

# Wood Edge Independent School

Wood Edge, Ruff Lane, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4UL

## Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

| Overall effectiveness                        | Requires improvement     |
|--|--------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Requires improvement     |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement     |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Requires improvement     |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Requires improvement     |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and teaching have lacked stability until recently. This has delayed the development of key policies and procedures, including those to check and improve teaching.
- Proprietors and leaders are not sufficiently familiar with the independent school standards. Evaluation of the school's performance lacks detail.
- Curriculum planning is ineffective in subjects that do not follow an accredited course.
- Teaching has improved recently, but over time it has lacked continuity and progression. Pupils' progress has therefore been limited.
- Assessment is not yet developed in sufficient detail to enable teachers to systematically build on pupils' prior learning in all subjects.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not promoted and reinforced effectively in all subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning has improved, but attendance is still too low.

### The school has the following strengths

- New leaders and teachers have brought stability and expertise. They have begun to assess strengths and weaknesses in provision.
- Proprietors and all staff are committed to improving pupils' education and life chances.
- The new staff team have already secured some improvements and are taking appropriate action to secure the necessary further improvements.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills and their mathematical understanding are promoted well in a range of subjects.
- Teaching is effective where it follows a set course, for example, leading to BTEC or functional skills qualifications or bushcraft awards.
- Teachers have established positive relationships with pupils and personalise teaching to make it interesting and relevant for pupils.
- Pupils' welfare is everyone's main priority. Home, school and clinical staff collaborate effectively to provide good personal development and ensure pupils' safety.

### 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 leadership and management by:
  - formalising systems to check the impact of teaching and track pupils' progress over time
  - providing teachers with quality feedback on their teaching and training to help them improve their practice
  - ensuring that all policies are kept up to date and understood by staff
  - developing leaders' and proprietors' knowledge of the independent school standards and the Ofsted inspection framework to support monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.
- Develop the curriculum by:
  - ensuring that schemes of work support teachers to build on pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects such as history, geography and art and design
  - further developing links with external providers to provide learning and work experiences that are beyond the expertise of school staff.
- Improve teaching and pupils' learning experiences and progress by:
  - ensuring continuity and progression in learning in all subjects
  - reinforcing and extending pupils' reading and writing in subjects across the curriculum
  - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' learning accurately, in order to plan activities that are matched closely to pupils' abilities and build on their prior learning systematically.
- Raise pupils' attendance.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- All of the independent school standards are met, but the school is not demonstrating the characteristics of good provision.
- Leadership and management were turbulent in the first six months of the school's operation. There were several heads of education and frequent changes to teaching staff. Pupils' learning lacked continuity and there were no systems and procedures to check quality during this time.
- The current head of education, and recently appointed teaching staff, have brought stability. They are focused on improving provision and securing better outcomes for pupils. They have already secured some improvement. However, some of the systems and procedures to ensure quality teaching and progression in pupils' learning are not fully developed.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and on pupils' work and progress are informal and have not been recorded. Teachers have not benefited from quality feedback to help them to reflect on and improve their teaching. Some key policies have only just been updated and staff are not aware of the detail within them.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is broadly accurate, but lacks detail. Improvement planning is focused on the right priorities but does not define precisely how priorities will be achieved and how success will be checked and measured.
- Some changes that have been made are already having a positive impact on teaching and learning. For example, communication between home, clinical services and teaching staff has greatly improved. Daily handover discussions and weekly meetings are held. These ensure that all staff are fully informed about pupils' pastoral needs, barriers and strategies to support effective learning. The reward system for positive behaviour in school is motivating pupils to engage in learning.
- The curriculum provides pupils with suitably broad experiences. However, planning does not ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning in all subjects. Pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are met through weekly therapeutic sessions that help them to build resilience and develop positive learning behaviours.
- Pupils study for qualifications depending on their ability and prior learning. So far, qualifications have been limited to functional skills in English and mathematics and BTEC qualifications in health and social care. There are alternative pathways in place, including opportunities to study GCSE courses, either in school or local colleges.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well in functional skills courses in English and mathematics, either at the school or in their college placements. However, literacy skills are not as well developed or consolidated in other subjects. Where pupils complete these courses in college, there is little follow-up or consolidation in the school setting.
- Courses in health and social care and bushcraft are planned in detail to ensure progression in pupils' knowledge and skills in these subjects. Other subjects are covered, giving the pupils experience in scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. However, there are not any schemes of work for

subjects that cover these aspects. The activities provided are insufficiently matched to pupils' abilities and they do not build on pupils' skills.

- Leaders are seeking to extend pupils' experiences through links with outside providers and developments to the curriculum. They are in the process of developing a workshop and purchasing a car, for example, to provide a base for a course in vehicle technology. Pupils are also able to access courses such as make-up and beauty in Liverpool City College.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched effectively through trips out and visitors to the school. Pupils enjoyed a trip to a beach and a recycling centre, for example, during a topic on the environment. They have learned about careers in the fire service and the British political system from visitors to the school.
- The extensive and well-kept grounds provide a wonderful environment for outdoor learning, leisure and relaxation. Physical education is also enhanced with gym sessions.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are promoted effectively in all aspects of the school's work. Pupils' social development and their ability to make positive choices is a focus in all their learning. They discuss moral dilemmas and are taught to respect people regardless of age, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
- The school staff collaborate with the home in the delivery of the '24-hour curriculum', to support pupils to develop life skills and social skills. This includes, for example, budgeting, cooking and shopping. These activities help pupils to prepare for life beyond school.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the work of the school, under the current leadership and new teaching staff. Parents say, for example, 'The school encourages [pupils'] talents and is very well adapted to their needs and aspirations' and 'Communication is excellent, with regular updates and very approachable staff.'
- The head of education has evaluated the main strengths and weaknesses in provision accurately. School development planning is focused on the most important priorities for improvement. The new teaching staff and therapeutic specialists are highly motivated and capable. The home manager also contributes effectively to improvement planning for the school and to pupils' holistic education. Together, they provide the school with the capacity to sustain necessary further improvements.

## **Governance**

- Governance is provided by three proprietors. They are committed to improving pupils' life chances and have invested in equipping the school to a high standard.
- Proprietors have ensured that pupils are safe and safeguarded effectively.
- They have had a limited role in quality assuring the standard of education. They also have a limited awareness of the independent school standards and the Ofsted framework for inspecting independent schools.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff meet requirements.
- Staff are aware of the procedures to safeguard pupils and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. New staff are experienced in safeguarding and are vigilant in ensuring the safety of pupils in school.
- Training for staff is extensive. It includes training in safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, mental health, restraint, first aid, fire safety and health and safety. The school premises are safe and secure.
- The daily handover meetings between home and school staff ensure that any concerns are shared. Staff are alert to possible triggers of anxiety, stress or negative behaviour. Pupils are nurtured and cared for, so they feel safe and are safe.
- The school engages with other professionals effectively to safeguard pupils: the police have talked to pupils about keeping safe from extremist views; fire officers have visited to promote safety from fire; and local authority safeguarding officers have talked to pupils about keeping safe from sexual exploitation.
- The clinical service manager leads on engagement with Lancashire local authority services. These include the safeguarding hub, the positive behaviour teams and child and adolescent mental health services.
- There are thorough risk assessments in place to minimise risk in school and when pupils go out on trips.
- Staff meet regularly with social workers, corporate parents and parents, where appropriate, to ensure that pupils are supported to keep safe in all contexts. The school does not have a website, but the safeguarding policy is available on request.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- In the past, teaching has not secured a positive impact on pupils' learning over time. Teaching has improved and there is some effective practice now. However, assessment systems and planning for continuity and progression in pupils' learning are not securely established. Current teachers have only been in school for a few weeks. They have brought expertise and have established positive relationships with pupils.
- Teaching is effective where it follows a course syllabus, for example in health and social care, bushcraft and functional skills. Pupils enjoy these subjects. Teachers make the learning interesting, for example by taking learning outdoors and using interesting resources.
- However, activities provided in other subjects such as science, art and design, geography and history are often at a low level. Teaching includes topics that appeal to pupils' interests, but activities do not promote continuity and progression in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough to establish what pupils know and can do. Consequently, activities are not always matched precisely to pupils' abilities, and do not build on their learning systematically.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are encouraged and developed in all subjects. Pupils grow in confidence and engage in discussion readily. Their literacy skills are developed

well in lessons following the functional English courses within school and in college placements. However, literacy skills are not developed or consolidated in other subjects across the curriculum. Teaching does not take sufficient account of pupils' reading and writing abilities.

- Mathematical skills are taught well when pupils follow functional skills courses. Pupils also apply and extend their mathematical skills effectively in subjects like bushcraft and vehicle technology.
- Teaching is personalised and takes account of pupils' education, health and care plans, their individual learning and behaviour plans and their personal education plans. These are shared with the Virtual School for Looked After Children in each of the placing authorities. Teaching is successful in promoting increasingly positive behaviours for pupils' learning and social skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils often enter the school after periods of trauma, and their well-being is everyone's main priority. School staff work closely with home and clinical staff to ensure that pupils' care needs are met fully.
- Daily meetings between home and school staff ensure that everyone is aware of potential barriers to learning and triggers of anxiety or inappropriate behaviour. Positive strategies are used to encourage and reward pupils, supporting them to grow in self-esteem and confidence.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to relax. Pupils trust adults and feel safe in their care. There have been no recorded cases of serious misbehaviour or bullying. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and confirm that there have not been any incidents in school. They are aware of procedures and feel able to talk to staff if they have any concerns.
- There is a strong emphasis on how to keep physically and mentally healthy in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the weekly therapy sessions. Pupils are supported effectively to manage their behaviour and look after themselves. The '24-hour' curriculum, which continues in the home, places a strong emphasis on resilience and skills to support independent living and to stay fit and healthy.
- Staff are alert to any potential risks. They engage effectively with outside agencies where risks are identified, for example, if pupils are vulnerable to extremism or sexual exploitation. They ensure that pupils are aware of risks and know how to avoid them. Staff have worked extensively with pupils on how to keep safe when online or using social media.
- Pupils receive good careers advice and education. They receive impartial careers information and advice from an external consultant. Work-related skills are taught in PSHE and pupils are able to access vocational college courses. Pupils are encouraged to participate in voluntary work and part-time paid employment, where appropriate.
- Pupils' attendance, safety and well-being are supervised closely when pupils attend

college.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' engagement in education has improved over time. In the first six months of the school's operation, pupils generally did not engage in their learning. This reflected the poor quality of education they received. Pupils' attendance is consequently only around 50% for this academic year. Attendance at college placements is also low. Pupils are more engaged now that they recognise that teaching and learning is much improved.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning improve over time. On entry to the school, they have often been out of education for a while. They respond well to the teachers' encouragement and the positive reward system. Their attitudes to learning are still variable, however, and expectations for behaviour in the classroom are not established fully.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is generally good. They are cooperative and respectful towards others.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils' education was highly disrupted in the first six months of the school's operation, due to frequent changes in staff. The teaching did not engage pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils' learning over time has lacked continuity and their progress has been limited.
- Pupils' progress has improved recently as a result of developments in teaching. The schemes of work in core subjects are now well organised.
- Pupils are working towards various qualifications, including level 1 and 2 in functional English and mathematics and awards in bushcraft. They also take BTEC qualifications in health and social care and make-up and beauty. A course in motor vehicle technology is being introduced.
- Pupils have not yet completed any courses, as the school has not been open for a full academic year.
- Pupils are adequately prepared for life beyond school. Their good personal development helps them to develop resilience and confidence in accessing further education. The '24-hour' curriculum, continued into the home setting, supports them to develop independent living and work-related skills. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to have a positive impact, equipping pupils with functional skills and vocational learning.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 143936   |
| DfE registration number | 888/6069 |
| Inspection number       | 10048610 |

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                 | 14 to 16   |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 2  |
| Number of part-time pupils          | 0  |
| Proprietor                          | My3 Limited  |
| Headteacher                         | Peter Lam  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)            | £65,000  |
| Telephone number                    | 07427 947716   |
| Website                             | Not applicable   |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:peter.lam@my3ltd.co.uk">peter.lam@my3ltd.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- The school was registered in June for 2017 for five boys and girls aged 16 to 18 years who have autistic spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.
- There are currently two pupils on roll. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are in the care of local authorities.
- Governance is provided by proprietors.
- The school does not have a website. Information is provided to parents and carers when a pupil enters the school and also on request.

- The school supports pupils to access courses at Liverpool City College.
- Since the school registered there have been three different heads of education and five different teachers. The current head of education has been in post since February 2018. A full-time teacher was appointed at the beginning of June after two months of working as a supply teacher. A part-time supply teacher was engaged at the same time. All staff are qualified teachers.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work. She spoke with pupils about their work and their views of the school.
- The inspector met with parents, teachers, the head of education and the children's home manager. She had telephone conversations with social workers, a representative of proprietors, a tutor and safeguarding lead from Liverpool City College.
- The inspector checked school policies and documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. She checked compliance with the independent school standards, including checks on the premises and safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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