

# Owlswick School

Newhaven Road, Kingston, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3NF

## Inspection dates

12–14 February 2019

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	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietors and school leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met consistently. They have not made the improvements required from the last inspection.
- Staff do not receive enough training to hone their teaching skills.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Plans are not linked to pupils' learning outcomes sufficiently well.
- Teaching does not assess pupils' progress precisely enough. Assessment is not used well to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress. They do not have enough chances to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. They do not develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics well enough.
- Governors have not held leaders to account rigorously enough. Leaders have not ensured that plans for improvement are fully in place. Leaders do not measure the success of their actions sufficiently well.
- While the curriculum is adequately broad and balanced, leaders do not have a written curriculum policy in place as is required.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and staff have an absolute commitment to do the best for their pupils.
- Pupils are proud of their school and usually behave well.
- The newly appointed headteacher is well respected by staff and pupils.
- Leaders have created an environment where pupils feel supported and safe.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that procedures are put in place for governors and leaders to check that the independent school standards are met consistently
  - developing action plans that set out exactly how to measure the success of leaders' intended actions
  - ensuring that a written curriculum policy is provided as is required
  - ensuring that a suitable assessment policy is put in place so that leaders can monitor the academic progress of pupils
  - implementing performance management of teaching staff so that they receive precise feedback and have access to appropriate training.
- Improve teaching by:
  - ensuring that short-term targets are provided for pupils that accurately reflect their learning needs
  - ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment and other information effectively to plan for pupils' different needs
  - ensuring that teaching provides a consistent approach, following an agreed policy
  - ensuring that mathematics teaching is planned so that pupils apply their knowledge more regularly to solve real-life mathematical problems
  - ensuring that there is an agreed approach in teaching literacy across the curriculum
  - making sure that leaders' checks on teaching are focused on the impact teachers have on pupils' learning.
- Improve pupils' engagement in lessons further by providing teachers with clear strategies drawn from the success of the school's existing therapeutic approach.
- Ensure that the medical room meets the requirements laid down in the independent school standards.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex to this report.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, turbulence in leadership has reduced the school's effectiveness. Leaders have not addressed the areas for improvement identified sufficiently well, nor have they ensured that there are sufficient checks on the statutory requirements for independent schools. Consequently, not all independent school standards are met, which has resulted in pupils not making enough progress in some areas of their learning.
- The proprietors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have identified and communicated clear priorities for improvement. However, currently there are no improvement plans in place so leaders are not clear on how the impact of their actions will be monitored. The lack of an organised approach to improving the school means that progress within the key priorities is currently hampered.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is variable. Their individual education plans lack detail and do not identify precisely enough what actions to take to support pupils' specific needs. Teachers receive insufficient advice and guidance on how to meet pupils' learning needs. As a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress in their academic subjects.
- The performance management of staff is underdeveloped. Staff do not yet have targets set for improvements in their teaching. The leadership of the school has not put in place effective systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. While staff receive regular support to understand pupils' therapeutic needs, they do not participate in sufficient training to help them improve their teaching skills.
- Despite the absence of a written curriculum policy as required, the curriculum in place is adequately broad and balanced. Leaders have rightly identified that the current curriculum does not meet pupils' needs fully, as pupils do not value some of the courses on offer. Not all courses result in appropriate accreditation, especially for the most able pupils. Nevertheless, pupils follow areas of interest, such as horse-riding, cooking or gardening and gain valuable skills. Pupils have ample opportunities to learn outside in the extensive school grounds. An audit of the quality of teaching and learning has been undertaken and a review of the curriculum is under way but it is yet to be completed.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. This is because there is a strong ethos of tolerance and understanding of others' views and opinions. Pupils receive effective personal, social and health education, where topics such as lifestyle choices and life in modern Britain are discussed.
- A recently introduced management information system has improved the recording and sharing of behavioural and safeguarding information about pupils. Leaders and staff place much emphasis on pupils' well-being. Staff report positively on this recent improvement in record-keeping and how it supports pupils' welfare.
- Members of staff feel valued by leaders. They feel well supported, especially in managing pupils' behaviour. They share the new headteacher's vision to provide high-quality educational experiences for pupils. Staff members say that they work well as a team and that they are led well. They report that their views are considered. One member of staff, representing the views of others said: 'I am proud to be part of a team which works

together to do the best for each young person.’

- The leadership team has developed good relationships with parents. Parents are complimentary about the school and the care their child receives. As a parent said: ‘Owlswick is a fantastic place where staff know the pupils really well. My son is a changed child.’

## **Governance**

- The proprietors are also the governors of the school. They visit the school regularly and know its strengths and weaknesses in detail. They acknowledge that their expertise within education is not secure enough to hold leaders fully to account. The lack of a school improvement plan hampers governors’ ability to hold school leaders fully responsible for the success of their actions. Governors do not receive enough information about pupils’ academic progress to provide effective challenge and support in this area of school effectiveness. Nevertheless, governors are determined to improve monitoring and evaluation processes within the school.
- Governors have plans to complement governance with external educational expertise.
- Governors provide effective support and challenge to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders publish the safeguarding policy on the school website, which meets all current government requirements. Appropriate checks are made and recorded when recruiting staff.
- The leadership of the school has developed a strong safeguarding ethos. Staff receive regular and effective safeguarding training to ensure that they are kept up to date with the latest advice and guidance.
- Staff communicate well with parents, carers and other agencies should there be concerns about a pupil. The focus on keeping comprehensive records on the school’s new management information system and daily meetings with care staff ensures that safeguarding information is shared promptly and appropriately.
- The management of health and safety is effective and contributes to pupils’ well-being. Leaders undertake regular health and safety audits across the school site. External experts supplement proprietor checks to provide assurances to keep pupils safe. Comprehensive risk assessments are compiled for each pupil. While suitable written risk assessments regarding school activities, such as learning in the school grounds, are completed, they are not easily retrieved should they need to be checked.

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

## **Requires improvement**

- Teaching is not consistently strong enough to be judged good overall.
- Staff are not provided with clear guidelines about teaching, learning and assessment including how to plan schemes of work or lessons effectively to meet pupils’ needs. Sometimes, teachers do not take account of pupils’ prior achievements or special

educational needs well enough. Consequently, teachers' plans are highly variable with an emphasis on tasks to be completed rather than what learning will take place.

- When teaching captures pupils' interests, they engage well. Sometimes pupils do not always participate well with their learning because they do not feel inspired by the work they are given. For example, at times pupils complete a series of low-level tasks that provide little challenge.
- Teaching does not use assessment information effectively enough to support pupils' progress. While pupils receive helpful verbal encouragement, as a rule they do not know precisely why a piece of work is successful. They do not learn from mistakes well enough and their progress is hampered.
- Teachers generally use verbal questioning well. In the best examples, questions prompt pupils to think deeply and explain their understanding.
- Teaching successfully gains pupils' enthusiasm for reading. A pupil said: 'I like reading because it helps my writing.' English lessons focus on learning about grammar and then pupils' practise skills in creative writing sessions. Because of highly engaging topics and structured learning activities, pupils respond well and write at length with expression and flair. However, they do not practise these writing skills consistently well across the curriculum, nor do all subjects insist on good presentation of work.
- Teaching in mathematics is too variable. Teaching provides limited opportunities for the most able pupils to think deeply about how they will use their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems. This was identified as an area to improve following the last inspection and has not been tackled sufficiently well.
- Pupils learn well in technology and art because they carry out practical investigations and must think for themselves. Teaching strives to capture pupils' interest. For example, pupils explore successfully mark-making by attaching pens to trees moving in the wind. The subsequent work is displayed, and pupils gain a sense of pride and satisfaction.
- Pupils participate well in practical science investigations. They find out about the world around them, often learning outside when appropriate. However, the most able pupils have yet to develop writing well enough to explain their science understanding, as will be required by examination boards.
- Staff build positive working relationships with pupils. Teaching reinforces pupils' social skills well, including those of listening and responding. Pupils feel that staff are supportive of them. This helps to break down barriers to learning and is a real strength of teaching.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have yet to develop fully the self-awareness to help them become successful learners. While staff are adept at cajoling pupils to have a go at their work, periods of disengagement for several younger pupils sometimes go on for too long.
- Leaders have ensured that there is an appropriate first-aid policy in place. However, the

school does not currently have a water supply in the medical room as is required by the independent school standards. The proprietors have plans in place to relocate the medical room to meet this standard.

- Pupils receive suitable careers advice and guidance. Regular sessions help them to prepare for their future lives. Older pupils learn about searching for future courses or how to conduct themselves at an interview. Pupils are appreciative of the effective careers advice and guidance that they receive.
- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provision, CRE8. Good communication between school and CRE8 staff aids pupils' welfare at this placement.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying at the school. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be handled sensitively and any problems resolved swiftly by staff.
- Pupils know how to keep safe, including when using the internet. They understand the risks of extremism and radicalisation. They say that staff help them to understand how to keep safe.
- Pupils learn how to lead healthy lives through an effective personal, social and health education programme. Pupils readily participate in outdoor activities and sports.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The highly successful therapeutic approach to managing pupils' anxieties and subsequent behaviour is a strong feature of the school. Clear and specific guidelines and strategies are provided to staff, so that each pupil has bespoke support. Pupils are appreciative of the support they receive from staff. Parents report that pupils' behaviour improves significantly once they settle in to the school.
- Staff agree that pupils' behaviour has improved over time. When necessary, staff manage pupils' extreme behaviour outbursts well. School records show that the use of physical restraint has fallen substantially over time.
- Pupils usually show courtesy and respect to each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school. Pupils say that adults are kind to them. They feel valued by school staff.
- Low numbers of pupils on roll preclude any meaningful conclusions about overall attendance figures. On a case study basis, almost all pupils' attendance significantly improves when compared with their attendance at previous educational placements.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils join the school at various ages. Many have experienced fragmented education in the past and have gaps in their learning. Pupils' abilities are tested soon after joining the school, but assessment information is not used to inform pupils' individual education plans sufficiently well. Consequently, expectations of pupils' academic progress are not appropriately aspirational.
- Pupils make strong progress in their behavioural and emotional development, but progress is inconsistent in their academic subjects. Pupils' academic progress is not monitored by staff sufficiently well, so it is difficult for school leaders to find out how

much progress pupils make over time.

- Observation and scrutiny of work show that the most able pupils are not being challenged consistently well. Pupils' work shows inconsistencies across subjects with a lack of attention to basics, such as spelling, grammar and presentation.
- Pupils' writing during 'creative writing' English sessions shows good progress. Pupils' writing is less well developed across the curriculum, with not enough opportunity for them to write at length and for a variety of purposes. Consequently, pupils are not practising their extended writing skills frequently enough.
- Progress in mathematics is held back as pupils, especially those who are the most able, do not get enough opportunity to apply their knowledge to solve mathematical problems they may encounter.
- Pupils make strong progress in their speaking and listening skills. Pupils have ample opportunity to explain their feelings and opinions and most are highly articulate.
- Pupils are provided with a library and read books for pleasure. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to reading and willingly talk to staff about their favourite books. Leaders are in the process of developing a more structured approach to reading.
- A small minority of parents, while they value the work of the school and what it does for their child, express concern about the quality of the information they receive about the academic progress of their child. Inspection evidence shows that reports about pupils' progress do not give precise enough information. Much of the report focuses on pupils' progress with their behaviour and engagement, rather than progress towards specific academic goals.
- Pupils achieve qualifications appropriate to their ability, including entry-level certificates as a minimum in English and mathematics and other vocational qualifications. Leaders have rightly identified that the current range of educational qualifications are not appropriately matched to the most able pupils' requirements. Work is under way to review the courses and qualifications on offer to pupils to provide more academic challenge.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress in preparation for their next stage of education.

## School details

Unique reference number	114660
DfE registration number	845/6007
Inspection number	10056669

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 residential special school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mayne Enterprises Ltd.
Chair	Sarah Hawke
Headteacher	Oluseye Odunsi
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000
Telephone number	01273 473 078
Website	<a href="http://www.owlswickschool.co.uk/">www.owlswickschool.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:olu@owlswickschool.co.uk">olu@owlswickschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26–28 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Owlswick School is registered for up to 15 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 19. There are currently six boys attending the school.
- This is a residential special school located on the same site as the residential provision. It caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or associated disorders such as autistic spectrum disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Some pupils also have additional moderate learning difficulties.
- There are currently no sixth-form students at the school.



- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All have been placed at the school by a local authority.
- The school makes use of CRE8, an alternative vocational learning provision for a small number of pupils.
- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher and all members of staff. Six responses were considered from staff to the online questionnaire.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietors, who are also the governors of the school.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with two parents. There was one response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across all age groups. All lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of all pupils' work and viewed case studies across year groups. Meetings were held with two pupils.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of CRE8, an alternative learning provider.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative one of the local authorities that places pupils at the school.
- Several documents were scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation; the improvement plan; safeguarding documents; a number of school policies; and minutes from governor meetings.
- As there are no students in the sixth form there is no judgement for that area.

## Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work—
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
    - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including—
  - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.

#### **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that—
  - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is—
  - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2 (Curriculum policy).

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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