

Inspection of Serenity School Crawley

Atlantic House, Hazelwick Avenue, Three Bridges, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1QQ

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

From the moment pupils first join the school, staff get to know their interests and aspirations well. They work hard to help pupils experience success and achieve their potential. Staff get the best out of pupils by offering support and reassurance. Pupils are put at ease by the respectful, trusting and professional relationships staff form with them. Consequently, a happy and inclusive ethos permeates into everyday school routines.

Pupils learn to manage their feelings successfully. Staff sensitively provide pupils with direction to reflect on their actions and decisions. This guidance enables pupils to gain an appreciation of the impact their behaviour has on others. Over time, pupils develop a clear understanding of how their words and choices can sometimes have negative consequences for them and others. One pupil said, 'It is not good to upset anyone, because hurting others will make us all sad.'

Staff have high expectations. Pupils describe their school as a place where 'each day is a fresh new start'. They enjoy the interesting range of enrichment activities, such as crafts, football and basketball. Pupils look forward to trips to the trampoline park, the leisure centre, the animal centre, the nature reserve and the cinema.

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

Since opening its doors in January 2023, the school has overseen a rapid growth as new pupils and staff have joined. These changes have meant that occasionally communication between the school and all stakeholders has lacked precision. However, the proprietor body is not complacent. They continually review and refine systems to ensure that new staff, pupils and parents now experience a supportive and welcoming start at Serenity School. One such measure is that the proprietor body is making sure that communication between the school and all stakeholders is effective. As a result, parents value the weekly information staff now provide about their child's social and academic successes. Staff agree that the school is actively listening to their feedback and is mindful of their workload and work-life balance.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Too often, they have a history of disjointed and negative experiences of education. The school carries out entry assessments of pupils. These inform pupils' individual learning pathways and set out precise targets for pupils in their different areas of need. The plans link closely to pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Therapists work with staff to ensure that pupils are well supported in all areas of their work.

Staff are positive role models. They reinforce what is expected and help pupils to regulate their behaviour so that learning is not disrupted. Pupils usually behave better the longer they are in school. Staff work effectively in order to help pupils to remove barriers to their learning and attendance. The school has strong procedures in place to support pupils' regular attendance. However, despite this, some pupils do

not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on important learning and vital school experiences.

The curriculum is interesting and ambitious. In key stage 4, this is increasingly aligned to qualification pathways and pupils' aspirations. Priority is given to ensuring that pupils leave the school with a functional skills qualification or GCSE in English and mathematics. Staff know well what pupils need to learn in different subjects and year groups. The curriculum sets out exactly what pupils should learn and when. However, some of the activities that teachers provide do not always help pupils learn or secure their knowledge in different areas of the curriculum fully enough. As a result, they do not consistently achieve as well as they could from their individual starting points.

The school promotes the enjoyment of reading well. It ensures that pupils are introduced to a range of genres at all stages. Pupils enjoy discussing their opinions of the characters, plot and themes in what they read. Younger pupils look forward to listening to the stories staff share. They enjoy choosing books and relish the school's regular visits to the local library. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in the school's approach to the teaching of reading and in its support for pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. This means that some of the younger pupils do not learn to read as quickly and fluently.

There is a well-designed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme in place. Pupils learn about relationships and sex education, different faiths and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Assemblies promote key messages, such as the importance of treating different cultures, beliefs and heritages with respect. Regular events such as litter picks and volunteering in the community help to instil the importance of citizenship. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The careers education programme prepares pupils well for the future. Staff support pupils effectively when applying for college or apprenticeships. Older pupils leave with valuable qualifications that help them to pursue a range of career options.

The proprietor body has a successful track record in special education. They challenge and support the school effectively in order to improve pupils' achievement and attendance. The proprietor body ensures that all the independent school standards ('the standards') are met consistently well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some lessons, the activity choices used by teachers do not consistently support pupils' understanding of the important knowledge they need to learn. This hinders

how well pupils learn and achieve from their individual starting points. The school should ensure that staff are well trained to ensure the activities pupils complete are carefully aligned with the aims of the curriculum.

- Staff who teach phonics lack sufficient expertise. This means that some of the younger pupils do not learn to read quickly and confidently. The school should ensure that the new phonics programme is firmly established and that all staff receive expert training to deliver phonics effectively.
- A significant minority of pupils are persistently absent from school. These pupils miss valuable learning. The school should continue determinedly with its work to raise pupils' attendance.

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	149160
DfE registration number	938/6010
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10299265
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	SED.Group Limited
Chair	Ebere Emezie
Headteacher	Claire Pettman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,000 to £59,000
Telephone number	01293 698298
Website	www.serenityschool.org.uk
Email address	crawleyoffice@serenityschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education in December 2022 and opened on 20 January 2023. It caters for up to 180 pupils aged five to 18 years of age. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- Serenity School Crawley caters for pupils with a range of SEND needs, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. They are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. Most pupils have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 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 held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chief operating officer and the chief executive officer of the proprietor body. An inspector spoke on the telephone with an officer from one of the local authorities which places pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 also reviewed the curriculum in science and carried out a work scrutiny in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff

during meetings with them and through the staff survey. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with some parents.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Liz McIntosh

Ofsted Inspector

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