

Doulton House School

Main Street, Anwick, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 9SJ

Inspection dates

15–17 May 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the learning needs of each pupil. They provide a suitable curriculum, which enables all pupils to learn and to make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Staff provide activities and tasks pitched at the correct level and that interest pupils.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of how pupils who have various learning difficulties learn effectively. They regularly review pupils' timetables and ensure that learning opportunities are relevant and productive.
- Senior leaders have created a culture of teamwork and mutual respect. Staff support each other well and respond very flexibly to pupils' changing needs.
- Pupils with previous negative experiences of school respond positively to learning and enjoy working with staff.
- The school is successful at helping pupils overcome their personal barriers to learning. Pupils develop attitudes and behaviours that prepare them effectively for further education and employment.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve in response to challenging learning activities and high expectations from staff.
- The school provides a safe environment in which pupils are helped to understand, and to manage, risks and challenges in the wider community.
- The school has implemented effective arrangements to assess pupils' progress from their starting points. Senior leaders' analysis of assessment outcomes is at an early stage of development.
- The school's curriculum includes all required areas of learning. However, there are insufficient opportunities to study human and social themes and topics.
- Senior leaders continuously evaluate all aspects of the school's work and plan appropriately for improvement. Staff have limited access to examples of effective practice beyond the school.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

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 leaders and staff have a good understanding of how the school's practice and outcomes compare with best practice nationally by:
 - extending the analysis of pupils' progress information
 - increasing staff awareness of teaching, learning and assessment in similar settings.
- Improve planning for the systematic and comprehensive teaching of the human and social area of learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The recently appointed headteacher has worked successfully with senior leaders and staff to create a culture of teamwork and cooperation. All staff share a vision of success for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Together, they are having a positive impact on the motivation and personal development of pupils.
- Staff are highly committed to improving pupils' life chances. They have established a curriculum and quality of teaching, which address the gaps in pupils' previous learning and enable them to succeed.
- Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships, and pupils respect the hard work and patience of the staff. Gradually, they take on responsibility for their own success and begin to display the personal qualities required to succeed.
- Senior leaders ensure that teaching is consistently good and provides relevant and meaningful experiences for each pupil. The curriculum meets the requirement to address all areas of learning, although the human and social areas are not as well developed as the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils are provided with individualised opportunities to prepare for their chosen vocational pathways. These opportunities include work experience and individual subject choices when pupils are clear about their intended destinations.
- The school provides strong support for pupils' transition to further education and employment. All pupils have access to independent careers advice and guidance. In addition, staff provide individualised support for pupils to access and integrate into further education courses.
- Staff are very aware of the vulnerability of pupils and the challenges they face in managing their own decisions and actions. The school supports effectively a small number of post-16 pupils who are not ready for more advanced study. They are provided with the opportunity to achieve functional skills and vocational qualifications, together with the development of independent living and social skills.
- The school provides effectively for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The curriculum achieves an appropriate balance between pupils' personal development, including their emotional stability and well-being, and their achievement of external qualifications.
- Senior leaders and staff promote a positive culture in which all pupils are enabled to achieve and to overcome their very individual barriers to learning. Staff do not permit individual pupils' circumstances to inhibit their equal opportunity to succeed.
- The headteacher has established a clear sense of direction for the school. The shared vision and teamwork between leaders and staff demonstrate good capacity for continued improvement.

Governance

- Governors and school leaders are ambitious for pupils' success. They have overseen significant recent improvements in the quality of the school's work and its impact on pupils' progress.
- Governors provide good support for school leaders and staff. They provide effective services which have greatly improved the quality of the premises and accommodation, health and safety and working conditions for staff.
- Senior leaders ensure that all aspects of the school's work are continuously monitored and evaluated. They share their findings with governors and ensure that governors understand the challenges faced in providing a safe, caring environment with an emphasis on sustained progress for each pupil.
- The work of the headteacher and staff ensures that governors have an increasingly accurate understanding of pupils' learning and progress. They have greatly improved arrangements for tracking pupils' progress in their learning and personal development. At this point, the school's analysis of pupils' outcomes and progress is not sufficiently focused on comparisons with the progress of pupils from similar starting points nationally.
- The governors hold the headteacher to account through effective reporting systems and appraisal of his performance. The headteacher, similarly, ensures that all staff work effectively towards individual targets related to the school's development priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy, which has regard to the latest government requirements. Paper copies of the policy are shared with all parents and carers.
- Staff are trained appropriately to understand the risks to pupils' well-being, including sexual exploitation, online grooming and radicalisation. Staff training is updated regularly, and all understand and follow the school's procedures for managing any concerns or disclosures.
- Senior leaders have developed strong working relationships with local authority agencies, which provide advice and support to staff in managing any safeguarding concerns. Staff's relationships with parents include a constant focus on risks to which pupils may be exposed and joint working to resolve these.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and teaching assistants have a very good understanding of the barriers to learning experienced by pupils. They provide learning activities that are well matched to each individual pupil's current stage of learning.
- Staff also take full account of the individual social and emotional characteristics of each pupil, which may interfere with their ability to focus and sustain concentration.
- Teaching activities and learning tasks are well planned to ensure a suitable level of challenge for each pupil. Teachers maintain a good pace to learning and ensure that time is used productively.

- Pupils, for example, made good progress as they sorted items into categories using a Venn diagram. They were interested in the activity and worked well together. The teacher ensured that each of them was challenged appropriately by further tasks which required them to interpret and calculate different diagrams individually.
- Staff provide good opportunities for pupils to process new ideas and to consolidate their learning through interesting and challenging activities. Pupils, for example, demonstrated their understanding of how to communicate effectively for a given audience when presenting 'broadcast' news items.
- Staff monitor the work of pupils continuously, ensuring that they use time well and providing advice and suggestions where these are required. Teachers understand how to question pupils effectively, in ways that extend and deepen their understanding and their ability to communicate their ideas appropriately.
- Teachers assess pupils' current level of achievement effectively through continuous discussion as they work through new areas of learning. For example, pupils demonstrated increasing confidence as they tried different methods to add and subtract fractions, including mixed numbers. Pupils enjoy learning as they achieve success and demonstrate progress in their knowledge and understanding.
- Staff place a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and quickly develop the confidence to volunteer to do so. A number of pupils experience difficulty with recording their ideas. Staff provide extensive help with different ways of recording, for example, using diagrams or tables to simplify complex ideas.
- Teachers ensure that pupils take their work seriously, maintain their focus and complete tasks to a good standard. Pupils are helped to identify appropriate methods of working in different subjects. For example, pupils developed their understanding of predictions, fair testing and consistent recording when preparing for practical activities about reaction times.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop personal skills in practical activities such as horse riding. This includes a good level of challenge to develop appropriate riding skills, while also providing much needed therapeutic experiences for pupils.
- Many pupils have experienced gaps in their education and are not naturally committed to learning. However, they respect staff, cooperate appropriately and remain on task during lessons.
- Teachers are aware of pupils' different levels of prior attainment in their teaching groups. They ensure an appropriate level of challenge for the most able pupils in this school. This demands persistent and, sometimes, close supervision by staff to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential consistently.
- Staff are developing increasing consistency in establishing a baseline starting point for each pupil on entry to the school. Each pupil then works towards a target level, including externally accredited awards. Teachers have a good understanding of the standards required for successful progress in national curriculum subjects and external awards.
- The tracking of pupils' progress over extended periods of time and evaluation of the extent to which they are meeting their targets are at an early stage of development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enter the school with mostly negative previous experiences of education. They experience a number of barriers to learning due to complex emotional and social difficulties, together with associated behavioural conditions. Many have experienced time out of school and do not conform easily to the required standards of behaviour.
- Staff demonstrate patient and understanding care for pupils' well-being. They understand the difficulties that pupils experience and work diligently to help them address these. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to education and trusting relationships with staff.
- As they integrate into the school's expectations, pupils learn to listen to each other and to value alternative points of view. They develop self-esteem as a result of experiencing success and praise for their behaviour and work. Pupils stated that they are safe and happy in school.
- The school provides good support for older pupils as they prepare for the transition to further education, employment and independent living. Staff provide good advice and information about the options available to pupils, taking care to ensure that pupils are well informed about the decisions they have to make.
- Staff provide suitable experiences to enable pupils to make decisions about how to spend money wisely, to make appropriate independent choices and to understand the implications of their decisions and actions. Pupils value the personal support they receive when attending interviews and induction events at college.
- School records demonstrate the extent of pupils' strong progress in building positive relationships and trust. Staff and parents acknowledge the efforts made by many pupils to live successfully alongside others in school. Pupils learn important lessons that they may apply to future relationships in the wider community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They quickly adapt to the school's expectations about respect and positive relationships. They are punctual to lessons and settle well to the tasks and activities provided for them.
- Staff are patient and resilient in managing any distracting behaviour, including derogatory or unhelpful comments. Pupils know what is expected of them and they make steady progress.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and shows marked improvement for many, compared with their previous experiences. Regular and constructive communications with pupils' parents support consistent standards of behaviour.
- Pupils respect staff and take an active part in learning activities. Occasionally, there are incidences of distracting or off-task behaviour. Staff work patiently and support pupils to develop suitable strategies to manage their own relationships, attitudes and reactions.

Over time, they experience considerable success.

- Cooperation and good-humoured relationships around the school are the norm. Staff have a consistent approach to the management and resolution of any incidents of poor behaviour.
- The school presents a consistent and positive culture in which pupils' views are valued and they are continuously encouraged to learn from their mistakes. Overall, pupils make good progress towards appropriate behaviour, which underpins their successful learning.
- The school provides a safe environment in which pupils may make mistakes and learn from them. They are taught how to develop healthy lifestyles and positive relationships and to understand the risks and threats they may meet in adult life and how to address these.
- Visitors are welcomed to the school, for example, to provide workshops dealing with racial prejudice and extremism, to attend the school pantomime or to provide information about local services.
- Staff make good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils contribute to the local community, for example by arranging coffee mornings to support local and national charities. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and to strive for personal improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment below the average for their age. The majority have previously had time out of school or experienced behavioural and health difficulties, which have impeded their progress. They are mostly unskilled at managing their own learning.
- Current pupils are making strong progress from these low starting points. They increase their knowledge and understanding, and develop improved skills in the management of their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. They respond positively to the tasks provided for them, and older pupils, in particular, enjoy debate and discussion. Staff are skilled in allowing pupils to take the lead in discussion and using their questions to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress and begin to close the gaps in their previous knowledge. They develop deeper understanding because teachers engage in regular discussion with them and challenge their assumptions through high-quality questioning.
- Pupils enjoy reading aloud in class, and they mostly demonstrate fluent reading skills and the ability to understand the content and meaning of texts. A few pupils enjoy reading for pleasure, but this is not a strong feature of pupils' leisure activities. They develop good speaking skills and are increasingly willing to listen and comment sensibly on the views of others.
- Revisions to the curriculum and well-chosen learning activities ensure that pupils make good progress across the curriculum, including in vocational courses and leisure activities.

- Pupils are enjoying improved success in external accreditations. Key stage 3 pupils make steady progress in English and mathematics, laying good foundations for examination courses at key stage 4.
- Pupils at key stage 4 have achieved success in functional skills examinations at entry level 3 and level 1. This represents good progress and a strong response to challenging targets. Some pupils at key stage 4 have recently entered or are preparing for level 2 functional skills and GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are prepared well for entry to suitable vocational courses at colleges of further education. Their achievements demonstrate strongly improved attitudes to learning and good progress from low starting points.
- There have been only a small number of leavers from the school to date. All those who completed courses to the end of Year 11 or beyond have progressed into suitable pathways in further education and training.

School details

Unique reference number	141490
DfE registration number	925/6006
Inspection number	10048645

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	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	InMind Children's Services
Chair	Amjid Saquir
Headteacher	Duncan Fielding
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500
Telephone number	01526 831055
Email address	duncanfielding@childreninmind.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1– 3 July 2015

Information about this school

- Doulton House is a special school for pupils who have social, emotional and moderate learning difficulties, including associated challenging behaviour. It is registered to admit up to 20 pupils, aged 11 to 18 years.
- There are currently nine pupils on the school roll, including a small number of post-16 pupils. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Post-16 pupils are not taught as a separate group. They are provided with the opportunity to extend and consolidate their key stage 4 learning and to prepare for independent living, including further education and employment.

- The previous inspection of the school was its first since registration as an independent school. This took place in July 2015.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in a variety of subjects across the full age range of the school. He scrutinised samples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietors' representatives, who also provide the school's governance. He discussed all aspects of leadership and management and the implementation of policies with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and held conversations with a small number of parents and carers. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire submitted by nine members of staff.
- The inspector held informal discussions with pupils. He also spoke with representatives of placing local authorities.
- The inspector scrutinised several school policies, procedures and records to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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