

Inspection of The Lighthouse School

24 Clarendon Road, Margate, Kent CT9 2QJ

Inspection dates: 22–24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The proprietor has not ensured that governance arrangements are strong enough. A number of independent school standards are not met, including records that show that all safeguarding checks have been made. The proprietor has not made sure that the school complies with its registration requirements agreed with the Department for Education (DfE).

Staff support pupils well in developing their personal skills and in helping them overcome difficulties. They understand pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Pupils are happy at the school. Many have a history of disjointed education in the past. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the education the school provides for their children. One parent said, 'There is great life coaching' at the school.

Staff are positive role models. Pupils get on well together and are tolerant of others' differences. Pupils say that there is no bullying at the school. They say that any concern is dealt with quickly by staff. One pupil said, 'There is always an adult to help you here.'

Recently appointed senior leaders have high ambition for pupils and for what they can achieve. Staff say that the school has vastly improved under the current principal's leadership.

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

Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has put a governing body in place consisting of leaders, finance staff from Acorn Group, and an external chair of governors. However, the proprietor has not ensured that the governing body and staff have enough knowledge of the independent school standards. Consequently, many aspects of the school fall short of the DfE's requirements for independent schools.

Those responsible for governance do not check on the impact of school leaders' actions well enough. The proprietor has not made governors' roles in checking compliance with the independent school standards clear enough. Systems that leaders have put in place are not reliable enough to ensure that the independent school standards required are met consistently.

Leaders have not recorded all the required recruitment checks on the suitability of supply staff and governors on the single central register (SCR). Nor have leaders and governors checked the SCR effectively. Leaders had completed SCR as required by the end of the inspection.

Since the last inspection, the proprietor has relocated the main school to a second site. More pupils attend the school than the permitted number. The proprietor did not inform the DfE of these changes. During the inspection, shortcomings were

found with the additional site. The water used by pupils to wash their hands is too hot. The medical room does not have a washing facility as is required. Leaders have not made sure that the complaints policy provides details of the formal complaints procedure as required. Nor have leaders made parents aware of the number of formal complaints in the preceding school year.

Leaders have not notified parents of all the information they are expected to provide. Parents have not been supplied with governing body contact details, recent examination results or the aims and ethos of the school.

Despite shortcomings, leaders have made many improvements to the school, such as to the curriculum and how it is taught. Governors monitor this aspect of the school well. Pupils receive a personalised curriculum linked to the targets in their education, health and care plans. Leaders have checked that curriculum plans ensure that new learning builds on previous knowledge and skills. However, curriculum plans in some subjects are not so strong. This means that subjects such as personal and social education and reading are more developed than others.

Teaching staff keep a close eye on pupils' progress and adapt teaching as necessary. Some teachers have yet to gain sufficient subject knowledge for all the subjects they teach. For example, at key stage 3, teachers' lack of scientific knowledge leads to pupils' misconceptions going uncorrected. Furthermore, a small number of pupils with a highly specialised curriculum do not have a rich enough curriculum experience.

Teachers promote a love of reading for most pupils. Pupils in key stages 2 and 3 are motivated by the progress they make in their reading. Pupils read books that match their reading ability. Pupils are eager to refine their skills so that they can read more widely. A number of pupils learn to read successfully for the first time here.

Leaders are currently improving the way pupils' behaviour is managed. They are aware that the current sanctions are not appropriate, resulting in too many exclusions from school. It is too early to see the full impact of improvements to the behaviour management system because this work is still in its infancy.

Pupils learn how to be responsible citizens and to prepare well for life after they leave the school. Parents speak highly of a bespoke life-skills curriculum for Year 11 pupils. Leaders plan independent careers education, so pupils have individualised support for continuing their next steps after leaving the school. In recent years, many pupils have gone on to local colleges to study a wide range of courses, including in finance, hair and beauty, and building services.

Staff promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils gain skills to regulate themselves, so they are ready to learn. They reflect on their own issues and are considerate of others. Individual interests are developed well. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their talents such as horse riding, arts and sports. Trips and visits are undertaken to learn about cultural and historical issues.

Leaders have complied with the independent school standard regarding publishing the safeguarding policy on the school's website and ensuring that the school meets its equality duties.

The principal, senior leaders and all other leaders engage well with staff, and morale is high. Current leaders have capacity to improve the school. They rectified a number of unmet standards, including the complaints policy details and information provided to parents, during the inspection.

Leaders support newly qualified teachers well. These teachers say, 'It's a pull-together ethos.' They say that leaders are supportive of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The proprietor has not made sure that there is a system to ensure that staff recruitment details are recorded as required. Leaders do not have an effective system to keep track of pupils who are transitioning to a new provision. Despite this, staff are well trained in safeguarding matters and report any concerns they may have about a pupil.

The designated safeguarding lead communicates with outside agencies well and keeps in regular contact with parents. Chronological records of safeguarding concerns about pupils are kept in an organised manner.

Pupils say that they feel safe in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Governance arrangements do not currently meet requirements because leaders and governors do not know the independent school standards well enough. The proprietor should make sure that the independent school standards are understood fully by all leaders and governors.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account well enough. There is insufficient scrutiny of the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. The proprietor should make the role of governors clearer, including in checking improvement planning and ensuring that all the independent school standards are met.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are not effective. Leaders have not set up a fail-safe system to record staff recruitment checks on the SCR. The SCR is not checked effectively. The proprietor should set up procedures to make sure that recruitment checks are recorded as required.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the main school building at Northdown House meets the requirements of Part 5 of the independent school standards. Unmet standards related to temperature of the hot water and to the medical room

should be rectified. A reliable system of checking the premises and accommodation should be put in place.

- Leaders do not provide parents with all the required information. The proprietor should ensure that parents are provided with details about the aims and ethos of the school. They should also provide contact details for the chair of governors and the number of complaints received in the previous school year. The complaints policy must meet all of the requirements of Part 7 of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor has not monitored the numbers of pupils on the school roll closely enough. The school is currently exceeding its registration agreement. Governors should make sure that the school operates within its registration requirements agreed with the DfE.
- Leaders have developed the reading curriculum well, so that pupils' learning builds on what has gone before. More work needs to be done to ensure that the rest of the curriculum matches the quality of the reading curriculum.
- Teaching staff do not have the depth of subject knowledge needed to teach subjects outside their area of expertise. Leaders should put training and additional support in place, so that staff are able to deliver the curriculum as intended.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 [here](#).

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	130979
DfE registration number	886/6110
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10193091
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Homes (Group) Limited
Chair	David Knowles
Headteacher	Natalie Christie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000 to £59,300
Telephone number	01843 482055
Website	http://lighthouseschools.co.uk/
Email address	lighthouseschools@lighthouseschools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–13 October 2016

Information about this school

- The Lighthouse School is registered for 44 pupils, aged from eight to 18. All pupils who attend the school have SEND associated with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Over half of the pupils on roll are in the care of the local authority. The school does not comply with its current registration requirements as there are 54 pupils on roll.
- The school operates from two sites, Clarendon Road and Northdown House. The latter is the main site.
- Since the last inspection, the proprietor has put a governing body in place. The current principal was appointed in December 2018, and two vice-principals have been appointed since September 2020.
- The school uses two unregistered and one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The previous standard inspection was in 2016.

Information about this inspection

We 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the following staff: the principal, vice-principals, special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator, and the health and safety co-ordinator. Inspectors also met with members of staff in groups and individually. They talked to pupils informally in groups and individually throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with following: the proprietor, the chair of governors, a care home manager, a virtual school officer and representatives of alternative learning placements.
- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, personal and social education, science and art. Each deep dive involved a conversation with subject leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, talking to pupils and looking at their work.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors looked at documentary evidence, including the single central register of recruitment checks, and talked to designated safeguarding leads and staff, and observed the school at work.
- Inspectors considered 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They took account of 38 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Deborah Gordon

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person's identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply);
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff–
 - 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that–
 - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–

- 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
- 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and
- 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(2)(c) where there is a governing body, the name and address for correspondence of its Chair; and
 - 32(2)(d) a statement of the school’s ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(e) particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations;
 - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor–
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
 - 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is–
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and

- 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
- 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and–
- 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) 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–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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