

Inspection of My Choice School Arundel

2 Sefton Lane, Warningcamp, Arundel, West Sussex BN18 9QY

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small, nurturing school where pupils feel happy and safe. Staff develop positive working relationships with pupils quickly. Teachers use several strategies to support pupils' individual needs effectively. Pupils told inspectors that they get on well because of the small groups. As a result, staff skilfully spot potential issues before they happen and support pupils to manage these situations. Behaviour inside and outside of classrooms is typically calm.

In previous schools, pupils have experienced disruptive education. However, the approaches staff use here successfully encourage pupils to find a love of learning once again. Over time, pupils' self-confidence, relationships with peers, independence and social skills improve. Most pupils are fully invested in the life of the school. As a result, these pupils attend school regularly. However, a small minority of pupils do not attend well enough despite the school's efforts. The school has a clear action plan to improve the attendance of these pupils.

Wider opportunities outside of the classroom help to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy nature walks, visits to museums and local parks. They benefit from learning about history and geography through real-life experiences, for example visiting the local castle and cathedral.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is committed to making a positive difference to pupils' lives. This was summed up by a parent, responding to Ofsted Parent View, who said: 'This school is amazing, and I would highly recommend it.'

The school has carefully designed the curriculum from Years 7 to 11 so that it successfully helps pupils catch up on missed learning. Pupils typically study English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (PSHE). College courses and placements outside of school provide pupils with opportunities to study other subjects, for example angling, motor vehicle studies and animal care. Several accredited projects mean that pupils also study subjects such as geography, history, and beliefs and values. This broad education helps to prepare pupils well for the future.

The curriculum in each subject is sequenced logically. Staff teach the most important content and revisit it regularly to make sure that it sticks in pupils' memories. Routine checks on what pupils know and remember help staff to adapt learning so that pupils are keen to learn, and are motivated and enthused. Staff do this very skilfully. While they are trained well, the school is continuing to develop staff knowledge of the subjects they teach, including phonics.

Reading is prioritised. The well-stocked and welcoming library provides pupils with a wide range of reading materials to choose from. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly in class. During the inspection, pupils in one class were reading a book

with a theme of friendship and love. They went on to enjoy a rich discussion about the text. The school carefully checks pupils' phonics knowledge, reading confidence and fluency when they first join the school. This helps staff to put suitable support in place. The school uses a well-thought-through phonics programme that is designed to help secondary-aged pupils. As a result, pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge become increasingly more confident when reading.

Staff know pupils very well. They have a deep understanding of pupils' individual special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets are carefully broken down into smaller, termly targets. Pupils make good progress towards them. Close partnership working with other professionals ensures that pupils get the help they need, for example different therapies.

Staff expertly support pupils' behaviour. They understand the challenges that pupils have with managing their behaviour and are quick to resolve issues. The school's focus on mental health support has a positive impact on how settled pupils are at school. This is something that has been developed since the last inspection. As a result, behaviour has improved.

The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development. The carefully planned and sequenced PSHE programme provides an opportunity for pupils to learn about different religions, physical and mental health, and relationships and sex education. It covers important topics such as consent and the risks of drugs and alcohol. Several other opportunities, including learning to play the keyboard, guitar or drums, help to develop pupils' interests and talents.

Pupils receive helpful careers education and advice. Staff help pupils with application forms and preparation for college interviews. Many pupils enjoy attending college for one or two days a week during key stage 4, which gives them an insight into what college is like. Some pupils experience what it is like to work. Staff are keen to ensure that pupils leave with fond memories of their time at school.

The school is supported well by the proprietor body. Regular visits and checks by members of this body ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties, including compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Staff workload and well-being are carefully considered. As a result, staff feel well supported and are happy in their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all staff are specialists in the subjects they teach. This means that some are less confident about what they teach, making it harder for them to adapt learning quickly in lessons. The school should ensure that there is a regular programme of training to develop staff subject knowledge, including expertise in phonics.
- A small minority of pupils have low attendance. This means that these pupils do not make the progress they should academically, socially or emotionally. The school should continue to implement the attendance action plan to ensure that attendance for this group rapidly increases.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

| | |
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| Unique reference number | 135111 |
| DfE registration number | 938/6272 |
| Local authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10322067 |
| Type of school | Other Independent Special School |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 21 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | My Choice Children's Homes Ltd |
| Chair | Alex Hyland |
| Headteacher | Clare Wye |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £48,562 |
| Telephone number | 01903 898060 |
| Website | www.my-choice-homes.com |
| Email address | a.murphy@my-choice-homes.com |
| Dates of previous inspection | 8 to 10 November 2022 |

Information about this school

- This is an independent special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils have been unable to access or sustain educational placements at other schools. Many have experienced significant disruption to, and gaps in, their education.
- All pupils are placed by local authorities and have EHC plans. Many have attachment and anxiety disorders.
- The proprietor body also runs children's homes in West Sussex, East Sussex and Surrey.
- The school currently uses one registered and one unregistered provider of alternative provision. Pupils attend for one or two days per week.
- The school is led by a headteacher who was in post at the time of the last inspection. The head of education oversees the running of the school.
- Several pupils currently follow a 'blended learning' package. This means that they attend school for part of the week and receive online tutoring or alternative packages for the rest of the week.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any ongoing impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders to discuss the curriculum, held discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.

- Inspectors checked the school's arrangements for meeting the independent school standards. The lead inspector also toured the premises.
- The lead inspector met with one member of the proprietor body to discuss their involvement with the school and how they challenge and support its work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, and parents and carers. Inspectors held informal discussions with pupils when they arrived at school and at social times.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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