

Great Oaks Small School

Ebbsfleet Farmhouse, Ebbsfleet Lane, Ramsgate CT12 5DJ

Inspection dates

10 February 2016

Overall outcome

Unmet independent school standards identified

Reason for the inspection

- This was an emergency inspection commissioned by the Department for Education because of concerns relating to the quality of education, the welfare, health and safety of pupils, the manner in which complaints are handled, and the leadership and management of the school. Therefore, the inspector was asked to judge whether the independent school standards relating to these areas are met.
- The school was last inspected in March 2014.
- As an emergency inspection, it was unannounced.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the chair of trustees. A range of documents were looked at including information about safeguarding and trustees' records. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

Main findings

Quality of education provided

- The plans and schemes of work for personal, social, health and economic education, and sex and relationships education, suitably take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils. The schemes of work that teachers use are designed for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers use regular assessment to check pupils' understanding and plan weekly lessons that meet pupils' needs. Lessons cover topics such as relationships, rights and diversity. Through these, pupils also have opportunities to learn about British values and to respect other people. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education, and sex and relationships education, is appropriate.
- The policies for personal, social, health and economic education, and sex and relationships education, reflect the aims and ethos of the school. Leaders seek to effectively prepare pupils for their adult lives by teaching them how to stay safe and make informed choices. The policies state the importance of working in close partnership with parents and how staff will communicate with families. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that they have not yet established effective communication with parents about this aspect of the school's work.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- Some policies relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety are missing, require updating or are not fit for purpose.
- The safeguarding and child protection policies do not take into account the most recent guidance contained within the Department for Education's publication, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. For example, neither policy refers to the duty placed on schools to prevent pupils from radicalisation. However, all staff have received child protection training. Leaders and a trustee have had additional training to support their work as designated safeguarding leaders. Leaders have also attended radicalisation training. Staff know what they need to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Records show that appropriate action is taken to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare. The trustees monitor the school's safeguarding work closely and use

this to hold leaders to account. Although action is taken to keep pupils safe, there is no clear guidance in place to ensure that this is consistent or to enable leaders to evaluate the impact of safeguarding.

- The anti-bullying policy is not fit for purpose. It does not state who pupils or parents should talk to if they have a concern. Parents and pupils indicated in recent questionnaires that they feel the school keeps pupils safe. However, some individual pupils reported to a trustee that they feel bullying sometimes takes place at school. Work to prevent bullying is not effective.
- There is no risk assessment policy. Leaders have not yet ensured that effective action is taken to reduce risks. For example, there are no risk assessments for the use of equipment or for the school premises. Leaders have implemented some systems to promote health and safety. Suitable arrangements for supervision are in place. Teachers do carry out risk assessments when planning off-site visits. However, the guidance for planning off-site visits lacks rigour. It is not clear what is expected of staff to ensure that appropriate action is always taken to reduce risks when planning visits.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the school's behaviour policy. The policy sets out clear sanctions that apply if pupils behave in an unacceptable manner. However, leaders do not keep a record of the sanctions that they impose on pupils. This means that leaders are not able to evaluate the impact of their work to promote good behaviour.

Manner in which complaints are handled

- The complaints procedure meets requirements. It makes provision for complaints to be considered on an informal basis in the first instance. Following this, appropriate further steps lead to a complaints panel that includes a member who is independent of the management of the school. The procedure provides timescales and invites parents to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing. Provision is made for the panel to make recommendations and share these and their findings with parents.
- Complaints have been handled in accordance with the procedure. Records are kept securely and confidentially. However, informal complaints and concerns are not documented as rigorously. Leaders recognise this and are currently reviewing the complaints procedure.

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- Leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils are met. Work to promote the well-being of pupils is not consistent because the school's guidance is lacking or not clear enough.
- Leaders recognise the need to make improvements and have taken some action. The trustees monitor the school's work to keep pupils safe. New performance management procedures are currently being introduced. There have been some changes to staffing to provide pupils with better support.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should:

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school	7(a)
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Ensure that all the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and arrangements accurately reflect the guidance contained within <i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i>	7(b)
Ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented effectively	9(b)
Keep a record of the sanctions imposed on pupils for serious misbehaviour	9(c)
Draw up and implement an effective anti-bullying strategy	10
Ensure that there is a risk assessment policy in place that is effectively and consistently implemented by staff at all levels	16(a)
Ensure that risks that have been identified through assessment result in appropriate action being taken so that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and appropriate at all times	16(b)

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate the skills and attitudes appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are met consistently	34(1)(a)
Ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities so that the independent school standards are met consistently	34(1)(b)
Ensure leaders at all levels actively promote the well-being of pupils in all their actions, policies and procedures	34(1)(c)

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Great Oaks Small School is an independent, secondary day school situated on the outskirts of Ramsgate. The school is based in a large farmhouse with additional teaching areas in adjacent buildings. It first opened in 2001 and provides for pupils between 11 and 18 years old.
- The school caters for pupils who have not been successful in mainstream education. The aim of the school is to 'prepare well rounded, considerate and independent members of society that are capable of independent learning'. It also seeks to rebuild pupils' confidence.
- There are 20 pupils on roll. Two pupils attend on a part-time basis. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are prepared for external examinations.
- The school uses local sports facilities to provide pupils' physical education.

School details

Unique reference number	133539
Inspection number	10013106
DfE registration number	886/6093

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Type of school	Secondary
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	3
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	The trustees of Great Oaks Small School
Chair	Penny Jackson
Headteacher	Julie Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	19–21 March 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,000–£49,000
Telephone number	01843 822022
Email address	office@greatoakssmallschool.co.uk

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