

Inspection of The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5HD

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at The Lioncare School feel safe and settled. For many, this is a new and welcome experience. All pupils at the school need support to manage their emotions and mental health. Staff help pupils to understand and cope with big feelings with compassion and patience. Pupils rarely take their anger out on others, and any instances of bullying are quickly identified and challenged. Pupils described the family feel of the school, and said that they appreciate the care that staff provide for them. One pupil described the staff as 'super rocket nice' and told inspectors that he trusted staff to look after him.

Pupils know they are at school to learn. They benefit from the focus on reading, writing and mathematics. They work hard in lessons and are proud of the work they produce. Pupils love the topics they study and the opportunities to improve their understanding of different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles. For example, pupils learned about the Black Lives Matter movement and the historical and cultural impact of racism in the United Kingdom and abroad. Work such as this helps pupils to be respectful and curious about the world and people they will encounter in the future.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that can be adapted to meet pupils' specific needs. The curriculum equips pupils with the vital knowledge that they must learn. Knowledge of reading, writing, mathematics, and communication are prioritised for all. Leaders know that pupils cannot thrive without these basic skills. Staff follow the plans closely and present information in the right order. This works best when staff follow the agreed approaches to teaching. Sometimes, staff present information and tasks in ways that are unfamiliar to pupils, and this can be confusing.

Staff assess pupils' knowledge accurately to identify any gaps in their learning. Many of the pupils have missed significant time in school in the past. Staff are adept at providing pupils with work that helps them to address any gaps in their understanding. Pupils' personal, social and health education curriculum is highly tailored. This helps pupils to understand and navigate their past experiences and to move forward positively.

Staff prioritise reading and know that this is crucial to pupils' long-term success. Staff follow the school phonics programme precisely. Pupils revisit their known sounds every day, helping to commit these to memory. Pupils throughout the school read very well because staff refuse to let them fall behind.

Staff track pupils' behaviour and attitudes continually and share their findings daily. Leaders use this information well to deploy staff and resources to help pupils. In doing so, they provide pupils with help before their emotions run away with them. Work is carefully matched to pupils' needs and often tackles long held beliefs and

emotional responses. Pupils are taught to manage their feelings and to show care and empathy. For many, the opportunity to celebrate themselves and others is new. Inspectors saw pupils encouraging others to read and telling their friends how proud they are of each other.

Pupils are well prepared to be active, happy citizens. They really enjoy their visits out into the community and love to raise money for charities. One pupil fizzed with pride as she explained how her bake sale had raised enough money to sponsor a donkey at the zoo. Pupils receive useful guidance to help them to plan and embark on their next steps in education and employment. However, the school is still establishing links with local employers and colleges. This means that the guidance provided to pupils is not always sharply focused.

In recent months, there have been changes to the leadership team in the school. The proprietary body has managed this well, stepping in to run the school and to maintain the quality of education it provides. The proprietor body is mindful of the pressures on staff. Regular supervision, careful consideration of personal circumstances and strong career development help to improve staff well-being and morale.

The school is appropriately maintained and policies to safeguard pupils' health, safety and welfare are well established. The regular review of systems and policies includes the views of staff and pupils. Leaders use this information to iron out any issues as they arise. Procedures for ensuring pupils' complaints are taken seriously and investigated properly are a strong example of leaders commitment to ensuring that their policies work for pupils, including those who are looked after by their local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff identify the local and personal risks that pupils face accurately and work with a range of external agencies to put in appropriate safeguards. For some pupils, this means addressing negative habits and beliefs. Staff tackle these head on, providing pupils with the right help to make positive and safe choices.

Systems for vetting staff and tracking concerns about pupils are highly effective. Staff share their observations daily and leaders check these to make sure the right support is provided immediately. Links with external agencies are well established and focused on what pupils need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have developed plans which state clearly what knowledge pupils should learn and when. However, leaders have not stated in their plans how staff should

present this information. This means that staff sometimes use too many different approaches and techniques in presenting knowledge and information, which pupils find confusing. Leaders should ensure that staff know and understand the agreed methods for teaching content in different subjects.

- The careers guidance that pupils receive is too broad and does not provide personalised signposting to suitable employers, apprenticeship providers and further education institutes. This means that pupils have to explore too many options before they identify their next steps in education. Leaders should work with local businesses and education providers to ensure that a suitable and tailored menu of options is made available to older pupils.

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	131356
DfE registration number	846/6043
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10207018
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Lioncare Ltd
Headteacher	Sara Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,560
Telephone number	01273 734 164
Website	lioncare.co.uk
Email address	schooladmin@lioncare.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 to 14 December 2017

Information about this school

- Pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan, and the majority are cared for by their local authority. Pupils have challenging behaviours and require a high level of support. Many have had gaps in their education or have been excluded from other schools.
- Since the previous inspection, several key members of staff have left the school, including the headteacher. Senior officers from the proprietor body are currently leading the school. A new headteacher is due to join the school in October.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspectors met with senior leaders and the chief executive officer of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education, and physical education. Inspectors talked to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors then considered a wider range of evidence.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys and through discussions with parents. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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