

Inspection Report

Inspection dates

3–5 October 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	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

- Leaders and trustees have not established a clear system of accountability for raising academic standards in the school. Consequently, standards are not yet consistently good.
- Leaders and trustees do not fully understand the independent school standards.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning does not focus sharply on the progress that pupils are making. Staff do not receive precise enough guidance about how to improve their practice.
- The curriculum in both key stages 4 and 5 is not ensuring that the most able pupils access qualifications at a standard that meets their abilities.
- Assessment is not fully developed in all subjects, and does not support the most able pupils to gain skills and knowledge rapidly enough. Pupils who are ready to achieve more are, too often, working at a pedestrian pace.
- Teaching activities and resources do not encourage or enthuse pupils to want to learn more. This is particularly the case for those pupils who are ready to learn more rapidly.

The school has the following strengths

- Personal development and welfare is outstanding. Adults undertake exceptional work to support pupils' welfare needs.
- Leaders provide excellent support for students in the sixth form so that they achieve good-quality next steps in their education, training or employment.
- Behaviour is good. The atmosphere in the school is calm and welcoming.
- The least able pupils are achieving well. They access a wealth of vocational qualifications and functional skills that are well suited to their abilities and interests.

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?

- Raise the quality of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening leaders' and trustees' understanding of the independent school standards to identify specific priorities for improvement
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of leaders and trustees
 - ensuring that there are good, frequent opportunities to check the impact of leaders' work in addressing the priorities within the school development plan
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning provides teachers with specific guidance and holds teachers to account precisely for pupils' progress.
- Improve the curriculum provision and assessment systems so that:
 - all subjects are as well developed as the best
 - the most able pupils access a wide range of higher-level qualifications closely suited to their abilities and interests.
- Raise standards in teaching, learning and achievement across the school so that pupils make good progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment precisely to provide appropriately challenging work for the most able pupils and those who are ready to achieve more
 - providing resources and activities that encourage pupils to want to learn more and work at a pace which matches their ability and understanding.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
 - 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
 - fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - 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
 - utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range
 - 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, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(f), 3(g)).
- 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

(paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the school opened in 2016, leaders and trustees have not developed clarity about their different roles and responsibilities, or a thorough enough understanding of the independent school standards. There is not a sharp enough accountability among leaders and trustees for raising academic standards. Consequently, leaders and trustees are not collectively ensuring that pupils receive a consistently good standard of education.
- Leaders and trustees undertake annual appraisal of staff, as well as detailed and routine monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, this monitoring focuses overtly on teachers' performance rather than the progress that pupils make. Leaders have not placed sufficient emphasis on how they review this information to hold staff to account for pupils' progress.
- There has not been sufficient focus on the curriculum or qualifications available for the most able pupils. Some pupils study for qualifications that are not a clear progression from their previous learning and achievements, or that are too easy for them.
- Curriculum planning has been haphazard, and has not ensured that pupils have appropriate curriculum time or staffing expertise to be able to undertake some qualifications effectively.
- The curriculum provision for the least able pupils has been well thought out. Pupils study a range of functional skills, entry-level qualifications, and a good variety of vocational qualifications such as City and Guilds in woodwork, catering, horticulture, painting and decorating, and motor mechanics. The on-site facilities for pupils to undertake these qualifications are of a very high quality.
- Leaders rarely receive additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. However, other forms of additional funding received are used effectively to support the personalised welfare needs for disadvantaged pupils. This includes funding for high-quality trips and visits that build pupils' confidence as well as their skills for independent living.
- The passionate and committed leaders and trustees have focused on getting the right social, emotional and welfare support for the very vulnerable pupils who attend the school. This welfare provision is of an exceptional quality. Consequently, pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding.
- Leaders work determinedly to support pupils to face their considerable challenges head-on, so that they are increasingly better prepared to play a positive role as citizens in modern Britain. In particular, leaders have created well-thought-out opportunities for pupils to have meaningful dialogue to improve their understanding of positive and healthy relationships.

Governance

- Since opening, trustees have not worked precisely enough with leaders to ensure that they are all clear on the independent school standards, or that roles and responsibilities are as well clarified as they need to be.
- The trustees have a good understanding of the over-arching strengths and weaknesses in

the provision. However, they have not made academic standards enough of an urgent priority. Trustees are not ensuring that leaders and staff act rapidly enough to address specific issues, most notably the curriculum and teaching for the most able pupils.

- Trustees are passionate about the quality of education for the most vulnerable pupils and remain unequivocal in their aspiration for pupils' futures.
- The trustees use their range of expertise to undertake focused visits to the school, and to review the information provided by the director of the provision. They have focused particularly on the personal welfare development in the provision. Consequently, trustees have a good understanding of how the school meets the personal welfare needs of pupils, and ensures that pupils move on to appropriate education, employment or training.
- Trustees ensure that they review the spending of the funding and finances in the school well. They use much of this funding for the intensive and highly effective therapeutic support for pupils and the specialist on-site provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The ongoing and high-quality training provided to staff means that they are constantly vigilant to the needs and vulnerabilities of pupils in the school. In particular, leaders and staff are very aware of the specific vulnerabilities of their pupils to radicalisation and extremism. Staff use their thorough training insightfully and work with leaders to ensure the vigilance and safety of pupils in their care.
- Leaders work tenaciously with local agencies over child protection, including the Care Quality Commission, local authorities and virtual-school headteachers. Leaders make referrals effectively, and act as the 'voice' for pupils when they feel that more support and care is required from external agencies.
- Leaders work meticulously to keep pupils and staff safe on site and in the wider community. Leaders undertake incredibly thorough assessments of the risks on site, in the locality and through the wider activities that pupils undertake. The work of the site manager in keeping all checks on the fire safety, health and safety, and general maintenance of the site up to date is meticulous.
- Pupils arrive at the school with a very poor understanding about how to manage their behaviours, particularly with regards to appropriate online behaviour and safety. Leaders and staff spend inordinate amounts of time supporting pupils in a sensitive and thoughtful way, to develop safer behaviours both for themselves, and towards others. This is a central focus of many of the therapy sessions for pupils.
- The single central record of the suitability of staffing meets requirements. The records for staffing checks are well kept. However, leaders and trustees are not ensuring that they audit this record against the independent school standards routinely enough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not use assessment consistently well to ensure that they have high enough expectations about what pupils can achieve. Teachers do not notice quickly enough when pupils are ready to move at a faster pace, or to a higher level. Teachers do not routinely

challenge pupils to achieve more, or to deepen their knowledge and skills to achieve higher standards, when they are ready. This is especially the case for the most able pupils in academic qualifications.

- Pupils join the school often after missing long periods of education in their previous schools, but teachers do not use their knowledge and understanding of this routinely enough, or their extensive information on pupils' interests and aspirations.
- Teachers do not habitually plan to ensure that they enthuse pupils in their learning, most notably in the academic aspects of the school's curriculum. As a result, although pupils are generally compliant, they are not being encouraged to make the rapid progress that they need to, in order to catch up with their peers nationally.
- There is a core of strong practice in teaching, learning and assessment in the school, especially, but not exclusively, in the vocational provision. Where practice is more effective, teachers use assessment to help pupils create portfolios of evidence that match the required standards for the qualifications. The evidence of pupils' ongoing work in GCSE and A-level qualifications is not as consistently well organised and does not show good progress over time.
- Teachers exhibit a deep-seated knowledge of the subjects that they teach. The support for the least able pupils and those who have the most complex special educational needs and/or disabilities is a particular strength of the school. Teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to develop their understanding. For example, the questioning seen in City and Guilds in horticulture was effective in guiding a pupil to understand the reasons behind specific planting techniques.
- Music, art, drama and physical education are used with increasing effectiveness to support the academic and therapeutic needs of pupils. The learning environment across the school site provides superb facilities for pupils to engage in learning, which enhances their personal development. Woodcraft, motor mechanics and sport are just some of the high-quality sessions that pupils access routinely.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and staff 'go the extra mile' for all pupils. Leaders and trustees invest heavily in a team of teaching and non-teaching staff, who wholeheartedly support the holistic needs of all pupils with care, compassion and resilience.
- The community meetings, which occur throughout the school day, ensure that pupils get to discuss issues that are pertinent to them and the wider community. This is undertaken in a safe yet challenging environment, where pupils are made to think meaningfully about their actions, their views and their role in the community.
- In this provision, any early signs of potential bullying are dealt with very effectively. Staff have created a transparency and honesty in how they manage sensitive issues, and pupils appreciate this immensely.
- The outdoor learning environment across the provision offers extensive opportunities for pupils not only in the curriculum, but also in their own personal development. Pupils are

supported to increase their health and fitness through the on-site outdoor gym, through visits to the local gym and swimming pool, and through local football community matches.

- Staff and pupils have created a real community atmosphere in the provision. There are a number of practical activities on offer and staff engage harmoniously with pupils during these times. Pupils often lead on the preparation of lunch, especially those who are undertaking courses in catering, and readily help to tidy away.
- Staff put pupils' needs and well-being at the centre of their work, and treat them with respect and courtesy. The whole community celebrates one another's successes, including the staff, through events like the school's leaving ceremony. Consequently, most pupils develop very positive relationships with staff, based on respect and trust.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils normally arrive at the school after significant turbulence in their previous schooling and staff use a supportive behaviour system to help pupils when they are struggling to cope. As a result, after time, pupils interact well and develop an understanding of how to behave appropriately.
- Most pupils value their education and attend school regularly. Where there are some who do not attend as well, leaders and staff work collectively, and successfully, to improve attendance over time.
- The number of pupils who display poor behaviours which result in them facing consequences reduces considerably after their induction into the school. Pupils learn to manage their own behaviour very well.
- On very rare occasions, pupils use disrespectful language towards some teaching staff. Where this occurs, leaders use their very effective community meetings and consequences system to address the issue. However, leaders acknowledge that they could prevent such occurrences by exploring these pupils' feelings towards education more specifically.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- From their individual starting points, the progress made by pupils across the school is uneven. School leaders use a range of commercial systems to find the starting points of pupils accurately. Generally, but not always, pupils make more rapid progress when they enter the school with lower starting points. Where progress is less rapid, this is often linked to temporary staffing, the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- The least able pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make better progress than others. The use of the specialist sensory room provides additional support for a number of these pupils. In key stages 4 and 5, the range of qualifications, such as functional skills and City and Guilds qualifications, supports pupils well in filling previous gaps in their learning so that they can achieve their potential in the examinations.

- The most able pupils do not make the consistently rapid progress they should. While pupils in key stages 4 and 5 do achieve some qualifications in English, mathematics and a number of other subjects, they do not achieve the highest standards or qualifications that they should. Too often, they do not spend enough time on these higher-level qualifications to complete them successfully.
- Leaders are encouraging more pupils to read widely and often, especially through the creation of the 'reading room'. This is decorated, organised and maintained by staff and pupils. Older pupils are encouraged to read newspapers and find out about major world events. However, literacy development across all subjects is not well developed or monitored by leaders, and relies solely on the skills and strategies of individual teachers.
- Pupils' development in their social, emotional and mental health is rapid, owing to the significant support that leaders and staff provide. Ongoing assessment of pupils' needs and progress is well embedded and used by staff with confidence. Leaders are continuing to look for more formal ways to show the impact of this work.
- The transition support that staff give when pupils are ready to move into further education, training or employment is exceptional. The transition team and life-skills teachers work alongside local authorities, housing offices and the pupils themselves to make sure that they go on to appropriate next steps in their lives. In 2016/17, all pupils achieved a successful next-step destination; a number of them went into apprenticeships or further education courses.

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

- As almost all students who attend the school are in the sixth form, the areas of inconsistency identified in teaching, learning, assessment, leadership and outcomes are also apparent in the sixth-form provision. This is the reason for the sixth form requiring improvement. In particular, the level 3 courses open to the few students who are able to access this level remain minimal currently, mainly owing to a lack of staffing expertise.
- Work experience and work-related learning are real strengths in the school's provision. Teachers and tutors ensure that vocational qualifications enable students to undertake practical application of this work off-site. For example, students who are undertaking horticulture are able to use these skills through work experience in local community gardens, such as the local church. This not only gives students a sense of the practical application of their skills, but also a sense of working within the community.
- Additionally, the on-site facilities allow students to learn early driving skills in a very safe environment. This facility was created as leaders acknowledged that, for many students, the cost of learning to drive was prohibitive. Students are being given opportunities to practise their driving skills, learn basic car maintenance and apply for their provisional licenses and formal lessons, so that they can undertake their theory and practical tests successfully.
- The exceptional work of the transition team and the life-skills teachers is ensuring that students who are nearing the end of their time with the school are very well supported to move on to appropriate next steps. The team helps students to understand the theory behind living independently through life-skills lessons and on-site practical activities. The team also uses a number of 'independence weeks' for students to put some of this theory

into practice.

- The transition team and leaders also work closely with the appropriate local authority and housing teams, to make sure that students, when they leave, have safe and secure independent living facilities that are of a suitable standard. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that their young people are set up as well as possible when they leave them.
- Leaders have identified that, despite all of their work to smooth transition, many students do not have sufficient external support once they leave the school. The ongoing support that the school provides for students who have left, most notably in the following 18 months in their next steps in education, employment or training, ensures that any ex-student who is struggling has access to therapists within the school, and face-to-face visits, if appropriate. For a number of students, this is just the right level of support to keep them on track.

School details

Unique reference number	142625
DfE registration number	873/6053
Inspection number	10033609

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 school
Age range of pupils	15 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Proprietor	The Friends Therapeutic Community Trust
Chair	Sue Brock-Hollinshead
Director	Peter Clarke
Clinical director	Karen Parrish
Headteacher	Michelle Hamilton-Dutoit
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in May 2016. This was its first inspection.
- There is a director, clinical director and headteacher with responsibility for the school.
- The school is owned by The Friends Therapeutic Community Trust, and led by a group of trustees from the Quaker community.
- The trustees provide governance for the school. There is no governing body.
- The school provides education for up to 16 pupils aged 15 to 19.

- Admission to the school is through local authority or social services referral, or as directed by the court. All pupils have complex needs, relating to their vulnerability to harmful and challenging behaviours.
- The school works with pupils to recognise and reduce the risks and threats that they face and represent. The aim is to assist pupils to learn how to maintain socially and legally acceptable standards of behaviour so that they can resume independent living.
- A few pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school does not use supply staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects, such as City and Guilds and functional skills.
- Meetings were held with the trustees, director, clinical director and headteacher, and teachers.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation; minutes of trustees' meetings; records relating to safeguarding pupils; recruitment paperwork; physical intervention logs; risk assessments; pupil progress information; and school policies and procedures.
- The inspector took account of 32 responses from the Ofsted's online survey of staff. Additionally, the inspector spoke to staff about their experiences of working at the school.
- The inspector spoke to pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes and in lessons.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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