

# Inspection of SMS Changing Lives School

Ferranti House, Wickentree Lane, Failsworth, Manchester, Greater Manchester M35  
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Inspection dates: 15 to 17 November 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent  
school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The proprietor has created a caring and nurturing environment at SMS Changing Lives School. Pupils have experienced trauma or had negative experiences of education in the past. The headteacher understands this. She and her staff are experts at making pupils feel valued. Consequently, most pupils quickly settle into school life quickly. Pupils told inspectors that they are happy and enjoy coming to school.

Senior leaders are ambitious for pupils. The great majority of pupils leave school with qualifications that will help them go on to further training or employment. Staff use a range of sports to help develop qualities such as discipline and teamwork in pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is carefully monitored by staff through the day. All pupils are expected to behave well. The great majority achieve this. Bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly and effectively if it happens. Staff model respect and kindness. As a result, pupils learn how to relate appropriately to each other and to staff.

Pupils trust their teachers. Pupils recognise the care that all staff take over their welfare. This means that pupils feel safe and well looked after.

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

Senior leaders have established an ambitious curriculum in which all pupils work towards recognised qualifications in the subjects that they are studying. Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. As well as English, mathematics and science, pupils achieve vocational awards in a range of subjects, such as sport, hair and beauty, food technology or music.

Staff place a high priority on teaching pupils to read fluently. They keep a close eye on pupils' reading skills. Any pupils who fall behind are given extra individual help. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new approach to this extra help. This is having a positive impact. However, not all staff have been trained to use the new approach and so the impact has not been fully felt across the school.

All teaching takes place in small groups or one to one. Many pupils' communication skills are weak when they join the school. Pupils are encouraged to speak and debate with each other. This builds their self-esteem and increases their willingness to take part. As a result, their confidence grows.

Teachers check on pupils' learning regularly and accurately. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers use these, along with knowledge of pupils' interests, to ensure that teaching activities are accurately based on pupils' individual needs. Staff are trained to deal with some aspects of pupils' social,

emotional and mental health needs. However, the range of specialist therapies available at the school is limited.

Senior leaders provide pupils with effective careers advice. Even though some pupils have only been at the school for one year, they leave it better prepared for their next step. Pupils gain vocational qualifications, but they also gain confidence and valuable communication skills. This means they have more options to choose from when they move on.

Staff help pupils to understand their own behaviour. They form trusting relationships with pupils, often in a short period of time. Staff are calm and patient when pupils are anxious or tense. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves and is typically calm and attentive. Most pupils attend regularly. However, the rate of attendance of a small number of pupils remains poor and so these pupils do not gain the full benefit of the curriculum.

A well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme allows pupils to think carefully about life in modern Britain. Senior leaders provide pupils with relationship, sex and health education that complies with statutory guidance. Staff teach pupils to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships. This strengthens pupils' resilience against the risk of exploitation.

A range of sports on site, such as football and boxing, are used to provide opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils' cultural awareness is enhanced by carefully chosen visits. For example, a recent trip to an art gallery expanded pupils' horizons and provided inspiration for their own work.

The proprietor is passionate about the power of sport to motivate disadvantaged pupils and build their self-esteem. He has appropriate knowledge of his statutory responsibilities and so he is able to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of education.

Senior leaders are conscious of staff workload and consider ways to help them manage this. They ensure that the independent school standards are met fully and consistently. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school is now well placed to develop further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher has established a safe environment for pupils. She ensures that all staff are alert to pupils' vulnerabilities so that staff can identify those at risk and quickly report their concerns. She sets a good example to all. This has led to an open culture of safeguarding at the school.

The school works successfully with a range of other organisations to make sure that pupils are given suitable support at times of greatest need. Staff make pupils aware of specific safeguarding issues, such as online risks.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Only a small number of teachers have been trained in the new approach to reading recovery. This limits the impact of the new strategy. Leaders must ensure that all staff are familiar with the new strategy.
- The rates of attendance of some pupils remain poor. They miss out on the learning and personal development work that the school offers. Leaders should further develop their efforts to ensure that more pupils attend regularly.
- The range of therapeutic help offered by the school is limited. As a result, the school relies on external agencies for specialist therapies. Pupils sometimes do not engage with these agencies and so they miss out on the help that they need. Leaders should increase the range of therapies available to pupils.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146646
<b>DfE registration number</b>	353/6004
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10243498
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	26
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	SMS Coaching Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Jonathan Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hecabe DuFraisie
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£38,000 to £58,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 682 6462
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smsschool.co.uk">www.smsschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:headteacher@smscoaching.co.uk">headteacher@smscoaching.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	4 to 6 February 2020

## Information about this school

- The school provides education programmes for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These needs include social emotional and mental health needs, autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- Pupils are placed at the school by local authorities, including Oldham, Stockport, Cheshire East, Salford and Manchester. All pupils on roll have EHC plans.
- The school operates from its main site in Failsworth and a smaller site at 29 Greek Street, Stockport SK3 8AX. This site caters for pupils with more complex needs.
- The school offers temporary alternative provision placements for pupils on roll at local mainstream schools.
- The school offers a core curriculum of English, mathematics and science alongside vocational courses in sports, hair and beauty, food technology and music. The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in February 2020. The school received emergency inspections in May 2021 and February 2022.

## 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, headteacher and senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at lunchtime. The lead inspector met with pupils from the school council.
- Inspectors considered the safeguarding arrangements at the school. They met with the designated safeguarding leader, pupils and staff. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from three local authorities. The safeguarding policy was considered and records relating to pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, sport and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and pupil and staff questionnaires.
- The lead inspector visited the site at Greek Street, Stockport to view the premises and meet with staff and pupils.

## **Inspection team**

Paul Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Maria McGarry

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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