

# Teaseldown School

Sugar Loaves, 175 Swan Street, Sible Hedington, Halsted, Essex CO9 3PX

## Inspection dates

9–11 May 2017

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b> |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Good</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders provide an education that is literally life-changing for some pupils and their families.
- Pupils receive high-quality care that helps build their self-esteem.
- Staff help pupils to understand their diagnoses, helping them to regulate their behaviour more effectively.
- Most pupils make good progress against the targets in their individual plans.
- Leaders' effective actions ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff help pupils with previously negative experiences of education to re-engage in learning.
- Generally, staff understand pupils' needs well and build strong relationships that help most pupils to make good progress both socially and academically.
- Despite making good gains in their personal and social development, some pupils make less progress academically than they should.
- A few teachers lack the skill and expertise to drive rapid improvements in pupils' learning.
- Teachers plan carefully so that pupils are able to fill in the gaps in their learning.
- Teachers plan learning that pupils find exciting.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' learning, progress and personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff instil fundamental British values by fully embracing the 'you respect everybody' ethos.
- Pupils' attendance is close to or above national figures. Where it is not, it shows a clear improvement from pupils' starting points.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. The dynamic risk assessments completed for each pupil help to keep them safe.
- Comprehensive monitoring gives leaders an accurate view of the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders do not always ensure that all statutory checks are recorded properly.
- Leaders ensure that all of the independent school standards are 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.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by auditing the records that staff complete more closely to make sure that the checks they undertake are recorded properly.
- Improve teaching to enable pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points by:
  - ensuring that teachers have detailed subject knowledge
  - matching teaching precisely to the needs of individual pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders' ambitious vision to establish a setting to provide for pupils whose needs had not been met elsewhere has been realised. The service provided meets the vast majority of pupils' needs extremely well. For some families, the impact is literally life-changing. As one parent said, 'She wouldn't be here [alive] were it not for attending this school.'
- Staff work patiently and meticulously to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of some pupils with highly complex needs. The school's philosophy epitomises fundamental British values; the message pupils receive is simple: 'you respect everybody'.
- Staff help pupils to grow in confidence, and build their self-esteem highly successfully. Pupils are more personable and adopt more positive attitudes to learning over time. This prepares them well for when they leave the school.
- Leaders have created an environment where 'everybody learns together' and they promote learning by supporting staff to advance academically alongside pupils. Currently, staff are studying for A levels, degrees and Masters' qualifications.
- Leaders use performance management effectively to drive improvement. Staff receive a comprehensive training programme that equips them well to meet the demands of the needs of the pupils with whom they work. Leaders use training passports to track staff progress effectively and highlight any further professional development required.
- All of the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff were highly positive. Staff work well together and act as a cohesive team. They know the individual pupils very well and work hard to help pupils who have a range of complex needs to re-engage in learning. As one member of staff said, 'In other environments, these children cannot function – we help them to be all they can be.'
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Inspectors agreed with their evaluation of the school's effectiveness. The development plan highlights appropriate areas for improvement. For example, leaders knew that a more advanced information system would enable them to spot trends linked to pupils' progress more easily. A new system, specifically designed to meet the school's specific needs, is now in place.
- Leaders have established effective systems to monitor standards. The four-weekly, full-day meetings for senior leaders help to keep them abreast of developments across the three sites. Communication in all settings is a real strength. Daily briefings, end-of-day reviews, and frequent discussions with parents and carers ensure that pupils' development and needs are at the forefront of staff's work.
- Leaders' effective monitoring systems highlight some areas that require further development. Leaders know that a few pupils do not make enough progress because some teachers lack the skill or expertise to drive improvement sufficiently well. Leaders are taking measures to support staff accordingly.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through the curriculum. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community. For example, a group of pupils develop their social and communication skills by making tea for some residents at an old people's home.
- Leaders have established a curriculum that allows pupils to progress successfully to life after school. Pupils access a full range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, geography, history and citizenship. The most able pupils have the opportunity to study a modern foreign language. Additionally, pupils work in groups on STEAM (science, technology, English, art and mathematics) projects to add variety and extend their learning. Pupils speak positively about the work they complete in these lessons, including the construction of a hedgehog hotel, and the detailed analyses of combustion engines.
- The range of extra-curricular activities arranged across schools helps pupils to develop their social and teamworking skills well. Pupils go canoeing, climbing, and take part in drama productions and bake-off competitions with pupils from the other schools. Pupils build productive relationships with staff through visits to local amenities, such as tennis courts, trampolining facilities and basketball courts.
- Parents and carers receive regular updates to let them know how their children are doing. Parents are mostly full of praise for the work the school does to keep them informed. Regular contact at pick-up points, daily phone calls or emails home and always being able to speak to a member of staff give the vast majority of parents confidence in the school. Termly reports inform parents of their child's academic progress.

## **Governance**

- The proprietors, who are also directors, provide the governance for the school.
- Directors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The directors are in school on a daily basis. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and are aware of the areas that require further development.
- The directors have ensured that the school has published a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out all the necessary pre-employment checks to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. At the start of the inspection, there were some minor administrative errors in the single central record of the checks made on staff working in the school. Her Majesty's Inspector was able to confirm that the school had made all the required checks, and the record was updated correctly by the end of the inspection.
- Leaders carry out detailed risk assessments on all aspects of school life, including the dynamic risk assessments for each pupil. This ensures that staff are fully aware of the potential risks that each pupil currently faces.
- Staff receive regular updates about the latest statutory guidance, and know what to do and whom to speak to should they have concerns.

- Child protection files show detailed records, with concerns reported without delay to the designated person and appropriate agencies.
- Leaders have successfully woven safeguarding elements into the curriculum. Pupils say that they feel safe. Parents and carers unequivocally say that their children are safe, and are made aware of how to keep themselves safe.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Pupils often come to the school having been out of education for a long time. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many pupils have high levels of anxiety and social phobia. Staff work effectively to support pupils to re-engage in learning and achieve outcomes that had not seemed possible prior to joining the school.
- Teachers assess pupils on entry to identify the gaps in their learning. They plan lessons effectively to address the areas where pupils have misconceptions. This highly individualised tuition helps most pupils to catch up, build on their prior knowledge, and make good progress in their learning.
- Where practice is most effective, teachers establish strong relationships, monitor pupils' levels of understanding well, and use questioning effectively by giving pupils time to think about their responses. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils make good progress because teachers set them work that they find challenging. Pupils have to think hard and strive to work through problems. However, teachers provide effective help, so that pupils can overcome their difficulties.
- Teachers plan activities that interest pupils, helping them to learn while also developing their social skills. For example, pupils in science worked together to record the temperatures of liquids in a range of insulated cups. They were able to plot cooling rates over time, and explain what combination provided the most effective type of insulation.
- Teachers support pupils effectively to develop their skills and understanding across a range of subject areas. They assess pupils' progress on a lesson-by-lesson basis. By recording precisely what pupils can do, and highlighting what they need to do next, teachers help pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils have consistently productive relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and the positive learning environment, including personalised working areas, means that they enjoy studying and learn successfully. Inspectors noted that the longer pupils attend the school, the more progress they make.
- In a few cases, teachers do not always display the necessary skills or expertise to set work that challenges pupils effectively. Consequently, some pupils do not make the academic progress of which they are capable.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The care afforded to pupils is a strength. Pupils feel happy, valued and well cared for. They appreciate the difference staff have made to help them develop their self-confidence and be able to learn more effectively. As one said, 'Before I joined this school, my life was full of misery, stress, overthinking, and [obsessive compulsive disorder] rituals. Now, my thinking has turned around and it is more positive and solution focused.'
- Staff are patient and meticulous in meeting pupils' needs. Inspectors saw clear evidence of pupils' progress in their social skills and personal development. Stakeholders confirmed this as a skilled area of the staff's work.
- Leaders provide staff with effective training that helps them to meet pupils' development needs well. There is a collaborative approach between staff and pupils to establish what works best. For example, one pupil helped staff to rewrite the training on autistic spectrum disorder so that it could better reflect pupils' needs.
- A small number of pupils attend Wellies-On, a 40-acre care farm based in Abberton, just outside Colchester. They attend regularly, behave well, and make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe. Staff have thorough knowledge of each pupil's conditions, circumstances and recent behaviours. The dynamic risk assessment completed for every pupil is reviewed daily. Consequently, well-informed staff meet pupils' diverse and complex needs highly effectively.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff build good relationships with the pupils by demonstrating the patience and understanding to deal with some challenging behaviours. Pupils trust staff and realise that they are there to support them. This helps pupils to change how they act, and become more responsible and more productive.
- The number of serious incidents recorded show that pupils make significant improvements in their behaviour over time. Staff take great care to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their diagnoses and the impact these have on their behaviour. This helps pupils to spot potential trigger points, and be able to approach situations differently, leading to less confrontation.
- The attendance of most pupils is above the national average. However, at Brook View site, some pupils who have complex needs rarely attend. Nonetheless, their current attendance levels represent a sustained improvement from those seen prior to them joining the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Leaders' work in establishing provision to help pupils return to learning is very successful for the vast majority of pupils. Inspection evidence supports leaders' evaluation, and the school's own information, that most pupils make good academic progress over time. It is clear that the longer pupils stay at the school, the better the outcomes become. As one parent said, the school 'takes the learners and their families through a positive, truly collaborative journey, away from the negative that has sadly, all too often, come before.'

- Staff work highly effectively to support pupils to re-engage in learning. Pupils often arrive with highly negative experiences of education. These include many previous schools, frequent exclusions, and significant periods of absence leading to a fragmented education and extensive gaps in their learning. Teachers help pupils to catch up and many achieve outcomes that stakeholders confirm would not have been possible otherwise.
- Staff employ a range of approaches to support pupils, and their rates of progress have to be seen fully in the context of their individual needs. Inspectors cross-referenced each pupil's progress against their EHC plans. Inspection evidence shows that the vast majority of pupils show good levels of improvement from their various starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in English. Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' books. Initially, pupils produce minimal unaided writing and work includes only the most basic skill levels. Later work showed that pupils are able to vary their vocabulary and tone, and to use paragraphs and punctuation more confidently. The most able pupils show the ability to extract information from a text, and compare findings across texts.
- In science, books show that pupils often arrive without the skills required to complete simple data-collection tasks. They have low-level understanding of terms and content. Over time, pupils' skills develop and they are now able to distinguish between different habitats and life cycles. The most able pupils demonstrate an understanding of more complex issues linked to radioactivity, for example.
- Pupils often arrive at the school without the skills required to complete the four basic mathematical operations consistently well. Over short periods, pupils can show that their calculations are becoming far more precise. In the longer term, pupils are able to solve linear equations, and use formulas accurately and appropriately.
- Pupils achieve a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, and functional skills and entry-level certificates that help them to progress to appropriate settings when they leave. Leaders timetable sessions to help pupils devise suitable transition plans. Staff provide impartial careers advice, and accompany pupils initially to their post-16 college provision where they study a range of vocational and academic qualifications. This helps pupils adapt to their new surroundings and ensures that destinations are sustained.
- Inspectors noted a small number of occasions where teachers do not display the detailed subject knowledge to stretch pupils fully. Consequently, a small number of pupils make less rapid progress than they could.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 135837   |
| DfE registration number | 881/6060 |
| Inspection number       | 10020918 |

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 school   |
| Age range of pupils                 | 11 to 19   |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 27   |
| Number of part-time pupils          | 0  |
| Proprietor                          | Hazel Bunting and Brett Runchman   |
| Chair                               | Brett Runchman   |
| Headteacher                         | Hazel Bunting  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)            | £49,380  |
| Telephone number                    | 01787 469373   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.exceptional-ideas.co.uk">www.exceptional-ideas.co.uk</a>     |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:admin@exceptional-ideas.co.uk">admin@exceptional-ideas.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 5–7 November 2013  |

## Information about this school

- Teaseldown is an independent day special school owned by the proprietor Exceptional Ideas Limited. It occupies three sites in Essex as follows: Teaseldown at Sible Hedingham, Primrose Hill in Chelmsford and Brook View in Wethersfield.
- All pupils are referred and funded by their local authority. There are currently 27 pupils on roll across the three sites, all of whom have EHC plans to cater for their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- In many cases, pupils have been excluded from their previous schools and arrive with histories of poor attendance. Many present challenging behaviour, and have experienced personal traumas, leading to disruption in their previous education.
- Most pupils have complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school combines therapeutic and educational provision to meet the needs of boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19 years. Currently, there are no pupils in post-16 provision.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to consider the proprietor's request for a material change in October 2015. As a result, the DfE increased the school's admission number from 22 to 29, and extended the age range from 11–16 to 11–19.
- All teaching is provided on a one-to-one basis by a team of 27 tutors under the leadership of the headteacher.
- The school does not use agency staff.
- The school uses one alternative provider, Wellies-On, a 40-acre care farm based in Abberton just outside Colchester.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are in the care of the local authority.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning across all three sites, often jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the directors, senior leaders, senior operational staff and teaching staff.
- The inspector spoke to four parents/carers on the telephone. They also considered the views of the six parents who contributed their views via the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 20 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector held telephone discussions with staff from the local authority, including the head of statutory assessment services, casework managers, the chief commissioner, and the head of the virtual school.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises across all three sites.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including required policies, records of the checks made on staff, curriculum planning and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's tracking of pupils' progress, both in lessons and of their social and personal development. They looked at a range of pupils' work and spoke to them in lessons. An inspector carried out a detailed work scrutiny, alongside senior leaders, to evaluate progress over time.
- There are currently no students accessing the sixth-form provision and, therefore, no separate section or judgements are made for this aspect of the school's work.

## Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Copping

Ofsted Inspector

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