

Learn 4 Life School

Quarry Bank Community Centre, 364 Ormskirk Road, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9AL

Inspection date

23 March 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets 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(a), 7(b)

- The standard inspection in July 2021 judged that safeguarding in the school was not effective. This was because leaders did not record all safeguarding concerns about pupils. Leaders also did not analyse the records for pupils who go missing from school well enough to identify the causes for these behaviours. They did not take actions to stop incidents of pupils' absconding. This meant that leaders could not be sure that pupils were kept safe.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in January 2022, it was judged that the actions identified did not specifically focus on meeting the required unmet standards. For example, there were actions related to specialist additional training for the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), but it was unclear what these would be or the purpose of them. There were a number of actions relating to leaders creating logs, procedures and agreements with regard to pupils' absence and pupils missing from placements. However, the evaluation highlighted that if implemented effectively, the actions would only result in leaders knowing about incidents after they had occurred. The action plan did not explain how leaders intended to prevent these incidents from occurring in the first place.
- Since the previous standard inspection in July 2021, leaders have reorganised their safeguarding team and have completed safeguarding training with staff. A new senior member of staff has also completed DSL training. Four other members of staff are registered to complete similar training shortly. This will mean that over three quarters of the adults in the school will be trained to a level 3 standard of safeguarding. Staff meet daily to discuss the safeguarding and welfare of pupils. They are much more knowledgeable about the safeguarding and welfare of pupils than at the time of the previous inspection.

- A new log has been created that details every incident relating to pupils' attendance, behaviour or safeguarding. Each incident is clearly recorded, and actions are identified for each pupil. Where more detailed actions are required, there is reference made in the log to further documentation pertaining to the pupil, for example the behaviour support plan. These documents are updated regularly and include future preventive actions and strategies to safeguard pupils.
- At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors found that safeguarding considerations for pupils on placement were insufficient. This was particularly the case if a pupil decided to walk out of a placement or did not arrive at a placement. Leaders have addressed these issues. They have appointed a member of staff to be a placement lead. This person meets with staff from all of the alternative providers and checks on the safeguarding and welfare arrangements. All alternative providers are now required to sign and adhere to a contract. This outlines raised expectations in regard to the attendance, welfare and safeguarding of pupils while they attend these provisions. For example, the provider is required to contact the school by 10am to let it know whether a pupil has arrived safely at the setting. Clear protocols have been set up with the alternative providers in regard to any pupil who walks out of a setting. The actions taken by leaders have increased the safeguarding of pupils and significantly reduced the number of incidents of pupils absconding from their placement settings. The placement lead contacts the alternative providers regularly, requires a weekly report on pupils' progress and has built in opportunities for impromptu checks of providers.
- Leaders now have appropriate procedures to safeguard pupils if they walk out of school. Detailed individual behaviour plans for pupils identify any risks of poor attendance or absconding. The plans are highly personalised to take account of individual pupils' needs. For example, if a pupil posed a risk to members of the public, the actions are tailored differently than if a pupil walks out of a setting because they need to take some time out.
- Inspectors at the time of the previous inspection found that records of attendance were confusing. The records did not indicate why a pupil was absent. These records now have an extra column that provides a reason for absence. It is clear that absence is monitored more closely. Patterns and trends of pupils' absence and absconding are analysed regularly by leaders and the proprietor. Information is shared regularly between the school and the residential care homes. Leaders now look for proactive ways to address pupils' individual attendance issues. In the last few months, incidents of absconding have greatly reduced and pupils' attendance has increased.
- The safeguarding policy was checked at the time of this inspection. The policy is appropriate and pays due regard to the most up-to-date guidance from the Secretary of State. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Paragraph 14

- The inspection in July 2021 found that this standard was unmet. This was because the supervision of pupils who were at risk of going missing was not thorough enough. Inspectors found that some pupils left their placements without permission and that leaders had not acted appropriately to reduce the risks of this happening again.
- The action plan did not include any actions relating to the supervision of pupils.

- The deployment of staff has been reviewed. Plans now include detailed information about how staff will be deployed to manage any incidents if pupils walk out of school. The plans are personalised appropriately according to individual pupils' needs. The deployment of staff is made clear in the behaviour support plan. A summary of actions and deployment is placed in the office so that staff can access this information quickly if needed. If a pupil is at risk of absconding from an alternative provider, a member of the school staff is allocated to attend the setting with the pupil. There are far fewer incidents occurring and all pupils are fully supervised. At the time of this inspection, pupils were appropriately supervised, including at breaktimes, when arriving at school and when leaving the school premises.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The inspection in July 2021 judged that this standard was not met because the proprietor had not ensured the welfare of pupils. Leaders had not drawn up or implemented an appropriate risk assessment policy. Risk assessments had not taken place. Leaders had not acted to reduce the risks to pupils who left their placements without permission or to stop such incidents from happening.
- The action plan indicated that leaders plan to implement protocols and improve leaders' knowledge of incidents when pupils leave the school site or their placements without permission. However, the action plan did not contain any information about how leaders intend to identify, evaluate and reduce the risk of this happening in the first place. The plan did not contain any actions relating to writing a risk assessment policy.
- There is now an appropriate risk assessment policy in place. Each pupil has a personalised risk assessment. The risk assessment identifies the level of risk for each pupil in relation to their attendance and likelihood of absconding. The plan identifies strategies to improve pupils' attendance and to help avoid having pupils walking out of school or their placement. It makes clear each pupil's triggers and warning signs, and how to reduce risks. These plans are reviewed regularly by school leaders and the proprietor.
- The standards related to welfare, health and safety that were checked as part of this inspection are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The inspection in July 2021 judged that leaders and the proprietor had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met consistently. In particular, the inspection judged that the leadership of safeguarding in school was weak and that leaders did not take effective actions to reduce risks for pupils.
- The action plan that Ofsted evaluated in January 2022 judged that leaders and the proprietor had put some actions in place to address safeguarding and in particular pupils' attendance and the risk of absconding. However, the plan had not indicated any measures to reduce pupils' absence or the likelihood of pupils walking out of school or their alternative provision placement.
- At the time of this inspection, school leaders demonstrated that they are now more knowledgeable and vigilant about safeguarding. Staff have had up-to-date training and

regularly attend briefing sessions with a focus on safeguarding and pupils' welfare. Procedures have been improved regarding the logging of safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and attendance issues. Risk assessments are linked closely to these logs and this helps to minimise any risks. Systems are in place to act quickly where needed to prevent pupils being at risk of harm. Consequently, pupils' attendance is improving and the number of incidents of pupils absconding is reducing.

- The proprietor now meets school leaders at least weekly to hold them to account for the safety and welfare of pupils. He has ensured that the previously unmet standards are now met. He has an appropriate understanding of the independent school standards and has systems in place to monitor compliance regularly.
- Leaders now demonstrate the knowledge required to run an independent school successfully. They actively promote the well-being of pupils through a range of suitable policies and processes that are implemented effectively. There are now clear systems in place to monitor the safety of pupils. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities to actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- Additionally, the previous inspection also judged that leaders did not effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This resulted in the stagnation of school improvement. Some leaders did not have the knowledge they needed to ensure that the school's curriculum was logically sequenced to promote pupils' learning.
- The Ofsted action plan evaluation in January 2022 identified that the proprietor intended to introduce a number of protocols to check on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It also outlined training for teaching staff in subject leadership. However, the plan gave no indication as to the actions the proprietor would take to rectify the shortcomings of senior leaders.
- The proprietor has restructured the leadership team and is in the process of appointing a new headteacher. The school's action plan, which had subsequently been rejected as inappropriate by the Department for Education (DfE), has been revised and improved. It now has much clearer success criteria and addresses the required areas of school improvement. A regular cycle of meetings is scheduled between senior leaders and the proprietor to monitor improvement work and to ensure that deadlines are met.
- At the time of the inspection, it was clear that there has been a renewed keenness among senior leaders and staff to develop the curriculum. There has been an increase in the opportunities for staff to participate in professional development. This has supported the work that is well under way with regard to reconstructing each subject area. There is a more considered approach to developing the curriculum.
- Curriculum leaders are more aware of the importance of the need for a logical sequence of curriculum content in each subject. They are also mindful that high-quality content will help pupils to learn and remember subject knowledge. Although pupils are still entered for qualifications, leaders recognise that slavishly following only the content needed to achieve these qualifications means that the subjects they deliver lack depth. Leaders and staff are now beginning to see the role of assessment differently. They see that it can help teachers to adapt the curriculum, so that new learning builds on what pupils already know. Leaders and the proprietor recognise that there is still much work to do in this area. However, their increased understanding and enthusiasm set a positive tone for school improvement and this is beginning to have

an impact. For example, there is an improvement in the promotion of pupils' love of reading, which has improved pupils' reading fluency.

- The proprietor now demonstrates the capacity to ensure that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. Consequently, the standards for leadership and management are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets 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. 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.

The school now meets the following 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.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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.

–

School details

Unique reference number	129571
DfE registration number	888/6089
Inspection number	10229304

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Proprietor	Care Afloat Limited
Chair	Michael Fletcher
Headteacher	Cath Briggs
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,142 to £77,792
Telephone number	01695 768960
Website	None
Email address	cath.briggs@careafloat.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	6 to 8 July 2021

Information about this school

- The school's previous inspection was a standard inspection and took place from 6 to 8 July 2021.
- The school is preparing to move to new premises. This inspection was originally to monitor progress and complete a material change request. However, the proprietor did not feel that they were ready for a material change inspection and so contacted the DfE to withdraw the application.
- Since the previous standard inspection, a new proprietor has been appointed. The headteacher is due to retire shortly. The proprietor is in the process of appointing a new headteacher. The school's management structure has been revised, and the deputy

headteacher has an increased responsibility for safeguarding and to develop the curriculum.

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.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since it was judged as inadequate at its previous full standard inspection in July 2021.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan after the full standard inspection in July 2021. Ofsted evaluated this plan as not acceptable. The DfE rejected the plan in January 2022.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector held discussions with the new proprietor, the headteacher and deputy headteacher. She also spoke informally to school staff and to pupils who were in attendance.
- The inspector reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the standards. She also looked at a range of other documents to provide further inspection evidence. This included documentation in relation to safeguarding, risk assessment, leadership and management, and the curriculum.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2022