

Inspection of The View School

Church Street, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 5BD

Inspection dates: 24–26 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school, although a small minority struggle to adhere to the rules or to show enough respect for their peers and staff. Older pupils are very positive about the changes that attending The View has made to their lives. They appreciate the personalised nature of the curriculum and the excellent pastoral support they receive. They feel that their prospects of continuing successfully in education or gaining employment have improved significantly since they joined the school.

Pupils who talked formally to the inspector were happy to share their experiences, including when times had been difficult, both at this school or in previous settings. All were immensely positive about the emotional support they get here. Students in the sixth form confirmed that staff expect a lot from them but are sympathetic to their needs. One observed that different staff had 'their quirks and their perks', but were always there when things were tough.

Parent, pupil and staff surveys were notably positive during this inspection. Although this is a small school, a relatively high percentage of replies were made. Most were incredibly positive about the high aspirations of leaders and the dedication of teaching and support staff.

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

This is an improving school with good leadership and management. Although notable progress has been made with the curriculum offer since the last inspection, some aspects of the quality of education the school provides still require improvement to be good. COVID-19 has not helped. Recent staff departures have left the school's teaching team short. This has led to inconsistencies in the way the intended curriculum is delivered, impacting negatively on the progress some pupils make in some subjects. Leaders have started a recruitment process to address this. Current staff are being supported well, including by leaders covering additional teaching commitments when needed.

Despite inconsistencies in the way it is currently implemented, the curriculum has appropriate breadth and is tailored well to meet the needs of individual pupils. Pupils are expected to study a standard programme according to the key stage they are in, taking into account pupils' own interests and the school's assessment of their needs. Further subject choices and enrichment opportunities are also available. They may include vocational strands and subjects such as personal growth and well-being.

Older pupils are able to access GCSE courses if appropriate for them. One pupil delighted in telling the inspector how proud she was to be able to study for a GCSE in English language after she thought she never would. Another student in the sixth form was similarly proud, working hard this year to increase his 'strong pass' GCSE portfolio, which already includes English language and mathematics, before applying for a college place to study for A levels.

All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Most have experienced difficulties in previous schools. Many have not attended school for extended periods prior to joining 'The View'. This has made the transition into school potentially challenging for some. Because of this, and despite the best efforts of staff, the behaviour of some pupils impacts negatively on the learning of others.

Pupils' personal development is served well here. On the first day of the inspection, pupils from key stage three visited the House of Commons. Pupils explained to the inspector afterwards that learning about democracy and British institutions had been brought to life for them. One described how 'awesome' the artwork he witnessed was, explaining that the sheer scale of the portraits had made a lasting impression on him.

Big-hitting events such as trips to Parliament are supported by the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school's nurturing ethos supports pupils in developing healthy lifestyles and respectful relationships. Some of this work is covered in the ongoing interaction between pupils and staff throughout the school day. Other aspects are delivered through focused pieces of work which might be required because of single issues needing to be addressed, such as the inappropriate use of the internet. Older pupils report that they feel free from bullying behaviours on the whole. They told the inspector how they appreciate that staff have faced issues such as racial harassment or racial profiling head-on when they needed to. Timetabled lessons also help pupils to understand the dangers of addiction (to 'screen time', for example). Other aspects of the curriculum enable pupils to understand better the benefits and potential dangers they face when using social media, including protecting personal information when online.

Despite the ongoing nature of COVID-19, important aspects of the wider curriculum such as work experience opportunities are now starting again. Pupils are also beginning to enjoy more frequent trips into the local community, including activities designed to increase their independence in preparation for when they leave the school. Access to additional curriculum enrichment opportunities that will focus on woodland management and ecological studies is also about to become a reality for all pupils.

Leaders are proud of the way the school has moved forward since its first standard inspection two years ago. Despite some aspects of the school's provision needing to be better, pupils' welfare, health and safety are supported well. Most aspects of the independent school standards are securely met. Arrangements for governance of the school rest with the sole director and a number of independent 'critical friends'. Since the school opened, the director has gradually stepped back from some of the day-to-day duties such as operational oversight of the accommodation and health and safety, for instance. His role is evolving and it is clear that while strategic oversight remains, the headteacher and other leaders are now enjoying more autonomy to lead the school on a day-to-day basis.

The confidential staff survey was extremely positive about all aspects of the school, including staff workload and how leaders support staff in their work. Parents were equally positive about staff, including their work with pupils and their families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture to protect the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors to the school is strong. Despite the poor behaviour of some pupils, staff work hard to keep all pupils safe. Daily routines are established. Record-keeping is fit for purpose. Policies are in place and constantly evolving to meet the needs of the school. This includes the safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website. Checks on staff and other adults with unregulated contact with pupils are thorough. The single central record meets current guidelines. Recruitment procedures are sound.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and the proprietor)

- The way the curriculum is implemented is not as strong as it could be. Some subject specialist teachers have left recently. Classroom visits during this inspection highlighted some inconsistencies in the way that the curriculum is delivered, including in teachers' expectations and how staff adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. Because of this, not all pupils are making the progress through the curriculum that leaders intend. Leaders are aware of this and a new staff recruitment process has started. Further staff training also needs to be put in place to ensure that inconsistencies in staff expectations of what pupils can achieve are resolved. This will help ensure that all pupils are able to access and benefit from consistently high-quality teaching across the whole curriculum.
- The behaviour of some pupils impacts negatively on the way the curriculum is delivered in classrooms. While older pupils, those in the sixth form for instance, behave well and show positive attitudes to school, younger pupils struggle. Leaders have recently reviewed the school's behaviour policy to help to address this problem. However, in classrooms and at break and lunchtimes, staff, despite their best efforts, still struggle to manage the challenging behaviour of some pupils in a consistent way. This impacts negatively on pupils' learning and also on the generally positive atmosphere in the school. Addressing this issue needs to be given the highest priority going forward.

How can I feed back my views?

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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	147034
DfE registration number	886/6155
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10205345
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	The View School Limited
Chair	Julian Roberts
Headteacher	Louise Bourne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000 to £80,000
Telephone number	01732 865 049
Website	www.theviewschool.org
Email address	info@theviewschool.org
Date of previous inspection	10–12 December 2019

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was exceeding the maximum number of pupils it is registered to admit. The school is registered for up to 24 pupils but had 26 pupils on roll.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in December 2019.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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 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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and teaching and support staff in the school. He met with the school's sole director and talked on the telephone to a representative of a local authority which places pupils at the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.
- The inspector toured the school's premises and accommodation. He checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. He also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff linked to the independent school standards.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included two different formal meetings with small groups of pupils, including those from the sixth form.
- The inspector also considered two additional matters at the request of the Department for Education as part of this standard inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

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.

- 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(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

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.

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