

Shelldene House School

20 Main Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0HJ

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

- Staff give high priority to safeguarding all pupils. Teamwork is effective. Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep safe.
- Staff help pupils to manage their emotional needs. Pupils behave well. They are encouraged to make the right choices and to develop their resilience.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They respect staff and socialise well with adults and with each other.
- Attendance is very good. Almost all pupils attend every day.
- The directors and the headteacher have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Teachers provide a variety of activities to help pupils learn, although some morning sessions are not planned well.
- Older pupils make good progress on their vocational and GCSE courses.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained its strengths and improved pupils' outcomes in humanities, mathematics and science. Most resources help pupils learn, although the effective use of modern technology is lacking.
- In English and mathematics, staff check pupils' progress against their starting points well. Assessment in other subjects is too infrequent.
- The curriculum is relevant, and enriched through practical tasks. These varied experiences motivate pupils, but they are not used well enough to reinforce literacy and computing skills.
- In some subjects, staff have had insufficient training.

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?

- Improve pupils' outcomes in computing and literacy by:
 - providing time and resources for the teaching of computing
 - identifying subjects where computers and technology would support pupils' learning
 - setting specific and short-term targets to fill pupils' gaps in literacy
 - reinforcing literacy skills across subjects of the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - identifying and meeting staff's training needs
 - maximising the use of curriculum time
 - developing assessment to monitor pupils' progress across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The directors and the headteacher have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide a good quality of education. This is mostly due to the stability in staffing, the excellent team work and the dedication of staff.
- Pupils access a broad and relevant curriculum. They speak positively about the many opportunities that they have to learn during the school day and after school. Pupils are particularly proud of their successes in construction, cooking and sports. After-school clubs are highly beneficial to pupils' welfare, physical and emotional needs.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The records of achievement, awards and many celebrations clearly show that pupils play a positive role in the local community. Events, such as the Christmas charity lights and the yard sale in Friday Bridge village, develop pupils' sense of belonging and their self-esteem. These occasions also teach pupils important practical skills, such as health and safety, managing behaviour in public and budgeting. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders and staff ensure that pupils value the views of others and understand people's differences. The programme of personal, social and health education includes a range of relevant topics, such as the difference between myths and reality and the dangers of radicalisation. As a result, pupils are able to identify the risks that they may encounter in their life and the impact of extremism or gang crime on families and communities.
- The school's analysis of pupils' additional learning and emotional needs is thorough. Staff are well trained to meet these needs. The headteacher makes sure that statutory plans, such as personal education plans and education, health and care (EHC) plans, are updated to meet pupils' needs and summarise their achievements. The plans, however, do not show clearly how literacy skills could be developed in subjects other than English. Reports contain sufficient detail to inform the funding authorities, families and carers of pupils' progress.
- Staff who completed the inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They praise the headteacher for his commitment, ongoing support and enthusiastic leadership.
- The school's assessment procedures work well in English and mathematics. In these subjects, pupils' progress is checked and assessment is used to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Staff use the vocational and GCSE examination criteria effectively to review the progress of older pupils and help them progress. In other subjects, and for younger pupils, assessment is too informal. Pupils' individual plans do not show clearly how literacy skills will be reinforced across subjects of the curriculum.
- Although the headteacher and directors ensure that staff have the resources to do their work successfully, they are not checking that curriculum time is used consistently well. As a result, some long sessions, particularly in the mornings, are not planned well enough to raise expectation and accelerate pupils' progress.
- The training needs of staff who lack confidence or expertise in some subjects are not met

quickly enough.

Governance

- The directors are responsible for the governance of the school. They are approachable and communicate routinely with staff to ensure that provision is effective.
- The directors have an in-depth understanding of pupils' well-being and welfare needs. Their educational knowledge is adequate, but more work is required to hold the headteacher to account for some aspects of teaching and assessment.
- The directors ensure that statutory requirements are met. They liaise effectively with the authorities that place pupils in the school. Sound financial management ensures that funding is used to meet pupils' needs.
- The directors are currently reviewing the website so that all the school's policies and procedures are more easily accessible.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy is on the school's website and meets the most recent guidance.
- Staff work extremely well together to keep pupils safe and to remind pupils how to stay safe. All staff are vigilant. They know each pupil well and use this knowledge carefully to assess potential risks against pupils' known vulnerability, health and emotional needs.
- Risk assessments, including for all education outings, are detailed. This enables pupils to take part safely in exciting activities, such as extreme sports and residential trips.
- Pre-employment checks are completed as required and recorded to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. One of the directors is improving the way that these checks are recorded. The high ratio of staff to pupils means that adults rarely work alone and supervision is constant. All staff receive a robust induction programme on arrival, supported by ongoing training to match the specific needs of individual pupils.
- Staff know what to do should they need to report a concern. They use the frequent staff meetings and social times during the day to share information and to ensure that pupils follow the rules, such as how to stay safe online and in and out of school.
- The need for physical restraint is rare and recorded promptly.
- Policies for health and safety, fire risk and first aid are all up to date and ensure that the school complies with regulations.
- Pupils told the inspector that they felt very safe at school and were looked after well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils arrive at the school having spent most of their time out of education or having been excluded from several schools. The assessment of pupils' learning needs when they join the school is sufficiently detailed. Staff identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and plan the right amount of support in English and mathematics. The teaching of science has improved and staff now use a range of relevant activities to help pupils progress in this

subject. Several pupils said that this was the best school they had ever been to.

- The plans in pupils' files, scrutinised during this inspection, are usually helpful. Pupils' achievement and progress are recorded in most subjects. The personal plans and EHC plans are most effective when precise targets and specific resources are identified to help pupils make progress. Some targets, such as 'read one book in the term', are far too vague and not time-specific.
- In subjects other than English and maths, achievement is not carefully tracked. For example, in humanities, staff record the topics covered, such as 'Japan', but not what pupils have actually learned and understood.
- The most able pupils are entered for some GCSE examinations as the school is now an accredited centre, a new development since the previous inspection. In English, mathematics and science, staff use their expertise well to develop pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills. Support staff are on hand to provide additional guidance and help pupils understand challenging questions on the vocational or GCSE courses.
- Practical activities motivate pupils. The cooking, leading to a convivial meal at lunchtime, is successfully meeting the needs of pupils and is highly relevant to the future study of catering at college. The construction work and the learning environment in the workshop prepare young people for the world of work.
- Male members of staff who teach physical education at the local sports centre are good role models for the boys. The speed and demands of collective games stretch pupils' physical skills and stamina. This was demonstrated very well through games activities at breaktime on the new multi-use games area and through the high-quality presentation of the Iron Man expedition to Scotland.
- The practical activities are particularly effective when staff make clear to pupils their intended outcomes, such as learning about budgeting or developing measuring skills. In the main, however, literacy skills are not reinforced and applied well enough across subjects. Hands-on activities and work in humanities subjects appear bolt-on and do not contribute sufficiently to filling gaps in pupils' literacy skills. Across subjects, pupils' achievements and academic progress are not recorded and assessed carefully enough. The use of technology to support pupils' learning, such as in art and design, is limited.
- Teachers have the necessary subject knowledge, although, in some areas, they lack confidence and do not plan enough work. In these sessions, curriculum time is then not used well and expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This is particularly the case in the morning sessions.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that teachers did their best to encourage them to learn and to ensure that nothing disrupted them. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. This was seen to be effective during the inspection when staff were building on the pupils' own interests to ensure a positive start to the school day. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and the headteacher leads by example. Staff speak to pupils calmly and respectfully. Confrontation is avoided at all cost.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The stability in staffing is exactly what pupils need because they find it difficult to adapt to change. The school is able to retain a team of committed professionals who know that pupils at Shelldene House School rely heavily on adults to help them develop as mature young people. The positive climate and high morale of staff enable pupils to develop their self-esteem and learn better as a result.
- Most-able pupils demonstrate the skills and commitment to learn and attempt difficult work. Older pupils are proud to prepare for some examinations because they do not like to fail. Several pupils said that this school was great because staff helped them learn new things.
- Pupils said that they loved the sporting activities and clubs outside school. Charity events clearly improve their confidence and commitment. They also develop pupils' commitment towards, and understanding of, the local community.
- The daily interactions with adults, the teaching in small groups and specific curriculum programmes, such as personal, social and health education, are designed to develop pupils' maturity, resilience and tolerance. In most aspects of this work, the school is successful, although some pupils, especially those who recently joined the school, require constant encouragement and reminders to sustain attention.
- Pupils show respect for others' ideas and views. All pupils have had a history of poor attendance. They now see the value of their education, even though a very small number still struggle to come to school. Pupils want to be respectful citizens. Most were confident to speak to the inspector. They showed loyalty towards staff and were very keen to say that this was a good school.
- Most pupils have experienced bullying and significant trauma in their lives. Most are streetwise and aware of the risks that they may encounter. Staff consistently and relentlessly promote all aspects of pupils' welfare. They clearly explain to pupils the consequences of their actions. Staff ensure that all pupils are well supported emotionally.
- Pupils know how to keep safe, including when using social media. They say that staff help them to stay safe and that they would have no hesitation in sharing any concern with an adult. Pupils know right from wrong. They know about risky and dangerous behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly good. At times, some pupils give up quickly when teaching is not planned well. However, most pupils want to cooperate with staff. Pupils who have been at the school for longer tend to behave better than recent entrants. This is because newly arrived pupils need time to understand the impact of their poor behaviour choices.
- The placing authorities are pleased about the way staff manage behaviour. There is strict

application of the 'no-mobile-phone' policy in school. This protects pupils extremely well from being disturbed and upset by external influences. It also enables them to socialise effectively and keep physically active at break and lunchtimes.

- Pupils who spoke with the inspector were confident that when issues arise staff carefully deal with them. No carers or parents completed the Ofsted survey and their views about bullying could not be taken into account. The school takes appropriate action to record, analyse and reduce incidents of bullying and poor behaviour. Physical restraints are very rare. The school's policy and staff training in de-escalating techniques and restorative approaches to manage challenging behaviour work well.
- Pupils' attendance is good, especially when compared with pupils' poor attendance at previous schools. Current attendance is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils have low attainment and a history of poor achievement when they join the school. The progress they make from low starting points is good. This is mostly due to the stability, expertise and commitment of staff. In most subjects, staff take account of pupils' existing knowledge and interest to move their learning on. The most able pupils are encouraged to tackle the demanding work required to succeed in their GCSE and vocational qualifications.
- Outcomes are good when teachers give pupils clear direction and high-quality resources to build their resilience for learning. Small steps and achievable targets lead to good progress. There are few pupils on roll and reporting on their achievement is generalised to avoid them being identified. Pupils were observed making very good progress in speaking. They explained their points of view clearly, and in some written work, the use of descriptive and emotional language was good.
- Pupils' outcomes in construction, food technology and physical education are good. This is because pupils respond very well to practical activities and can quickly see the quality of their end products. The lunch prepared during this inspection was of a high standard and, although the difference between a béarnaise and hollandaise sauce was not entirely understood, the meal was very tasty. The wooden trucks and furniture made in the workshop are decorative and solid.
- In physical education, pupils achieve well and most have high levels of fitness that enable them, for example, to cycle or walk for miles.
- Outcomes are inconsistent in some academic subjects. The prior disruption to pupils' schooling means that pupils who have not been at this school for very long struggle initially because they have huge gaps in their learning. However, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science from their starting points. In other subjects, the resources, often limited to worksheets, are not developing pupils' literacy skills.
- In humanities and practical subjects, pupils' range of vocabulary is narrow and staff do not develop reading and writing well enough.
- Progress in computing and use of technology is too slow because there is limited curriculum time for this subject. Pupils rarely have opportunities to develop their research and creative skills, such as in art and design or music, using the assistance of computers

or other modern technology.

- Pupils' work shows that, for most, achievement in outdoor pursuits is good. The breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to take a range of certificates and functional skills qualifications.
- Year 11 pupils are prepared well for their college placements with training in areas such as catering, plastering or building skills. Links with local colleges are strong and career pathways are carefully planned.
- The school keeps in touch with pupils, whenever possible, after they have left. Several former students are now successfully studying in higher education.

School details

Unique reference number	135380
DfE registration number	873/6044
Inspection number	10046988

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	Day special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part time pupils	None
Proprietor	4D Care Ltd
Chair	Michael Coles
Headteacher	Stuart Lloyd
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000
Telephone number	01945 861 122
Website	www.shelldenehouse.com
Email address	Mikecoles@shelldenehouse.com
Date of previous inspection	21–23 April 2015

Information about this school

- Shelldene House is a day special school providing full-time education for pupils who have experienced difficulties in their previous educational placements. Most pupils have been excluded or were at risk of exclusion as a result of their emotional and social difficulties. A few pupils have communication difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder.
- The school admits pupils in the age range 12 to 16 years. Pupils currently on roll are all boys aged between 13 and 15 years. All have a personal education plan or an education, health and care plan.
- The school provides a curriculum which combines academic, personal development and

vocational experiences.

- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school does not use supply staff.
- The school was previously inspected in April 2015. At that time, all aspects of the school's work were judged good and all of the independent school standards were met.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' behaviour, learning and progress.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work on display, in their books and folders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, two directors and the manager of the accommodation provided by the company.
- The inspector spoke to staff. She met pupils to talk about their school and she observed them at break and lunchtime.
- The inspector telephoned representatives of a local authority and the headteachers of two local schools. There were no responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire. The inspector took account of the completed questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including: safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures; records of behaviour incidents and physical restraint; risk assessments; the admissions and attendance registers; the school's information about the progress pupils are making and the directors' key priorities for the school.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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