

Gloverspiece

Ladywood, Wychavon, Droitwich, Worcestershire WR9 0RQ

Inspection dates

13–15 February 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school opened in September 2017 to provide therapy and education for pupils who have not successfully engaged with formal education. In the six months since then, the school has provided well for pupils' complex needs. It meets the independent school standards and provides effective teaching.
- Pupils join the school having had limited or extremely negative experiences of school life. As a result, their attendance had been very low. They now rarely miss a day.
- Some pupils still find it difficult to settle in to the school day. Staff are patient, kind and sensitive to their anxieties. This helps pupils to calm down and join in with the activities on offer.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved notably since they joined the school. All now settle down to work with their individually assigned teaching assistant for increasingly long periods of time. They join in whole-class activities more confidently. They now know how to listen to the teacher, follow instructions, share and take turns.
- When pupils join the school, little is known about their academic potential. This is because their social and emotional needs have prohibited them from showing what they can do. Teachers assess carefully what gaps pupils have in their understanding.
- A team of highly dedicated teachers and teaching assistants nurtures pupils through their fears about learning. Staff gently coax and support pupils to have a go and try new things. As a result, pupils are developing stronger basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are growing in confidence as learners and are beginning to make up lost ground. Nevertheless, they have a very long way to go to make up for previous underachievement.
- As a result of the notable improvement in their behaviour and self-confidence, some pupils are now ready to make faster progress. Leaders know this. They are working effectively to ensure that the focus of teaching promotes academic progress alongside care and nurture.

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 pupils' academic outcomes are as strong as they could be by making sure that pupils:
 - systematically build knowledge, in small steps where necessary, so as to make strong progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics
 - develop secure skills in reading, writing, mathematics and communication.
- Make sure that the quality of teaching continues to meet pupils' needs well as pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence and are ready for greater academic challenge and rigour.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher established the school because she believed pupils with some types of complex needs would benefit from learning in the farm-based environment in which the school is situated. Her ambition is that the school should provide high-quality education in a therapeutic setting so that pupils achieve their personal and academic potential. She is determined and passionate in the pursuit of her vision.
- The headteacher sets high expectations for pupils' futures. The aim of the school is that, wherever possible, pupils successfully reintegrate into mainstream education. Where that is not the best course of action, leaders are committed to providing education that enables pupils to progress to relevant further and higher education courses.
- Prior to opening at the beginning of this academic year, leaders had little information about pupils' abilities, interests or academic attainment. Therefore, plans for the curriculum could only be set to provide overviews of the content for each subject. Since admitting pupils, leaders have meticulously examined the information they gather about what pupils can and cannot do. They are using this to build individual curriculum plans for each pupil within the school's overall structure. This is helping to shape a curriculum that is finely tuned to pupils' needs and so serves them well.
- The structure and situation of the school are such that pupils have easy access to additional activities and experiences that support their emotional well-being. Pupils access these in a variety of ways, either as part of their individual plan or as extra-curricular activities. For example, some pupils' timetables include specific time to work with the animals on the farm. Alternatively, pupils can choose to spend time in the small-animal enclosure as a reward or to help them calm down when they are distressed.
- Leaders ensure that the school meets the independent school standards now it is in operation. Leaders have established a school development plan to focus their attention on the next steps needed to ensure that the school achieves its aims for pupils. This plan is informed by accurate evaluation of what is working well and what could be better. For example, the plan includes training for staff and the appointment of suitably qualified teachers to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to meet pupils' needs beyond this early phase of the school's life.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in helping pupils to overcome their substantial social and emotional barriers to learning. This is making a big difference to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and behaviour. The success of this work means that pupils are now much more ready to learn than when they started. It also means that pupils are becoming better prepared for life in modern Britain in the future, as they are learning to tolerate others and show respect. Leaders know that teaching must keep pace with pupils' emerging need to make rapid gains in learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. This is why leaders' plans to increase and train teaching staff are appropriate.

Governance

- There are no formal arrangements for governance. However, the headteacher seeks and uses informal opportunities to test out the school's effectiveness. For example, she invites representatives from the placing local authority to review the provision for their children.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. These are set out in a comprehensive policy that is available to parents and carers via the school website.
- The headteacher and designated safeguarding lead have established easy-to-follow procedures for staff to report concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff are vigilant in applying these. Concerns are followed up promptly and referred to appropriate external agencies when necessary.
- Staff communicate very closely with parents about any concerns, either at school or at home. Parents feel well supported by this effective partnership and trust staff to look after their children's safety and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The number of teaching staff and teaching assistants has increased since the school opened. Each time a new pupil joins, another teaching assistant is appointed. A new teacher joined the school in January this year. Two more teachers are due to join at Easter. New staff are well supported by leaders and existing staff. They quickly learn how to follow the school's specialised teaching approaches.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are ambitious for their pupils to do well. Staff hold a range of appropriate qualifications to help them address pupils' social and emotional difficulties. For example, staff hold qualifications in psychology, counselling and other therapeutic fields. In addition to therapeutic support, staff are increasingly focusing on developing the skills needed to stretch pupils academically.
- From the point at which a pupil arrives at the school, teachers start to map out what they can and cannot do in a range of subjects. This is essential because little information is available about pupils' prior academic achievement. Teachers use the emerging picture of pupils' attainment to plan a personalised programme of work in reading, writing and mathematics for each pupil. As pupils' social and emotional barriers to learning are overcome, teachers set increasingly challenging academic targets. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge are beginning to close. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go due to the substantial nature of pupils' previous underachievement.
- In addition to individual work supported by a teaching assistant, pupils also learn in whole-class lessons. These sessions help pupils develop social skills, such as listening to the teacher, listening to one another, sharing and taking turns. Teachers use these sessions to cover a wide range of subjects. During the inspection, these lessons included music, yoga, science, Chinese New Year and elements of personal safety. Pupils enjoyed these and participated confidently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- When pupils arrive at the school, their personal development is at a very low level. They have complex needs. They have had little, no or an extremely negative experience of school life. Some have severe, moderate or specific learning difficulties. All have social and emotional difficulties. They struggle to manage their own feelings and frustrations. They find it hard to interact positively with other pupils.
- Little by little, pupils' confidence grows as a result of the patience, sensitivity and skill shown by teachers and teaching assistants towards them. Staff give pupils the time, space and support needed to work through their emotions. In the short time the school has been open, pupils have learned to settle down much more quickly to work and to persevere more when they find tasks hard.
- Pupils are learning how to share space and work together. Each day begins with a group chat in which pupils share news. All pupils can now listen respectfully to one another and contribute their own ideas to these discussions. Similarly, pupils look forward to story time at the end of the day. This is an enjoyable and sociable experience that pupils struggled to join in with when the school first opened.
- Staff understand that pupils are vulnerable to a range of dangers, both in and out of school. Therefore, staff explicitly teach pupils how to act safely and protect themselves from a variety of risks. For example, during the inspection, they were learning how to behave safely around dogs. Similarly, staff ensure that pupils are aware of how to report concerns about their experiences when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' prior poor behaviour is a principal reason why they have not been able to remain at their previous schools. Very soon after joining the school, pupils' behaviour begins to improve. For example, they learn to follow instructions and to complete their work. Instances of aggressive behaviour have declined substantially since the school opened. This shows a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour improves rapidly as a result of the caring, supportive environment. For example, staff give pupils choices about how and when they complete some activities. Pupils do still display some challenging behaviour typical of their social, emotional and mental-health difficulties. However, the organisation of the school day and the approach taken by staff help pupils to calm down when they become frustrated or upset. Individual pupils' traumas have very little impact on others' learning.
- Staff teach pupils how to take turns in a discussion or to listen politely to others. This is why pupils are now able to participate successfully in activities that involve the whole class.
- Prior to attending Gloverspiece, pupils' attendance at school was very low. Some did not attend school at all. Others had been excluded from their schools for poor behaviour.

Their current rates of attendance are higher than the average in mainstream schools. This is a notable improvement and indicates the school's success at enabling pupils to re-engage with schooling.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Each is supported by an education, health and care plan funded by Worcestershire local authority. These plans outline each pupil's significant barriers to learning. The school is helping pupils to overcome the social and emotional issues that have inhibited their academic achievement in the past. However, pupils have a long way to go to catch up and achieve well academically.
- Pupils arrive with very little information about what they can and cannot do. Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint progress from starting points beyond the beginning of the current academic year. Staff quickly assess pupils' skills and map out a programme for each to cover the gaps. This is beginning to yield results. However, pupils' current progress is not rapid enough to make up all the lost ground. This is because teaching has, until recently, been correctly focused on addressing pupils' ability to learn. Now that pupils are more settled, teaching is being refocused to inject more academic rigour.
- At this early stage of the school's operation, staff have identified some pupils who are potentially very able at mathematics. This is being factored into the individual learning plans for these pupils. The initial priority for these pupils, as with all the others, is to build their self-confidence, their self-esteem and the attitudes to learning that will enable them to achieve their potential. Nevertheless, their work shows that they are being challenged appropriately and are making steady progress.

School details

Unique reference number	143106
DfE registration number	885/6045
Inspection number	10041368

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	4 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Gloverspiece Minifarm Ltd
Chair	Lynne Duffy
Headteacher	Lynne Duffy
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,000
Telephone number	07918 026 036
Website	http://gloverspieceminifarm.co.uk/school
Email address	gloverspiece@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was first registered by the Department for Education as an independent special school in February 2017. It opened to pupils in September 2017. This is the first standard inspection.
- It is registered to admit up to 25 pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in addition to specific, moderate and severe learning difficulties.
- The aim of the school is to embrace the principles of care through therapeutic farming practices to support the educational and personal development of its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector checked the school's premises and examined documents relating to the quality of education and pupils' welfare and health and safety in order to determine compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed pupils learning alongside their individual teaching assistants and in whole-class sessions. She talked to pupils about their learning, looked at their written work and heard one pupil read.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the designated lead for safeguarding and other school staff. Telephone conversations were held with a senior officer from Worcestershire local authority and the virtual headteacher who is responsible for the education of children who are in the care of the local authority. Conversations were held with most of the parents whose children attend the school.
- The five responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 12 staff survey submissions were considered.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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