

The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5HD

Inspection dates

12–14 December 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	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has quickly addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Safeguarding is now effective. The school's leaders have worked hard to improve many aspects of the school. They have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- The headteacher provides skilful leadership. Staff morale is high. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. They make careful assessments of pupils' academic and personal skills and abilities, and provide work that enables pupils to do well.
- Pupils form trusting relationships with staff. Over time this helps to improve pupils' behaviour. Careers education and work experience is effective. It helps pupils to make positive plans for their future. All pupils who leave go on into further education, training or employment.
- Staff often scribe on pupils' behalf and this hampers progress in writing.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, often from low starting points. They make particularly strong progress in reading, and often catch up with their mainstream peers who are of a similar age. Pupils achieve accreditations in subjects from entry level to GCSE.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the school. Their personal development is good. There is a strong sense of community and pupils enjoy doing jobs in school that help others, such as laying the table for lunch.
- Those with governance responsibilities carry out their roles effectively. They have a broad range of expertise in education, safeguarding and business. They ask challenging questions regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school does not yet make enough use of outreach with other schools so that leaders can keep up to date with current educational developments and staff can develop areas of their practice.

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?

- Increase outreach with other schools so that this school can both benefit from and provide expertise to a broad community of learning.
- Ensure that staff provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills independently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- At the time of the previous inspection, due to a rather insular approach, the school had not kept up to date with regard to current safeguarding requirements. Since then leaders have conducted a complete overhaul of many aspects the school. This has included a thorough audit of all safeguarding procedures. Leaders have ensured that the school provides a good quality of education and that the independent school standards have been met.
- The school is quickly becoming an outward looking community. The school now realises that previously it did not reach out enough to other schools to ensure that it was always aware of current educational developments. Staff are starting to relish the opportunities to exchange ideas with teachers from other schools. They have been on a few visits but want to forge closer links so they can further develop areas of their practice. Leaders, in their conversations with other schools, have recognised that they also have much to offer, particularly in their expertise with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that the school has quickly improved. With her team of committed staff, she has made sure that the school achieves its aim of helping pupils to view education as a positive and rewarding experience.
- The school is very welcoming. Every morning pupils are greeted warmly by staff. Pupils share their successes or concerns in a safe and supportive environment. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning at this school because staff are caring and understand their needs.
- School documentation, such as that relating to self-evaluation, is accurate and detailed. Records regarding staff performance are exceptionally thorough. They show how effectively staff have helped pupils to make good progress in both their personal and academic development.
- The school enables pupils to study a large range of subjects, and work is tailored to meet each pupil's specific needs. Pupils, including those who are most able, are given the opportunity to explore subjects in considerable depth. During science week, for example, pupils learned mathematical facts about the solar system during their visit to an observatory. Leaders have developed a set of themes which have been designed to help pupils develop their life skills. For example, during the inspection the theme was 'doing jobs is part of being at school'. Pupils accepted this concept readily and engaged in jobs that helped the school community, such as laying rock salt on icy paths.
- The school makes good use of the local coastal area for extra-curricular activities. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal and academic development. For example, skills in history are effectively developed through visits to maritime museums. Pupils learn about the effects of plastic pollution on the marine environment through their field-trip activities along the shoreline.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the school. All who responded to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend it to another parent. They say that 'the school

works brilliantly with the children and it provides fantastic support to nurture their growth’.

Governance

- Those who are responsible for governance are dedicated to ensuring high standards in teaching and learning. New additional members have brought a considerable wealth of experience in areas such as business and education to the governing body. They have invited an appropriately qualified school improvement consultant to visit regularly and advise on important changes in education.
- The safeguarding monitoring group ensures that all safeguarding aspects, such as the single central register, are regularly checked and comply with statutory requirements.
- Effective governance has ensured that senior leaders are challenged in areas such as the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Those responsible for governance have ensured that the independent school standards are regularly monitored.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are passionate about ensuring the welfare of pupils. They are highly sensitive to pupils’ varying needs and are constantly alert to any safeguarding concerns. Pupils say they feel safe and secure at the school. All staff know the procedures to follow if there are any safeguarding concerns. Very detailed records are kept relating to any safeguarding incident.
- Leaders are dedicated to ensuring that pupils are kept safe at all times. For example, they ensure that thorough risk assessments are in place for those pupils who are learning to become more independent.
- Safeguarding training has been carefully considered by senior leaders. In addition to issues such as child exploitation and preventing extremism, staff are trained in the symptoms of eating disorders and the emotional signs of abuse. The school has good links with a range of external organisations including social workers and the police.
- The safeguarding policy is suitable and fully compliant with requirements. It is published on the school’s website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff are sensitive to each pupil’s needs. They have a clear understanding of potential behaviour triggers and know the right de-escalation techniques. Sessions make the most of pupils’ limited attention spans. Pupils learn to respond positively to the challenging tasks they have been given. They say that teachers have helped them to value the work that they produce.
- Assessments of pupils’ skills and abilities when they first join the school are exceptionally thorough. One area for improvement identified at the last inspection was to ensure that the new assessment system informed the planning for pupils’ next steps in learning. It is

clear that the school has worked hard on developing this area. Although still being refined, assessment is now effectively used by staff. They carefully track the progress that each pupil has made and plan work accordingly.

- Some pupils have a fear of change and are not keen to think about their futures. Because staff know pupils so well they carefully judge when it is the best time to talk about possible future pathways and careers options.
- Numeracy skills are taught well, particularly mental mathematics. Teachers take every opportunity to help pupils to practise these skills. This has ensured that almost all pupils have a good understanding of real-life mathematical problems, such as the addition, subtraction and division of money.
- Skills in reading are effectively developed. Staff ensure that pupils read a range of books, both fiction and non-fiction, that stimulate their interests.
- Therapists provide valuable information to teachers about pupils' personal skills. They provide useful advice about how each pupil can be supported in class, such as in their speaking and listening skills.

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 is successful in creating a caring and supportive community. The convivial morning meeting between staff and pupils starts off the day in a positive way. Pupils have the opportunity to talk to the group and share their successes. This has a positive impact on developing pupils' self-confidence.
- Pupils make good progress in learning about keeping healthy. The school has recently had a healthy eating week where pupils learned about the importance of eating a balanced diet. Leaders also used this as an opportunity to teach pupils about showing respect for those with different views on the types of food that they felt comfortable eating.
- Staff help pupils to develop their self-belief. From often negative views about themselves and others pupils begin to flourish and start to think positively about the future. During the inspection, staff were seen to constantly encourage and help pupils to follow their career aspirations. They helped pupils to research jobs and gave useful advice about qualifications.
- Pupils are encouraged to think about and take care of others. Often this is quite a difficult concept for some pupils. However, the school has achieved considerable success in this area by using a variety of interesting strategies. For example, the school gives pupils money to purchase items from a charity shop. Slowly, over the weeks, pupils start to buy items for others in the school as well as for themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- When pupils start school they often have challenging behaviour. Staff use their expertise and training to ensure that incidents are dealt with in a calm, patient and consistent manner. The intensity and frequency of challenging behaviour typically decreases considerably over time.
- Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and are usually keen to please them. Classrooms are typically calm. Staff are skilful in rewarding good behaviour. They also, when needed, help pupils to understand the reasons why some behaviours are unacceptable. For example, if a pupil damages property they are invited to join the maintenance team at a later date to put right the damage they have caused. This has a positive impact on helping pupils to realise the impact of their actions.
- Behaviour is carefully monitored. Incidents are logged and checked to see whether there are any potential triggers that lead to misbehaviour.
- Staff are well trained in the use of restraint. Records show that the longer the pupil is at the school the fewer the number of incidents or restraint there are.
- Attendance for most pupils is around the national average or better. A few have lower attendance due to their significant medical needs. There have been no unauthorised absences in the last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils often arrive at the school with low starting points. Due to effective teaching that helps pupils to rediscover their interest in learning, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' workbooks are typically well presented and show that the quantity and quality of work increases the longer the pupil is at the school. Pupils say they do well because the staff at this school care about them and take the time to explain things to them in a much clearer way than they have previously experienced.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects. In reading, they are beginning to catch up with their peers in mainstream schools. Pupils enjoy developing their comprehension skills, for example when predicting the plot in fiction books. They are able to gather and synthesise a range of information from non-fiction texts.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that progress in mathematics has strengthened. They are making good use of a link with another school to ensure that work provided methodically develops pupils' skills and abilities. Pupils typically now make stronger progress in mathematics than they did a few months ago.
- Pupils' workbooks show that progress in writing is variable. Sometimes pupils do not make strong progress because staff are too quick to take the initiative, for example by scribing for pupils. They often do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to properly develop this important life skill.
- Those who are most able do well. For example, in art pupils had created interesting murals on the back wall of the playground.
- Sporting skills are well developed. Pupils regularly take part in different sports, including

team games such as football, at a local leisure centre. This helps to develop pupils' understanding that by working together they can achieve a shared objective. Pupils have achieved successes in climbing and using a zip wire, which have helped to develop their self-confidence. Pupils' aquatic skills are strong. Good use is made of the local sea lagoon, where pupils become confident kayakers, paddle boarders and sailors.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their vocational skills. For example, pupils make strong progress in cookery. They delighted in making the communal lunch for the rest of the school, and learned effective skills in chopping, weighing and frying. Particularly strong progress was seen in bread making. This is because pupils regularly visit a local community bakery and produce their own excellent rolls and loaves.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their life skills. Leaders plan carefully to ensure pupils learn skills such as how to wash clothes and budgeting. Pupils make good use of the small area of garden at the front of the school and learn how to grow fruit such as strawberries.
- Careers education is effective, leaders having ensured that pupils have high aspirations. Work experience opportunities are varied. They are tailored to each pupil's interests and include, for example, work experience at a community radio station. Pupils successfully achieve accreditations in a range of qualifications from entry level to GCSE.
- The school is preparing pupils well for the next stage of their lives. Past pupils pursue opportunities for further training or qualifications. Many have been successful in obtaining employment in areas such as retail, sport or beauty.

School details

Unique reference number	131356
DfE registration number	846/6043
Inspection number	10044925

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	7
Proprietor	Seafields Ltd
Chair	Matt Vince
Headteacher	Sara Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,526
Telephone number	01273 734 164
Website	lioncare.co.uk
Email address	schooladmin@lioncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 May 2017

Information about this school

- The Lioncare School opened in 1997. It is owned by Seafields Limited, trading as The Lioncare Group.
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs, many having had experiences of abuse and neglect. Prior to joining this school, a large number of pupils have been excluded from their previous schools or have been out of education for some time. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils receive a range of specialist support from outside agencies including child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and educational psychologists. All pupils have weekly individual psychotherapy.

- 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 seven pupils on roll, aged between nine and 15 years of age.
- The school aims to 'assist children in coming to terms with difficult areas of their lives, consolidate areas in which they function well, begin to view education as a positive and rewarding experience, and enable the achievement of qualifications and where possible promote their successful return to a mainstream school or college placement'.
- The school's last standard inspection was in May 2017 when the school was judged to be inadequate due to unmet school standards related to safeguarding. A progress monitoring inspection in September 2017 found that all of the independent school standards were met.
- Since the previous inspection the school has increased the number of individuals who are responsible for governance.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school. Conversations were held with pupils to gather their views about what it was like to be at this school. Pupils' folders and books were also examined.
- Consideration was given to six responses to the Ofsted, Parent View, questionnaire and nine questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Conversations were held with the executive director, who acts as the proprietor, the headteacher and other staff. There were telephone calls made to the local authority designated officer for Brighton and Hove, and a meeting was held with a social worker from a local authority. There was a discussion with the school's external improvement partner.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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