

Inspection of Teaseldown School

Sugar Loaves, 175 Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3PX

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Teaseldown enjoy coming to school. They are polite and courteous and say that they are happy and feel safe. Positive relationships between school and home help pupils to develop socially and emotionally. They re-engage positively with learning after long periods out of education.

From the very start, pupils receive precise support to ensure that they can successfully access the curriculum. Pupils are offered a wide range of subjects, and many take examinations at the end of key stage 4. Pupils receive good support to learn how to participate successfully in and outside school and to be independent. However, some aspects to help support pupils' personal development, including preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, have not been planned into the curriculum well enough. Some pupils only experience topics if they have chosen to study certain subjects, such as history. This means that some pupils are not being taught important information that they need to know.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. They take part in a weekly activities such as golf, ice-skating and trampolining. Pupils visit the local parks routinely for physical activity and games. They are given opportunities to take part in work experience placements. Parents and carers are extremely positive about what the school provides. All pupils get the help they need to make choices about their next steps in education, training or employment. Attendance is good and almost all pupils continue their education at local colleges when they leave the school.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn a range of subjects. However, the curriculum does not meet the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders have not given enough thought to the important knowledge pupils need to learn. Most notably, the key stage 3 curriculum does not consider what pupils have learned in the previous key stage. Overarching curriculum plans do not consider what pupils already know and can do. This is across a range of subjects.

In English, pupils in key stage 3 learn how to write for different audiences and have opportunities to present to their peers. Pupils are encouraged to read books that interest them. Most lessons have a focus on the key vocabulary that pupils need to know for that lesson. However, curriculum plans to develop pupils' language are not precise enough. They do not provide opportunities for pupils to practise and use their reading and writing knowledge or develop their vocabulary over time. This slows pupils' learning and progress in English and across the wider curriculum.

All pupils have opportunities to complete qualifications in English and mathematics. Some pupils also complete GCSEs and gain accreditation for other subjects that they have learned at the school. This supports most pupils to acquire a place on a course

at college, or in training or employment when they leave. The sixth-form provision is primarily for students who arrive at Teaseldown after having been out of education during Years 10 and 11. No students currently attend the sixth form.

The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is incomplete. Staff work well to support pupils when they have problems or concerns, including working with individual pupils to understand core concepts such as equality, diversity, views and beliefs, gender stereotyping, and political injustice. However, delivery of the core concepts essential to pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) entitlement, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are dependent on the subjects that pupils choose to study and what staff choose to cover from this curriculum. There is not a plan in place that ensures that all pupils get access to the full scope of the essential information that they need so that they have a strong understanding of life in modern Britain.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Leaders' systems to ensure that pupils attend school are rigorous and supportive. Leaders work closely with pupils and their families. They provide strategies to help support pupils' good attendance. Almost all pupils attend all the time.

The proprietor body has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met in relation to Parts 1 and 2. It has not been strategic in its approach to curriculum planning. It has not ensured that all pupils receive the curriculum that they are entitled to, and that this curriculum is precisely planned.

Despite these weaknesses, staff and the proprietor body want the best for pupils. They have identified where there is variability in the quality of teaching in some subjects across the school that results in hindering pupils' access and progress in the curriculum. Leaders have a plan in place to support staff's professional development and teachers' subject knowledge through mentoring and training. However, the implementation of this plan is still in its early stages.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff ensure that pupils are kept safe. They ensure that pupils get the help they need, involving external agencies when necessary in a timely manner. Staff ensure that all safeguarding concerns are recorded and followed up swiftly. Behavioural incidents are recorded and categorised appropriately. Staff know what constitutes serious safeguarding concerns.

Leaders use appropriate systems when pupils begin attending the school to ensure that their needs are identified, and support is put in place to keep pupils safe. Pupils are taught and have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Staff work very well with individual pupils when they need additional help and support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered by some staff in the school. Staff training and team teaching are helping less experienced staff to develop their skills and knowledge. This means that the delivery of some of the curriculum is weaker and is not allowing pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop the expertise of all teaching staff so that teaching enables pupils to make effective progress across all curriculum subjects.
- Curriculum plans do not clearly identify the important knowledge that pupils need to understand to build successfully on previous learning. In addition, they do not specify the important language pupils need to know. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans clearly identify the important subject knowledge that pupils should learn, and that teachers implement plans effectively.
- Leaders do not deliberately plan to ensure that pupils' personal development is considered fully. There is an over-reliance on staff to deliver content as and when issues arise. This reactive approach means that not all pupils are being prepared fully for life in modern Britain. Leaders need to ensure that the school's SMSC policy, and the relationships and sex education and PSHE curriculums are implemented fully.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	135837
DfE registration number	881/6060
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10203407
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hazel Bunting and Brett Runchman
Headteacher	Hazel Bunting
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,143.26
Telephone number	07754 271016
Website	www.exceptional-ideas.co.uk
Email address	admin@exceptional-ideas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 May 2017

Information about this school

- Teaseldown is an independent day special school owned by the two directors and proprietors. It occupies three sites in Essex as follows: Teaseldown at Sible Hedingham, Primrose Hill in Chelmsford and Brook View in Wethersfield.
- The school is currently registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit up to 29 pupils.
- The school combines therapeutic and educational provision to meet the needs of boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19 years. Currently, there are no students in post-16 provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities. Most pupils arrive having been excluded from school or having missed long periods of education.
- In many cases, pupils have been excluded from their previous schools and arrive with a history of poor attendance.
- The school does not currently use supply staff.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school uses alternative provision to provide education programmes suited to individual pupils' needs and interests. No pupils are currently attending alternative provision.
- The school's inspection history:
 - The school's first standard inspection was in May 2010. The quality of education was judged to be good.
 - In July 2013, Ofsted conducted a material change to extend the school roll from eight to 13 pupils.
 - In November 2013, a standard inspection took place when the school's overall effectiveness was judged as good. At that time, the school operated from two sites: Teaseldown School in Ridgewell for up to eight pupils and Primrose Hill in Chelmsford for up to five pupils.
 - Teaseldown School subsequently relocated to Sible Hedingham and increased its registered number on roll to 12 pupils, following a material change inspection on 11 March 2015.
 - The school opened a new site in a converted public house at Brook View, The Brewery Tavern, Braintree Road, Wethersfield, Essex CM1 2RQ in September 2015 with five pupils aged 11 to 15 on roll.
 - The proprietors were granted temporary permission by the DfE in July 2015 to increase the roll to 22 pupils across the three sites. The school is now seeking to increase the numbers to 10 pupils at the Brook View site and to increase the number to seven pupils at the Primrose Hill site.
 - The DfE commissioned Ofsted to consider the proprietor's request for a material change in October 2015. As a result, the DfE increased the school's

admission numbers from 22 to 29, and extended the age range from 11 to 16 to 11 to 19.

- In May 2017, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The quality of education was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

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

- Inspectors visited all three school sites. They held meetings with the two directors, one of whom is the headteacher and both of whom are members of the proprietary body. Inspectors held discussions with the deputy director and examinations officer, the member of staff responsible for safeguarding, the curriculum leader, and the operations leaders at each site. Inspectors met with other school staff responsible for administration and teaching.
- Inspectors visited lessons, some jointly with school leaders. They looked closely at the quality of education in English (including reading) and in mathematics, food technology and art. Inspectors checked curriculum plans, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school sites. They also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 39 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and five free-text responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 12 responses to the pupil survey. They also considered information provided by the school's sharing of parents' views. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Liz Smith

Her Majesty's 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.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 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.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

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.

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