

Little Acorns School

London Beach Farm, Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6SR

Inspection Dates

12 October 2017

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- School standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils that were explored during this inspection are met. These standards were also met during the June 2017 progress monitoring inspection.
- Staff know the pupils well. School leaders are diligent in ensuring that the procedures regarding safeguarding are all in place. Staff, including those new to the school, have received extensive training to ensure that all pupils are safe.
- The designated safeguarding leads are always on site. They are aware of their duty to inform the designated officer if they have any concerns.
- Suitable safer recruitment procedures are in place. The school's single central record is detailed and contains all the required information.
- The school's safeguarding policy is appropriately used to ensure that pupils receive the right care and support. It is up to date and takes into account the latest guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016), which is published on the school's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- During the previous monitoring inspection that took place in June 2017, it was found that there remained unmet independent school standards in relation to leadership and management. The report advised that there was no scheme of delegation or form of governance in place. It stated that there were not adequate arrangements for the proprietor to manage the performance of the joint headteachers. All of these areas have been addressed.
- The school now has suitable governance in the form of an advisory board, which is currently composed of three members, including a representative of the proprietor. The board has already met, and minutes of the meeting show that members have a clear strategic oversight of the school. The board commissions consultants, such as educational advisers, who regularly visit the school to provide additional support and

challenge. Additionally, Kent County Council has conducted a full safeguarding audit.

- The school now has a scheme of delegation, which clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each member of the advisory board. The scheme of delegation specifies the required frequency of reporting from the joint headteachers to the advisory board. For example, there is an expectation that information about pupils' progress and attainment will be presented six times a year.
- Arrangements for the performance management of the joint headteachers are in place. The advisory board will be using the new assessment system to challenge leaders on the academic and personal progress of pupils.
- The joint headteachers have demonstrated a commitment to rapidly improve the school. By June this year they had already met most of the school standards. The joint headteachers have achieved many of the goals identified in the school action plan. There are now much clearer roles and responsibilities for all staff. Job descriptions are detailed and link into the appraisal system. The school has a clear set of priorities in place to develop further.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found previously in this paragraph, this standard is now met.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - actively promote well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

School Details

Unique reference number	131810
DfE registration number	886/6085
Inspection number	10040602

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Proprietor	Jawad Sheikh – Choice Lifestyles
Chair	Barbara Dansey
Headteachers	Tony Hollett and Alison Neal
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,234
Telephone number	01233 850 422
Website	www.choicelifestyles.co.uk
Email address	littleacorns@choicelifestyles.net
Date of previous standard inspection	8–10 November 2016

Information about this school

- Little Acorns School opened in 1999. The school specialises in working with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health issues. The school does not provide alternative provision.
- The school is owned by Choice Lifestyles and is registered to take pupils aged from five to 14 years of age.
- There are six pupils on roll.
- Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Some are awaiting their education, health and care plans.
- Pupils are taught in two classes. Pupils are placed in the class that best meets their

needs. However, typically, the younger pupils are in one class while the older pupils are in the other class.

- The school was last inspected in November 2016 when the overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate and a number of independent school standards were found to be unmet. On 23 June 2017 the school had a progress monitoring inspection which found that there were still some unmet independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the school's previous standard inspection in November 2016, when the school was judged to be inadequate. The school's first action plan to address the unmet independent school standards identified at that inspection was rejected by the Department for Education (DfE) in February 2017. The subsequent action plan was accepted in April 2017.
- In June 2017 the school had its first progress monitoring inspection. It found that although most of the independent school standards had been met, those related to leadership and management remained unmet. The focus of this second progress monitoring inspection was to ascertain whether those standards related to leadership and management had now been met. This inspection was carried out without notice.
- The inspector met with the joint headteachers and other staff. She visited three lessons. There were meetings with pupils to ascertain their views of the school. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the proprietor's representative, who is also a member of the school's advisory board. There was also a telephone conversation with one of consultants that the advisory body has commissioned to provide educational support and challenge.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's safeguarding, behaviour and other associated policies. Records of visits by independent consultants to advise school leaders on aspects of school improvement were examined. The single central record and the local authority's audit of safeguarding arrangements were checked.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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