

# Kisimul School

Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 5HN

## Inspection dates

21–23 November 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher has high ambition for what pupils can achieve, stating: 'I want Kisimul School to be a centre of excellence for children with autism.' Under her leadership the school is improving at a fast pace.
- Governance provided by the Kisimul Group provides effective challenge and support to school leaders. Together, they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The caring ethos within the school enables pupils with a high level of need to make considerable gains in their self-esteem. As a consequence, pupils' personal development and behaviour is good and improves over time.
- Leaders make sure that all procedures are in place to keep pupils safe and that levels of staffing meet requirements. Parents and carers agree that pupils are kept safe at the school.
- Good-quality teaching, which includes the contribution of a highly effective therapy team, ensures that pupils make good progress.
- The school's curriculum provides a range of courses that are personalised to meet pupils' needs, including a strong focus on the development of skills for their future lives. Leaders plan to enhance the curriculum further with a broader range of courses.
- The individual needs of post-16 students are met successfully in the same way as in the rest of the school. Students make good progress, particularly in their personal development and communication skills. Most-able students take part in effective work-experience opportunities.
- There is a small amount of inconsistent teaching that does not meet pupils' needs fully, including in managing their behaviour.
- The care-home staff who support pupils in the classroom lack sufficient training on how to improve pupils' learning.
- A small minority of staff are not helpfully supportive of leaders' current improvement priorities.

### 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:
  - ensuring that all staff understand and share leaders' vision for improvement and are clear about their part in school improvement
  - developing staff training further so that pupils' learning needs are more precisely and consistently met
  - implementing the new curriculum so that it improves pupils' life skills further
  - ensuring that all support staff, including care staff, contribute in a consistent and proactive way to pupils' learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Changes in leadership since the last inspection resulted in a period of uncertainty. The new headteacher, who started in September 2018, has wasted no time in setting about making improvements to the school. Together with the newly appointed director of education from the Kisimul Group, she has established high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders are relentless in their determination to ensure that pupils receive high-quality learning experiences. A member of staff, representing the views of most colleagues, said, 'The headteacher is very passionate about our pupils, has introduced changes for the better and has a clear vision for the school.'
- Recent restructuring of the leadership team, which includes new members of staff, has strengthened lines of accountability. The head of therapeutic services works closely with other leaders as a key member of the senior team, and therapists make a strong contribution to teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders' roles and responsibilities are now clear. Recently appointed middle leaders show great promise, although it is too early to see the impact of their actions.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning very carefully, taking swift and effective action should there be any concerns. For example, leaders identified that not all staff were effective in managing pupils' behaviour, and recently intensified staff training. Staff are now being supported to deepen their skills, helping them to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively than in the past.
- The curriculum is designed well to interest pupils and provide for their complex needs. It is based on developing pupils' communication and social skills. In addition, it focuses on basic literacy, numeracy and physical-coordination skills. The most able pupils follow a more academic curriculum, and communicate through speaking, reading and writing. Leaders have identified that the curriculum could provide even more vocational and life-skills experience, and plan to implement the enhanced curriculum in the very near future.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are prepared positively for life in British society through an effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum.
- Staff ensure that there are many opportunities to make visits to the community, enabling pupils to practise their social and wider skills. Trips, such as to the local supermarket and the leisure centre, and use of public transport, complement the curriculum effectively.
- Leaders know accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have not yet had time to share their plans for improvement precisely, and in full, with all staff. As a consequence, leaders have not yet secured the full engagement of a small minority of staff in the changes they are making. A number of staff have left the school since September. Leaders are taking steps, such as improving training and introducing a staff forum, to ensure that all staff understand, and are fully behind, the school's ambitious vision.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Leaders regularly carry out their own parental surveys, and act upon feedback. Staff communicate with parents in a variety of ways, including providing them with a weekly report of their children's progress. Leaders and all staff work hard to maintain strong relationships with parents. Good communication was

raised as a strength by the few parents who responded to the online questionnaire. One parent, representing the views of most, said, 'Our son has settled well and staff work very hard to ensure that he has the best care and education.' A small minority of parents commented on high turnover of staff.

- School leaders have ensured that all the required policies and procedures are in place and meet the independent school standards.

## **Governance**

- The Kisimul Group provides strong governance. The company structure provides rigorous checking mechanisms for the quality of education that the school provides, and ensures that pupils are kept safe. The newly appointed director of education provides highly effective monitoring and support for the headteacher.
- The director of education and her deputy know the school well. They visit often so they can see the school for themselves. The headteacher writes comprehensive progress reports so that the directors are very well informed.
- External reports are undertaken regularly to double-check that leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school publishes the safeguarding policy on its website, which follows all current government requirements. Checks made when recruiting staff are meticulous.
- Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding ethos. Regular training ensures that staff are kept up to date with latest advice and guidance. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding matters, including preventing pupils from risk of radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders communicate well with parents, carers and other agencies should there be concerns about a pupil. The focus on communication and keeping comprehensive records makes sure that pupils are supported and safe.
- The management of health and safety is strong because regulations are followed closely. For example, leaders have already carried out a fire risk assessment on a newly built swimming pool yet to open. Leaders undertake regular health and safety audits across the school site. External experts supplement school and proprietor checks to provide assurances to keep pupils safe.
- Before and during the inspection, concerns were raised about levels of supervision not being adequate at the school. However, it was found that the support requirements of pupils are served well by the levels of permanent teaching staff.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Currently, the quality of teaching is improving because of new initiatives to promote pupils to work with more independence. Planning aligned to individual education plan (IEP) targets has recently improved. It ensures that teaching staff prepare highly bespoke

sessions in which learning tasks are broken down appropriately to meet the differing needs of the pupils.

- The skilled teaching staff know their pupils well. The teaching-staff team includes a large number of therapeutic professionals, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and education psychologists. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists typically work closely together to support pupils' learning well.
- Teaching reinforces pupils' social skills well, including those of listening and responding. With highly effective use of communication strategies, such as using pictures and symbols, staff encourage pupils to respond positively to any request.
- Teaching makes effective use of sensory materials to stimulate pupils to think for themselves and to communicate. For example, pupils reinforce what they are learning through using songs and repetitive rhyme. Staff provide suitably positive feedback through both signing and verbal means.
- Teaching staff plan literacy activities appropriate to pupils' ability. Mark-making and writing are developed well. Teaching supports pupils' acquisition of early phonics and reading skills effectively.
- Teachers support pupils' mathematical development well through taking opportunities to demonstrate numeracy. For example, pupils count familiar objects whenever possible. When undertaking visits to the community, pupils practise numeracy skills in real-life scenarios, such as paying for items in a shop or telling the time.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are good overall there is some variation. There are many examples of excellence in the school where teaching provides precisely for pupils' needs, and pupils show high levels of engagement. On occasion, however, pupils are not provided with enough stimulating activity. Consequently, their interest in learning wanes, which can result in undesirable behaviour. Sometimes teaching assistants provide too much support and do not find out what pupils can achieve independently.
- Some pupils who have very high levels of need are sometimes provided with additional support on an impromptu basis by members of the care staff from the children's home. However, these staff lack training in supporting educational aims, and this additional support sometimes has the effect of slowing pupils' learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a caring ethos in the school. All staff put pupils' welfare at the centre of their work. A parent said, 'Kisimul school is a school with a heart'.
- The curriculum promotes healthy lifestyles such as having a balanced diet and taking exercise. Pupils benefit from a range of creative and physical therapies. These strongly support pupils to become more self-aware and self-managing. One pupil reflected, 'I am safe because I can manage myself better now.'
- Pupils work well together and develop appropriate social interaction. Staff provide positive role models, as shown in pupils' good manners and respect for others. Unkindness

between pupils is extremely rare. Pupils said that should they have a problem then they could talk to any member of staff.

- Pupils who are able to express themselves explained that they feel very safe in the school. One older pupil said, 'My job is to keep my friends safe.' Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe.
- The lack of consistency in care-staff support at the school causes uncertainty for pupils and is not always conducive to pupils' well-being.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Despite the high levels of pupil behavioural issues the school is an orderly and calm community most of the time.
- Occasionally when pupils' learning needs are not met well, difficult behaviour can be triggered. Leaders have recently improved the recording and analysis of behavioural triggers relating to any incident. They initiate staff training should analyses show that pupils' learning needs are not met precisely enough. As a result, leaders have successfully reduced the frequency of extreme pupil misbehaviour. In addition, records show that the need for physical restraint has fallen significantly since September.
- Pupils have very high levels of attendance.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils typically enter the school at differing ages, and with extreme and complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils arrive having failed to thrive in previous placements. The vast majority of pupils do not display skills that enable them to learn effectively. Leaders' first priority is to support pupils to develop effective communication and learning behaviours.
- Most pupils make good progress in speech, language and communication skills. This means that they understand, and are understood, and so their levels of frustration begin to reduce. Pupils develop the skills to make their own choices, and start to make sense of the world around them.
- Staff continually check and review records of pupils' progress. They provide pupils with encouragement and feedback on their outcomes. Pupils show immense pleasure when they have achieved even the smallest of steps, such as giving a verbal answer or successfully carrying out a sensory activity.
- Pupils make good gains in their numeracy skills and learn to manipulate number, understand shape, and apply their knowledge in everyday scenarios.
- Staff help those pupils who have developed verbal skills to make good progress in speaking. Pupils are encouraged to repeat phrases. A highly consistent approach supports pupils' understanding of expressions and language. When reading, pupils use phonics strategies effectively to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Pupils make good progress in their physical dexterity. They have ample opportunity through play, physical education and therapies to develop control of their finer physical

movements. Pupils practise performing tasks needed in life, for example using simple kitchen equipment. They also take regular exercise, and leaders plan to initiate more regular swimming sessions and associated therapies once the new swimming pool is opened.

- Case studies show that pupils make strong progress towards their IEP targets. Pupils are prepared for their next stage of education because they are becoming more independent and making good gains in their communicating skills. The vast majority of pupils stay at the school into the sixth form.

## Sixth form provision

**Good**

- Leadership of sixth-form provision is strong because leaders have developed a highly personalised curriculum for students. They ensure that students have a very positive learning experience.
- The sixth-form study programme focuses on developing students' independent living skills. Leaders carefully balance support for students with encouraging them to be more autonomous. Students follow a range of accredited courses that focus appropriately on preparation for their future lives. Recent plans to enhance the curriculum further with a wider range of accredited courses have yet to be put in place.
- For the most able students, work experience on the school site forms an integral part of their study programme. Students learn appropriate skills, including completing an application form and developing their interview techniques.
- As in the rest of the school, students receive good teaching. Learning activities are carefully adjusted to meet the needs of each student. Lessons prioritise skills such as reading and following instructions. Students make frequent supported trips to local shops to practise these skills. They also learn how to support themselves by preparing and cooking meals, together with other essential skills.
- Students make strong progress, especially in their communication skills and personal development. Students also make good progress in English and mathematics, appropriate to their level of ability.
- Students say they are safe and well cared for. Working relationships between students and staff are happy and respectful. Sixth-form students are good role models for other pupils. The most able students use their social skills to engage well with other students and work as a team.
- Retention is very high, as the vast majority of students stay on until the age of 18. Students are offered effective careers advice which helps them to understand the various options open to them and to make informed choices at the end of their time in school. Last year, nearly all leavers continued their studies at Kisimul Group's own adults' training provision.



## School details

Unique reference number	135577
DfE registration number	936/6593
Inspection number	10068081

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 special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Proprietor	Kisimul Group Ltd
Headteacher	Jamie Mulgrew
Annual fees (day pupils)	£98,000 to £109,000
Telephone number	020 8335 2570
Website	<a href="http://www.kisimul.co.uk">www.kisimul.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admissions@kisimul.co.uk">admissions@kisimul.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–6 October 2016

## Information about this school

- Kisimul School (Woodstock House) is an independent special school. All pupils have severe learning difficulties. Most have very challenging behaviour and a diagnosis of autism. All students have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is owned by Kisimul Group Ltd, which provides education and residential care homes for children and young people with autism, learning disabilities and challenging behaviour. Most pupils attending the school live in adjacent residential care.
- The school does not use alternative providers.



## Information about this inspection

- This was a no-notice standard inspection commissioned by the Department for Education following complaints received prior to September 2018 about leadership and management and the safety of pupils. All regulations were found to be met.
- The inspector also considered 18 responses from staff to the online questionnaire.
- The inspector met with the director of education and two other representatives from Kisimul Group Ltd.
- A discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector met with a parent and considered five responses to the online questionnaire. One email from a parent, and the school's own parent survey, were also considered.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across all age groups. All lessons and one-to-one sessions were visited jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work and viewed case studies across year groups. A meeting was held with a group of most-able pupils.
- A number of documents were scrutinised including: the school improvement plan; information relating to behaviour of pupils; safeguarding documents; the complaints policy and associated records; and minutes from meetings, including the staff forum.

## Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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