

Inspection of Acorn Cottage The Lodge

Ipswich Road, Elmsett, Suffolk, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 6NY

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2022

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	Requires improvement
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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 Acorn Cottage are well looked after in a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are a priority for staff. All adults get to know students and their individual needs from the start. Staff set high expectations to help pupils settle and be ready to reconnect with education. Adults support pupils to feel safe and valued. Therefore, pupils and staff build positive relationships quickly.

Pupils learn about how to be good citizens. They learn about the wider society, including different faiths and cultures. Pupils join the school having had poor life experiences. They are given frequent opportunities to discuss their thoughts, feelings and previous experiences. This enables adults to plan work that helps pupils to learn about the world beyond what they already know.

Adults help pupils to manage their behaviour well. Pupils learn to make positive behaviour choices. Adults take time to listen to what pupils have to say, and apply clear strategies to help manage negative behaviour. As a result, pupils are respectful to adults who look after them.

Pupils develop aspirations for their future. They know that it is important to develop strong skills in reading and writing. They are able to gain certificates in a wide range of subjects. This helps them to develop confidence and self-esteem, and leave ready for their next stage of education.

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

Since the previous standard inspection, the proprietor body has established an effective management structure and secure systems to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently. This ensures that pupils receive a good standard of provision at the school.

Under the guidance of the proprietor body, leaders share a clear vision to help pupils continue their education successfully. In their carefully designed curriculum, leaders precisely consider and meet pupils' individual needs. Well-constructed curriculum plans in subjects such as citizenship and psychology deepen pupils' understanding about their place in the world and how they can make a positive contribution to society. Pupils develop a sense of purpose and leave the school with a strong sense of identity.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships through a well-structured programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Through vigilance and meticulous record-keeping, staff build a comprehensive picture of the individual pupil. Teachers adapt their teaching so that they precisely support pupils' physical and mental well-being as well as their academic success.

In each subject, teachers carefully check pupils' understanding. Teachers design teaching to take into account what pupils already know and what they may have missed in their previously disrupted learning. As a result, pupils achieve well and learn to enjoy their studies.

Pupils build on their numeracy and English skills through a well-organised curriculum. Books are chosen that allow pupils to link and deepen their learning across subjects. Pupils have access to a wide range of books and understand the importance of being able to read well.

Staff are skilful at supporting each pupil's behaviour needs. Staff quickly spot when a pupil becomes anxious or agitated. As a result, pupils are able to stay in class to access the curriculum.

Leaders' curriculum is designed to help pupils develop knowledge and skills effectively in a range of subjects during the relatively short time that they attend the school. However, teachers have only recently begun to implement links that enable pupils to consolidate and apply their understanding of number and English skills in other subjects. In addition, the vocabulary that leaders want pupils to know, and use, is not yet precisely planned in a few subjects.

Pupils achieve a wide range of accredited awards, which is motivating to them and demonstrates success in their learning. Most go on to gain passes in subjects where GCSEs are offered. In addition, leaders provide enriching courses that spark pupils' interest so that they can follow their chosen path. As a result, many go on to study for qualifications at colleges.

Leaders are ensuring that the independent school standards are consistently met. They have secure structures for reviewing and reporting, and use their knowledge of the independent school standards to do so. In addition, there are clear reporting systems to the proprietor body and directors on whether the independent school standards continue to be met.

Leaders demonstrate that they fulfil their duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are meticulous in their recording of safeguarding concerns. Risk assessments for individual pupils are thorough and cover historic and current safeguarding concerns. Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns about pupils are shared immediately with staff. Leaders routinely review their actions, ensuring that they are consistently meeting Part 3 of the independent school standards.

Leaders have effective systems for carrying out safeguarding checks on staff and visitors to the school. Staff continually update their knowledge of the potential

safeguarding risks for the pupils they look after. Leaders keep themselves and staff updated through planned safeguarding training. Leaders consistently demonstrate meeting Part 4 of the independent school standards.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Teachers do not consistently work together to identify how they can consolidate and apply what pupils learn in mathematics and English across the curriculum. This means that pupils do not have further opportunities to practise and use what they have learned in English and mathematics in subjects outside of these lessons so that they gain a deeper understanding. Leaders need to ensure that precise opportunities are planned so that students can practise routinely applying what they know.
- While leaders have made many improvements to their curriculum, they have not precisely thought about the training that will help continue to further embed the teaching of English and mathematics across all curriculum subjects. Leaders should ensure that they offer a finely tuned programme of curriculum training opportunities for teaching staff. This should be aligned with leaders' curriculum development priorities. This will ensure that teachers and leaders are consistently working towards the same goals to improve the quality of education.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	130854
DfE registration number	935/6084
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10226689
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Care Focus Limited
Chair	Timothy Leigh
Headteacher	Karen Randall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,980
Telephone number	01473 657030
Website	www.carefocus.co.uk
Email address	ninacampbell@carefocus.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Acorn Cottage is a small independent special school owned by Care Focus Ltd. The school opened in 2005. The school acquired a second site in 2013.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education to admit eight girls.
- The two proprietors of Care Focus Ltd, alongside one appointed director, are responsible for governance at the school.
- Most pupils who attend the school over time have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some have education, health and care plans.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- Leaders do not use supply staff.
- The head of education joined the school in April 2021.

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.

- This was the second standard inspection since the standard inspection in June 2019.
- Both inspectors visited the Acorn Cottage site. An inspector also visited the Care Focus Ltd central offices.
- Inspectors met with the deputy head of education, and spoke with school staff and students.
- The lead inspector met with the head of quality assurance, the head of therapeutic care and member of the Care Focus Ltd central administrative team.
- The lead inspector also met with a chair of the proprietor body, and two directors and governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff, school policies, the school development plan, records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of education, the school's safeguarding policy, minutes of management meetings and records of pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors also considered documentation relating to the health and safety and the site premises, including risk assessments.

- Inspectors reviewed documentation from the local authorities who place pupils at the provision.
- Inspectors considered six responses from Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, or Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors considered the school's own information on the views of parents.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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