

# Ashlea House School

## Inspection dates

5–7 February 2019

<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>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The dedicated headteacher has, very quickly, gained the confidence of all staff and the proprietor. The pupils also hold the headteacher in high regard.
- The headteacher has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school provides pupils with a good quality of education.
- As a result of frequent monitoring, the headteacher has a detailed understanding of the strengths of the school and areas to improve further. However, the plans for school improvement sometimes do not contain sufficiently detailed expectations. This hinders the proprietor's ability to easily check what difference leaders' actions are making.
- Safeguarding and pupils' welfare lie at the heart of the school's ethos. Staff are very well trained in protecting pupils from risks. Staff are passionate in enabling pupils 'to be all that [they] can be' as the school mission states. Staff do this by raising pupils' aspirations and building their resilience for learning and for life's challenges.
- Staff ensure that the curriculum is personalised to the needs of each pupil. Post-16 students benefit both personally and academically from attending vocational college courses which are enhanced with work in school.
- Typically, teachers plan activities so that pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points. However, in a small range of subjects, some teachers lack the very secure subject knowledge required to promote pupils' deeper understanding.
- Whether pupils attend this inclusive school for a few weeks or years, staff ensure that pupils achieve well both academically and in their personal development.
- Pupils' behaviours and attitudes to learning are outstanding. All pupils have previously had negative experiences in several other schools. Here, the expertise and genuine compassion of staff enables pupils to develop appropriate behaviours for learning and for life.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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 the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - enhancing teachers' subject knowledge in subjects in which they are not experts to ensure that teaching in all subjects routinely promotes pupils' confidence and ability to apply skills, knowledge and understanding at greater depth.
- Enhance the quality of leadership and management by refining the school improvement plan in order for the proprietor to more easily check that actions are having the expected impact on pupils' learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, supported by the proprietor, has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have maintained high staff morale during a period of considerable change. The school remains an oasis for learning which is highly valued by the pupils. One pupil, when talking to the inspector, summed up the views of others stating, 'I love this school.' This is quite an achievement considering that all pupils have had only negative experiences in previous learning environments.
- The proprietor and headteacher have a steely determination to provide the best possible education and care for pupils who attend Ashlea House School. They know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well because of their frequent checks on its performance. However, in places, the strategic plan for improvement does not have precise expectations and timescales, which makes it hard for the proprietor to measure the impact of actions on pupils' progress over time.
- Leaders ensure that they meet the requirement to provide information for parents, carers and others on request, including those required by the standards relating to the school's website. Detailed annual reports, and the school's contributions to the review of pupils' education, health and care plans, keep parents and carers, and local authorities, well informed about pupils' academic and emotional progress. Well-established systems ensure that appropriate information about pupils is effectively shared with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day.
- Feedback from local authorities and professionals who work with the pupils affirms the positive impact that staff have on pupils' emotional well-being and academic progress. The stable, caring and nurturing environment that staff at the school provide helps pupils to get their lives back on track. Pupils aspire to gaining employment, making a positive contribution to society and building their own family units when they are older.
- Teachers develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through a range of activities. During the inspection, staff very effectively provoked pupils' imaginations when discussing British values. Pupils recalled their visit to a museum when they took part in a role play in an old police court. Staff encouraged debates among the pupils to tease out their views on democracy, together with the importance of having tolerance towards those who have different opinions. Staff showed real skill in helping to prepare pupils for living more independently and responsibly in a diverse society.
- Teachers access training that is specific to the needs of the pupils. Staff say that opportunities for ongoing training has improved since the new headteacher and proprietor took up their posts. There is a cycle of training for all staff planned for the remainder of the academic year. However, the opportunities for subject-specific training for staff who are teaching subjects in which they lack expertise are limited. This hinders the ability of pupils to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding at greater depth.
- The headteacher ensures that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the requirements of the standards. The headteacher carefully designs a bespoke curriculum to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of individual pupils,

including when pupils continue with their education post-16. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), alongside the basic skills required in literacy and numeracy. As a result, pupils effectively access learning in a range of other subjects and regularly achieve nationally accredited academic qualifications.

- The curriculum provides pupils with vocational experiences which pupils carefully choose, having attended a number of impartial careers events. Post-16 students told me how much they are enjoying studying for a motor-vehicle qualification at a local college and also the benefits of having two weeks of work experience. Consequently, students are well prepared for their next stage of education or employment.
- Pupils participate in a range of off-site physical education activities, including boxing and swimming, which develop their social skills, alongside promoting their physical development. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to suitable changing and showering facilities on their return to the home.
- The school does not receive any additional pupil premium or special educational needs funding from those local authorities placing pupils in the school. This funding is an intrinsic part of the school fees charged to the local authorities, and it is used well to provide carefully considered provision that meets pupils' social, academic and welfare needs.
- Leaders keep up-to-date records and logs of events within the school, including those that record incidents of serious behaviour. These logs record incidents and their outcomes in detail. They are regularly evaluated by the headteacher, and effectively shared with the proprietor.

## **Governance**

- The governance of the school is effective and has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietary company has an effective accountability structure in place to ensure that the headteacher is closely held to account for the impact of her work.
- The proprietor has ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering is in place for the school's internet connection.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher's actions ensure that the school is a safe environment in which pupils can learn.
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are followed meticulously. Leaders ensure that the statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, including those members of staff who are employed by the local college, are completed before they commence work.
- Staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding procedures because of the frequent training that they receive. They are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face and share any concerns effectively and appropriately. Leaders share information with

carers and appropriate authorities effectively to ensure pupils' safety.

- The proprietary company has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is published on the school website. Well-established and effective practices provide pupils with appropriate and safe access to technology and information held online.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Typically, teachers use their assessment of pupils to carefully plan activities that are appropriately challenging and that systematically build upon pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils, including the few that continue their education post-16, routinely follow bespoke learning plans, to ensure that they make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, particularly in their specialist subjects. For example, the music teacher strongly promotes pupils' understanding of the structure of rhythms alongside the technical knowledge needed to play the ukulele. However, on some occasions, particularly when teaching subjects which are not their subject specialisms, teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong. Consequently, on occasion, this limits pupils' development of knowledge and understanding at a greater depth.
- The teaching of mathematics is of high quality. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to carefully plan activities which systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across a wide range of mathematical topics. Teachers make good use of links to everyday mathematical situations to consolidate pupils' learning and allow them to practise their skills in solving problems. For example, pupils told the inspector about their recent shopping trip to a supermarket. They explained why they had bought certain brands and not others, based cost. They had also checked whether or not they had been correctly charged by calculating the cost of the items bought when they returned to school.
- Reading is taught effectively across the school. There is a small library in the school and books are clearly labelled so that pupils can choose books that match their ability. The strong links between school staff and parents ensure that pupils read at least three times a week to adults in their home environment. Adults routinely record reading completed in the evenings and at weekends. All pupils are members of the public library, which they visit regularly with school staff. This strongly supports pupils' progress with their reading.
- Teachers encourage pupils to write across a range of subjects. Teachers provide guidance on how pupils can plan their writing by, for example, using pictorial prompts. In preparation for coursework for English qualifications, teachers help pupils to assess and edit their work to make improvements.
- The work in pupils' books shows that most teachers systematically plan sequences of activities to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to consolidate and apply these skills.
- At the core of all teaching is the aim of supporting pupils to overcome the barriers to learning produced by their considerable social and emotional needs. Teachers do this particularly well. As a result, pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Sometimes, however, pupils are overcome by their emotions and can present some considerable challenges. Staff swiftly and

effectively apply their training and skills to de-escalate these emotional outbursts and minimise their impact on pupils' learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils overcome many obstacles to their learning, including those relating to their mental health and self-esteem, because of the headteacher's deployment of staff to provide one-to-one teaching, support and guidance. For most pupils, this nurturing environment encourages them, for the first time in their lives, to commit to learning and value their education. Pupils develop their confidence to have ambitions and talk of their aspirations for their future lives.
- Pupils deeply value their excellent relationships with staff and the effective care and guidance they receive. As a result, pupils are prepared well for their next stages of education and readiness for life after care. A wide range of carefully chosen, suitably checked and closely monitored placements and activities allow pupils, where possible, to develop their skills for employment and future life. For example, work experience in a tyre-repair company develops their self-confidence and ability to build relationships with colleagues and customers.
- Frequent visits to careers fairs, college open days and visits from people working in a variety of occupations, including the military, broaden pupils' horizons and raise aspirations about future employment choices.
- Pupils receive good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. During the inspection, pupils recalled visiting a Buddhist temple and how they felt when they were meditating there. Similarly, they were able to tell the inspector about their visit to a local mosque and their discussion with an imam after they had observed prayers. Pupils' displays of their work in school clearly demonstrate how they learn about and celebrate the similarities and differences found in Britain today. Work on sexual orientation led to pupils creating a display celebrating diversity. One pupil had summed up their understanding with the statement 'love has no gender'. Teachers demonstrate aplomb in their ability to delve into sensitive issues and topics, but which are essential in pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is typically of a high calibre. Pupils new to the school quickly settle because of well-established routines and the fair and respectful implementation of school rules. Pupils show respect and tolerance for each other and for staff and visitors.
- Pupils swiftly develop their self-regulation skills relating to their behaviour because of the high-quality guidance and support they receive. As a result, pupils initiate their own actions to head off an emotional crisis, for example taking a short time-out to get some fresh air before returning to class.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school and demonstrate an understanding of the different types of bullying. Pupils who spoke with the inspector found it difficult to recollect or identify acts of bullying and were confident that if they did occur, staff would do all they could to prevent them from continuing.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils join the school with considerable gaps in their education or prolonged absences from school, often due to exclusion. However, pupils soon make rapid and considerable improvement and attend well both in school and/or college. Absences are typically for genuine reasons, such as illness or an emotional crisis. All pupils who are unable to attend school are provided with appropriate additional support and homework materials, to minimise the impact of their absence on their learning. Exclusions are extremely rare and for appropriate reasons.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- All pupils currently attending the school are disadvantaged because of their social, emotional and mental health needs. Most have an education, health and care plan. Pupils make strong progress from their starting points in a wide variety of subjects, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils also develop appropriate social and emotional skills because of the teaching, support and guidance they receive. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life after school.
- The school's assessments and work in pupils' books show that pupils' progress since joining the school is good, particularly in reading, writing, mathematics and vocational subjects. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are diminishing. Consequently, although their attainment is below that of their peers nationally, pupils are making up ground.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and quickly improve their reading skills. They often overcome deep-rooted reluctance to read, and become effective readers, because of support and appropriate resources provided for them.
- Leaders make good use of national accreditation to support pupils' engagement in education and reflect their interests. Consequently, pupils follow a carefully constructed curriculum that promotes the skills required for them to attain basic qualifications in literacy, numeracy and PSHE. These are strongly celebrated and consolidate and effectively promote pupils' self-esteem. As a result, pupils eagerly engage in more-difficult learning to achieve higher qualifications.
- The main impact that staff have on pupils is promoting pupils' self-esteem, positive behaviours towards others and a love of learning. Pupils enter the school with low self-esteem and challenging behaviours. As a direct result of the skills and compassion of staff, pupils develop emotional stability and a desire to learn, which is reflected in high levels of attendance both in school and for those who attend off-site provision. The impact which the headteacher and staff have on pupils leads to the overwhelming majority of pupils continuing in education, training or gaining employment when they leave the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	135975
DfE registration number	357/6003
Inspection number	10067904

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	Special school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School category	Other independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Kalvinder Bains
Headteacher	Jenna Coyne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,800
Telephone number	0161 3360664
Website	<a href="http://www.fullcirclecare.co.uk">www.fullcirclecare.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@fullcirclecare.co.uk">info@fullcirclecare.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–15 September 2016

## Information about this school

- Ashlea House was opened in 2009 and is owned by Full Circle Care Limited.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2018. A new proprietor was in place from October 2018.
- Ashlea House is a small special school that is registered to admit up to five boys between the ages of 11 and 18. The particular special educational needs catered for are behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- A small number of pupils have education, health and care plans. The school was last inspected in September 2016.



- The school's primary aim is to 'encourage every student to achieve their potential by guiding and nurturing individual talents and ensuring access to a broad and balanced individualised curriculum within a caring and friendly environment'.
- The school works with The Manchester College and The Prince's Trust.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning, checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards and looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects. The inspector spoke with pupils about their work and school life.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, headteacher and teachers. Short interviews took place with pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation, including policies, planning, documentation relating to the leadership and management of the school and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. She scrutinised the school's records and systems to check the suitability of adults to work in the school.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation an officer of a local authority which has placed pupils in the school and with a social worker who works with the pupils.
- At the time of the inspection a very small number of boys aged over 16 were attending a college and/or The Prince's Trust. A telephone conversation was held with a member of staff from the college who works with the students.
- The inspector considered the five responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and three responses to the online pupil survey.
- The school's website was checked prior to the inspection.

## Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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