

Cornfield School

53 Hanworth Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5HS

Inspection date

6 November 2019

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- This aspect of the standards was identified as unmet at the time of the May 2019 inspection because of weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements. These processes had not been managed effectively and had the potential to put pupils at risk of harm. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) at the time of this previous inspection was not part of the senior leadership team, and communication between the DSL and senior leaders was not good enough. Records about pupils, including concerns about their safety, welfare and behaviour, did not enable efficient oversight of patterns of concerns. Some serious incidents had not been acted upon promptly enough, and communication between leaders and other agencies was not strong enough. Leaders did not give enough priority to advice about keeping children safe as issued by the Secretary of State, and staff were not secure in their understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and processes. The safeguarding policy was not published on the school website. The proprietor and the headteacher did not have a close enough working relationship with the local authority.
- The proprietor acted quickly to engage the services of a consultant headteacher. Working with the headteacher, the consultant headteacher has developed and implemented the action plan. While this work has led to substantial progress and has helped to strengthen safeguarding procedures, there are still gaps in leaders' understanding of the detail of safeguarding requirements.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy meets requirements and is published on the school's website. Teachers and teaching assistants have all received safeguarding training. They have a secure understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and processes to follow. However, leaders do not consistently follow the procedures set out in the policy, particularly with reference to making referrals to the local authority.
- The proprietor has appointed the headteacher as DSL, with a deputy DSL to ensure that there is always someone on site if safeguarding concerns are raised. The proprietor aims for this to show that safeguarding is 'clearly at the heart of the school'. However, leaders do not know the statutory advice about keeping children safe well enough and so have not followed it carefully. For example, leaders have not confirmed that safeguarding

checks are completed for the staff at the alternative provision where a very small number of pupils are educated.

- Record-keeping has improved. Leaders have adopted an online system to record safeguarding concerns and actions. All staff record any concerns on this system, and leaders take appropriate action. This has helped to improve communication. However, a paper-based system is still in use for a transition period, and leaders' confidence with navigating the online system is not fully secure.
- Despite improvements, this aspect of the independent school standards is not met.

Paragraph 14

- This aspect of the standards was identified as unmet at the May 2019 inspection. Pupils were not properly supervised, and an increasing number were on modified or reduced timetables and so not in receipt of a full-time education. Absence rates were high, and too many pupils left the school site without permission. Staff morale was low, and some felt that recent approaches to supporting pupils lacked consistency.
- Leaders have made sure that almost all pupils have a full-time education. Attendance has improved, and rates of absconding have fallen. Staff work well together to make sure that they follow the agreed procedures to support pupils. This has helped to improve staff morale and to improve provision for pupils.
- Supervision of pupils in the school is also improved. Staff understand pupils' needs well and recognise how to supervise them without crowding them. Staff work very well as a team, moving fluidly and thoughtfully as required around the school site. Pupils respond well to this professionally caring and appropriate supervision.
- Staff morale has improved. Staff overall feel that the recent changes have improved the school, but say that there is still work to be done. They feel supported by the improved communication, especially when they have concerns about pupils.
- This aspect of the standards is met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a)

- This aspect of the standards was not met because the school's risk assessment policy was too generic and did not take into account the specific needs and difficulties of the pupils. Risk assessments were weak and not helpful to staff. Strategies to support did not provide the required detail. Leaders did not act promptly enough following serious incidents. The code of conduct for staff was ambiguous and did not provide clear identification of boundaries.
- Leaders have produced new, clearer policies that provide useful guidance for staff. The code of conduct for staff details expectations, although it is still not clear about when staff should report specific events. Leaders feel that staff know what to do, but this omission indicates a lack of rigour and clarity.
- Individual risk assessments for pupils are detailed and contain useful information to help staff support pupils' specific needs. These are reviewed routinely and help to prevent incidents because staff understand potential trigger points. They also help to de-escalate incidents more quickly because staff follow the agreed actions.
- There are some risk assessments for off-site activities, but leaders have made assumptions about pupils' safety and have not ensured that risk assessments are

completed routinely. Leaders are too casual about potential risks and have not ensured that their own policies are followed.

- This aspect of the standards is not met.

Paragraph 16(b)

- The risk assessments that are created, whether for individual pupils or for activities off-site, are well written. They support staff to take appropriate action to reduce risks. Staff use and review them well.
- This aspect of the standards is met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34, 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- This part of the standards was not met in May 2019 because there was not enough oversight of the school from the headteacher and senior leadership team. Leaders had not prioritised safeguarding arrangements and had not met these responsibilities. Not enough attention had been given to staff capacity, training and suitability for the roles they performed. The proprietor had not checked the school's work carefully enough or ensured independent scrutiny of the school.
- The proprietor engaged the services of a consultant headteacher to improve the quality of leadership and management in the school. There have been improvements, and more of the independent school standards are now met, but these improvements have not been fast enough and are not embedded. There is no evidence that they will be sustained when the consultant headteacher's contract ends.
- Required policies are now in place. However, these improvements are recent, and leaders do not show a strong enough knowledge of their responsibilities. They do not consistently follow their own policies or statutory safeguarding processes.
- Staff have had better training and they demonstrate a secure understanding of their responsibilities and roles. They follow the risk assessments that are created well.
- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- This part of the standards remains unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	133477
DfE registration number	936/6581
Inspection number	10124249

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	Independent
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	3
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Vivienne Spence
Headteacher	Mrs Jayne Telfer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,931
Telephone number	01737 779578
Website	www.cornerways.org
Email address	cornfieldschool@cornerways.org
Date of previous standard inspection	27 February – 1 March 2018

Information about this school

- Cornfield is an independent special school, catering for up to 25 girls aged 11 to 18. Pupils admitted to the school have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some have autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school is run by Cornerways Ltd, which also manages residential care and fostering services for children looked after. A number of different local authorities place pupils at the school.
- At its standard inspection in 2018, the school was judged to meet all independent school

standards and to be good. An emergency inspection was carried out in May 2019, at the request of the Department for Education (DfE), because of concerns about safeguarding and the quality of leadership and management at the school. The school did not meet the standards checked at this inspection.

- Following the emergency inspection in May 2019, the proprietor engaged the services of a consultant headteacher, who supports the headteacher three days a week. There have been changes to the senior leadership team. The headteacher is now the DSL, and an acting deputy headteacher has recently been appointed. A few teachers and teaching assistants have left the school.
- A very small number of pupils attend The Hope Service, a multi-agency service providing short-term alternative placements. These placements are arranged by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE). The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspection preceding this one was an emergency inspection in May 2019. At this inspection, the school was judged not to comply with the independent school standards.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was carried out without notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan by 8 July 2019. This was evaluated and accepted by the DfE in August 2019.
- I met with the proprietor, consultant headteacher, headteacher and other senior leaders, including the deputy DSL. I held a meeting with teachers and teaching assistants and spoke to pupils informally, during and outside lessons. I observed pupils when learning and during breaktime.
- I reviewed the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including the school's policies, staff training, the single central record and a sample of risk assessments. I also scrutinised the school's information about pupils' behaviour, including exclusions.
- I spoke with the local authority's designated officer for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment 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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- Paragraph 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- Paragraph 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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