

School for Inspiring Talents

The Growing Rooms, Seale Hayne, Howton Lane, Newton Abbott, Devon TQ12 6NQ

Inspection dates

27 February–5 March 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The highly effective senior leaders ensure accurate monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. They ensure that the independent school standards are fully met.
- Changes to the senior leadership structure of the school have enabled the quality of education provided to improve. Likewise, the establishment of the multi-disciplinary team ensures that pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are very well supported.
- Teaching is good. Adults help pupils to persevere and concentrate on their learning in lessons. Leaders ensure that there are effective procedures to continue to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' achievement is good, and improving, with the great majority of pupils currently making good progress.
- Pupils feel safe, and are kept safe, because they are very well cared for. Everyone is treated as an individual, and given equal opportunity to do their best.
- Pupils' attendance improves because of the support provided for families and because lessons are interesting.
- The new assessment system ensures that staff can measure pupils' progress carefully in most subjects so that gaps in pupils' learning are spotted and filled. School leaders are aware that the assessment of pupils' progress in humanities subjects is not as strong as in others.
- The curriculum is rounded and enables pupils to have exciting and memorable learning experiences. Leaders have identified that more work needs to be done to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding in science. Plans are in hand to resolve this.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is not always as strong as it should be. Pupils new to the school do not develop their phonic knowledge quickly enough to enable them to spell and read out words that are new to them.
- Some adults do not model writing clearly enough to enable pupils to aspire to attain higher standards of handwriting.
- Teachers do not give the most able pupils hard enough work. Therefore a few do not develop their levels of knowledge as quickly or as deeply as they should.

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 the rate of pupils' learning and progress by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils have greater challenges to deepen and extend their thinking so they can reach their potential
 - pupils, particularly those new to the school, use systematic, synthetic phonic skills to help them when sounding out new words and to improve their spellings
 - all staff model good-quality handwriting for pupils so that pupils have good examples to follow and to raise their aspirations for their own handwriting.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment by:
 - developing the use of assessment in humanities subjects to match the high quality seen in other subjects, so that staff can better check pupils' achievements
 - continuing to develop pupils' scientific experiences so that they increase their levels of knowledge and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders are practical, positive and proactive. They have a cohesive approach to ensuring that the school provides a safe haven for pupils. As a result, pupils who join the school start to thrive.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the school is effective in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements. All of the previously unmet standards are now met.
- Changes to the senior leadership team have reinforced the oversight of leaders and those responsible for governance of the school. Leaders have used expert external advice to help improve the school's provision, for example for staff training and to support the development of middle leadership.
- Although they are relatively new to their roles, the establishment of the multi-disciplinary team and the appointment of the head of education services provide the school with further capacity to improve.
- Senior leaders prioritise pupils' academic achievement, alongside their emotional development. They use a wide range of suitable assessments for pupils when they join the school. This ensures that staff have a rounded picture of each pupil's specific emotional needs and academic potential. This information is then used to ensure that pupils have an appropriate learning pathway that maximises their learning. The information is also used to generate risk assessments and behaviour support plans. These identify positive ways to support and celebrate the achievements that pupils make.
- The curriculum covers all the requirements of the national curriculum. It is designed to engage pupils in wanting to learn and to take pleasure from learning. For example, pupils developed coding skills by creating a computer simulation of the school. They also took part in a radio broadcast to develop questioning and listening skills, and used World Book Day to create artefacts to represent Hogwarts.
- There are limited opportunities for extra-curricular activities at the end of the school day because pupils travel some distance. However, pupils have a good range of opportunities during the school day. In particular, the whole school day is used to support the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The school effectively promotes pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.
- This inspection was combined with a material change inspection. The leaders have gained access to further rooms on both school sites. In the Seale Hayne site they propose to increase pupil numbers from 15 to 22 upstairs and to provide additional accommodation downstairs for a further six pupils. These rooms were inspected, and they would provide appropriate space based on the current types of special needs that the school provides for. The additional space at the Torquay site would also provide sufficient space for a further six pupils. The rooms in their current state of repair would not be suitable. The proprietor has upgraded the rooms currently used by the school to a good quality and does not skimp on resources. Provided that the accommodation at the Torquay site is improved as intended by the proprietor and the pupil-to-staff ratio is maintained, the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change

is implemented.

Governance

- The directors and proprietor ensure that all of the independent school standards are met. They have a good combination of skills and experience to ensure that the future developments planned for the school can be implemented. Good relationships with the school's landlords enable them to ensure that good-quality accommodation is provided for pupils to learn and play in.
- Governors, along with other leaders in the school, are not complacent. They have invested in good-quality resources to enable pupils to make good progress. The proprietor is always looking at new experiences for pupils to take part in, such as using the professional radio recording facilities at Seale Hayne.
- The directors ensure that external funding is spent appropriately and reported back to the local authority.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The new online recording system enables safeguarding leaders to have an instant awareness of any actual or potential concerns about pupils' safety, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The school has a safeguarding policy published on its website. It also provides copies of it to parents and carers on request. The policy takes into account the current government requirements. It is known, understood and followed by staff.
- All staff, including those who have been recently appointed, undertake regular child protection and other relevant health and safety training. They are aware of the statutory 'Prevent' duty. Staff know how to keep pupils safe, and do so. They are alert to a range of issues, including potential signs of radicalisation and child exploitation.
- Adults work highly effectively with pupils when they become emotionally upset. All staff are trained and use de-escalation techniques. As a result, it is unusual for staff to restrain pupils. Pupils swiftly re-engage in their learning after any episodes of frustration or anxiety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- During their time at the school, all pupils develop improved attitudes to learning. They enjoy taking part in practical activities, particularly in science. Teachers exploit this to engage pupils to be willing to learn, listen and take part in lessons and wider school activities.
- The adult to pupil ratio in lessons has a strong impact on pupils' learning and development. In each lesson, the assessment of pupils' work and their attitudes to learning are carefully considered and monitored by staff. This enables senior leaders to track and check the effectiveness of the school's provision, and to direct future improvement.
- Staff are proud to be part of this school and this shows in their day-to-day interaction

with each other and the pupils they support. Adults act as good role models for pupils by, for example, being calm, kind and considerate.

- Teachers and other adults work in close harmony to ensure that learning time is well used. Nevertheless, sometimes teachers do not make sure that the most able pupils have work that extends their knowledge and understanding. This limits their progress.
- The quality of the school's assessment systems have been greatly enhanced since the previous inspection. They are now based on age-related expectations. The high level of detail recorded for most subjects enables staff to check how well pupils are learning and to identify and plug gaps in their knowledge and understanding. However, school leaders appreciate that the system in humanities subjects is not yet as strong as for other subjects.
- The quality of some adults' handwriting does not provide sufficiently good examples for pupils to learn from. This does not help pupils to form letters correctly, join letters or write neatly and at speed. It also means pupils do not take enough care to ensure that letters are the right size. This results in pupils using larger letters inappropriately in mid-sentence, which appear to be examples of the incorrect use of capital letters.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- During their time at the school pupils' self-confidence grows. They learn how to share and take part in activities with other pupils.
- Good relationships are quickly established between pupils and staff. Pupils have key workers that they learn to trust. These key workers and other staff help pupils to be ready to learn and to develop positive attitudes to education.
- Pupils engage in a range of physical activities to keep themselves fit and active. Pupils have targets and plans that are carefully monitored to ensure their physical and emotional health and well-being. For example, pupils get good exercise and develop healthy living habits by going mountain-bike riding, using high-quality gym equipment and undertaking specifically directed therapy work.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Bullying is rare.
- Staff, particularly the multi-disciplinary service team, work closely with families to ensure that pupils are kept safe when in school and at home.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils. They provide a kind, calm and nurturing environment. In this safe haven, pupils develop and grow into thoughtful young people.
- When pupils join the school they often find it hard to control their emotions and sometimes lash out verbally and physically in frustration. Staff help pupils to regulate their behaviour. In lessons, adults focus on pupils' learning. However, they are astute at

noticing the signals that pupils' behaviour might be slipping. If this happens, they calmly support the pupil until they are ready to learn again. For example, by working with pupils one-to-one in a breakout room until they are ready to rejoin their classmates. This ensures that the learning of pupils in the lesson is not disrupted.

- The multi-disciplinary service team work closely with teaching staff, pupils and their families. They provide discrete timetabled support for pupils based on a detailed understanding of each pupil's emotional and behavioural needs. They also help teachers and other adults to support pupils' learning throughout the school day.
- Pupils' attendance improves from their attendance rates in previous schools. Families are supported by school staff to make sure their children attend school as often as they can. Pupils want to come to school because of the varied curriculum and the support that school staff provide.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically join the school with limited educational experiences, fear of school, or having little experience of educational success. Sometimes it is a combination of all three. As pupils' confidence and trust in the staff increase, so does their progress. At both school sites, those pupils who have attended the school the longest make the best progress.
- Pupils make good progress through a wide range of activities in subjects such as art and physical education.
- Pupils have created videos that demonstrate their understanding of different texts, such as 'Romeo and Juliet'. Through their interpretation of using text messages and relating the story to the school they bring the original text into modern-day life.
- Pupils' mathematical skills also improve. They have opportunities to reason and use problem-solving. As a result, they make good progress and are increasingly able to apply their knowledge to new situations.
- Most pupils begin to enjoy reading. After breakfast, pupils read with an adult. This sets the pupils up for the day through a set routine. It helps staff to check how well each pupil is ready to learn. As with all learning sessions, staff keep careful notes on pupils' progress. These records show that pupils' reading improves and that they begin to read for pleasure.
- Pupils who are new to the school often have limited understanding of using systematic, synthetic phonics. They often try to make sense of words or spell them by saying the letter sounds rather than the phonic ones. This hampers their ability to read words that are new to them and to spell words more easily and correctly. As a result, the progress of these pupils in writing, although improving, is not as fast as it should be.

School details

Unique reference number	141515
DfE registration number	878/6064
Inspection number	10041381

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	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Life Chance Education Ltd
Chair	Judith Johnson
Headteacher	Mark Escott
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,650
Telephone number	01626 422 086
Website	www.sfit.org.uk
Email address	mark.escott@sfit.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- The chief executive officer is the executive principal and also acts as a proprietor. The School for Inspiring Talents is owned by Life Chance Education Limited (LCE). A new director has recently been appointed.
- Considerable changes have been made to the accommodation and staffing at the school since the previous inspection. It now operates on two sites. In the main site it leases rooms from the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust and is based in Seale Hayne. This site also contains the main head office. In the second site it leases rooms from The Spires College in Torquay.

- The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection has retired. Each school site now has a 'head of school'. They are overseen by the executive principal.
- The school has developed a 'multi-disciplinary service' team with its own leader that operates across both sites. The school also deploys a family support worker.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and are placed at the school by local authorities. Pupils have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties that have made it difficult for them to attend mainstream education. Almost all pupils have been excluded or withdrawn from their previous education.
- Pupils join the school at various ages, often after disruption to their education. Fifteen pupils joined the school from the start of the autumn 2017 academic term; of these seven joined the school since Christmas. The school has not taken pupil referrals directly into key stage 4.
- The school's goal for pupils is that they 'be the best they can be'.
- The school opened in October 2014. This is its second full inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited both school sites. The inspector worked with the school leaders and other members of staff throughout the inspection. The inspector conducted observations of pupils learning, some jointly with staff. She reviewed pupils' work and the records of pupils' achievements. She met with the head of schools, teachers, a parent, the directors and the chief executive officer of Life Chance Education Limited. She had a telephone conversation with the lead officer of a placing authority.
- The inspector scrutinised the quality of pupils' work, listened to pupils reading in class and talked with pupils about their work and life in school.
- The inspector took account of the five responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 23 paper responses submitted by staff were also considered.
- The inspector considered a wide range of documentary evidence in the school, including records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation and development plans. She checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Dangerous weather conditions occurred midway through the inspection requiring the school to be closed for a period of two days. The inspection was stopped. It was then resumed and completed on the Monday of the following week.
- The inspection was combined with a material change inspection. The school wishes to increase the number of pupils at the Seale Hayne site from 15 to 28, and at The Spires College site from 12 to 18.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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