

# My Choice (Kestral House)

c/o Unit 3a Mill Green Industrial Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1XQ

**Inspection dates** 6–7 and 28 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Adequate	3
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

## Summary of key findings

### This school is adequate because

- Students' achievement is adequate and improving in academic subjects. Achievement is not yet good because teaching and learning are adequate and individuals' progress is often held back by personal difficulties.
- Students' personal development is improving. Their improved self-confidence and awareness of others is very clear, but there is still some way to go before they know themselves well and have realistic aspirations.
- The individual education plans are not wholly appropriate to the needs of all students in that, initially, too much emphasis is placed on academic progress and not enough on personal development.
- Leaders and managers have not yet met with the appropriate authorities to review the individual education plans so that the curriculum, teaching and achievement can become consistently good.
- Leaders and managers have established a safe and supportive environment for students in the very short time since opening. They have ensured students' adequate progress to date. But it is only a start and there is still some way to go before students become happy and confident optimistic people.

### The school has the following strengths

- Although they have been at the school for only a short time, there is strong evidence that students are now making adequate progress academically and in their personal development.
- Staff know the students very well and they work very closely together. Such close liaison means that all staff have a very good awareness of students' anxieties and are improving individuals' behaviour. Good relations ensure learning is carried out in a positive climate.
- Students are kept safe and secure and are quick to acknowledge this. Staff are vetted very thoroughly and recruitment records are maintained meticulously. Staff are very well trained in all aspects of health and safety, such as child protection, first aid, fire safety and physical interventions.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out on two separate visits by two separate inspectors. The first visit was made with half a day's notice and the second with no notice. This report combines the findings of both visits.
- A range of activities was observed. This included four lessons when a teacher was present with care staff, the latter in the capacity as support teachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other staff.
- School policies and their application were examined.
- No parents, carers or local authorities submitted their views about the school.

## Inspection team

Paul Armitage, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- My Choice (Kestral House) is a very small special school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. There is residential accommodation.
- The school had its last full inspection in July 2007, when the quality of education was found to be inadequate. It was judged to have made good progress in dealing with its failings when it was monitored in December 2007.
- The school is so small that it frequently does not have any students on roll. There were none in the school between 2008 and December 2012. Students joined the school in December 2012 at very short notice.
- Because it is a small school, teachers and care staff work closely together on all aspects of provision.
- The school only admits students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties that are severe enough to prevent their attendance at a mainstream school.
- There are no students with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has links with a number of local providers who provide educational opportunities for students.

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

- With the appropriate authorities, leaders and managers must revise the individual education plans so as to:
  - make the curriculum more relevant to students' aspirations
  - give teachers more ideas on how to provide learning experiences for students that provide greater challenge.
- Find a better room or teaching area to serve as a classroom.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

### Adequate

Students' academic achievement is adequate. In the study of themes such as 'Getting ready for adult life' and 'Recycling and composting', there is evidence that progress is adequate given students' low starting points on their recent entry to the school. Much of the academic work focuses on literacy and numeracy, an example of the latter being the calculation of household budgets. In literacy, prose is clear, coherent and written in well-controlled handwriting. Achievement is strongest in oral communication which is especially important because of the way the expression and exploration of thoughts and ideas help students understand themselves and others better. One good example of high quality, effective oral communication is the discussion that goes on round the table at lunch time. It also allows reflection on the morning's activities and preparation for the afternoon. In art, cookery, ice skating and swimming, achievement is at least adequate. Particular interests, such the history of graffiti, help to raise standards in art. A very small amount of work has just been completed and assessed for national qualifications in basic skills. This includes cloze exercises in literacy and a draft curriculum vitae, the latter including a spider diagram. These have been completed to an adequate standard.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

### Adequate

Behaviour and students' personal development are adequate. The school makes considerable effort with personal development because of the nature of students' special educational needs and the need to provide each student with a secure personal foundation as a basis for academic achievement. The school takes great care in understanding individual needs and then uses various approaches to address them before selecting the most effective. It also exploits links with other providers to help when necessary. A good example is a link with a local charity that provides additional basic skills and other training, and then finds placements for students as well as finding appropriate further education courses.

The professional relationships between staff and students are very good, which makes the actions of staff to support students even more effective. Likewise, the close relationship between care and education staff means that there is consistency of approach. This is particularly evident in the clear expectations regarding behaviour and the ways in which any difficulty or concerns are handled.

Staff have achieved a great deal in the short time since the students' arrival. Behaviour has improved considerably as has students' attendance, which is now regular, particularly at after-school activities. But there is still more to do, which is why personal development is adequate rather than good. Students' self-confidence is developing but is still not secure and their ability to undertake sustained work is only just beginning. The students still do not have clear ambitions and do not know themselves well enough, even though this process has begun and has already had a positive effect.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate. It takes place mostly in the discussions that take place between students and staff. These are often based on family issues and choices, but they also arise from other things such as what has been seen on television. There is a good, formal personal, social, health education course, but the talks with staff are far more important. Visits and a range of other activities are also beginning to contribute to development; for example, the recent visit to Madame Tussauds raised awareness of historical dilemmas and seeing the 'Sports Zone' and 'Music Megastars' pointed to other worlds and raised ambition. During the inspection a visit to the bank to open an account was planned and a country walk was linked to conservation issues, thus raising students' community awareness. In this way, students have started to understand better, British institutions and culture. Future planned activities include opportunities to study other cultures. This has already begun, principally through art.

**Quality of teaching****Adequate**

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate. It is not yet good because students' progress is not yet good and students have yet to succeed in the greater challenges planned by teachers for the future.

In the lessons seen, staff promoted students' personal development through a range of objectives. Thus, one lesson encouraged students to make choices by selecting from either rambling or swimming. The rambling also included the option of visiting a local nature reserve which linked to written and other work already done about conservation. The lesson also presented the students with an even bigger challenge – whether to go or not because, for many different reasons and inhibitions, not all wanted or felt able to go. This was one of many different attempts made by teachers to engage the students, each time trying something different to see what would be most successful. The same approach is taken in classroom-based activities, attempting to find out what works and what does not. In these types of activities, in addition to teaching the subject content, staff are attempting to develop students' patience, enthusiasm for learning and the ability to undertake sustained work.

Over the short time that students have been in the school, teachers' success has been variable but, overall, there has been improvement, noticeably a greater willingness of students to participate with increased self-confidence and a developing optimism about the future.

While preserving sensitivity to the personal needs of the students, teachers are aware of the need for greater challenge and faster pace of development. They are already moving to do this, for example by seeking work and training placements which will provide challenge outside the school environment.

**Quality of curriculum****Adequate**

The curriculum overall is adequate. Provision enables students to make adequate gains in their learning over time. The individual education plans set out a comprehensive academic curriculum consisting of a good range of learning activities. They place a suitable emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills and personal, social and health education, with the breadth of study provided by subjects such as art and design, humanities, food technology and the use of computers. Students have the opportunity to study units of an accredited examination scheme which has the potential for suitably preparing students for leaving school. However, after the arrival of the students, staff soon discovered that plans were not wholly appropriate because, without focusing more on students' personal development, little headway would be made in academic achievement. In addition, the content of the plans was not wholly appropriate given the students' emerging career aims. As a consequence, staff changed emphasis so that the present curriculum suitably focuses on personal development with basic skills in literacy and numeracy and other subjects such as physical education and art woven in to what is taught and experienced by the students. The teachers' interpretation of the plans has led to an adequate curriculum but there has not yet been a formal review with placing authorities to discuss how it can be improved further.

**Pupils' welfare, health and safety****Good**

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. A very well organised approach to ensuring the suitability of all staff makes an important contribution to the school's robust safeguarding arrangements. All relevant details are checked prior to all staff taking up appointment and these are stored correctly in a single central register. A similarly well-maintained record of staff training also contributes much to students' safety by ensuring that staff training is up to date in

aspects such as child protection, first aid, fire safety and physical intervention. All staff, including the designated staff member who oversees safeguarding, are trained at the appropriate level. There is an appropriate number of trained first aiders.

The premises are safe and students are well supervised. Routine risk assessment checks, including those for electrical equipment, fire fighting equipment and alarms, are undertaken and carried out within the recommended timescales, and regular evacuation exercises are conducted and outcomes are formally recorded. Guidance for ensuring students' off-site safety is clear and appropriate risk assessment of visits is always undertaken and the results are properly recorded.

All of the required health and safety policies are in place and these are understood by staff and are implemented effectively. This includes those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying and first aid. The policy and practice for promoting good behaviour involve a useful reward system.

Anti-bullying procedures are effective and students report that there is no bullying in any form. Most of the time, staff and students interact very well. Relationships are strong and school and residential staff provide high quality guidance and support. They listen carefully to students' concerns, and work with students to try and get them to resolve any issues that arise themselves. Staff do this by encouraging them to take a balanced view of the problem and to work out what the consequences of alternative actions might be, and then to make the right choice. However, sometimes students still make the wrong choices, although this weakness is improving as students' understanding and self-confidence improve. The school works hard at maintaining links with parents and carers and the students' home local authorities. These are not always successful, depending, mainly, on students' backgrounds.

## Leadership and management

### Adequate

Leadership and management of the school are adequate. After a period of more than four years with no student in the school, the proprietor was asked by a local authority in December 2012 to admit students. The proprietor responded quickly by ensuring that appropriate staffing, accommodation and resources were quickly put in place. Since then, the leaders and managers have worked closely with staff to develop teaching and a curriculum that will encourage students' personal development and their engagement in academic learning. It is early days, but for these students from troubled backgrounds they are already achieving adequately.

Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, including teaching. As a result, they have ensured a safe environment for students, provided good staffing and resources and staff are doing almost all the right things with adequate success in a short period of time. However, they have not yet explored with the relevant authorities how teaching and the curriculum reflected in the individual education plans can be improved further.

The proprietor has ensured that the premises and accommodation are generally suitable. For the most part the rooms are bright, friendly and homely. The one negative is the schoolroom. It is adequate but rather dull, small and unattractive, so it is a good thing that it is not used too much. All of the required information is provided, or is made available to parents, carers and others, including the local authority. The complaints procedure meets requirements. The proprietor has ensured that all the regulations for independent schools are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135112
<b>Inspection number</b>	420137
<b>DfE registration number</b>	938/6271

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Female
<b>Proprietor</b>	My Choice
<b>Headteacher</b>	Annie Murphy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2007

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



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.

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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

