

# Inspection of Learning Opportunities

Ringwould Road, Ringwould, Deal, Kent CT14 8DW

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Inspection dates:

11–13 February 2020

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent  
school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils join the school because they have had difficult experiences in the past, particularly with their behaviour. They receive a high level of support from staff to help them learn how to manage their own feelings and behave well. Pupils told us that if it were not for Learning Opportunities, they would not be in education.

Teachers set work that pupils find interesting. Pupils are keen to learn and know that if they are struggling to cope, staff will help them. They are willing to make mistakes and rise to the challenges staff set them.

Pupils say that bullying rarely happens at school. Pupils have an excellent relationship with staff; they know there is always someone to speak to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils feel safe in school.

From when they start at the school, pupils are happier, more confident and better prepared for their next steps. Pupils are well informed about college courses, apprenticeships and jobs. This information helps them to make informed decisions about what to do when they leave school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Changes to the structure of the leadership team are making a positive difference to this school. Effective systems and procedures have been put in place to improve the quality of education pupils receive. All staff are very positive about the new ways of working introduced by the current senior team.

The proprietor provides effective governance for the school. Since the last inspection, the level of challenge the proprietor provides to leaders for the work of the school has increased. This has ensured that the independent school standards are met and due regard is given to the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils' personal development is a key focus across the school. Outdoor learning is used effectively to develop pupils' resilience, understanding of their emotions and social skills. Experienced and well-trained staff are excellent role models for pupils. They provide pupils with the support they need to help them deal with any learning, social or emotional difficulties they may have.

Staff set high expectations and rigorously apply the school's behaviour policy. Incidents of poor or unkind behaviour are resolved quickly because staff help pupils to manage their behaviour. School routines, rewards and sanctions are used fairly and consistently. The proportion of pupils who are temporarily excluded from school is low.

Pupils' attendance is high and continues to improve. The school makes suitable arrangements for pupils who struggle to be in school full time. Leaders review these arrangements regularly, increasing the time pupils are in school. Additionally, leaders have checked the other education settings that pupils attend. These settings are safe and meet pupils' specific needs well.

There is a wide range of enrichment activities to support pupils' development, including residential trips and visits to the theatre, museums and places of worship. That said, pupils' knowledge about the different groups of people who make up British society is not as strong as it should be. Leaders do not create enough opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures, ethnicities and religions other than their own.

Staff prepare pupils exceptionally well for when they leave the school. The school's comprehensive careers programme prepares pupils very well for their next steps. Pupils across the school visit different workplaces, meet employers and attend college 'taster days'. All pupils who left last year are still in college, work-based learning or employment with training.

Parents and carers are very happy with the school. One parent who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey said, 'I would strongly recommend this school to other parents.'

Many pupils arrive at the school with poor literacy levels. Improving pupils' literacy, particularly their reading skills, is a top priority for the school. Leaders have provided training for staff to support them to do this. However, there is not yet an embedded, consistent approach to promoting a love of reading through the school. Too many pupils are still reluctant to read for pleasure.

Leaders have made a start on improving the curriculum and raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. This work is promising, although it is not yet fully embedded. Some subject areas are well planned and sequenced. In mathematics, pupils learn the right things in the right order. This helps them to remember what they have learned. However, this is not the case in some other subjects, particularly English.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding training is regular and thorough. School staff know their pupils and families well and take their welfare seriously. Staff understand the risks that pupils face in the local area and are vigilant for any indicators that might suggest a child is at risk of harm.

When required, the school acts promptly in making safeguarding referrals and is persistent in chasing these up and escalating them if necessary. Leaders work with determination with a range of agencies and organisations. This ensures that families get the help they need. Parents are very positive about this support.

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

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that all staff work together to ensure that all pupils receive the highest quality of education. Since the last inspection, the school has improved, particularly teachers' use of assessment and the teaching of mathematics. However, there is still more to be done so that all subjects are taught equally well. Leaders need to provide further training and support to all teachers. They also need to monitor the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that it is implemented well.
- Leaders recognise that reading is not yet fully promoted across the school. They need to ensure that all staff understand their role in helping pupils to develop as readers. This will allow pupils to foster a love of reading.
- Over time, pupils learn to treat adults and fellow pupils with tolerance and respect. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about the different groups of people they will meet when they move on from the school. Pupils do not know enough about the major religions, ethnicities and other key groups that make up British society.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119013
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6063
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10123973
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	31
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	2
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lesley Buss
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Graydon
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,052 to £47,052
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 381 906
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.learningopps.org">www.learningopps.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:simong@learningopps.org">simong@learningopps.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5–7 June 2018

## Information about this school

- Learning Opportunities (Secondary) is an independent school that caters for pupils from the age of 10 to 19 years.
- The school provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Some have additional difficulties relating to autism spectrum disorder and anxiety. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils have had negative past experiences of education. Many have been excluded or have had significant disruption to their education.
- The school's last standard inspection was in June 2018, when it received an overall effectiveness judgement of requires improvement.

- Since the time of the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed.
- The school uses the following alternative providers to complement the curriculum: East Kent College, Kent Mentoring Service, Nelson Park and Motocross Challenge Project.

## **Information about this inspection**

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- In considering the quality of education, we carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, art and personal, social, health and economic education. We discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited about the curriculum.
- We checked safeguarding, including by speaking with leaders, staff, pupils and carers about safety. We checked a range of school policies and procedures and leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school.
- An inspector met with the proprietor to discuss the governance arrangements for the school.
- We reviewed three responses from pupils to the Ofsted survey. We also met with pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- We took account of nine responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the additional free-text responses.
- We considered the views of 14 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.

## **Inspection team**

Emma Sanderson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Ofsted Inspector

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