

Lighthouse School

24 Clarendon Road, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2QJ

Inspection dates

11–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and staff are ambitious for the pupils of Lighthouse School. Pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching are improving rapidly. Leaders are clear about what needs to improve further, although this is not documented clearly.
- Pupils arrive at the school with major gaps in their learning due to missing time in school as well as disruptions in their personal lives. From typically low starting points, pupils settle into well-organised learning routines and make good and sometimes better progress, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Assessment information is used well to identify targets and to track progress. However, lessons are not routinely adapted when tasks are too easy or too hard. This limits otherwise successful teaching.
- Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Each pupil is known well to staff, who model positive relationships and treat pupils with respect. Consequently, pupils' self-esteem, attitudes and behaviours improve.
- Pupils describe school as a happy, safe place to which they enjoy coming. Despite their high levels of need, incidents of difficult behaviour rarely prevent learning. Pupils show friendly attitudes towards staff, visitors and each other.
- Pupils are aware of many different dangers and some show a sophisticated understanding of risk. All pupils report feeling safe in school and trusting the adults to help them resolve concerns.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that staff take note, during lessons, of whether a pupil finds the given task too simple or too difficult, and make suitable adjustments.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders' and governors' plans for improvement are clear about the intended impact of actions, identify how pupils will benefit positively from proposed changes and have clear arrangements for the timeframes, monitoring and evaluation
 - formalising arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with an unrelenting focus on improving pupils' outcomes, have ensured that the quality of teaching and pace of learning have significantly improved over the last year. Leaders' clear vision for improvement and determined approach have united staff in a quest to see pupils achieve well and be ready for the next steps in their lives.
- A positive culture of training and development has been firmly embedded and staff morale is high. School leaders hold staff formally to account through performance management systems, and effective guidance and support are provided via supervision meetings. In both sets of meetings, pupils' progress is closely analysed and discussed. Consequently, additional support is quickly provided for any pupil who is not making good progress.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school, offering formal classroom learning and varied opportunities to take part in off-site activities. A range of academic subjects is now available at GCSE level in addition to vocational qualifications. The significant concentration on basic skills in which pupils have fallen behind ensures that pupils make particularly strong progress in reading, writing, mathematics and social skills.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and British values are well promoted. Staff and pupils have a thorough understanding of equality and know about protected characteristics. Pupils display highly inclusive attitudes, for example when considering different backgrounds and heritages. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions, participate in discussion and make appropriate decisions for themselves. Such opportunities help pupils to prepare for life beyond school, including increasing their understanding of law, democracy and responsibility.
- Leaders discuss what more should be improved and how, but documents, plans for improvement and evaluations lack detail. It is not clear from the documentation how proposed actions would benefit the pupils.

Governance

- The director of operations of Acorn Care, the company that owns the school, provides effective support for the headteacher and holds him to account through frequent, rigorous conversations and email correspondence. The school does not have an established governing body, but leaders have agreed that this would benefit the school and active recruitment of suitably experienced and skilled governors is under way.
- The director of operations visits the school regularly and knows the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. He knows precisely how money is spent, including the pupil premium funding, to what effect and how well the pupils are achieving.
- Suitable arrangements for the management of staff performance and appraisal targets are established for all staff other than the headteacher. Evidence indicates that poor staff performance is tackled swiftly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- All staff are extensively trained, including in safer recruitment, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Staff are knowledgeable about the additional vulnerabilities of the pupils in this school and know exactly how to proceed should they have a concern.
- The curriculum is planned to promote personal safety, and close working with parents, carers and other agencies is thoroughly established. Communication is such that no pupil is absent from school without staff knowing exactly why. High levels of supervision and routine assessment of risk promotes pupils' welfare both in school and when taking part in activities beyond the school site.
- The school safeguarding policy pays close regard to the most recent government guidance. The policy is available on the school website. Pupils also show a good awareness of safeguarding matters.
- All staff have confirmed their reading of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' as required.
- The single central register fully meets the regulations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Work in pupils' books, observations in lessons during the inspection and the school's own records all confirm that pupils' progress has accelerated significantly in the last year. Pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 typically make good progress, and in certain subjects, such as science, when learning about emulsions or friction, progress is outstanding. The most able pupils make consistently strong progress in all subjects.
- The school has a clear framework for assessment. Pupils have personal targets that cover their full range of social, emotional, mental health and academic learning needs. Teachers and support staff have a deep knowledge of each pupil's unique situation, are aware of their targets and evaluate progress towards them.
- Teachers have extensive subject knowledge and set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Lessons are interesting and are supported by appropriate resources. These different factors all contribute to pupils' overall progress.
- Teachers provide pupils with detailed feedback about their learning and, as a result, pupils are able to improve their work. Staff are adept at identifying who is best placed to support a pupil according to their particular immediate need. This ensures that most lessons progress without disruption and a clear focus on learning is maintained.
- Daily routines are well established throughout the school. All pupils know what to expect and when and usually make smooth transitions from one part of the day to another.
- Teachers know that good literacy and numeracy skills are vital for pupils' future success. They plan carefully to weave opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening into all subjects. The teaching of phonics, coupled with the raised profile of reading, has ensured that pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able, have improved their reading.
- The most able pupils in the school are making rapid progress. Learning tasks are planned for each individual and lessons move at a challenging pace. Consequently, differences between this group of pupils and their peers in mainstream schools are diminishing. In common with pupils in mainstream schools, pupils at Lighthouse School are now able to gain recognised qualifications.

- Teachers are good at using information about how effectively pupils are learning to plan future lessons. However, when a pupil finds a task particularly easy or difficult, staff do not routinely make adjustments during lessons. In such lessons, pupils do not make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils typically join the school with low self-esteem and poor social skills. Most pupils have previously attended several schools, have been excluded and have experienced periods of absence from education.
- Since arriving at Lighthouse School and in particular over the last academic year, pupils have made great progress in increasing their self-confidence and are re-engaging with learning. Their relationships with adults and their peers are improving significantly. Pupils show pride in their own achievements.
- All pupils have programmes of support to secure their emotional well-being. Pupils readily discuss their feelings with staff and all pupils benefit from one-to-one mentoring. Pupils learn about the importance of health, including physical well-being, through the school's structured personal, social and health education programme. Records show that placing authorities and those involved in pupils' wider care agree that pupils make good progress towards their social and emotional targets.
- Pupils and staff agree that there is no bullying in school. There are decreasing numbers of outbursts of poor behaviour and these are not based on homophobic, racist or sexist motives. Pupils understand right from wrong and are learning to be accountable for their actions. They have a thorough understanding of different risks and how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The school's health and safety policies are effective in keeping everyone safe. Appropriate checks are completed on equipment. Risk assessments for activities and for individual pupils are in place.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand the right of others to work in a calm atmosphere. When necessary, pupils leave the classroom and go to an agreed space, where they can calm down, tackle the problem and get back to work. This approach is appreciated by all pupils as disruption is kept to a minimum.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are tracked in every lesson, every day. Pupils accumulate points towards weekly rewards, which are eagerly awaited. Records demonstrate that all pupils currently in school have improved their levels of self-control.
- Break- and lunchtimes are seen as a social time and are enjoyed by staff and pupils alike. For example, at morning break, pupils and staff share tea and toast together, chatting in small social groups. Table tennis is very popular and played by some in all available moments. In these sessions, adults model sporting conduct – pupils benefit from this, as well as opportunities to engage in informal, yet respectful, dialogue with staff.

- Pupils feel valued as members of the school community and know their views are respected and responded to. This contributes to their improving behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and pupils are generally punctual to school and lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at different points in their educational career, and at different times of year, with very low levels of attainment. Current pupils are all in key stages 3 and 4. All pupils have experienced disrupted education arising from their complex needs. Staff are highly skilled at meeting the learning and emotional, social and mental health needs of each pupil. Individually tailored induction packages help pupils settle. Following induction, pupils make good progress.
- Outcomes in English, mathematics and science are consistently good. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are persistently reinforced at formal and informal times of the day. Pupils' reading improves strongly. Some pupils learn to read for the first time and others increase their enjoyment of reading as they are more readily able to access texts that interest them.
- In science, outcomes are outstanding. Teachers' high expectations are revealed in pupils' work. Pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 make predictions, carry out experiments, draw conclusions and record their work.
- In other subjects, including humanities, physical education and design technology, pupils show enthusiasm and interest. All pupils participate in physical education together, demonstrating their competitive spirit combined with a sense of fair play. Pupils were proud of the letter blocks that they had carved in the design technology workshop and were proceeding to use them as printing blocks.
- Last year, all pupils in the school, regardless of age or key stage, were entered for and gained formal qualifications such as functional skills at entry level or level 1. Pupils took a combination of English, mathematics and science. Pupils have gathered confidence from this experience and current pupils are working to improve and extend their qualifications. Formal certification and rapid progress are helping pupils to be prepared for the next stages in their lives. Most pupils who left the school last year remained in education, studying subjects of particular interest such as carpentry, hairdressing and animal husbandry.
- All pupils who attend the school have identified social, emotional or mental health needs. Some also have additional learning needs, for example autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have individual learning plans to which staff and pupils contribute. Staff and pupils are clear about individual learning needs and targets. While all pupils in school are progressing well, outcomes at the end of key stage 4 remain significantly below those of their peers in mainstream schools, due to pupils' low starting points, gaps in learning and their particular special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- All pupils are entitled to pupil premium funding. This funding is spent differently according to pupils' needs. Leaders analyse and identify the impact on progress of the additional spending. The school meets the needs of these pupils effectively, as reflected by the pupils' work books and their own descriptions of the progress they have made.

- The most able pupils achieve well across the curriculum and particularly well in English, mathematics and science. Teachers use assessment effectively to identify what pupils know and can do and plan learning to fill gaps and enable rapid progress. Consequently, attainment gaps between these pupils and their peers in mainstream school are reducing.

School details

Unique reference number	130979
DfE registration number	886/6110
Inspection number	10006114

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	David Knowles
Chair	David Knowles
Headteacher	David Wilkinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,500
Telephone number	01843 482043
Website	www.thelighthouseschool.eu
Email address	lighthouseupper@ahgroup.eu
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Lighthouse School is registered for up to 36 boys and girls aged eight to 18 years of age who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Almost all pupils are looked after by their local authority and all have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils have previously attended a number of schools and have been excluded. Most pupils have significant gaps in their education.

- The school is situated in Cliftonville, Margate. The school relocated to the current building in September 2016. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015.
- The school aims to provide a high-quality learning experience by delivering an alternative curriculum designed to promote inclusion, engagement, learning opportunity and access to accreditation and qualifications.
- The school uses alternative providers when considered appropriate. Currently, pupils are accessing Challenger Group and Forest Schools.
- This is the school's first standard inspection since it was registered as Lighthouse School in July 2015. Pupils on roll at the predecessor school transferred to Lighthouse School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards, reviewed the school's website, and scrutinised school policies, schemes of work and other documentation.
- The inspector observed a range of different lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, the director of operations and staff. She met pupils informally and talked to them about their learning and their experiences of school. The inspector listened to the most able and the least able pupils reading aloud.
- The inspector took account of the views of one of the placing authorities and analysed staff questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to generate a report.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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