

Great Oaks Small School

15 September 2016

Ebbsfleet Farmhouse, Ebbsfleet Lane, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5DJ

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)

- The previous inspection found that some policies relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety were either missing or were not fit for purpose. When the school's action plan was evaluated it was judged that the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils were unlikely to meet the standard. This was because the school's safeguarding policy did not take into account the most recent requirements. The school was imprecise about safeguarding arrangements and how they would be monitored and communicated to parents.
- These issues have now been addressed and leaders have been diligent in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are now fully compliant. A copy of the safeguarding policy is now published on the school's website and it meets the latest statutory requirements.
- Pupils said that they would not hesitate to ask a member of staff if they had any concerns. They said that they all felt safe at the school and that the staff know their needs well.
- Staff, including those new to the school, advised that they had received extensive safeguarding training. All staff know whom to report concerns to and how to access external sources of help and support.
- A check of the single central register revealed that all staff were included and that the appropriate pre-employment checks had been made.
- This standard is now met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)

- At the previous inspection it was found that policies and procedures relating to behaviour were not fit for purpose. When the school's action plan was evaluated it was judged that the behaviour policy was still unlikely to meet the standard. This was because the policy did not state how staff would be trained in its administration. There was a lack of clarity about the school's code of conduct for pupils and how sanctions would be recorded for serious misbehaviour. There was no information about how the behaviour log would be monitored.
- Leaders have now ensured that behaviour is effectively monitored. Staff have had extensive training in how to implement the behaviour policy. The policy clearly lists the rewards for good behaviour as well as the sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. The school closely monitors the number of incidents of serious misbehaviour and in the last term there were very few.

- There is a clear code of conduct for pupils. It is simple and all pupils understand what is required of them both in terms of managing their own behaviour and how their behaviour impacts on others. Pupils who were spoken to informally throughout the day said that lessons are not affected by poor behaviour. The inspector saw that during lessons and social times all pupils got along well together and respected each other's needs. Pupils say that being at the school has made a real difference to their lives and has improved their behaviour. As one pupil said, 'it's like a family and most of the time we really enjoy being together and the teachers are lovely.'
- Most parents consider that behaviour is good and effectively monitored. Those who were spoken to when collecting their children were emphatic in saying that behaviour is good.
- This standard is now met.

Paragraph 10

- The previous inspection found that the anti-bullying policy was not fit for purpose. When the school's action plan was evaluated it judged that the anti-bullying policy was still not fit for purpose. This was because it did not indicate to whom parents or pupils should talk if they had a concern.
- This shortfall has now been rectified. Leaders have amended the policy and it now clearly directs to whom parents should speak if they have any concerns. The policy is frequently communicated to staff during staff development days. Pupils said that they know what to do if they have any worries about bullying. Informal discussions with pupils indicated that they do not consider bullying to be an issue at the school.
- This standard is now met.

Paragraph 16

- The previous inspection found that there was no risk assessment policy and that leaders had not taken effective action to reduce risks. The evaluation of the school's action plan judged that the recently created risk assessment policy lacked clarity. This was because there were no details about who was to approve the policy. There was also very limited information about how staff would be trained to monitor risks and conduct risk assessments.
- These issues have now been addressed. The school now has a clear policy for risk assessments. Staff are well trained. Individual risk assessments of pupils have been completed to ensure that pupils are safe at all times during the school day. For example, the school is in the process of arranging some part-time college placements for a few pupils this term. Although details are still being finalised, the school has already considered how potential risks will be minimised.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- As a number of the preceding standards were not met and pupils' welfare was not assured, the standards for leadership and management were not met.
- The evidence from this monitoring inspection indicates that these shortfalls have been rectified. School leaders have shown a determination to bring about improvements. There has been much progress in the areas of weakness and the school now has a clear system of accountability throughout. Tasks are delegated appropriately to ensure that all the school standards are met.

- The headteacher, other staff and trustees have been diligent in ensuring that pupils' welfare, health and safety take a high priority. Leaders have ensured that all staff have completed an extensive programme of training, particularly in relation to the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- Parents who were spoken to at the end of the school day were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- Departmental reviews are now effective because they are closely monitored by senior leaders to ensure that they link closely to the school's broader aims.
- The school is registered for 20 pupils. However, at the time of the inspection there were 21 on roll. The school has approached the Department for Education to notify it of this material change.
- 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.

School details

Unique reference number	133539
DfE registration number	6093
Inspection number	10020615

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	Secondary
School status	Independent special 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	21
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The trustees of Great Oaks Small School
Chair	Penny Jackson
Headteacher	Julie Kelly
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,000 to £49,000
Telephone number	01843 822022
Website	www.greatoakssmallschool.co.uk
Email address	office@greatoakssmallschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	19 March 2014

Information about this school

- Great Oaks Small School is an independent day special school which opened in 2001. It is situated in a semi-rural location on the outskirts of the village of Minster-in-Thamet in a large farmhouse with additional teaching areas.
- The school caters for the needs of pupils who primarily have learning difficulties associated with autism spectrum disorder. The school is registered to take pupils from 11 to 18 years of age.

- Many pupils have experienced disrupted education in the past. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form are prepared for a range of external examinations. They have the opportunity to study for qualifications ranging from entry level to GCSE.
- The school aims to 'prepare well rounded, considerate and independent members of society that are capable of independent learning.' It also seeks to rebuild pupils' confidence.
- The school uses local sports facilities to provide pupils' physical education.

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 that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspection was unannounced.
- The Department of Education (DfE) served a notice on the school on 2 June 2016, following the emergency inspection that took place on 10 February 2016 as a result of a complaint. The inspection found that there were unmet school standards in relation to pupils' welfare, health and safety and the quality of leadership and management. The school submitted an action plan to the DfE which was rejected. This is the first progress monitoring inspection.
- The inspector was asked to monitor the progress the school has made and to check that parts 3 and 8 of the independent school standards are met.
- In order to check compliance with the school standards, the inspector met with the headteacher and a number of senior leaders. The inspector held a meeting with the chair of the board of trustees. The inspector toured the school and visited lessons during a learning walk. There was a meeting with three new members of staff. There were informal discussions with pupils. The inspector spoke to parents at the end of the school day and took account of the 11 responses to the online parents' questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector checked a range of documents and also reviewed the checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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