

# Inspection of Owlswick School

Newhaven Road, Kingston, Lewes BN7 3NF

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Inspection dates: 29 June–1 July 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

Pupils are happy in school. They feel safe and secure. Pupils who spoke with the inspector during the inspection were impeccably polite. They commented perceptively about their experiences of school. Relationships between adults and pupils are a notable strength of the school. Adults work hard to earn and maintain pupils' respect and pupils respond in kind.

Staff are committed to helping pupils to discover and develop new interests. Extra activities and special events help to build pupils' confidence and contribute well to their enjoyment of school. For example, at the time of the inspection several pupils were keenly looking forward to joining a local cricket team.

Pupils enjoy using the school's extensive and attractive grounds during breaktimes and usually do so sensibly. They feel that most pupils behave well. Some pupils have understandably found the process of adjusting to recent changes in the school quite challenging. However, they are adapting well to raised expectations of their learning and behaviour. Occasionally, pupils need a gentle reminder about their behaviour. Adults intervene calmly when this is the case.

Pupils stated in a recent survey that bullying is rarely a problem and records support this view. Leaders follow up any concerns about bullying promptly and appropriately, including liaising with agencies, such as children's services, where appropriate.

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

The previous proprietor had not addressed the issues identified for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. Persistent weaknesses in the curriculum and in assessment procedures perpetuated low expectations, variations in the quality of teaching, and underachievement. The new proprietor has taken urgent action to secure improvements, including introducing a range of policies, procedures and curriculum documents. However, improvements are not established securely.

The new curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a secure framework for teaching. However, the revised curriculum is not implemented well enough in all subjects and year groups and variations in the quality of teaching and learning remain.

Some subjects are taught more effectively than others. For example, the school's well-established mathematics curriculum, combined with teachers' strong subject knowledge, ensures that pupils' mathematical knowledge builds progressively over time. During the inspection, for example, pupils used what they had learned previously to compare and simplify fractions successfully.

Leaders have recently updated the reading curriculum and there are signs of improvement in pupils' learning. For example, pupils are reading a wider range of texts than previously and the quality of work set and completed in pupils' English

books has improved noticeably in recent weeks. However, weaknesses in the teaching of early reading hamper pupils' progress. Phonics skills are not taught or reinforced consistently enough to ensure that pupils learn to read quickly.

The proprietor prioritised the teaching of English, mathematics and science in the first instance, ensuring that these subjects were given appropriate attention in the school timetable. Leaders quickly identified that pupils were capable of much more than had previously been achieved in these subjects. Several pupils have been entered for GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics and science this year, a significant increase on last year.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to lessons and to the school's atmosphere. They want to do well and usually work hard. Sometimes pupils become frustrated during lessons and need extra help to maintain concentration. Adults respond quietly and constructively until pupils settle back to work when this is the case.

The school's curriculum incorporates a wide range of activities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about topics such as the Second World War and the slave trade, and have opportunities to debate issues such as tolerance, respect and understanding. The school has appropriate plans in place to comply with the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Improved assessment procedures are providing leaders and staff with a robust system for monitoring pupils' learning. This is helping staff to develop a clearer picture of what pupils have already learned and what they need to learn next.

The proprietor has delivered a range of staff training modules this term. Staff have welcomed recent curriculum developments and are keen to improve their practice. However, staff knowledge is not consistently strong enough across the different subjects to ensure that the new curriculum is delivered effectively.

The proprietor and governors understand and carry out their roles effectively in setting strategy and meeting statutory obligations. The proprietor's swift action has ensured that the independent school standards are now met. The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school website.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff give pupils' safety a high priority. They are attentive to pupils' needs and work very well together to ensure that pupils are safe, settled, and comfortable. Staff respond sensitively when pupils are upset or become frustrated.

Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding so that they know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. The proprietor is currently enhancing staff

safeguarding knowledge with a suite of training modules which will be completed over the coming weeks and months. Lunch and breaktimes are appropriately supervised.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The quality of education is not good enough. Leaders are in the process of establishing the new curriculum. However, recent improvements need to be consistently implemented across all subjects so that pupils in all year groups learn well.
- Not all teachers have the required knowledge to teach their subjects. They require further training to build their expertise. A programme of training has started which is supporting staff to implement the curriculum. Leaders should continue with this programme so that staff have the subject knowledge and skills needed to deliver the new curriculum effectively.
- The reading curriculum does not support the weakest readers sufficiently. Leaders should make sure that there is a consistent and effective approach in place to help pupils to learn to read quickly.

## **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>	114660
<b>DfE registration number</b>	845/6007
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10164481
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent residential special 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>	10
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Compass Community Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Kate East
<b>Headteacher</b>	Georgina Saralis
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£50,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 473 078
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.owlswickschool.co.uk">www.owlswickschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@owlswickschool.co.uk">office@owlswickschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–14 February 2019

## Information about this school

- Owlswick School is registered for up to 15 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 19. There are currently 10 boys attending the school.
- This is a special school located on the same site as a residential provision. The school caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or associated disorders such as autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Some pupils also have additional moderate learning difficulties.
- There are no sixth-form students at the school.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All have been placed at the school by a local authority.
- The school makes use of CRE8, an alternative vocational learning provision in Hastings, for a small number of pupils.
- The school was acquired by Compass Community Ltd in January 2021.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector 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 set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspector met with the regional executive headteacher and other senior leaders. She also met with the director of education and with the chief executive officer of Compass Community Ltd.
- The inspector checked the single central register of recruitment checks and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also met with staff and spoke informally with pupils and with a local authority social care worker.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website and a range of documentation.
- The inspector considered the teaching of reading, mathematics and geography in detail as part of the inspection. She met with subject leaders, visited a series of lessons and reviewed curriculum plans. The inspector also looked at pupils' work and listened to a pupil reading to a member of staff.

## **Inspection team**

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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