

Dovecote School

Dovecote, Llangarron, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 6PB

Inspection dates

5–7 June 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This newly opened school has got off to a flying start. Effective leadership and management have ensured that teaching is good and all the independent school standards are met.
- While the school has only just started admitting pupils, it is clearly successful at helping them to re-engage with education. Current pupils are making good progress towards the targets that have been set for them.
- The headteacher is a very positive role model who provides steady-handed and effective leadership.
- Staff treat pupils with respect and kindness. They understand pupils' difficulties and needs but also set clear expectations for their behaviour. Through encouragement and praise they help pupils to see the value of effort, achievement and responsible behaviour.
- Routines for responding to conflict or difficult situations are in place and work well. Pupils receive good support to help them manage their emotions. They are able to trust the adults who teach and care for them.
- The curriculum is tailored to pupils' needs and interests and is often supported by outdoor activities. Pupils regularly go on educational visits in order to generate interest in the wider world and enthusiasm for learning. There is some limited use of information technology to assist learning in different subjects.
- Teaching is bespoke to each pupil's needs and is informed by accurate assessments. Lessons help pupils to understand the relevance of education to their own lives and futures. In the short time they are at the school, pupils grow in confidence. They are able to talk about their ambitions and what they need to do to succeed.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough, staff training is kept up to date and, apart from one clerical error, record-keeping is detailed. The school provides pupils with a safe and nurturing learning environment.
- Attendance at school shows an upward trend but is still low.
- As the school grows, leaders aim to employ more staff to assist with teaching and learning.

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?

- Further strengthen the quality of teaching and learning and improve its impact on pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that, as the school grows, the teaching team has sufficient staff and resources to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that pupils have appropriate access to information technology, as part of the curriculum offer
 - improving rates of attendance to lessons.
- Those responsible for leadership and management should make sure that:
 - the school maintains its early momentum as it grows and becomes more established
 - the single central record of checks on staff and managers is free from clerical errors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- This school is led well by the headteacher. She understands pupils' complex needs and is able to manage situations with calm authority and constructive action. Consequently, she is able to make the most of time in lessons, helps pupils to understand the options open to them and encourages them to pursue their ambitions.
- As the sole teacher in the school, the headteacher makes sure all her training is up to date and reports regularly to CareTech's head of education.
- The school curriculum is fit for purpose. It has an appropriate focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and supports their welfare. It offers plenty of outdoor physical activities and educational trips that promote health and fitness, and help to reignite pupils' interest in learning. Pupils are also supported to develop respect for themselves and others. Numerous school policies highlight the importance of this and make specific reference to 2010 Equalities Act and the protected characteristics.
- The curriculum offer for each pupil is designed around their particular needs. The school aims to give pupils a fresh start and get them back into the habit of learning, so they can acquire skills and interests that will help them in the future. Evidence gathered during this inspection shows that, while it is not all plain sailing, pupils are responding and making progress.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic education programme is well thought through and supports the school's safeguarding work. It is designed to help pupils recognise when they and others may be at risk, and aims to equip them with the skills, strategies and language they need to take appropriate action. It also helps pupils to think ahead, anticipate situations and develop important life skills.
- Pupils have some supervised access to computing equipment. The use of information technology to improve learning and employability skills has been identified as an aspect of the curriculum to develop as the school expands.

Governance

- There is no governing body. Instead, governance is provided by CareTech Community Services' board of directors. In practice, there is a head of education who represents the board and reports back to it. He is responsible for overseeing the school's work, setting the strategic direction, evaluating staff performance and pupils' progress and setting targets. His work is informed by regular visits to the school and monthly reports from the headteacher. Through these routines, he ensures that lines of accountability work as they should. He also maintains a good understanding of the school's performance and, together with the headteacher, ensures that all the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a significant strength of this school. Pupils receive well-informed support

to help them cope with past traumas and to manage their emotions and behaviours in a safe way.

- The school does not have a website, but an up-to-date and suitably detailed safeguarding policy is available on request. All staff are very aware of the guidance in this and other associated policies. Records show that statutory guidance is followed and that all concerns about pupils are followed up swiftly and properly.
- Staff have completed 'Prevent' training. They are alert to risks and pupils are taught about the dangers of extreme views and behaviours.
- All the necessary checks on staff and visitors are carried out. At the start of this inspection, the single central record did not show which people holding management positions had been subject to a section 128 prohibition from the management of schools check. However, the checks have been completed. This omission of information from the record was corrected during the course of the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is bespoke to each pupil's needs and is usually provided in one-to-one sessions. The school's core purpose is to find ways to re-engage pupils with learning. To this end, lessons make clear and specific links to pupils' own interests. Activities are designed to capture and hold their attention and teaching is regularly adapted on the spot in order to keep pupils motivated.
- During this inspection, for example, teaching drew upon pupils' interests in music, art and bicycle maintenance in order to inject interest into spelling and mathematical activities. In this way, pupils improve their basic skills while also seeing the relevance of learning to their own ambitions. Furthermore, staff who work at the school openly share information about the qualifications they are working towards so that pupils come to see learning as a lifelong activity.
- Teaching looks for, and frequently finds, the best in pupils. This is because it is informed by attentive assessment, sets clear expectations and boundaries yet is finely tuned to pupils' moods and needs. Pupils are given the encouragement they need in order to persevere, praise when they succeed and constructive support when they cannot cope. Consequently, their confidence and self-esteem improve.
- Outdoor activities are an important part of the curriculum. Each week, pupils spend a day off-site taking part in sport or other physical activities. This includes mountain-biking at a nearby centre, hill-walking or kayaking. These sessions, led by suitably qualified instructors, help pupils to develop new interests, promote physical fitness and well-being and generate enthusiasm for life. In addition, activities such as badminton or gardening take place in the school's grounds.
- Teaching in other areas of the curriculum also takes inspiration from the outdoors and the world beyond school. Staff have identified an extensive range of educational visits to assist learning in different subjects. Recent trips to a mining museum, a Roman bathhouse and a castle, for example, have been used to stimulate pupils' interest in history, science and geography. Such activities also prompt pupils to ask questions about their place in the world and to consider how different customs, beliefs and circumstances guide the way people live and interact with others.

- The school has only just opened and all teaching is carried out by the headteacher. School leaders recognise that, as the school becomes more established and pupil numbers rise, there will be a need to increase the teaching staff team.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils learn about different forms of bullying and what to do to prevent it from happening. Leaders have set up reliable recording systems for any incidents of poor behaviour. They have put supportive procedures in place to help pupils understand the problems caused by disrespectful or unkind behaviour.
- During their induction period prior to starting at the school, pupils' views are sought and taken into account when planning suitable areas of focus for their 26-week stay. Similarly, during lessons, pupils have plenty of opportunities to talk about their opinions and feelings and to make choices.
- The school places a heavy focus on improving pupils' emotional well-being. To this end, the school works with several different agencies in order to provide the right help at the right time. At this early stage in the school's life, there is no evidence of impact over time. However, current pupils are clearly benefiting from the care and attention they receive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Given the nature of the school, pupils do present challenging behaviours. Staff receive regular training so they know what to do when pupils find it hard to cope. Consequently, they deal well with difficult situations. In addition, pupils are helped to understand how their behaviour affects other people and to develop self-help strategies.
- The school is clean, tidy and well maintained. Teaching areas are fit for purpose. Appropriate security measures are in place to keep pupils safe but without making them feel overwhelmed.
- Attendance statistics are low, but improving. That said, the school admitted its first pupil in April 2018 and only has one complete month of attendance data. It is also worth noting that pupils who come to this school have been out of formal education for some time. Looking ahead, increasing attendance at school is a key development priority for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' levels of attainment when they first arrive at the school vary significantly and all pupils have special educational needs. In all cases, pupils have missed a lot of schooling and their education has been disrupted. Furthermore, information about their previous achievements can be missing or incomplete. Consequently, school staff spend time assessing pupils' needs and then set appropriate targets. This is done well. It ensures that

teaching is properly informed and that tracking of pupils' progress starts from a realistic baseline.

- The number one target for all pupils is to motivate them to re-engage with education. To this end, staff build on pupils' interests, encourage them to persevere and provide tasks that enable them to experience feelings of success. For current pupils, this is clearly paying off. During this inspection, good progress was observed in lessons, in pupils' work and in their attitudes. Staff encourage pupils to see the relevance of education and regularly talk to them about their future choices and aspirations.
- In order to assess the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress, staff assess basic skills in English and mathematics. In addition, they check on quality of life indicators such as emotional and physical well-being, inter-personal skills, participation and resilience. They use a recognised system for recording their observations and assessments and use this information to plan or refine lessons and activities. School records show that current pupils are moving forwards academically, socially and emotionally.
- School leaders have identified opportunities for pupils to gain accreditations and qualifications that are relevant to their ambitions. At this early stage in the school's life, the success rate of these options remains to be seen.

School details

Unique reference number	145128
DfE registration number	884/6017
Inspection number	10045274

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	CareTech Community Services Limited
Headteacher	Amanda Cooper-Boot
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,800
Telephone number	01989 770264
Email address	amanda.boot@greenfields.uk.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dovecote School is located in a converted residential property in Llangarron, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.
- CareTech Community Services' board of directors is the proprietorial body for the school. There is no governing body. CareTech Community Services lead and manage a number of other independent schools in England, Wales and Scotland.
- The school was registered as an independent school in September 2017 and admitted its first pupil in April 2018.
- The school is registered to admit up to four pupils aged 11 to 16 years. All of those admitted have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These are mainly social, emotional, mental health and behavioural difficulties and moderate and/or specific learning needs. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an

education, health and care plan.

- Pupils attend the school for a maximum of 26 weeks. The school's stated aim is to support pupils 'to restart their educational experience with confidence and resume a pattern of learning in order to progress, attain and achieve'. Following their time at Dovecote, pupils move to another CareTech school in England or Wales or move to provision elsewhere.
- The school does not have a website. Hard copies of policies and other documents are available on request.
- Pupils' fees are funded by local authorities.
- The school does not use any alternative providers or employ staff from supply agencies.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning and met with the headteacher and the head of education for CareTech schools. The inspector also spoke with some staff and pupils, looked at pupils' work and school records.
- The inspector considered educational and welfare information and observed an induction session for a new pupil. He observed behaviour during lessons and when pupils were moving about the building and preparing to go off-site for an outdoor activity.
- By the end of the inspection, there were no recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). There were eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included: the school's prospectus, information about pupils' achievement and welfare, numerous policy statements, curriculum plans, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. The inspector also checked records relating to: assessment, pupils' behaviour, admissions, attendance, premises, training, safety, the use of physical restraint and safeguarding.
- The inspector examined the school's single central record of employment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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