

Liberty Lodge Independent School

23–25 Waterloo Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2NY

Inspection dates

14–16 May 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school meets the independent school standards. However, in regard to the suitability of staff, some of the standards required attention during the on-site inspection.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school lacks rigour. Development plans are not sufficiently robust to drive forward the necessary improvements.
- Teaching and learning is not yet consistently good throughout the school. Activities do not always match pupils' needs. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could over time.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic enough to secure improvements.
- The homework policy is not consistently followed.
- The school's assessment system does not extend to all subjects. This makes it difficult to measure pupils' progress in all curriculum areas with the same degree of accuracy.
- Staff training is underdeveloped. This means that staff do not receive the training to further develop their skills and expertise to be highly effective in their roles.

The school has the following strengths

- The drive of the headteacher is having a positive impact on improving pupils' learning and development.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff understand pupils' needs well and are skilled at developing trusting relationships.
- The curriculum is personalised to engage the interests of individual pupils. Their personal development is particularly strong.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils make effective progress in their behaviour and rates of attendance.
- Staff encourage pupils to develop an appropriate level of independence as they prepare for adulthood.
- The independent careers advice and guidance that pupils receive ensures that pupils give sufficient thought to their next steps.

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 the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders have an in-depth, thorough understanding of the independent school standards
 - using the information acquired from an accurate evaluation of the school's performance to inform precise, succinct plans for improvement
 - ensuring that improvement plans include measurable targets and timescales, and are specific about who will monitor the progress to hold staff accountable for making improvements
 - ensuring that the detailed assessment systems are extended to all subjects, to enable greater accuracy in measuring pupils' progress
 - establishing a robust programme of continuing professional development to provide staff with the skills to be effective.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - rigorously evaluating the quality of teaching to gain a thorough overview of its strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring that leaders set consistently high expectations for the quality of work that pupils produce and their engagement in learning across the different subject areas
 - ensuring that the homework policy is used consistently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher ensured that by the end of the inspection, the school met all of the independent school standards. Leaders had not previously ensured that these were monitored well enough to ensure that they remained met.
- The proprietor has not consistently challenged practice or driven improvement. Recently, she has drawn upon external support to help the school to evaluate key aspects of the school's effectiveness more closely and to routinely monitor teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school's self-evaluation does not accurately reflect the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement plans do not have measurable targets and timescales to hold staff accountable for securing improvement. The monitoring of the success of the plan and the impact of actions taken is not sufficiently robust.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. Some pupils are not achieving as well as they could. This, in part, is due to the limitations placed on staff with regards to further developing their teaching practice and expertise.
- The headteacher has introduced detailed assessment systems for English, mathematics and science. This enables early identification of those pupils falling behind in their learning. Assessment for all subjects does not replicate the same level of detail as that used in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has worked assiduously to improve the school's curriculum to ensure that it is compliant with the independent school standards. Pupils now follow a curriculum better suited to their needs. However, pupils do not receive enough opportunities to develop both their subject-specific knowledge and skills consistently.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of fundamental British values are strong because they are embedded in all subjects of the school's curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how their behaviour affects others and are supported to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils discuss democracy, tolerance and respect, and know what these words mean.
- Pupil premium funds are spent wisely and thoughtfully on alternative provision that is personalised to pupils' needs and interests, resulting in suitable qualifications. The valuable practical skills taught tie in with pupils' future employment plans.
- The headteacher demonstrates an ambitious vision and determination to achieve a good school. The improvements secured since the previous inspection mean the school is well placed for further improvement.

Governance

- The proprietor (governance) has not been setting high enough expectations for pupils' achievement and the school's overall effectiveness.
- The proprietor has not implemented robust quality assurance systems. Consequently, she cannot tell when important aspects of the school's work are not completed effectively.

- There is evidence that the proprietor is beginning to hold the headteacher to account. The proprietor has recently been active in securing external guidance, support and challenge. However, this challenge is in its infancy and demonstrable impact of the work is yet to be fully shown in improving the quality of education for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is an up-to-date safeguarding policy which reflects the latest legal guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE). This policy is easily accessible on the school's website for parents and carers.
- All staff are vetted to make sure that they are suitable to work with pupils. Minor adjustments were made to the school's single central record during the inspection to ensure that it was compliant.
- Procedures to protect pupils from risk of harm are well established. Child protection arrangements are secure. Incidents are recorded systematically and followed up with appropriate support agencies.
- Staff training is updated with the most recent legal guidance. Staff are vigilant to the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Staff are highly attuned to current issues which may pose a safeguarding risk to pupils. These include county lines, knife crime, exposure to drug misuse and gang violence. When there are concerns, staff act promptly and report their observations to the relevant statutory agencies.
- The school site is safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and the use of assessment to ensure that pupils learn effectively are not consistently good over time. Leaders have not used widely enough the expertise of other providers to help them check the validity of their lesson observations or their scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress. While some pieces of work demonstrate pupils' true potential, there are occasions when learning is not built upon sufficiently well to allow pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- Most teaching is well planned and allows pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, work in folders shows that pupils could be challenged to do more. In some subjects, pupils do not write at length.
- Homework, when set, is in line with the school's policy and complements the work completed in class. However, pupils do not always complete the work. The school is working with parents and carers to promote the importance of completing homework.
- The curriculum is relevant to the needs of the pupils. Schemes of work are now in place and implemented. There are opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and personal development. Pupils thrive in learning about mental health. They actively participated in a lesson about 'body image', providing sensible answers with logical reasoning.
- Pupils' progress in personal development and behaviour is checked regularly and the information is used to complete reports that contribute towards pupils' personal education

plans (PEPs) and their education, health and care (EHC) plan reviews.

- Classroom teaching is often lively. Staff use pupils' areas of interest to make the learning interesting and to maintain their enthusiasm. Pupils are learning the skills to become independent learners. They are ready to learn when lessons begin and attempt work themselves, rather than rely on the support of adults.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Strong relationships are built with pupils but staff keep a professional distance that allows them to insist on high expectations and correct language. Procedures to manage behaviour are applied consistently. Pupils understand the consequences of poor behaviour.
- Pupils are encouraged to read quietly and said to the inspector that they enjoy reading. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. Pupils' written work, reading ages and evaluative skills show marked improvement.
- Staff offer praise and skilfully develop supportive, warm relationships with the pupils. This builds the confidence of pupils and enhances their enjoyment of learning. Pieces of artwork completed over an extended period of time demonstrate the behavioural and emotional development of pupils in their willingness to engage with learning. This is not evident in all subjects.
- Staff show determination and commitment to make the necessary improvements to enable pupils to achieve the very best of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning in most subjects.
- The curriculum helps pupils understand how to stay safe. Pupils say they feel safe and are well looked after by staff. The school promotes clear messages about bullying and pupils understand the impact of negative behaviour such as this. Pupils say bullying is rare and that any incidents are dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils develop their leadership skills through a variety of activities.
- Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities, including sports, which have a positive impact on their wider development.
- Risk assessments are completed for school trips and record the potential risks, with suitable measures to control or reduce these.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are closely monitored for their behaviour, attendance and safety. Pupils are transported to and from their placements and make effective progress in their learning.
- Policies for health and safety, fire risk and first aid are up to date and ensure that the school complies with the regulations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Expectations of how pupils should behave are high and are understood by the pupils.
- A significant number of pupils do not arrive at the school with a good understanding about appropriate behaviours. From their varied starting points, pupils are well supported to behave suitably.
- Pupils conduct themselves appropriately. They are polite and well-mannered and are welcoming to visitors. They feel the school is a safe, friendly place to be.
- Pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime is good. Pupils engage in positive communication with their peers and staff during these times.
- Pupils respect the learning environment, and make sure there is no litter or graffiti.
- The school retains an up-to-date attendance and admission registers. Systematic procedures are in place to monitor attendance. Attendance is monitored on a pupil-by-pupil basis. Pupils' attendance in the past has been an issue in previous schools. Pupils now access full-time education regularly and are making better progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress over time.
- Pupils arrive at the school with low attainment, often linked to previous experiences of lengthy periods of non-attendance in school and disruption to their education. Pupils are often disillusioned with learning and are negative about their futures.
- Staff prioritise getting pupils to settle into school promptly, and prepare them for learning. Pupils quickly gain in confidence. They develop social skills through their interaction with others that enable them to mix well and engage in learning.
- On entry, pupils complete external assessments to determine their level of English, mathematics and science. These are repeated regularly, but not in all subjects, in order to measure how much progress pupils make over time.
- Leaders have started to implement a system to measure pupils' personal, social and emotional health and development in the school.
- Since the previous inspection, no pupils have completed nationally recognised qualifications. The present cohort of pupils are studying for level 2 functional skills in English and mathematics and will access more courses next year. The school is widening its qualification offer for the next academic year, personalised to pupils' needs.
- The off-site provision is monitored carefully. The provision meets the specific aspirations of pupils. Pupils are undertaking relevant qualifications that prepare them for their next stage in education and the world of work.
- Pupils receive high-quality independent careers guidance. Such guidance allows pupils to identify their interests and future aspirations to move on to college or work.

School details

Unique reference number	136434
DfE registration number	935/6229
Inspection number	10093916

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Able Health Care Ltd (with a single proprietor, Aruna Kukadia)
Headteacher	James Connor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£43,300
Telephone number	01473 233350
Website	www.libertylodge.com/school
Email address	ani@libertylodge.com
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2017

Information about this school

- Liberty Lodge is an independent special school that opened in 2010 for boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 years. The school provides education for up to six pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is owned and run by a single person under the proprietorship of Able Health Care Limited. It occupies a large Victorian house in an urban location.
- The proprietor provides the governance for the school. The school is led by the same headteacher who was in place at the time of the three previous inspections, and who started at the school in September 2017.
- Pupils often present challenging behaviour and have experienced disruption in their previous education.
- The school uses Rally Sport Engineering Academy for alternative provision.

- All current pupils on roll have education, health and care plans.
- All the pupils' placements are funded by local authorities.
- At the school's standard inspection, in September 2017, six of the independent school standards were not met.
- The DfE rejected the school's action plan in December 2017. A second version was deemed acceptable in March 2018.
- Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection in July 2018, commissioned by the DfE. At the progress monitoring inspection, the school met two of the independent school standards identified as not met at the standard inspection in September 2017.
- Ofsted conducted a second progress monitoring visit in November 2018, commissioned by the DfE. At this progress monitoring inspection, the school met all of the independent school standards not met at the first progress monitoring inspection in July 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the classroom teacher, members of the management team and pupils.
- A telephone conversation was held with the proprietor, two representatives from the pupils' placement authority and the headteacher of the virtual schools.
- The inspector scrutinised all policies and procedures to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards. She reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and the curriculum.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and no free-text responses.
- There were no staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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