

Fusion College

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

Inspection dates

23–24 March 2021

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b) and 2(1)(b)(i)

- At the previous inspection, in March 2020, the curriculum was poorly planned and there was no agreed approach in place. Some progress has been made, particularly in English, mathematics and health and social care. However, plans in these subjects are incomplete. They do not set out the range and sequence of knowledge and skills to be gained by pupils in an age-appropriate way. In other subjects, such as physical education and citizenship, there are still no plans.

Paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)

- In March 2020, the careers programme was poor and not aligned to pupils' own hopes and ambitions. Although the provision of careers education has been improved in key stage 4, it is still very limited in key stage 3. The careers programme that is in place does not give sufficient information for pupils to make informed choices about a broad range of career options.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e) and 3(g)

- In the absence of complete curriculum plans, lesson planning lacks cohesion. Teachers do not demonstrate secure subject knowledge across the full range of subjects taught. Consequently, where lesson plans are in place, they focus on the tasks to be completed and do not give sufficient attention to the knowledge that pupils are to learn.
- Assessment arrangements lack rigour, so errors in pupils' work go unchecked. Too often, the level of challenge is below pupils' abilities.
- The standards in these paragraphs continue to be unmet.

Paragraph 2(2) and 2(2)(a)

- The curriculum policy does not set out how pupils will have full access to the areas required by the standard. The school timetable confirms that some of the areas set out in the standard are not taught to all pupils.

- This standard, which was met at the previous inspection, is now not met.
- Overall, the standards in this part continue to be unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The arrangements for safeguarding were found to be ineffective at the previous inspection. Although there have been some improvements, the arrangements still do not meet requirements. Leaders responsible for safeguarding do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding to perform their duties effectively.
- The school's safeguarding policy was revised in June 2020. However, the revision does not give sufficient regard to the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The school does not currently have a website. The policy is available on request from the school.
- Internal procedures, such as handling allegations against staff, are not completed satisfactorily. Investigations are not complete, and cases are closed too quickly. Similar concerns were raised at the previous inspection.
- At the previous inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that the necessary checks had been completed for staff employed through supply agencies. Almost all of the checks are now in place, but not all. Therefore, leaders are unable to satisfy themselves fully that staff are suitable to work with children.
- The standard in this paragraph continues to be unmet.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(iv) and 18(3)

- Although most staff are employed through supply agencies, some have been appointed directly by the proprietor, since March 2020. For these staff members, the proprietor has arranged for almost all of the necessary pre-employment checks to be carried out. However, for staff where specific qualifications are required there is no evidence that these have been checked.
- The standard in this paragraph is now not met.

Paragraph 19(2)–19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i)

- The proprietor has a better understanding of the checks that need to be carried out when using agency staff. As a result, most of the necessary checks have been carried out and the appropriate assurances received from the employment agencies. However, the agencies have not provided confirmation that they have checked whether colleagues have lived or worked abroad. Leaders have not carried out their own checks. Consequently, there may be times when leaders do not have all of the required information about staff who are working with pupils.
- The standard in this paragraph remains unmet.

Paragraph 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d)(ii)

- As a result of the improved checks on agency staff, the regulations in these paragraphs are now met.

Paragraph 21(1)–21(3), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(5)–21(5)(a)(i)

- The proprietor has implemented a new electronic system to record the pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. This has improved the organisation and monitoring of these checks. However, because one of the checks could not be evidenced it is incomplete. Although staff have a general oversight of the requirements, they do not fully demonstrate the level of knowledge needed to ensure that the school is fully compliant.
- The standard in this paragraph remains unmet.

Paragraph 21(2), 21(3)(a)(i)–(iii), 21(3)(a)(v)–(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c)

- Due to the improvements in the organisation of the single central register, the regulations in these paragraphs are met.
- Overall, the standards in this part continue to be unmet.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(2), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(3), 32(3)(b) and 32(3)(e).

- The school does not currently have an operating website. However, the information which was not available at the inspection in March 2020 is now available upon request. Leaders have drafted a policy for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities that sets out the school's approach and arrangements for supporting pupils. Leaders ensure that information for annual reviews for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is made available to the placing local authority.
- The proprietor has ensured that an income and expenditure statement is available for each pupil to satisfy the financial requirements of local authorities.
- The standards in this part are now met in full.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)–(c)

- Following the previous inspection, leaders drafted an action plan. However, it lacks specificity in the actions, success criteria and the milestones against which the proprietor can monitor progress. Significant matters such as the long-term stability of the school's leadership and teaching staff remain unaddressed. Currently, all teaching staff are working at the school on a temporary basis, including the part-time interim headteacher. The proprietor has made attempts to appoint staff on a permanent basis, but they have not been successful.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the systems that have been put in place are suitably rigorous or that they are implemented consistently. Equally, the proprietor has not ensured that the training that staff have had has given them the knowledge and expertise they need to ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- In June 2020, the proprietor established a steering group to strengthen the oversight of the school's work. This group includes two external advisers and others who work in businesses operated by the proprietor. However, the group's work has not resulted in the improvements required to ensure that the independent school standards are met. They

have an overly generous view of the school's strengths and have not identified or tackled many of the shortcomings that persist.

- The standard in this part remains unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- At the time of the previous inspection, there was no accessibility plan in place. Leaders have now drafted a plan, but it does not fully meet the requirements set out in Paragraph 3 of schedule 10. The actions stated are vague and several important aspects, such as access to teaching accommodation and the provision of disabled toilet facilities, are not included.

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	135278
DfE registration number	933/6215
Inspection number	10180696

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 status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Fusion College Limited
Chair	Gary Dawkins
Headteacher	Debra Henderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,000
Telephone number	01823 653620
Website	No website
Email address	schooladmin@fusioncollege.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	10–12 March 2020

Information about this school

- Fusion College is operated by Fusion College Limited.
- The school offers education for girls who have severe social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan. They are placed at the school by their respective local authority.
- The previous standard inspection of the school was carried out on 10 to 12 March 2020, when the school was judged to be inadequate.

- The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection left in March 2020. She was replaced by a part-time interim headteacher later in March 2020. All teaching staff are currently employed through supply agencies.
- No pupils are currently attending alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. 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.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the school was graded inadequate, following the standard inspection in March 2020. At that time, the school was judged not to be meeting the independent school standards.
- This inspection identified further unmet standards in Parts 1 and 4.
- The registration authority did not require the school to prepare an action plan following the inspection in March 2020.
- In accordance with the arrangements in place for COVID-19 (coronavirus), this inspection was conducted with 30 minutes' notice.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, senior leaders and members of staff. He spoke with the chair of the steering group and the local authority's designated officer by telephone. He also met with pupils to discuss their learning and experience of school.
- The inspector visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation including curriculum plans, safeguarding records, the school's action plan, policies, and minutes of steering group meetings.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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 un-met at this inspection

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.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 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)(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)(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).
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 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.

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.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person's qualifications.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- 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)(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;
 - 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)(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)(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)(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)(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.
- 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.

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