

# Inspection of Fusion College

Manleys Farm, West Buckland, Wellington, Somerset TA21 9LQ

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Inspection dates: 10–12 March 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

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

Caring relationships help pupils feel secure. Pupils say that they feel safe here. All agree that there is a trusted adult they can approach if worries need sharing. Pupils report that there has been bullying in the past which was not dealt with effectively. However, this is not the case now and pupils get along well.

Staff care about pupils and want them to succeed. However, a lack of expertise means that staff's expectations of pupils' learning are too low. The curriculum is poorly planned. As a result, pupils are not challenged, and they fail to achieve as well as they should.

Pupils share positive relationships with one another. However, despite mixing together well, there is not enough for pupils to do. The extensive outdoor area is not used. Instead, pupils socialise indoors or take fresh air in the courtyard car park. Pupils have too few opportunities to get out and stretch their legs.

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

Directors have not fulfilled their duty as members of the proprietorial body. They have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards consistently. Directors have a lack of knowledge of educational requirements. Those responsible have not made sure that the school complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 as there is no accessibility plan in place.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils gain the knowledge and experiences to learn well. The curriculum is poorly planned and not individualised to meet pupils' special educational needs. In some subjects there is no agreed approach. For instance, in English and mathematics, subject leaders do not yet have agreed curriculum plans as these are still being developed. Instead, staff follow examination specifications and select what they want to teach, ad hoc, from text books. Pupils have had changeable teaching arrangements this year, including up to three different teachers in some subjects. Staff do not understand pupils' learning needs well, which limits how well pupils do.

Staff mean well but lack expertise. The school's new assessment systems are not yet supporting teachers to plan activities that build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers do not know pupils' individual education plans well enough. In addition, teaching arrangements have recently changed so that pupils in different key stages are now taught together. This has caused confusion as staff do not know what they should be teaching, or why. As a result, the curriculum is a poorly connected series of themes and lessons. However, the headteacher is determined to make improvements and is currently beginning to review the curriculum.

Pupils often behave well. They listen to their teachers and are respectful to one another's contributions. However, staff are not yet skilled in how to manage pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils take too long to settle following

any disruptions to their learning. Staff try to cajole pupils back to work but there is no clear approach for how to best manage these situations. There is not an agreed, coordinated response when such situations arise. Nevertheless, pupils' disengagement rarely affects others who are trying to learn.

Some aspects of the curriculum are not taught often enough. For instance, pupils have received very little teaching about relationships and sex education. Leaders are trying to develop the school's offer so that pupils' personal development needs are better met. The headteacher has introduced weekly sessions that have included the themes of magic, music and exercise. However, there is not a coherent, well-thought-out plan for developing pupils' personal interests.

For some time, those responsible have not kept pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans) under annual review. The proprietorial body is unable to account for expenditure relating to pupils' EHC plans. The school's new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and trying to strengthen the school's approach. However, as pupils' EHC plans are outdated, there is no clear understanding of what is needed to support pupils well enough. Furthermore, the school's careers programme is poor and not well aligned to pupils' own hopes and ambitions.

The school's attendance policy outlines appropriate procedures for dealing with pupils' absence. For instance, a home tutor is deployed to encourage pupils to return to school. However, due to staffing restrictions, leaders have not yet implemented this procedure. As a result, some pupils' absence can become unnecessarily protracted.

The proprietor has not ensured that standards relating to welfare, health and safety are met fully. The chair of the proprietorial body recognises that safeguarding in this school is ineffective. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. However, leaders' practices and procedures to keep pupils safe do not follow the government's latest guidance. Leaders do not complete all necessary checks on supply staff before they start work at the school. Safer recruitment requirements are not implemented robustly. Leaders do not check that staff from alternative providers are safe to be with children. Some procedures, including those relating to allegations about staff, are not followed closely. When allegations are investigated, staff do not receive any written confirmation detailing the outcomes of leaders' decisions. The school's designated safeguarding leader does not liaise closely enough with the headteacher about staffing matters. Although advice is sought appropriately from the designated officer when appropriate, this is not always acted upon promptly.

The school's website does not contain all the required information. There is no information about the school's approach to teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or those for whom English is an additional language. The proprietorial body has not ensured that the standard relating to the provision of information is met.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The safeguarding policy is not adhered to. Some staff have not read statutory guidance. This means that staff's understanding of signs to look out for, including indicators of potential abuse or welfare concerns, is poor.

The system for reporting a concern is confusing. There is a great deal of uncertainty and staff do not always know which form to fill in. Those responsible add further insecurity as they are unsure whether reported cases are allegations about staff, complaints, or concerns about pupils. This means that the appropriate course of action is not always triggered.

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

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietorial body has not ensured that the independent school standards are met. Directors do not have strong systems to hold leaders to account. Directors should ensure that they carry out their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met in full.
- The arrangements to keep pupils safe are ineffective. Directors and staff do not understand or implement robust safer recruitment procedures. Those responsible do not make all the necessary recruitment checks in a timely manner. They do not maintain accurate safeguarding records. To keep pupils as safe as possible, directors and leaders need to ensure that:
  - supply staff have the necessary vetting checks and that these are detailed in the school's single central record
  - allegations against staff are managed appropriately, including when informing individuals of the outcome of any investigation
  - pupils receive a well-planned relationships and sex education programme so that they can form healthy relationships
  - pupils missing in care/education plans are enacted and appropriate personnel are informed if pupils leave the site
  - pupils are supported to attend regularly.
- The school's curriculum is poorly planned. It does not identify what pupils will learn, or by when. Pupils do not build up their knowledge and skills in a logical order. Leaders should make it clear what pupils are expected to learn and by when, so that pupils know more in every subject over time.
- Teachers do not build on what pupils know and can do. Staff do not use assessment information well to plan work that meets pupils' special educational needs closely. Leaders need to develop staff's use of assessment information so that pupils' learning builds effectively over time.

- Staff are not well trained to best manage pupils with SEND. Too few adaptations are put in place, including any agreed approach to managing pupils' episodes of disengagement. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive appropriate training to develop their expertise for supporting pupils with SEND.
- The school's approach to careers education and work experience is too narrow. Pupils do not receive guidance that is aligned to their future ambitions. Not all pupils can take part in work experience. Leaders need to ensure that the school's approach to careers education is beneficial to all.
- There are too few activities for pupils at social times. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to exercise and let off steam during the school day. Leaders should ensure that there is a wide range of activities available for pupils, including at breaktimes.

## **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>	135278
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6215
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10107535
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	4
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Fusion College Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Gary Dawkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vanessa Bingham
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£16,200
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823 653620
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.fusioncollege.co.uk">www.fusioncollege.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:vbingham@fusioncollege.co.uk">vbingham@fusioncollege.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16–18 January 2018

## Information about this school

- The school was established in 2005 and until July 2019 was known as Willows. In July 2019, the directors of the proprietorial body at the time, Willows Somerset Limited, separated. One group remained at the school and registered a new company. This is now the current proprietorial body called Fusion College Limited. There are three directors who have responsibility for governance. At the same time, the school became known as Fusion College.
- The school offers provision for up to 16 girls who have severe social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Most pupils have an EHC plan and are placed by their respective local authorities.
- In July 2019, the previous headteacher, some staff and pupils left and set up a different school. An English teacher was appointed as the headteacher of Fusion College.
- In September 2019 the headteacher left. The school was without a headteacher for several months. In November 2019 the current headteacher was appointed and joined the school. At the time of the inspection, the registration authority had not been informed of this change to leadership of the school.
- In January 2020, a new member of staff who acts as the school's SENCo joined the school.
- The school was using an alternative provision at the time of this inspection to provide horse riding.
- The headteacher joined in November 2019.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 16–18 January 2018, when it was judged to be inadequate and a number of independent school standards were not met. Following this, progress monitoring inspections took place in September 2018, July 2019 and January 2020, when independent school standards remained unmet.

## 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other staff who hold significant responsibilities and some teaching staff who were present during the inspection.
- A meeting and telephone conversation were held with the chair of the proprietorial body.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and discussed the school's approach to curriculum delivery with teaching staff.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. Inspectors met with the school's deputy designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised the school's recruitment checks and reviewed documentation. The inspection team also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- We observed pupils during the school day, including at breaktime.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised that included: fire safety records, health and safety documentation and pupils' attendance records.
- A meeting was held with a pupil at their request to discuss her views about the school. Inspectors also talked to pupils informally about the school.
- We took account of the one response to the Ofsted Parent View survey. There were no free-text responses. The views of five members of staff and three pupils who responded to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys were considered.

### **Inspection team**

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector



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

### **The school failed to 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(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are—
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that—
    - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
    - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 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;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 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.

### **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.

### **Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 19(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
  - 19(2)(a) a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received—
    - 19(2)(a)(i) written notification from the employment business in relation to that person—
      - 19(2)(a)(i)(aa) that the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person;
      - 19(2)(a)(i)(bb) that, where relevant to that person, an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check;
      - 19(2)(a)(i)(cc) if the employment business has obtained such a certificate before the person is due to begin work at the school, whether it disclosed any matter or information; and
      - 19(2)(a)(i)(dd) that, where that person is one for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, it or another employment business has obtained such further checks as appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
    - 19(2)(a)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business before the person is due to begin work at the school;
  - 19(2)(b) a person offered for supply by an employment business only begins work at the school if the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the work for which the person is supplied;
  - 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person's identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply);

- 19(2)(d) the proprietor, in the contract or other arrangements which the proprietor makes with any employment business, requires the employment business to provide—
  - 19(2)(d)(i) the notification referred to in paragraph (a)(i); and
  - 19(2)(d)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate which the employment business obtains.
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff—
- 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that—
  - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and
  - 21(5)(a)(ii) an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check,
  - 21(5)(b) whether a check has been made in accordance with paragraph 19(2)(e) together with the date the check was completed; and
  - 21(5)(c) where written notification has been received from the employment business in accordance with a contract or other arrangements referred to in paragraph 19(2)(d) that it has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate, whether the employment business supplied a copy of the certificate to the school.

## **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)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State;
  - 32(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such

information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority.

- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is—
  - 32(2)(b) either—
  - 32(2)(b)(ii) where the proprietor is a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office;
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is—
  - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language;
  - 32(3)(e) particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.

## **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.

## **Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010**

- The proprietor has not ensured that the school has an accessibility plan in place.

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