

Sunfield Children’s Home Limited

Clent Grove, Clent, Stourbridge, Worcestershire, DY9 9PB

Inspection dates

25–27 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet strong enough to meet pupils’ needs consistently. Too many lessons are not as well planned as they could be and as a consequence, pupils do not learn as well as they might.
- Sometimes, teachers do not take enough note of pupils’ communication passports or other assessment information to plan learning.
- Some parts of the school are unstimulating and industrial. Leaders’ plans to move pupils into more appropriate accommodation are not yet complete. In some classrooms, maintenance routines need to be improved.
- In the past, teachers have focused too much on pupils’ personal development and not enough on their learning. This is improving but outcomes are not yet good.
- Leaders have introduced a new assessment system. It is not yet embedded and needs time to become fully effective.
- The school regularly uses supply staff. Leaders acknowledge that, while the situation is improving, this has a negative impact on their ability to meet pupils’ needs.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are open and totally honest about the challenges that they have faced, and the work yet to do. This openness has led to rapid improvements, improved staff morale and better outcomes for pupils.
- The new curriculum better meets pupils’ needs because leaders have designed it with care.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. They have improved many aspects of the school over the last year.
- Staff effectively promote pupils’ personal development. Their care for pupils is excellent.

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 teaching and outcomes for pupils by making sure that teachers:
 - pay close attention to the ways in which classroom resources support learning
 - think carefully about the purpose of tasks and the learning that can be gained from them
 - fully embed the assessment system so that teachers can be sure of pupils' starting points and progress
 - create a sustainable, permanent team of teachers so that the use of agency staff does not negatively impact on pupils' learning.
- Improve maintenance in classrooms so that small hazards are fixed swiftly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Over the last year, the new leadership team have made swift improvements to the school. This is because they made an accurate assessment of the quality of the provision and worked diligently to meet all of the independent school standards. Staff are excited about the changes and told inspectors that they enjoy their work more than ever before.
- Leaders have evaluated the curriculum and introduced a new one which involves pupils using the full extent of the school site, the on-site farm, visits off site and more time out of the classroom. It also adds academic challenge where this is appropriate. This new curriculum is in tune with pupils' needs. Staff are supportive of the new curriculum but more time is needed for them to improve their teaching skills so that the curriculum has its full impact.
- Acknowledging that some pupils will benefit, both socially and academically, from time in a different environment, leaders are about to use alternative provision. They have made all the relevant checks of this provision. While the impact of this has yet to be seen, it demonstrates leaders' raising of aspirations for pupils.
- Leaders make sure that fundamental British values are promoted in ways which pupils understand. For pupils who can take part, they have reinstated a student council. Pupils are encouraged to make choices wherever possible and leaders have increased the range of activities which develop pupils' relationships with each other. Pupils enjoy celebrating various festivals and exploring the rich natural environment outside the classroom through Michaelmas celebrations, for example.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about many of the changes leaders have made. They feel safer at work because injuries to staff have decreased and the systems in place to monitor pupils' behaviour have improved. They hold the headteacher in high esteem because she listens to staff suggestions and makes changes when necessary.
- Parents are increasingly positive about the school. While some still have concerns, most now feel that their children's needs are being met well.
- During the inspection, inspectors found a range of small hazards in classrooms; for example, sharp edges on door frames, staples in window apertures and radiator covers that were broken. This showed that the system for checking on maintenance in classrooms needs to improve. Leaders had rectified these issues by the following day.

Governance

- New governors work closely with the principal and hold him stringently to account. They effectively support and challenge the school to improve. Governors:
 - have an overview of safeguarding concerns because leaders give them pertinent information about safeguarding
 - gain a first-hand view of how the school is improving through visits to the school
 - know the challenges the school still faces, are honest about its progress, and know what still needs to improve.

Safeguarding

- Leaders have reviewed and improved the systems for safeguarding pupils. They now have strict controls in place to make all of the relevant checks on staff, including supply staff. All these systems are fit for purpose.
- At a weekly 'safeguarding board' meeting, leaders consider all cases that have been brought to their attention. The principal holds the designated safeguarding lead to account and actions are agreed to keep pupils safe. As a result, all senior leaders are well informed of safeguarding concerns and can supervise each other's work in this area.
- Staff have received the relevant training on safeguarding. They are confident to spot any signs of abuse and neglect and they say that the prevalence of safeguarding has increased markedly over the last year.
- As a result of these changes, all staff understand the importance of safeguarding, are alert to concerns and the culture of safeguarding is strong.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

The school's progress towards meeting standards that were not met at the previous inspection

- Leaders have made sure that the school and classrooms are safe and appropriate learning environments for pupils. While some parts of the school are still drab and uninspiring, leaders have plans to relocate classrooms into a different building. Displays of pupils' work have improved. They are more recent and related to what pupils are learning. Equipment in the outdoor learning areas is safe and appropriate to pupils' needs.
- Leaders have put in place a new assessment framework. Pupils' work is now assessed with more regularity and effectiveness.
- All of the school's arrangements for vetting staff are fit for purpose and have regard to 'Keeping children safe in education'. Leaders ensure that checks on supply staff meet the relevant guidance. The admissions register is kept in line with the statutory guidance.

The school now meets the following requirements

- Part 1 paragraphs 3(f) and 3(g)
- Part 3 paragraphs 7, 7a, 7b and 15
- Part 4 paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 19(2), 19(2)(b), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), and 21(1)
- Part 8 paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Since new leaders took over the school, teachers strike a more appropriate balance between social learning and academic learning, as dictated by pupils' needs and abilities. However, due to a long legacy of neglecting pupils' academic needs and a lack of consistency, teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good.

- When teachers teach lessons on literacy and numeracy, sometimes the learning activities are not sufficiently well planned so that pupils can make progress. For example, inspectors saw occasions when resources did not model proper English, where worksheets did not have sufficient space for pupils' responses, or where pupils could have done more complex work. Discussions with teachers showed that they do not always focus keenly enough on what they want pupils to learn from an activity.
- Sometimes, staff do not follow pupils' 'communication passports' closely enough. As a result, pupils are given too many things to think about, the topic changes too frequently and pupils do not get involved in their learning.
- In the past, the quality of teaching has been hampered by the high number of agency staff used. While the school still uses significant numbers of these staff, leaders have a small group of supply staff who they now use more regularly. These staff know pupils better than supply staff in the past. As a result, teaching overall is improving. However, leaders acknowledge that teaching could be further improved through the appointment of more permanent staff.
- Where teaching is more effective, staff know pupils well, give appropriate challenge and allow for the right range of tasks so that pupils develop their skills and knowledge. They use questioning in ways that pupils can respond to.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff are vigilant to pupils' needs as they develop through the day. They speak with pupils in respectful ways and listen carefully to pupils' responses.
- Pupils' communication takes a high priority and plays a positive role in their personal development. All pupils have access to appropriate speech and language therapy and those for whom it is appropriate attend the speech and language 'café'. This long-term work on communication has a positive impact on pupils' ability to express themselves, make choices and feel a part of the school community.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. Many demonstrated enjoyment of their lessons and excellent relationships with the staff who care for them.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have careers information, advice and guidance that meets their unique needs and prepares them for life after school. This ranges from traditional work experience to in-school work experience, developing communication skills and independent living skills. As a part of their transition programme, leaders make a full consideration of each pupil's needs and meet them effectively. Some pupils particularly enjoy their rota system for checking on the farm animals and collecting eggs. This gives them a sense of responsibility and shows them the importance of dedication and hard work.
- Pupils have opportunities to take part in a range of activities which develop their understanding of charities, sports, culture and the world around them. They particularly enjoy these activities. For example, they have been involved with charity fundraising, and major sporting events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff agree that there have been rapid improvements over the past year.
- The instances of restrictive physical intervention (RPI) have fallen sharply. Leaders are clear that RPI is a last resort and the numbers of instances reflect this. They collect highly detailed information about RPI so that they can identify trends and patterns and adapt pupils' provision accordingly.
- The instances of challenging behaviour have decreased as the new curriculum has been introduced. This is because pupils have more time outside of the classroom, more stimulation and a wider variety of activities to do. Some individual pupils' behaviour has improved markedly over the last year.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Few pupils are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in the school have a very wide range of starting points. Academic outcomes are improving but too variable. Over a long period of time, the school has concentrated too much on pupils' social development. The improvements to pupils' academic learning are too recent for their impact on outcomes to be judged.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy are improving as teaching improves. However, more time is needed for pupils to catch up, develop their skills and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some pupils undertake accreditations in a range of subjects and were successful in obtaining these accreditations in 2018. Unfortunately, some pupils have not been able to receive their certifications because previous leaders did not follow exam board registration and submission rules. Current leaders have retrieved as much evidence of progress as they can and submitted this. Current pupils, for whom it is appropriate, are undertaking accreditations and some in 2018 were successful.
- Leaders track pupils' destinations well. Pupils go on to a range of destinations which are appropriate to their needs and abilities, whether this be to work, residential placements or into their family-home environment.
- Pupils' progress in fine motor skills, physical skills and artistic skills are positive. They have many opportunities to practise these skills and very much enjoy creating images, blending colours and expressing themselves. As a result of improved support from the school's therapeutic team, this part of the school's work is strong.

School details

Unique reference number	117033
DfE registration number	885/6024
Inspection number	10052716

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sunfield Children's Home Ltd
Chair	Helen Kippax
Headteacher	Lydia Swinton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£87,013
Telephone number	01562 882253
Website	http://www.sunfield.org.uk/
Email address	sunfield@sunfield.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–10 December 2015

Information about this school

- Sunfield is an independent special school for pupils who have complex learning needs, including autism spectrum disorder and pathological demand avoidance syndrome.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school became a subsidiary of the Ruskin Mill Trust in May 2017. The school has undergone significant staffing changes since this time. A new principal and other senior leaders have been appointed.
- At the time of inspection, the school did not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with school leaders, governors, teachers and pupils. They took account of pupils' views through conversations with pupils and information given by the school.
- Inspectors received nine responses to a questionnaire for staff and eight free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- They scrutinised a range of documentation on safeguarding, health and safety, pupils' progress and the curriculum.
- In December 2017, The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to undertake an unannounced emergency inspection. At this inspection, inspectors found a number of independent school standards that the school did not meet. The school was required to produce a statutory action plan. The DfE accepted this action plan on 6 September 2018.
- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to undertake a progress monitoring inspection as a part of this standard inspection. This was to evaluate the school's progress against its action plan, and to evaluate whether it met the independent school standards. This was the first progress monitoring inspection.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Ellis-Martin

Ofsted Inspector

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