of the independent school standards. Since that time, the school has changed location, moving to its present site in September 2015. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2015.

- The school currently uses both Northbrook and Chichester Colleges for part-time placements for some of its pupils.
- The majority of pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. Most are in the care of the local authority that places them.
- The school is registered for up to 20 boys and girls aged from 11 to 16. At the time of the inspection there were seven pupils on roll, all of whom are in either Years 10 or 11.
- The school has its own headteacher, who is line-managed on behalf of the proprietor by the head of education. The head of education also has responsibility for the proprietor's other educational settings.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a number of classroom visits during the inspection. The visits were conducted in a sensitive manner due to the complex needs of individual pupils. All visits were accompanied by the headteacher. During classroom visits, the inspector assessed the quality of pupils' work and talked to them about the progress they were making.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school site.
- A number of joint meetings were held with the headteacher and the head of education. The inspector also met formally with teaching and support staff, as well as with two pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a director, acting as the representative of the proprietor. Further telephone conversations were held with representatives of two different local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- The inspector took into account responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. He also took into account three replies to the staff questionnaire. The inspector also took into account the school's own pupil survey.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents and policies, including those regarding safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and aspects of the independent school standards. Pupils' individual education plans and examples of their work were also scrutinised. Records of meetings of those responsible for governance, the school's own self-evaluation document, 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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