

Ocean Lodge Independent School

8 Trinity Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7PU

Inspection dates

14–16 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- The school has been through a period of considerable change in senior leadership and staffing. This has slowed improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, the school's overall effectiveness has declined. Until very recently, the proprietor did not hold leaders sufficiently to account.
- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement. Procedures to identify training needs and improve the performance of staff are too new to have been effective.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour require improvement. Some pupils are slow to settle and find it difficult to concentrate on their learning.
- Pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points. This is particularly true of the most able pupils. Outcomes in literacy and numeracy are too low.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Assessment is not precise enough. It is not used well to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants lack precise understanding of how to meet pupils' academic needs. This limits their effectiveness in accelerating pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is successfully and rapidly steering the school through a period of positive transformation. In a short space of time, she has gained staff's and pupils' confidence.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are well cared for. They feel safe at the school. Staff know how to support pupils who have complex behavioural and emotional needs.
- Parents and carers are pleased about the school. They report significant improvement in the management of pupils' behaviour. They say that pupils are now keen to attend school.
- There are trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Older pupils say that staff are fair and always willing to help them.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that pupils make rapid progress in literacy and numeracy, by:
 - using assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge
 - ensuring that pupils' activities are well matched to their needs and abilities
 - ensuring that teachers and support staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve to improve outcomes across subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development and behaviour by developing their independence, confidence and interest in their work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - securing greater stability of staffing so that plans can be fully implemented
 - checking pupils' work frequently, including for off-site activities, to monitor the amount of progress that has been made
 - identifying and meeting staff's training needs, including those of teaching assistants, so that teaching becomes quickly effective
 - establishing systems to hold leaders to account so that the effectiveness of the school can be improved.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, a number of staff changes, including in senior leadership, have reduced the school's effectiveness. The proprietor is aware of the need for greater stability. Due to these frequent changes, some aspects of leadership and management have been overlooked. All pupils have special educational needs and the leadership of this provision, such as keeping detailed plans and records, has not been sufficiently strong.
- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education as a result of a complaint about the management and the recording of incidents of poor behaviour. The new headteacher, who has been in post for only one month, is taking complaints seriously. She is dealing with incidents of poor behaviour promptly and effectively. All incidents are logged and recorded in a timely manner. No incidents of poor or unsafe behaviour were observed during this inspection because staff are vigilant and well trained to meet pupils' complex needs.
- The headteacher has identified weaknesses and addressed underperformance. However, significant differences remain in staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in literacy and numeracy. Current systems to measure the progress of pupils, particularly when they are learning off site or attend extra-curricular activities, are not effective enough. Staff are not fully aware of pupils' starting points or of the amount of progress that they could be making. Teachers and teaching assistants do not record and use assessment information well enough to accelerate learning.
- Over time, the proprietor has not ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is challenging pupils to make good progress. The records kept in pupils' files are confusing. Some plans are missing or not dated. The links between different plans, such as behaviour plans, personal education plans and the education, health and care plans, are unclear.
- All pupils receive pupil premium funding. The use of this funding has an inconsistent impact on pupils' achievement because it has not been effectively spent. For example, resources to develop pupils' numeracy and problem-solving skills and help most-able pupils to progress academically are limited. This inspection is not recommending a review of the use of additional funding because the headteacher knows what to do to improve provision. Most recent practice shows that funding is targeted well to maintain good attendance and support older pupils' transition to college.
- The new headteacher has considerable knowledge and expertise. She uses her skills extremely well to bring about rapid and positive change. Although there is still some way to go to ensure pupils' good behaviour, the headteacher has introduced effective systems to help pupils manage their emotions so that learning is not interrupted. Systems to check the quality of teaching are being consolidated so that staff are held to account for the amount of progress pupils make. More must be done to meet staff's training needs as a result of this monitoring.
- Parents and carers said that they have seen the pupils' attendance improve and that pupils now want to go to school every day. They also said that staff help pupils to make positive choices. They praise the staff for the encouragement they give to pupils to help them re-engage in learning. The Ofsted staff survey shows that staff are proud to work at

the school and they are supportive of the new leadership.

- Professionals from a range of agencies who work with the school are pleased about the better communication that has been established. They gave precise examples of the clear and uncompromising direction given to pupils, such as not allowing pupils to leave the school whenever they wish.
- The bespoke curriculum is designed to meet the needs of individual pupils. Across subjects, there are some opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills although staff do not plan or record activities well enough with these skills in mind. All pupils learn about respect and tolerance. Daily routines and the first session at the beginning of the day are used to listen to pupils and to establish a positive climate for learning. Although pupils cannot always control their behaviour, they know right from wrong. They are appropriately prepared for life in modern Britain through the programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Subjects and topics interest pupils when they see the relevance to their future lives. In art, for example, pupils develop useful creative skills, such as how to present their ideas when designing a mural for the school outdoor courtyard. Pupils who spoke with the inspector were enthusiastic about the quality of their work on the allotment. Their work in horticulture offers opportunities for future jobs as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.
- Nationally recognised accreditations, including entry-level certificates and functional-skills qualifications, supplemented by effective careers advice and guidance, enable older pupils to develop clear plans for their future. The headteacher acknowledges the need to develop work-related learning so that it becomes more effective. Currently, pupils have limited work-experience opportunities.

Governance

- The proprietor takes responsibility for the governance of the school. She acknowledges that her knowledge of education is currently too insecure to hold leaders to account. The proprietor knows how the pupil premium is spent but, over time, she has not received sufficient information to determine its impact clearly.
- The proprietor is planning to use the expertise of other schools and education professionals to acquire a more objective understanding of the school's provision and outcomes.
- A few policies and the school's website were updated during this inspection. They now comply with requirements.
- The proprietor ensures that safeguarding requirements are met, including through the regular training and updating of staff. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. It is comprehensive and meets current statutory requirements. The proprietor and the headteacher oversee effective arrangements for the recruitment of staff.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards concerning the quality of teaching are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Staff give high priority to ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff are highly attuned to current issues which may pose a safeguarding risk to pupils, such as absconding and exposure to violence or crime.
- Staff work well together to identify any pupils who may be vulnerable. They provide excellent support when pupils are distressed. The headteacher checks safeguarding procedures and risk assessments when pupils attend out-of-school activities. These are effective. Parents and carers who were spoken to during the inspection said that pupils feel safe at the school.
- Staff were observed using safe procedures to manage pupils' emotional outbursts. The need for physical restraint is rare and recorded promptly. Policies for health and safety, fire risk and first aid are all up to date and ensure that the school complies with regulations.
- The headteacher ensures that stringent checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Staff work well with external agencies and are trained to spot the signs and symptoms of abuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Many pupils arrive at the school having spent most of their time out of formal education. The assessment of pupils' learning needs when they join the school is not sufficiently detailed. Staff do not use all available assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, plan the right amount of challenge and support pupils in their work. This is particularly the case for pupils who are most able and it reduces the progress that they make.
- Teachers have the necessary subject knowledge. However, they are not using their expertise well enough to deepen pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. Precise planning to make the work of teaching assistants more effective is underdeveloped. Across all subjects, pupils' personal achievements and academic progress are not recorded and assessed in sufficient depth.
- Staff use off-site experiences to help pupils apply their knowledge in a more real and authentic context. For example, staff use the allotments and the 'catch' (fishing) programme to develop horticultural, scientific and life skills. These curricular activities are particularly effective when staff make clear to pupils their intended outcomes, such as learning about budgeting and personal finance. In the main, however, these initiatives appear bolt-on and not sufficiently linked to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the headteacher is an excellent role model for staff. Although not always entirely successful, all adults positively redirect pupils when they are not behaving well. Staff speak to pupils calmly and respectfully. Confrontation is avoided at all cost. When faced with highly challenging behaviour due to pupils' extreme anxieties, staff coordinate support well to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that teachers tried their best to encourage them to learn and to ensure that nothing disrupted them. Relationships between staff and pupils

are strong. This was seen to be very effective during the inspection when staff were building on the pupils' own interests and recent experience to ensure a positive start to the school day. Pupils were enthusiastically discussing the rich local wildlife.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The high turnover of staff affects attitudes to learning because pupils find it difficult to adapt to change. Pupils are highly dependent on adults and they do not learn quickly enough how to become more successful learners. Most-able pupils said that they find some activities boring. They do not, then, demonstrate the skills or the commitment to learn by themselves and attempt more difficult work.
- Pupils said that they liked the activities outside school because they are more interesting. These clearly improve their confidence and commitment, but they are not used well enough to develop pupils' study skills and readiness to learn when they return to school.
- The daily interactions with others and the programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education are designed to develop pupils' maturity, resilience and tolerance. In some aspects of this work the school is successful. Pupils show respect for others' ideas and views. All pupils have had a history of poor attendance. They now see the value of their education. Pupils want to be respectful citizens. Most were confident to speak to the inspector and were keen to check that she had the right skills to inspect their school.
- Some pupils, in the past, have experienced bullying at their previous schools. Some have had significant trauma in their lives. All staff endeavour to promote all aspects of pupils' welfare. The school offers many opportunities for pupils to stay healthy. Pupils know how to keep safe, including when using mobile telephones and the internet. They say that staff help them to stay safe.
- Pupils explained very clearly to others examples of risky behaviour and dangerous consequences such as those associated with carrying a knife. These discussions had a powerful impact on others in the class. Staff are effective in making sure that all pupils are well supported emotionally.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary. Some give up quickly. Despite the efforts of staff, there are some incidents of inappropriate behaviour and lack of cooperation around the school. Pupils who have been at the school for longer tend to behave better than new entrants. This is because older pupils understand the consequences of poor behaviour choices.
- Parents and carers are pleased about improvements in behaviour this year although a few members of staff are still concerned. The headteacher has introduced a uniform that gives pupils pride and a sense of commitment to the school community. She has also been effective in stopping the use of mobile telephones in school to protect pupils from being upset by external influences.

- Pupils who spoke with the inspector were confident that when issues arise, staff carefully deal with them. Too few carers and parents completed the Ofsted survey to know their views about bullying. The school takes appropriate action to record, analyse and reduce incidents of bullying.
- Staff are trained and highly skilled in supporting pupils who have very challenging behaviour. Physical restraint is only used to avoid pupils hurting themselves or others. The improved recording of all incidents is enabling better analysis of trends.
- Pupils' attendance is good, especially when compared with their poor attendance at previous schools. Current attendance is above the national average. The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils have low attainment and a history of poor achievement when they join the school. The progress they make over time is inconsistent. This is in part due to the high turnover of staff, including senior leaders.
- New teachers are not sufficiently aware of topics and activities already completed by pupils, for example in food technology. This is affecting the progress of the most able pupils. In some cases, poor behaviour masks pupils' potential and capabilities.
- Progress is inconsistent across subjects. The impact of the pupil premium funding on improving pupils' attainment and progress is insufficient, particularly in English and mathematics. The resources, often limited to worksheets, are not stimulating pupils' writing. Pupils' range of vocabulary is narrow and few can solve mathematical problems. Some activities do not move pupils' learning on.
- The plans in pupils' folders, scrutinised during this inspection, are not helpful enough. This is because personal education plans are not precise, specific resources to help pupils make progress are not identified and targets are vague. Achievement is not carefully tracked.
- Outcomes are good when teachers give pupils clear direction and high-quality resources to build their resilience for learning. Small steps and achievable targets lead to good progress. There are few pupils on roll and reporting on their achievement is generalised to avoid them being identified. Pupils were observed making very good progress in computing and in writing when explaining the characteristics of appealing websites. They were able to compare these websites. The progress pupils make in speaking, to explain their points of view, and in the use of adjectives to write up their findings, is good.
- Pupils' work shows that, for most, achievement in art, horticulture and outdoor pursuits is good. Pupils were proud to show the inspector the quality of their work in drawing and painting. They made effective progress in their motor skills and coordination. The fishing and horticulture programmes are developing pupils' practical and scientific skills, such as how to respect the local environment and purchase the right equipment for leisure activities.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their health and physical skills. The school uses local sports venues for physical education. Trampolining is pupils' favourite because they are successful at it. The headteacher is keen to broaden the range of sports on offer.

- The breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to attain a range of certificates and functional skills qualifications. Year 11 pupils are prepared well for their college placements, with training in areas such as catering, hair and beauty or building skills. More work is required to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills to ensure that they can cope with the demand of their college courses.

School details

Unique reference number	137562
DfE registration number	882/6010
Inspection number	10043122

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	Special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sue Potton
Headteacher	Karen Ward
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000
Telephone number	01702 332181
Website	www.oceanlodgeschool.com
Email address	info@potton-homes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–26 November 2015

Information about this school

- Ocean Lodge School is owned by Potton Homes and is an independent special day school.
- The school opened in October 2011. It was last inspected in November 2015, when the quality of education was found to be good.
- The school is registered for 10 boys and girls between the ages of seven and 16 years, all of whom are referred by several local authorities. Some pupils live in accommodation provided by the company and a few are in foster care.
- There are currently seven pupils aged 13 to 16 on roll.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- In March 2016, the proprietor applied to open another site in Linford, Essex. This site is

registered for three pupils and is currently not used for education purposes.

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan arising from behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some pupils have additional needs associated with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The care provision provided by the company was not part of this inspection.
- The school receives the pupil premium funding for all its pupils.
- A new headteacher took responsibility for the leadership of the school on 2 October 2017. A special educational needs coordinator has been appointed and is due to join the school in December 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned this inspection as a result of a complaint about the management of pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector visited several lessons with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' behaviour, learning and progress.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work on display and in their folders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, including teaching assistants and supply staff.
- The inspector met the manager of accommodation provided by the company as well as the head of care and the proprietor of Potton Homes.
- The inspector telephoned some parents and carers. There were too few responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, for these views to be considered. The inspector took account of the completed questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including: safeguarding policies and procedures, records of behaviour incidents and physical restraint, attendance figures, the school's information about the progress pupils are making and the school's development plan.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught 3(a);
 - fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves 3(b);
 - involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time 3(c);
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons 3(d);
 - utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range 3(f);
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress 3(g);

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently 34(1)(b).

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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