

Howard House

Inspection dates

9–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- It is well led and managed. The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations of what the school can achieve. He has ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good and improving.
- Pupils' achievement is good from their low starting points. They make good gains in their learning over time, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils are given individual learning tasks which closely meet their needs.
- Pupils gain rapidly in self-confidence and enjoy their learning. They are prepared well for further education and employment. Their behaviour is good. They say they feel safe in school and are well cared for by all staff.
- The curriculum is good and does much to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through the well-planned personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE).

It is not yet outstanding because

- Although there are some good examples of marking, this is not consistent across the school. Pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to marking to help improve their work.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently or assess for themselves how well they are learning.

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

- The headteacher was notified of this inspection on the day before the inspection started.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by three teachers. Meetings were held with the director, headteacher, staff and pupils. Telephone discussions were held with three local authority staff and a parent.
- The inspector checked a range of documentation including records of pupils' progress, pupils' work, leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan and a range of policies.
- There were no Parent View responses but the inspector took into account the views of parents, carers, pupils and local authority representatives through their responses to school surveys. Ofsted questionnaire responses from staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Christine Inkster, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small independent school which is registered for up to 10 girls and boys aged from 11 to 17 years and which caters for residential pupils. No current pupils have a statement of special educational needs, although they all have special educational needs supported at school action plus (pupils who receive external support for their special educational needs).
- All current pupils are of White British heritage and are boys. All pupils are in the care of their local authority.
- The school provides for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education prior to starting at the school.
- The school opened in 2006, originally for six pupils, and the number permitted to be registered increased to 10 in 2009.
- The school aims to 'create a caring, challenging environment in which all pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential and are given opportunities to flourish in a wide variety of curricular and extra-curricular interests'.
- The school was last inspected in March 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching improves to outstanding by:
 - making sure that pupils are able to identify and assess for themselves how well they are learning
 - improving marking so that pupils are clear about what they have done well and how they can make their work even better
 - giving pupils opportunities to respond to marking and feedback
 - making sure that pupils have more opportunities to work independently, when it is appropriate for them to do so.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good because of the good quality of teaching and good curriculum. Pupils have low levels of attainment when they start at the school and many have significant gaps in their learning because of disruption to their education prior to admission. The school's information on pupils' progress and their work show that they are making good progress from their low starting points. This is particularly the case in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Pupils are successful in achieving a range of qualifications including GCSEs, Entry Level Certificates in English, mathematics, science, history and geography to level 3, functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT and adult literacy and numeracy awards at level 2. Pupils say they are keen to continue their education when they leave the school, for example by gaining an apprenticeship or going on to college.

Pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are rapidly improving. Pupils read with fluency, expression and good comprehension. School assessment data show that pupils' reading ages have improved significantly over their time at the school. Their confidence has developed considerably enabling them to participate very well in drama and role-play activities with members of staff, for example, when acting out a sketch about counter arguments during an English lesson. This enabled the pupils not only to understand the concept, but also how to manage conflict, particularly through the use of good humour. Pupils are improving their writing skills well, although some find it difficult to write at length. Standards in mathematics have improved with some predicted to achieve A* - C passes in GCSE mathematics this year. Pupils are making good progress in other areas of the curriculum such as in history and geography as they are gaining much new knowledge. They are also developing their skills in research well using ICT.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and their personal development are good. From being disengaged in their education prior to entering the school, they rapidly become enthusiastic and active learners and say they now enjoy coming to school. The headteacher and staff assess pupils' behavioural, emotional and social needs on entry to the school and address any specific needs. This enables pupils to settle quickly and engage in their learning. The views of parents, carers, placing authorities and staff from other agencies confirm that pupils' behaviour, confidence and self-esteem have improved. One local authority representative stated, 'I have found that the young person has grown in confidence and is enjoying his education'. Pupils' attendance has improved dramatically since joining the school with several pupils now achieving 100% attendance. However, not all pupils arrive in school on time each morning and sometimes miss the first few minutes of the lesson.

There are very good relationships between adults and pupils and pupils say that they trust the adults to give them the help and support they need. There are some incidents of unacceptable behaviour, but these have greatly reduced in number and are managed well within the school's clear policies and procedures. Pupils respond well to rewards and value the 'points' they achieve for good work and good behaviour. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and they say they feel safe in school. There are high levels of one-to-one support but occasionally, as pupils are so closely supervised, they are not developing independent learning skills as well as they could.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils benefit particularly from PSHCE and cultural lessons linked to religious education. They learn about world religions and those from backgrounds different to their own, for example, in history, when learning about the Holocaust and in geography when they learn about life in Kenya. This promotes their tolerance and

understanding and prepares them well for life in a multicultural British society. They are developing their social skills well and understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are developing a good understanding of public institutions and services in England, particularly through PSHCE and English lessons, for example when they learn about the government. Staff ensure that when political views are discussed, pupils develop a balanced understanding of opposing views.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers share with pupils what they are going to learn and identify the steps they need to take to achieve their goals. However, pupils do not always have the opportunity to assess for themselves how well they have learned. Although pupils have good individual support in lessons, they do not always have enough opportunities to work independently.

Pupils are assessed on entry to the school and staff plan carefully to meet each pupil's individual needs and address any gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their progress is tracked carefully following regular assessments and this information is used effectively to identify 'next steps' in learning and to set challenging targets. This information is shared with parents, carers and placing authorities on a weekly basis. There are examples of good marking, but this is not consistent across the school and in all subjects. Pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to marking to help improve their work. Pupils have individual learning targets for English, mathematics and behaviour and they understand what they have to do to achieve them.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils are encouraged to carry out research on computers to further their knowledge. Teachers have good questioning skills which probe pupils' understanding and pupils are expected to give reasons for their answers. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and there are constant changes of activities, including practical activities, which help to keep pupils interested and motivated in their learning.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good and supports pupils' good achievement. It is broad and balanced and there are good opportunities for pupils to study a range of subjects, which cover all the areas of learning. The curriculum is based on National Curriculum programmes of study and there are appropriate schemes of work in place. These are adapted and personalised to meet each pupil's needs well. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum, such as in history and geography. The school has introduced a modern foreign language (Spanish) and food technology.

Pupils learn important life skills such as cooking and managing finances and are involved in a 'preparing for work' programme which includes careers guidance. They learn how to keep themselves safe and develop their self-esteem and confidence through a well-developed PSHCE programme. This was shown in a lesson observed during the inspection when the classroom was 'set up' with a number of hazards. These were accurately identified by the pupils who were able to state how accidents could be avoided.

Pupils have opportunities to engage in a computer club and there are a wide range of visits organised such as to museums to study aspects of history and field trips to study geography. They also participate in 'Forest School' activities and enjoy residential and camping experiences, which contribute much to their learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. All the regulatory requirements are met. Systems to safeguard pupils are rigorous. All staff are trained to the required level and the designated child protection officer has attended enhanced training. Several senior staff have attended safer recruitment training and the school uses rigorous procedures for the appointment of staff. The school's single central register of checks on staff, including staff from other agencies, is up to date and thorough. There are detailed risk assessments for the school buildings and all aspects of school life, including those for off-site and educational visits. Thorough health and safety audits are carried out on a regular basis and any concerns are promptly dealt with. The buildings have been inspected for fire safety and all equipment is regularly checked including electrical equipment, fire extinguishers and external lighting. There is an appropriate fire plan in place and regular fire drills are carried out. All staff receive training in first aid, fire safety, health and safety, child protection and physical intervention. There are a range of suitable policies for anti-bullying, behaviour, first aid and safeguarding which are properly implemented.

Pupils are supervised closely at all times and pupils say they feel safe and secure while at school. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe, including when using ICT. There are good policies and procedures in place for promoting good behaviour and there has been a significant decrease in behavioural incidents, particularly over the last year. Pupils say bullying is rare but they know they can seek help from adults if they have a worry or concern. Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles, but not all take opportunities to eat healthily or participate in exercise.

Leadership and management**Good**

Leadership and management are good. The proprietor, director and the headteacher have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met. The headteacher, who was appointed 18 months ago, has ensured that there have been significant improvements to all aspects of the school's provision since his appointment. This was confirmed by staff from other agencies, including those from placing local authorities, and by parents and carers. He has a clear vision for the future of the school and has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. He regularly checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and gives helpful feedback to staff on how teaching can improve. Staff work closely and effectively as a team and are determined that pupils will achieve the best of which they are capable. As a result, the quality of teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding and pupils are making good progress in their learning and in improving their behaviour. Staff are given good opportunities for professional development and encouraged to enhance their skills and qualifications. The quality of the curriculum has improved and this has helped to engage pupils more in their learning because activities are more interesting and stimulating. School leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and there is a suitable action plan which identifies the most important priorities for further improvement. All the issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed.

Parents, carers and placing authorities are provided with good information about pupils' progress on a weekly basis as well as through an annual report. This is greatly valued and ensures that adults are promptly informed if there are any concerns and also of pupils' achievements. All the required information for parents, carers and others is available on the school website and in the prospectus. The complaints procedures now meet regulatory requirements and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The proprietor has provided high-quality accommodation. The school buildings and grounds are safe and secure and the school meets all the regulations. There are attractive gardens and spacious grounds which provide plenty of space for outdoor play, sport and games. There are well maintained, bright and cheerful classrooms including an ICT room and an art room. However, the range of ICT resources is limited, although those available are used effectively to support pupils' learning. The school has plans to develop a vegetable garden and there is now a shed where woodwork and design and technology activities can take place.

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/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	132855
Inspection number	420238
DfE registration number	929/6046

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.

Type of school	Independent school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11-17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Allan O'Neil
Headteacher	Alistair Omand
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2010

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