

# SW!TCH Borders

The Vibe, 195–211 Becontree Avenue, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2UT

## Inspection dates

31 October–2 November 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have a precise and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their evaluations effectively help them to run and enhance this provision for vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils make significant advances in their social and emotional well-being from the point of referral. Pupils' personal development is a key strength of the school.
- The curriculum supports pupils to develop knowledge and skills that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils' good progress in English, mathematics and information technology is down to good teaching and effective pastoral support.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning, removing barriers to good progress. Pupils and staff develop strong relationships that encourage pupils' personal development and support their welfare effectively. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) sessions develop pupils' work-related skills effectively.
- Teaching staff are committed to supporting pupils to achieve their best. Staff understand pupils' needs and communicate regularly with referring schools so that they can prepare lessons and activities that pupils typically engage with positively.
- Pupils' attendance and behaviour have improved markedly since joining the school. This is because pupils feel that staff invest in their futures and want to help them. Pupils are excited about the expedition that forms one of their learning aims.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good but pupils do not demonstrate the healthy lifestyles that the school encourages.
- Pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance, including regular meetings with volunteer trained mentors. However, the school has not yet developed strategies that closely align pupils' abilities and aspirations to possible post-16 options.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. However, this is less effective at developing pupils' academic skills in PSHE sessions.

### 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?

- Ensure that teaching and learning in PSHE sessions are consistently good at developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics explored.
- Further improve pupils' personal development and welfare, by:
  - enhancing pupils' understanding and fulfilment of healthy lifestyles and diets
  - continuing to develop the careers advice and guidance that pupils receive so that they move on to suitable education, training or employment when leaving school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and staff work effectively to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met and that pupils receive a good standard of education.
- Leaders and staff work closely together and with parents and referring schools. This means that pupils' needs are understood and effective strategies are put in place to help pupils develop new knowledge and skills.
- Leaders have rigorous systems and procedures in place to evaluate pupils' performance and the performance of the school. This information helps leaders refine their plans for development, which are pupil focused. This means that leaders' strategies are effective.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the structure of the curriculum, which provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Alongside this academic learning, pupils develop social and life skills that not only prepare them well for the planned expeditions, which form a core of the curriculum, but also prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Leaders have ensured that knowledge and skills developed in morning academic lessons support pupils' learning in afternoon skills-focused sessions, and vice versa. However, pupils' academic learning through PSHE sessions is weaker.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted by regular opportunities for pupils to consider the views of others, their rights and responsibilities and the philanthropic purpose of their expedition to West Africa.
- Leaders think creatively about how to meet pupils' needs in this small school. They draw upon programmes offered by the proprietor's charitable organisations to support pupils' personal development, for example. This is effective in widening the range of resources that staff have available to them and enables pupils to receive advice and support from a range of qualified external sources, including trained volunteer mentors.

### Governance

- The proprietor works closely with the headteacher and school staff, providing direct line management and support to the social work aspect of the school. Alongside staff, the proprietor works effectively in ensuring that pupils' social development sits at the heart of the school's work. The proprietor has ensured that the school achieves its ethos and vision, and recognises where there is further work to do so that standards rise further. The school's plans for development are well informed by the proprietor's first-hand observations and evaluations.

### Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff know their pupils very well and understand their responsibilities concerning safeguarding pupils' welfare. As a result, pupils attend school safe in the knowledge that staff have their best interests at heart and will help them should they have concerns. Staff are well trained and appropriately vetted before starting work. Leaders have ensured that procedures for responding to disclosures are timely and appropriate. Staff are proactive in

working with leaders, external agencies and the local authority if they spot anything of concern. Records relating to safeguarding are accurate and detailed. Links between pupils' behaviour, attendance and welfare are made clear in staff's analysis of pupils' performance. Staff are diligent in maintaining detailed logs of incidents that occur, so that they quickly identify emerging trends or signs of risk.

- The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and pays due regard to the latest statutory guidance. It is available on the school's website.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good because teaching staff know and understand their pupils' needs well. Teachers use assessment effectively so that they, pupils, parents and referring schools know how pupils are doing.
- Pupils make good progress towards aspirational qualifications because teachers' initial assessments of pupils' abilities on entry are accurate.
- Teachers plan activities that meet the needs of qualification courses and encourage pupils to want to do well. Pupils work with staff to help them learn.
- Pupils learn effectively with one another and independently. Pupils enjoyed offering opinions on the topic of domestic abuse, for example. The teachers were able to support pupils in developing new ideas and challenging preconceptions.
- Teachers ask appropriate and probing questions to help pupils arrive at solutions themselves. Teachers develop pupils' resilience to getting things wrong and trying again through well-chosen tasks and questions.
- The most able pupils are provided with challenging work, including GCSE materials in mathematics and English. This helps pupils to recognise the good progress they are making and to value their studies.
- Teaching and learning of mathematics, English and ICT are structured to meet course requirements and develop pupils' knowledge and skills in those discrete areas. In afternoon PSHE sessions, the focus is on preparation for life after school. This includes work activities that focus on other subjects, including science, history, citizenship and design. Pupils' social and skills development is very good in these sessions. However, their progress in developing the academic skills associated with the subject areas is weaker than in morning sessions.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's focus is on developing pupils' social and life skills to prepare them for life after school. Pupils join the school because they found mainstream schooling challenging and risked permanent exclusion. Pupils' personal development from joining SW!TCH is good because previous barriers to learning are gradually overcome and pupils are supported to manage any difficulties.

- Pupils receive regular mentoring and support from a range of staff, volunteers and external agencies. Leaders have planned strategically so that pupils receive guidance that is consistent and helpful. This enables pupils to develop their self-esteem and to recognise their strengths.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning improve at school because they recognise that staff are there to help them. Pupils' improved attendance reflects this, as does their punctuality to lessons following social times. Staff and pupils develop effective working relationships that underpin pupils' achievement.
- Pupils receive regular input to promote their ability to set targets for when they leave school. This includes mentoring sessions and explicit links to careers and post-16 studies during lessons. However, leaders are right to identify that further work is needed to ensure that pupils get the most out of those sessions, and that guidance is refined so that it closely matches pupils' abilities and aspirations.
- The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about the risks of drugs, alcohol, and youth and violent crime. Pupils are encouraged to learn about healthy lifestyles and receive regular physical education. However, pupils do not yet display a secure understanding of, or appreciation for, the benefits of good diet and healthy lifestyles.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. From the time they join, the school's records show that pupils' behaviour improves significantly. During the inspection, pupils were observed engaging well and keen to learn, demonstrating that their attitudes to learning improve during their time with SW!TCH. Pupils' conduct throughout a typical school day is good.
- Staff use rewards effectively to encourage pupils' participation in activities, and the expedition outcome at the end of the course is proving to be an effective motivator. Pupils' conduct is typically good and reflects significant gains from their starting points.
- Pupils typically work well with each other and staff. There is little significant disruption to learning in lessons because staff are consistent in their application of procedures to manage any incidents of poor behaviour.
- Pupils' behavioural improvements are down to the integrated work that leaders and staff undertake with pupils, parents and referring schools. Barriers to learning are fewer than when pupils join the school and this enables pupils to make good progress.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' outcomes are good. Pupils join the school with very low starting points, and face significant barriers to their learning. They make good progress towards Level 2 courses that will support their subsequent education, training and employment.
- Some pupils have already gained stepping stone Level 1 qualifications in English reading, mathematics and ICT. This represents good progress from their starting points. Pupils' work and current assessment information indicate a continuing trend of good progress over time in English, mathematics and ICT qualification courses.
- The development of knowledge and skills in activities focused on science, humanities, creative and aesthetic work, and physical education is good, particularly in supporting

pupils' understanding of the values and attitudes of others. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of these areas of the curriculum are less secure than in the qualification subjects.

- Pupils are well prepared for their subsequent education, training and employment because of the effective work the school does to help pupils learn about national and local institutions, the rule of law and life in modern Britain. The school helps pupils overcome challenges they face through the range of effective support strategies in place, which prepare them well for life after school.

## School details

Unique reference number	143019
DfE registration number	301/6005
Inspection number	10035817

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	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Lifeline Community Projects
Chair	Nathan Singleton
Headteacher	Eugene Amoako
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,960
Telephone number	020 82706106
Website	<a href="http://www.lifelineprojects.co.uk/alternative-education/#about">http://www.lifelineprojects.co.uk/alternative-education/#about</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@lifelineprojects.co.uk">info@lifelineprojects.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- SW!TCH Borders offers a two-year programme of academic and vocational courses for key stage 4 pupils who have been referred from local schools or the local authority. The school referring a pupil funds the placement and pupils are dual registered. Currently, all pupils are in Year 11 with plans to admit a new cohort into Year 10 in September.
- Pupils study functional skills courses in English language, mathematics and information technology in morning sessions. Scientific, human and social, creative and aesthetic, and physical education learning occurs through the afternoon sessions and contributes to pupils' preparation for an expedition.

- The school is located in The Vibe Youth Centre on Becontree Avenue and shares the site with other local authority-run and commissioned activities.
- The proprietor is the director of young peoples' services for Lifeline Projects. He is the only member of the proprietorial body.
- Shortly after registration with the Department for Education in August 2016, the school changed its name from The Lifeline Institute to SW!TCH Borders. The current maximum number of pupils that the school plans to admit is eight per year group.
- The school uses the following off-site facilities:
  - Target Fitness of 141 Becontree Avenue, RM8 2UL, for physical education sessions
  - Thriftwood of Orchard Avenue, Brentwood, CM13 2DP, for outdoor pursuits.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the proprietor, the headteacher and staff during the inspection. The inspector considered their views via the Ofsted survey as well.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with all of the current referring schools and the local authority designated officer.
- The inspector considered the views of three parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with him during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke with pupils formally and informally.
- The inspector observed learning in English, mathematics, information technology, fundraising and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) sessions and scrutinised pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised documentation, including: the school's evaluation of its performance and plans for development; policies and procedures; assessment information; incident logs; schemes of work; and staff appraisal.
- This was the school's first inspection since the Department for Education registered it in August 2016.

## Inspection team

Matt Tiplin, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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