

Inspection of Eton Dorney Independent Therapeutic School

34 Lake End Road, Dorney, Berkshire SL4 6QS

Inspection dates:

5 to 7 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

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 enjoy their time at school and some express feelings of relief that staff understand and listen to them. Pupils are confident that staff will make time for them, including helping to resolve any worries. This helps pupils to feel safe.

The atmosphere around the school is calm and mostly focused. There is very little bullying and unkind behaviour. Staff act quickly to address and stop any that happens. Staff also help pupils to understand how other people might respond to actions or words.

Pupils like helping to decide and plan the school reward days. These are varied and contribute to providing a wide range of experiences for all pupils.

There is a difference in the quality of education provided in the primary and secondary phases. Pupils in the primary phase experience well-considered learning that builds their knowledge. This is not the case in the secondary phase where learning is more superficial and often jumps from topic to topic. This prevents pupils from developing deeper knowledge and understanding.

The proprietor expresses ambition for pupils but does not have a secure enough understanding of how to ensure that this is achieved. Consequently, the intentions for pupils' education are not realised.

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

Pupils often arrive at Eton Dorney Independent Therapeutic School having previously missed large periods of school. Leaders make sure that they have a positive start. This often includes therapeutic sessions and work with whole families to jointly plan the approach. This approach helps pupils to settle quickly and successfully.

Leaders have ensured that staff are confident with working with pupils in terms of meeting their social, emotional and mental health needs, including those identified in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. This work is effective and is supported well by the daily debriefs where staff share information about pupils' successes and areas for development.

Leaders' focus on identifying potential behaviour issues and de-escalating incidents has paid off over the last year. Serious incidents have declined, and restrictive physical intervention is now a rarity. When an incident has happened, leaders provide support for all concerned and carefully consider how a similar incident can be avoided in the future.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. They understand and like the way that the school's behaviour policy is followed. However, in some secondary classes, some pupils work more with adults than they do with the other

pupils in the class. This is even when they have a target in their EHC plan to develop their skills working with their peers. This limits pupils' development and preparation for adulthood.

The work to promote pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Leaders provide a rich range of experiences for all pupils. Pupils enjoy planning their reward days and visits from people involved in public institutions, such as the police. Staff are not afraid to tackle big and difficult questions in sensitive and well-considered ways. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding around healthy lifestyles and respectful relationships.

Pupils also enjoy the weekly programme of learning that focuses on topical issues, including political events, where they consider different viewpoints and how to express their own views. These lessons are supported well by the ongoing focus on the school's own values of kindness, compassion and self-belief.

Careers information, education, advice and guidance is still developing. Pupils have access to an impartial adviser through an online platform and many older pupils undertake work experience placements. The provision meets the requirements of the independent school standards ('the standards'); however, the whole programme is not yet fully considered.

This is also the case when it comes to the quality of education. Leaders' work to improve the curriculum for primary pupils has been successful. However, there is still much work to do in the secondary phase of the school. Overall, the standards are met but pupils are not supported to build their knowledge consistently well.

Some curriculum leaders do not have the subject knowledge needed to work out what pupils need to learn, in what order and how best to teach it. Some staff are too ready to abandon learning if pupils do not want to engage in the lesson or are not interested in the topic. Part of the issue is the low expectations that some staff have for pupils. As a consequence, too many pupils undertake low-level tasks and do not move on with their learning.

Pupils who need specific help with their reading are supported well in individual sessions. These sessions help pupils to build their confidence and knowledge and so become stronger readers. However, leaders' intentions for a culture of reading are not realised across the school. In lessons other than dedicated reading lessons, teachers and teaching assistants do not have the knowledge to support pupils' reading effectively. This limits pupils' success across the curriculum and prevents some from accessing more challenging texts.

Senior school leaders are aware of some of the deficiencies in the secondary curriculum and have put together plans to address the issues in some areas. There is still work to be done here. Part of the approach is to build leadership capacity and several middle leaders are currently engaged in training programmes to help them develop leadership skills. However, these are not focused enough on the subject knowledge and skills that are required to ensure curriculum improvement.

The proprietor has acted on recommendations from external consultants and senior school leaders, ensuring that required learning resources are made available. Due to this, previously unmet standards around pupils' welfare, health and safety are now met. However, the proprietor does not have the knowledge and skills needed to ensure that the standards are met consistently and that the curriculum is of the quality intended. For example, the proprietor did not understand the requirements in the standards around the school complaints process.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff know pupils well and are alert to any change or indication of concern. Leaders have introduced a new recording system and have made sure that all staff are confident to use it. Leaders use the system well to join up knowledge about pupils and to check that planned actions and communications with external agencies happen as needed.

Staff are knowledgeable about their duties and the signs to look out for. They take this part of their roles very seriously. Staff are supported well by the comprehensive safeguarding policy that is published on the school's website, and the individual risk management plans for pupils. These are thorough and reviewed regularly.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor and some school leaders do not have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their areas of responsibility effectively. They have not ensured that the independent school standards are met or that the quality of education is consistently strong. Leaders should continue to build leadership capacity at all levels so that improvement is realised through the whole school.
- Curriculum leaders in the secondary phase of the school do not have the subject expertise and the pedagogical understanding that accompanies it. Consequently, they struggle to identify the core knowledge and learning that pupils need and the order in which they need it. As a result, some learning is superficial or fragmented. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the knowledge required so they can plan and deliver the curriculum to the depth and quality that leaders intend.
- Some teachers and teaching assistants do not have the knowledge to support pupils' confidence and fluency in reading. This limits pupils' success across the curriculum and prevents some from accessing more challenging learning materials. Leaders should draw on the expertise already in the school to improve these skills, help pupils to develop their reading across the curriculum, and embed a culture of reading.

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	145298
DfE registration number	825/6048
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10243376
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	none
Proprietor	Calcot Services for Children (Education) Ltd
Chair	Sukhbir Singh and Harvinder Singh
Headteacher	Alexandra Walsh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,050 to £90,639
Telephone number	01628 667 475
Website	www.etondorneyspecialschool.co.uk
Email address	etondorneyschool@csfc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2017 and admitted its first pupils in March 2018. It caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There are currently no pupils using the post-16 provision.
- The school received its first standard inspection in November 2018. At this point, it was registered for 24 pupils. It applied to increase this number to 34 and received a material change inspection to consider this in September 2019. Later, it applied to increase to 50 pupils and received a material change inspection in January 2021.
- An emergency inspection was carried out with 30 minutes' notice in October 2021. This inspection was commissioned by the DfE as a result of an anonymous complaint about fire safety. This inspection found that some of the independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils and to the quality of leadership in and management of schools were not met.
- The school submitted an action plan to address these issues in February 2022. This plan was judged to be acceptable.
- The current headteacher was appointed in June 2021. The deputy headteacher joined at Easter 2022. There has continued to be turnover of staff and a new school leadership structure is due to commence in September 2022.
- The proprietor is Calcot Services for Children (Education) Ltd, which also runs a number of children's home across Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and Hampshire. Eton Dorney is one of three schools belonging to the proprietor.
- The proprietor is in the process of setting up a governing body. It is intended that this will be in place for September 2022.
- The proprietor has employed the services of an external school advisory consultancy. This company has visited the school to examine various elements and report back to the proprietor.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff, including the behaviour lead and school business manager. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor by video call.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, physical education, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education (including relationships and sex education). For these deep dives, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about mathematics and looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work as part of this.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine their knowledge. Inspectors scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. They also looked at records showing actions following breaches of the school's behaviour policy. Inspectors also considered the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff. The lead inspector also telephoned the alternative provider to discuss safeguarding and pupils' learning.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers through the responses to Ofsted Parent view, Ofsted's online survey, and accompanying free-text comments. They also considered the school's own survey of parents.
- The views of staff were captured through conversations and scrutiny of the responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in class, in specially arranged groups, and around the school. Adults from the school were present when inspectors spoke with pupils. This helped to encourage pupils to talk to inspectors at the start of conversations.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which–
 - 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)(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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