

My Choice School Osprey House

Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XQ

Inspection dates

13–15 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous. Until recently, performance management of staff has not focused on raising pupils' outcomes and school improvement.
- The directors, who are also the proprietors, do not challenge school leaders robustly enough.
- The planned curriculum is not consistently delivered. Consequently, pupils cannot be sure of experiencing a sufficiently wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' targets are not sufficiently sharp and subject specific to make it clear what pupils must achieve to make progress in their work.
- Pupils' attendance rapidly improves while at the school. However, intermittent absence prevents pupils from accessing the wide range of subjects and accreditation on offer at the school.
- There are no time frames in place or milestones on which to measure the school's progress towards meeting targets for school improvement.
- While pupils develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning, pupils' lack of resilience sometimes impacts on their ability to access learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Good pastoral care enables pupils to make significant improvement in their behaviour so that they are better equipped for life.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe very effectively. British values underpin the ethos of the school and are modelled well by staff.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are threaded throughout the curriculum and delivered well.
- Safeguarding practice is strong. It is reinforced by strong relationships and an ethos of nurture and care.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- None of the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') were unmet. However, there was insufficient evidence to judge the following standards: paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(h) and 3.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school improvement plan has quantifiable actions, together with milestones for achieving those actions throughout the year, so that leaders and directors can evaluate the progress being made towards improvement more accurately
 - the quality of teaching and learning is monitored systematically and rigorously and identifies precise guidance to teachers on how to improve
 - pupils' individual education plans include subject-specific and measurable English and mathematics targets
 - the plans to manage teachers' performance are more closely linked with pupils' outcomes and school improvement
 - the planned curriculum is delivered
 - the directors challenge school leaders more robustly and interrogate the systems in place.
- Continue to seek ways to improve attendance so that pupils fully benefit from the education provided by the school.
- Ensure that pupils continue to develop positive attitudes to learning, grow in their capacity to be resilient and deepen their positive feelings of self-worth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school's management systems lack rigour. School leaders, including the directors, do not have a sufficiently thorough and comprehensive understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders have a broad awareness of what the school does well and what could be better. The school improvement plan addresses these areas for development but does not hone in on precise areas for development. Targets are too vague to be measured. There are no time frames or milestones on which to measure the school's progress towards planned improvements. As a result, it is difficult for leaders to evaluate whether school improvement is swift enough or effective.
- School leaders are yet to embed a new system to manage the performance of staff so that it can be used effectively to improve teaching, target professional development opportunities and thereby impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders' oversight of the quality of teaching is not rigorous enough and the quality of feedback provided by leaders is not sufficiently detailed to help teachers know precisely what they need to do to improve their effectiveness.
- Leaders offer teachers support and guidance. Teachers say this helps them to plan activities to engage pupils more effectively. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel proud of their work.
- Leaders have ensured that an appropriate system is in place to track pupils' progress across the curriculum, including pupils' journeys through accredited outcomes. In spite of this, the system is not linked well to pupils' individual education plans to help pupils know what they need to do to improve their English and mathematics skills. Currently, targets are too nebulous to be effective.
- The school's planned curriculum offers a wide range of subjects, which, when required, are supported by specialist teachers, for example in music. Pupils have access to a plethora of accreditation schemes, including functional skills, GCSEs and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, which cover a wide range of subjects such as employability skills, geography and Lifeskills Challenge. Trips and visits help pupils to make connections in their learning with the world outside school.
- Leaders have worked hard to design a curriculum that is pupil-led and builds on pupils' interests. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved markedly. Now and then, pupils do not have access to the school's full planned curriculum because of their intermittent poor attendance as a result of personal anxiety and distress. This is sometimes exacerbated by short-term placements at the school.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully threaded through the majority of subjects, and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about the value of money and the kind of expenses they might incur in adult life. British values are promoted strongly through discussions about current news that promote such values as tolerance and respect. Pupils discuss and learn about issues such as acts of terrorism, child sexual exploitation, and drug and alcohol awareness. They learn to express their opinions appropriately. Staff help pupils to form balanced opinions, and challenge any stereotypic views pupils might express.
- School leaders ensure that behaviour strategies and policies are consistently applied so that boundaries are clear. As a result, pupils are able to begin to manage their own behaviour and take responsibility for their actions.
- Adults set the tone for the school by leading by example in their attitudes and behaviour. They are resilient, persevere and act as excellent role models to the pupils in their care.
- School leaders have created a culture which is centred on repairing pupils' often fractured relationships with education to engender and facilitate greater life opportunities for them and refocus them on learning once more. This is enhanced by the school's positive atmosphere and the tangible care and respect that exude from staff towards pupils. This has enabled pupils to access education more fully where, previously, they were not able to do so.
- Leaders have brought much-needed stability to the education provision and staffing within the school, which has resulted in improved attendance and attainment for pupils.
- Staff share leaders' aspirations for pupils and pull together as a united team, working in the best interest of the pupils. Leaders have ensured that staff are now clearly focused on pupils' learning as well as the pastoral care of pupils. This is because leaders' higher expectations for pupils are communicated effectively.
- Leaders and directors recognise the usefulness of building collaborative partnerships with local schools to ensure that the school is outward-looking, to share good practice and to validate the school's effectiveness. Despite making preliminary steps to secure partnerships, as yet no such partnerships have been secured.

Governance

- The school has no recognised governance arrangements for the school. However, the headteacher is held to account by the head of education. The head of education is accountable to the proprietors, who are also the directors. Formal meetings take place on a fortnightly basis.
- Directors contribute to the education and care of pupils at the school because they are developing the skills needed to be more effective in their role. They take seriously their duty to ensure that all pupils are safe.
- Directors are realistic about the strengths of the school and know where more needs to be done to ensure that standards rise more quickly. However, directors are not sufficiently probing and challenging in their questioning of leaders to ensure that the school's effectiveness is improving quickly enough. Some areas of monitoring lack the required scope and depth to really interrogate the systems in place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.
- All staff and directors receive important training relating to safeguarding. Staff, in particular, receive updates and information regarding child protection and welfare of pupils on a very regular basis. Staff who are new to the school receive helpful and timely induction to enable them to ensure that pupils are protected from harm.
- Safeguarding practice is buttressed by strong relationships and because staff know the needs of pupils very well.
- The culture in the school is one of diligence, and safeguarding is given a high priority among the school community. The school has effective arrangements for identifying, sharing and tracking concerns over time.
- Pupils in need of protection are monitored closely to ensure that they are safe from harm. Staff work closely with other professionals to provide pupils with the best possible care during times of distress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Insufficient evidence –
amnesty granted**

- Insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils well. They have detailed understanding of their complex lives and emotional needs. Consequently, they are adept at providing the sensitive support that pupils require to access learning.
- Positive relationships between adults and pupils help to create a constructive climate where pupils feel safe to take risks and develop new ideas. This has resulted in everyone being able to confidently express their feelings without fear of repercussions.
- Pupils learn to manage their own emotions, become less reliant on support from adults, and demonstrate increasing awareness of social expectations and what it means to be part of a community inside and outside school. Pupils keenly participate in raising funds for charity. During this inspection, pupils were designing and making cupcakes to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society.
- There is a strong emphasis on well-being throughout the school's work, underpinned by careful attention to ensuring that pupils develop an understanding of British values through both the curriculum and their personal development. This emphasis on tolerance, respect and responsible citizenship throughout the school has meant that pupils are developing healthier feelings about themselves. Consequently, they are better equipped to deal with any challenges they might face in the future.

- Leaders provide a curriculum to support pupils' emotional development. This has a positive impact on developing positive learning behaviours. For example, pupils attend a countryside rangers course which helps them to build core transferable skills, such as perseverance, and raises their levels of confidence and self-esteem. Staff know how vital it is to continue to develop pupils' positive attitudes to learning, and take positive steps to further promote pupils' positive mental well-being in order to increase their access to learning.
- The school endeavours to prepare pupils for life outside school and to enable them to be able to manage when they leave. Leaders make every effort to secure the best onward journey for pupils and are resolute in their pursuit of good-quality education for them. This is because they care deeply for the pupils in their care.
- Pupils are supported to develop essential skills for life, such as managing their own finance, cooking and learning how to travel independently. These opportunities help them to prepare for the next stage in their lives when they leave school. They gain accredited recognition for their achievements through the ASDAN and functional skills awards.
- Pupils are given impartial careers advice by the school. They practise essential skills, such as writing a curriculum vitae to prepare them for the world of work. As far as possible, the school links pupils' work experience to their skills and personal interests. However, some pupils are unable to benefit from work experience because of the extreme anxiety it causes them. Leaders fully understand the importance of continually seeking ways to provide opportunities for pupils to prepare for life beyond the school.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a practical and meaningful way. Pupils learn about how to stay safe online and how to protect themselves from child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. School leaders make sure that pupils learn from visiting speakers, such as the police. Pupils have successfully completed first aid and food hygiene accreditation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Routines and expectations are well established, focusing on the development of the whole child, and these result in a calm and safe environment.
- Incidents of bullying or use of derogatory language are exceptionally rare. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet and with regard to sexual health.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite, well mannered and communicative. Pupils answered the inspector's questions willingly and happily shared photographs with her of cakes they had made.
- The school has a system for managing behaviour. It provides appropriate rewards and sanctions which staff consistently implement. The school has effective behaviour strategies in place to provide pupils with consistent boundaries for their behaviour that help them to understand what is expected of them. Behaviour plans are used well to support pupils who sometimes find it hard to manage their own emotions. As a result, pupils' behaviour rapidly improves over a short period of time and they respond increasingly well to the activities provided for them.

Attendance is good because of the strong partnership between staff and carers, who work together to ensure that pupils arrive at school on time and are ready to learn with increasing regularity. There is still more work to do to minimise erratic and sporadic incidents of absence that occasionally limit pupils' access to the breadth of the planned curriculum.

Outcomes for pupils

**Insufficient evidence –
amnesty granted**

- Insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

School details

Unique reference number	142328
DfE registration number	936/6005
Inspection number	10034346

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 boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	My Choice Children's Homes Ltd
Directors	Mr Alex Hyland and Mr Peter Kazmarski
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Evans
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,500
Telephone number	01444 446 920
Website	www.my-choice-homes.com/my-choice-school
Email address	a.murphy@my-choice-homes.com
Date of previous inspection	12–13 July 2016

Information about this school

- My Choice is a company providing residential care for children looked after. Osprey House is a very small independent special school situated in a large house in a residential area in Surrey. The school was registered in September 2015.
- The school provides education for boys and girls aged from 11 to 16 who are unable to attend mainstream school. This means that the school roll can change quickly and pupils sometimes attend the school for very short periods of time. This school is registered for three pupils.
- The school admits pupils who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which prevent their attendance at mainstream school. Pupils typically join the school with a history of disrupted education and some have missed extended periods of schooling.

- Pupils do not require a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan to attend the school. All pupils are in the care of the local authority that places them at the school and funds the school's fees.
- When the school opened, it had two pupils. Since that time, the number on roll has fluctuated greatly with protracted intervals when there have been no pupils on roll.
- The teaching staff are led and managed by a headteacher who works across the other My Choice schools. She started when the school opened. The headteacher is line-managed by a head of education who also oversees all the My Choice schools. The current teacher also joined the school when it opened in September 2015.
- The school aims to 'provide a holistic framework in which young people's emotional, cultural, religious, social, intellectual and health needs are met'.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Only one lesson was visited because there were no pupils on site for nearly all of the inspection. A minimal quantity of work, largely responses to online examination questions, was available for scrutiny at the time of the inspection. This meant that there was insufficient evidence to make judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about the following independent school standards: paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(h) and 3.
- The inspector held meetings with school leaders and the class teacher to discuss the effectiveness of leadership and management of safeguarding, teaching, pupils' outcomes, pupils' behaviour and welfare, attendance, the curriculum and leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- The inspector spoke to one of the proprietors by telephone.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan, evaluations of the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance records, and pupils' performance information shared by leaders.
- The inspector also examined policies, procedures and other documentation relating to the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, including documents relating to child protection and health and safety.
- The inspector conducted a tour of the school premises to ensure that they met the independent school standards.
- The inspector took into account the three responses from staff to the voluntary staff survey.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector was unable to observe pupils in unstructured times, hear pupils read or observe an assembly during the inspection.
- This was not an integrated inspection with social care.

Inspection team

Abigail Birch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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