

The Stables

The Old Rectory, Old Rectory Road, Brumstead, Norwich NR12 9EU

Inspection dates

12–14 March 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	Good
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

- Leaders have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Links between the school's systems for evaluating its own effectiveness and how this informs school improvement planning are at an early stage of development.
- Many initiatives need to be fully implemented before their impact can be seen. For example, the extra work that pupils complete to fill gaps in their learning needs to be more precise.
- Schemes of work are not adapted well enough to suit the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good. Not all staff have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Senior class pupils do not complete work that takes account of what they know and can do. Pupils do not make the progress they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The leaders' and proprietors' determination to improve pupils' lives is shared by staff.
- Staff and pupil relationships are strong. The nurturing environment helps pupils to develop social skills and builds trust highly effectively.
- Younger pupils make better progress. Teachers plan interesting activities that help pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils are polite and conduct themselves well. Staff skilfully manage pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend very well. Over time, they grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- Staff feel supported and, in turn, support each other well. This is a cohesive team.
- Pupils feel safe in school because staff know them well. Effective communication helps staff to stay alert to pupils' changing conditions.
- Leaders and governors provide a highly personalised curriculum that helps pupils grow in confidence and re-engage in learning.

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 all of the independent school standards are met by embedding recent initiatives and monitoring the impact they make on pupils' progress
 - refining systems to systematically monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness, with improvement plans linked to address any issues identified
 - ensuring that schemes of work and intervention programmes are specifically adapted to meet pupils' needs.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils across the school make good progress by ensuring that all staff have high expectations of what pupils can do and plan work and activities that build upon what pupils already know.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The passionate determination of leaders, proprietors and staff to support highly vulnerable pupils is clear and permeates everything they do. Separate learning areas and increased staffing help address pupils' changing needs and circumstances well.
- Leaders and the proprietors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, self-evaluation processes are at an early stage of development. Currently, they do not inform planning to give a clear picture of the actions to be taken to secure improvements.
- Pupils arrive at the school with histories of significant trauma. Leaders continually adapt the curriculum to address some of the underlying reasons behind pupils' behaviours. A broad range of academic subjects is complemented by a range of off-site activities, including horse riding, swimming and additional therapies. Pupils develop well socially, emotionally and academically.
- Leaders are developing their systems to monitor the school's effectiveness. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are new but becoming more systematic. Similarly, initial assessments to gauge pupils' starting points are at an early stage of development. When completed, leaders will have more precise information on which to base the additional support sessions that help pupils to catch up.
- Leaders' records of pupils' social and emotional development are insufficiently precise. Recently introduced 'THRIVE' assessments are starting to provide a clearer picture.
- All pupils have a personal education plan (PEP) and an education, health and care (EHC) plan, and all are eligible for the pupil premium. Their needs are clearly identified by a senior leader. Targets from their PEP and EHC plans are consolidated into an individual educational plan. Leaders use funding effectively to provide pupils with an enriched curriculum that builds their confidence and self-esteem.
- Schemes of work are in place across the curriculum but these have not yet been adapted well enough. They do not reflect a sufficiently graduated approach to highlight the small steps in progress that better meets the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders are very aware of staff well-being and have built a cohesive team in which staff support and learn from each other. They are aware and mindful of the pressures staff face on a daily basis. Regular supervision is provided and, as one staff member said, 'It's not seen as a weakness to say I need to step out.'
- Leaders provide staff with useful training and skills so that they can carry out their roles effectively. Staff spoke about how clinical advice and specific guidance give them useful information and strategies to support pupils better. One staff member, whose view matched that of many others, said: 'The school is unique. I am so happy to be here under the leadership team who encourage everyone to be their best, not just the children.'
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriately woven through the curriculum. Pupils learn about other cultures when studying topics like the Chinese New Year and Diwali. They benefit from a range of trips and activities, including Wroxham Barns, the Remembrance Day visit, road safety activities and Sheringham pantomime, to

name but a few. All of these experiences help pupils to build their understanding of the world and become more confident and communicative.

- Pupils learn to consider other people by raising money for charities through non-uniform days and sponsored walks, and by making donations to food banks. Events, organised by school leaders, help pupils to develop a true meaning of community. Their actions improve others' lives significantly and prepare pupils to become good citizens.
- Parents and carers overwhelmingly praise the positive impact the school has on their children. They praise the monthly progress report and how the individual care the school provides helps their children feel happy, confident and more able to focus on successes.

Governance

- Proprietors have a strong moral purpose. They do the right things for the right reasons. They know the background of every child extremely well and are determined to provide an educational experience that changes pupils' lives for the better. They bring a good range of essential experiences and desirable skills to the role.
- The proprietors provide the governance for the school. They receive useful advice from an adviser to supplement their knowledge on aspects of education with which they are less familiar. They are learning quickly. Although they have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The frequent discussions between the proprietors and senior leaders have recently become more formal. They are starting to link to the actions required to drive improvements. Minutes of meetings increasingly show that proprietors are asking the right questions and providing a good balance of support and challenge.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders create a culture of safeguarding by encouraging staff to adopt an attitude of 'It could happen here'. Staff are advised not to 'go home with a niggle' and to report everything. They do so because, as one member of staff said, 'We don't know what has been reported before.'
- Detailed record-keeping provides a useful overview of each pupil's contextual history. Pupils feel safe in school. Staff know them well and use the high-quality information from clinicians to produce individual risk assessments that help keep pupils safe. Leaders monitor the use of restrictive physical interventions closely.
- The school's safeguarding policy has been updated this year and refers to the latest statutory guidance. The school does not have a website but the policy is available to parents on request.
- The single central record is well maintained. All the necessary checks are made when employing new staff to work with children.
- Staff training in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date.
- The school grounds are safe and secure and access to the buildings is carefully controlled.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Pupils at the school present issues linked to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have a disrupted history of education and have significant gaps in their learning. Staff mostly work effectively to support pupils to build their confidence, knowledge and understanding and re-engage in learning.
- In the senior group, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Planned work does not build on what pupils already know and can do.
- Older pupils are less clear about what they are learning. Work in pupils' books shows that some activities are repeated unnecessarily and extension activities are not well considered.
- In other groups, teachers plan work that helps pupils to improve in the areas where their skills are less secure. For example, pupils are supported well to improve their letter formation and recognition skills using stencils.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that help younger pupils remain enthusiastic and on-task. In a science lesson, pupils were engrossed in an experiment to slide cubes down guttering and to notice the changes when using different liquids. This helps pupils to understand difficult concepts like the effect of friction.
- Most teachers use very good questioning techniques to check whether pupils understand the work and to recall prior learning. They also push pupils to explain exactly what they mean. This helps pupils reinforce and consolidate their knowledge and builds their confidence to speak out in front of others.
- Where practice is most effective, teachers model high expectations and create a calm learning environment where well-practised routines are the norm. Pupils respond positively and keep the work in their books neat and accurate. Additional adults support pupils well by guiding them to achieve more without doing the work for them.
- Teachers' good use of phonics helps pupils to develop their reading and spelling skills effectively. Pupils can blend the sounds of unfamiliar words, helping them to read more fluently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The relationships between pupils and staff are a real strength of the school. Many pupils have developed trust issues due to previous experiences. Staff display patience, sensitivity and resilience to help pupils to better understand and regulate their actions.
- Pupils' confidence develops as the frequency of their successes grow. As one staff member said: 'Watching these children thrive, have fun and learn is amazing to see. Every morning they turn up to school with a smile on their face and ready to learn.'
- Pupils develop well through involvement in activities that they thoroughly enjoy. The 'Crime Scene Investigation' work brought pupils' learning to life. Using evaluative and analytical skills to solve clues, pupils 'arrested' the proprietor for biscuit theft. Pupils'

sense of enjoyment was palpable as one said, 'I've got him. It's this one!'

- The increased focus on promoting positive attitudes is having an impact. Pupils are visibly proud when talking about how many 'good choices' they have made, and their self-esteem grows. The 'Star of the Week' and 'Golden Award' give further useful opportunities to celebrate pupils' successes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- While peer relationships are often fragile, most staff skilfully manage pupils' behaviour. They have high expectations, put clear boundaries in place and use praise extremely effectively to encourage pupils to make the right choices. This helps pupils to behave much better over time.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how well they behave. Staff grade pupils on their engagement in learning after every lesson. The immediacy of the feedback helps pupils see the improvements they make. School records show that pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning are both improving.
- Pupils do value education and they do want to do well. They enjoy school and attend extremely well. Overall attendance figures are significantly above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- When pupils join the school, the focus is on helping them to adjust to their new setting. Pupils make better progress when they become more familiar with staff, their peers and their surroundings.
- Teachers are starting to assess pupils more precisely to gauge their literacy and numeracy skills and to identify the gaps in their learning. The individualised support to help pupils to catch up is at an early stage of development.
- Pupils in the senior class do not make good progress over time. The work these pupils complete is not sufficiently challenging and some of the activities in books are incomplete.
- Older pupils' work does not reflect consistently high standards over time. The work completed by the senior class in the wider curriculum subjects is sparse. It does not reflect the coverage outlined in schemes of work.
- Work in younger pupils' books is of a far higher standard. The work is well sequenced and gets progressively more difficult over time. Books show high standards of presentation, with pupils clearly taking pride in their work.
- In English, pupils practise using adjectives and connectives to help them use more complex sentences in their extended writing.
- Younger pupils make good progress over time because teachers plan work that is precisely matched to the targets in their individual education plans. Where practice is most effective, teachers carefully monitor pupils' progress against these targets.
- In mathematics, younger pupils develop their confidence with arithmetic skills well.

- In personal, social and health education lessons, pupils complete memorable activities. For example, pupils observed having their feet washed when studying 'The Last Supper' were enthused and engaged learners.
- Link workers provide valuable support to help pupils reflect on their actions. By measuring pupils' progress against the targets in their individual education plans, leaders are starting to gain useful insights into where additional support is required.
- Pupils have individual meetings to learn about careers, the workplace and the next stage of their educational journey. Many of these processes are new. Leaders are establishing a more detailed programme.

School details

Unique reference number	145960
DfE registration number	926/6018
Inspection number	10084577

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	6 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Proprietor	Clover Childcare Services Ltd
Headteacher	Natasha Foucher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,200
Telephone number	01692 581 467
Website	No website
Email address	head@thestableschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Stables is an independent special school that opened in September 2018. This was its first inspection.
- The school specialises in accommodating up to 22 pupils, aged six to 14, who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Pupils are children who are looked after and are placed at the school by local authorities. All pupils on roll have PEP and EHC plans.
- Staff are supported by medical practitioners, including a clinical psychologist.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There are currently nine pupils on roll.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning across lessons and year groups. Observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- A tour of the site was made to check compliance against the independent school standards.
- The inspector looked carefully at the quality of work in pupils' books to assess progress and teaching over time.
- The inspector considered the 10 responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, the nine pupil questionnaires and the 12 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of staff, a group of pupils and the proprietor. The inspector analysed and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and development plans, and documentation which included evidence from proprietors' minutes, school policies and assessment information.
- The inspector made telephone calls to gain the views of other key stakeholders.
- The inspector examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils in the school.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons.

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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