

Lighthouse School

24 Clarendon Road, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2QJ

Inspection dates

1 February 2022

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 11, 12, 14, 16– 6(b)

- At the last standard inspection, it was found that arrangements to keep pupils safe were not effective. Leaders had not set up a failsafe system to record or monitor staff recruitment checks. Other aspects that caused concern about the welfare of pupils were scalding risks from hot water and unmet medical room requirements. Furthermore, leaders did not have an effective system to keep track of pupils who were moving to new schools.
- The designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead are knowledgeable about child protection, safeguarding processes and requirements. They demonstrate acute understanding of the safeguarding of pupils who have experienced childhood trauma as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This expertise is supported by rigorous and systematic record-keeping. Leaders now have a straightforward and effective system for monitoring the movement of pupils who leave the area and join other schools. Safeguarding records are securely transferred in a timely way. Leaders keep careful track of these pupils until their next steps are secured.
- Record-keeping scrutinised during the inspection additionally demonstrates that leaders act swiftly when any safeguarding concerns are raised, and that their actions are planned, implemented, and evaluated. Policies, including the safeguarding policy, are compliant and readily available on the school website. Since the inspection of June 2021, the governance of safeguarding has been strengthened. Safeguarding is now a routine standing agenda item and processes for safely recruiting new staff are meticulous. Recently, a new safeguarding governor has been appointed. This governor brings expertise in social care and safeguarding, and in holding leaders to account effectively.
- The health and safety policy is informative, helpful and up to date. School policies are easy to navigate and immediately inform the reader when the policy was last updated and when a further update is due. The responsibilities of different staff members are clear. Links are made to other related school policies and also to relevant legislation and statutory requirements.

- The fire safety policy is equally comprehensive and clear. Details of checks and maintenance records are in place. These demonstrate that leaders act in a timely way when updates are needed. Routine fire drills ensure that all members of the school community know how to proceed in the event of a required evacuation.
- Staffing arrangements ensure that pupils' learning and well-being needs are met securely. Teaching and support staff hold wide-ranging curriculum and pastoral expertise and undertake plentiful routine training to continually update and expand their knowledge and skills. Pupils are supervised at all times, including during breaks from lessons and at lunchtimes. This is particularly important as the main school site has no boundary fencing. Risk assessments are in place for all pupils and staff know exactly how to respond, including when to call for police support, should a pupil stray.
- The risk assessment policy is clear, comprehensive and helpful. The policy identifies who needs to know what and when. The risk assessment process is laid out in six steps, including identifying hazards and deciding who may be harmed, and how, as well as helpful questions to ask when reviewing risk assessments.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are suitable and effective. There is capacity for systems to continue effectively with increased numbers of pupils. Leaders have thought about admitting new pupils incrementally through the school year, should the material change requested be approved. The school now meets all previously unmet standards in part 3.

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

Paragraph 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6)

- At the last inspection, it was found that leaders were not completing or recording all of the recruitment checks required on staff, supply staff and proprietors. While this matter was corrected during the course of the inspection, leaders subsequently undertook a comprehensive review of how and when checks are made and recorded. Strengthened systems now include a range of routine quality assurance measures involving leaders, governors and external scrutiny.
- Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. They understand the risks as well as the requirements and processes for recruiting staff. Checks on staff, governors and the proprietorial body are now carried out consistently and recorded appropriately, including confirmation of identity checks and medical fitness. During this monitoring inspection, leaders demonstrated familiarity with the independent school standards, including those relating to recruitment checks.
- The school is amply staffed, with suitably experienced and qualified teachers and support staff. Morale is high. There is capacity within the current staffing arrangements to accommodate the increased number of pupils requested as part of the material change aspect of this inspection. Additional staff will also be recruited where necessary in order to meet a pupil's specific needs.
- Leaders have ensured that the school now meets all previously unmet standards in part 4.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)–29(1)(b)

- At the inspection of June 2021, it was found that the proprietor had not ensured that the main school building at Northdown House met standards relating to the temperature of the hot water in toilet facilities or that the medical room had running hot and cold water.
- Plumbing work in the toilet facilities, immediately following the previous inspection, has ensured that there is no longer a scalding risk from the hot water supply.
- The medical room at Northdown House has plenty of space for the short-term care of unwell or injured pupils. There is a sink unit with hot and cold running water, and toilet facilities are nearby.
- Weekly health and safety checks are undertaken at both sites. Checks include testing hot water supplies to ensure a safe temperature is maintained. A check is also made to ensure that the medical rooms remain fit for purpose. Records of these checks were scrutinised by the inspector. Senior leaders' termly quality assurance schedule additionally includes checks on these matters.
- More broadly, the accommodation at both sites is well maintained and compliant with the independent school standards. For example, there is outside lighting, separate girls' and boys' toilets, and showers with good supplies of cold and hot water. Drinking water is readily available and labelled. There is plenty of light and the acoustic conditions are suitable. There is ample classroom space, particularly at Northdown House, to accommodate the increased number of pupils requested.
- The outside areas are distinctly different at the two sites. At Clarendon Road there is sufficient fenced space for pupils to take a break from lessons and to play. Northdown House is an old manor house, set within its own parkland. The park is open to the public and is unfenced. This risk is carefully considered, documented and managed by the school. Positively, pupils experience an expansive and natural outdoor environment in which they can learn, play, take a break from lessons or exercise the school dog. As with the building, there is an abundance of outdoor space that would easily accommodate increased pupil numbers. Local sports facilities are used for physical education elements of the curriculum.
- Previously unmet standards relating to part 5 of the independent school standards are now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(2), 32(2)(c)–32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(e)–32(3)(f)

- At the last inspection, it was found that the proprietor was not providing parents with all the information required under part 6. This included aspects such as the aims and ethos of the school, the contact details for the chair of governors and the number of complaints received in the previous school year.
- Some of the omissions, such as providing the contact details of the proprietor and the chair of the governing body, were rectified during the inspection of June 2021. Other aspects, such as amendments to the complaints policy; making available to parents the number of complaints registered under formal procedures during the last school year; particulars of the school's academic performance during the previous school year; and

particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, were all addressed by the start of September 2021.

- A check of the school's website during this monitoring inspection revealed that the website contains relevant and required information and is easy to navigate. For example, it is easy to find contact information for the chair of the governing body, as well as information about the school's aims, summed up by the word 'PRIDE' – positivity, resilience, independence, diversity and enjoyment. Information about admissions, the curriculum and exam results, as well as policies, is quick to locate.
- The school now meets all previously unmet standards in part 6.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(f)–33(k)

- At the last inspection it was found that the complaints policy did not meet all the requirements of part 7 of the independent school standards.
- The complaints policy has been revised. It is fully compliant and easily located on the school website. Leaders are totally clear about how to proceed in the face of complaint, should one be made. Despite no complaints to date, leaders' quality assurance systems provide for scrutiny of complaints management and assure that information on the website is updated.
- Previously unmet standards relating to part 7 of the independent school standards are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- At the time of the last standard inspection, a number of independent school standards were judged to be unmet. Furthermore, it was found that the proprietor had not monitored the numbers of pupils on the school roll closely enough. Consequently, the school was exceeding its registration agreement. There were 54 pupils on roll, when the school was registered for 44. The school has subsequently made a request to the Department for Education to increase pupil numbers to 54. This material change request was considered alongside the monitoring inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the leadership capacity of the school has continued to strengthen. The skilled and knowledgeable executive principal is ably supported by the principal. The governing body has been reinvigorated, including with experts in finance and safeguarding. There has been an uncompromising focus on ensuring the independent school standards are understood and met, alongside an equal ambition to ensure that the education and care provided at The Lighthouse School are of the highest possible quality. Leaders convey an unequivocal vision that this school should become an outstanding provision, making 'the difference' that these pupils need.
- Established monitoring schedules ensure that all aspects of provision and school improvement are scrutinised and evaluated to inform future planning. Scrutiny is layered so that routine weekly checks are cross-checked by senior leaders' termly quality assurance. These checks are further moderated through the use of external trainers and auditors. Leaders are confident that all the independent school standards are now met.

- The well-being of pupils sits at the heart of this school. All adults here are willing to go 'the extra mile' to make a difference and therapeutic approaches and interventions are core to the school's provision. The school therapy dog greets pupils warmly with a wag and happily goes on many walks, supporting anxious or agitated pupils to calm down. The school has a positive atmosphere imbued with ambition for a successful future for vulnerable pupils.
- The evidence seen by the inspector as part of this monitoring inspection demonstrates that previously unmet standards in parts 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are now met. A clearly laid out action plan to address improvements has been adhered to. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that leaders understand the independent school standards, and that routine monitoring and quality assurance against compliance and quality of provision are established. Leaders have the capacity to continue driving improvement, including with an increased pupil population should the material change be approved.
- Leaders have responded swiftly and with acuity to the findings of the previous inspection. However, as improvements are new and some extremely recent, it is too soon to conclude that the independent school standards are 'consistently' met in full. Therefore, two standards in part 8 remain unmet.

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	130979
DfE registration number	886/6110
Inspection number	10220422

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	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Proprietor	Natalie Christie
Chair	David Knowles
Principal	Bonnie Tate
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000 to £59,000
Telephone number	01843 482055
Website	http://lighthouseschools.co.uk
Email address	n.christie@lighthouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	22–24 June 2021

Information about this school

- The Lighthouse School is registered for 44 pupils, aged from eight to 18. All pupils who attend the school have SEND associated with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Over half of the pupils on roll are in the care of the local authority.
- The school operates from two sites, Clarendon Road and Northdown House. The latter is the main site.
- The school uses two unregistered and one registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The previous standard inspection was in June 2021.

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.
- The inspector met extensively with the proprietor and the principal. Other members of staff were spoken to informally during the course of the inspection. Visits were made to both school sites.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of policy documentation, both during the inspection and remotely via the school website.
- The school's monitoring and quality assurance records and a wide range of documentation, such as the minutes of governing body meetings and details of staff training, were also considered.
- The single central record and safeguarding arrangements were reviewed.
- This inspection also included consideration of the school's material change request to increase the number of pupils that the school is registered to admit. The inspector took into account the impact that additional pupils would have on pupils currently at the school, as well as other relevant factors regarding the request.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils from 44 to 54

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a material change to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, 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 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.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction
- 19 The paragraph in this standard is met if–
 - 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).
- 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(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)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction.
- 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 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(2)(c) where there is a governing body, the name and address for correspondence of its Chair; and
 - 32(2)(d) a statement of the school’s ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(e) particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations

- 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor–
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school
 - 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is–
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher
 - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and–
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
 - 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

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)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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