

White Trees Independent School

13a London Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3SP

Inspection dates

8 May 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(a)

- The previous inspection in April 2018 found that the curriculum did not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the full range of curriculum subjects.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor and school leaders proposed to:
 - introduce a wider and deeper curriculum offer
 - introduce a robust system of assessment
 - analyse assessment data every half-term
 - have half-termly challenge and support meetings with the governing body.
- The school now has a clear curriculum policy outlined and detailed in the school's 'what we do and how we do it' document. This sets out leaders' intentions to develop pupils' knowledge and skills, so they become increasingly confident, independent learners. The specified aims translate well throughout the school's work.
- Leaders have implemented a full curriculum for all subject areas. Now in place are detailed, good-quality schemes of work and planning for subjects that are appropriately adapted to meet the needs of all individual pupils. As a result of this work, the school's curriculum now provides pupils with ample opportunities to learn across all curriculum subjects.
- Knowledgeable and caring staff, who know their pupils well, review schemes of work to ensure that planning is adapted to meet pupils' ongoing needs. Staff demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of the wider range of subjects now being taught. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive. This contributes towards pupils' enthusiasm, positivity and increasing interest in their learning, resulting in pupils wanting to achieve well.
- The school uses 'pathways' increasingly successfully to offer teaching and learning that effectively supports the progress of pupils prior to undertaking formal qualifications. In addition, there are 'pathways' in place to provide pupils with support in developing their

social skills and supporting pupils' welfare and well-being.

- The proprietor and leaders have now ensured that the school meets this independent school standard.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(f), 3(g)

Paragraph 4

- At the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was variable. Leaders had not identified the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, and teachers did not accurately assess or closely check pupils' progress in all subjects.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor and leaders proposed to:
 - introduce a robust system of planning and assessment
 - analyse assessment data every half-term
 - make monitoring of the quality of teaching more systematic
 - have half-termly challenge and support meetings with the governing body.
- Since the previous inspection in April 2018, and more swiftly since new leaders and staff have been appointed, expectations about the quality of teaching have risen. Well-thought-out structures to both support and challenge staff have been put in place throughout the school to help improve teaching so it meets pupils' needs more effectively.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now highly tailored to reflect and meet the complex needs of individual pupils. This is because teachers are using assessment information to plan learning that suits pupils' needs and also engages and interests them. Teachers are taking account of what pupils already know and can do and use appropriately planned activities to build on their current knowledge. Teachers regularly check that pupils understand what is expected of them.
- Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and they now have more opportunities to progress in a wide range of curriculum subjects. Carefully planned and adapted work, as evidenced in pupils' 'learning journals', shows that pupils acquire new knowledge based upon prior learning, skills and understanding. Well-planned lessons spark pupils' interest in their work so that they are increasingly becoming self-motivated learners who think for themselves and are keen to consider aspirational next steps.
- For both on- and off-site provision, leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning and evaluate the performance of pupils by carefully monitoring the progress that all pupils make.
- Governors have a better developed and well-informed oversight of the quality of teaching. This is because governors receive regular in-depth updates from leaders about the improvements being made and regularly check this is accurate through their visits to the school and the questions they ask leaders. While governors are encouraged by the positive impact of improvements since the previous inspection, governors and leaders are not complacent and know there remain improvements to be made to successfully build upon the effective work that has taken place.
- The proprietor and leaders have now ensured that the school meets these independent

school standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and managers were not demonstrating the good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They had not ensured that all of the independent school standards were met.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor and leaders proposed to ensure that:
 - there are robust and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work
 - all areas of the school are rated good and the independent standards are met
 - safeguarding continues to be effective
 - governors conduct regular challenge and support visits
 - the senior leadership team meets weekly
 - governors hold meetings every half-term.
- Leaders, including governors, have responded well, especially more recently, to the recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection. They have worked diligently with both established and new staff to deal with identified areas to improve. Consequently, this progress monitoring inspection found that leaders and governors have a more in-depth understanding of the independent school standards. This is in part due to support from external consultants and effective work with the local authority, but mainly because of their own determination and tenacity to improve the life chances for the pupils they serve.
- Governors appointed a new headteacher in October 2018 and a new deputy headteacher in January 2019. Evidence shows that governors had a clear understanding of the skills, experience and qualities they were looking for, resulting in the recruitment process being thorough and well considered.
- The headteacher, with support from the deputy headteacher, has introduced effective change swiftly. For example, together with staff, they have introduced a system to collect information on individual pupils' progress more thoroughly and systematically. This is currently being used to gather evidence to show more precisely how well pupils are doing and adapt learning carefully to meet pupils' complex individual needs. While this is still a work in progress and continues to evolve, there is evidence of the impact of this work. For example, pupils are able to clearly articulate their increasing enjoyment of school and are proud of their 'learning journals' which clearly show how well they are doing.
- Since the previous standard inspection, leaders have submitted two action plans to the Department for Education (DfE) that were judged to be unacceptable. Leaders now have an amended, updated action plan. This specifically details aspirational actions. The plan contains appropriate timescales and realistic and measurable criteria, ensuring that leaders can now precisely and accurately evaluate the impact of the actions they undertake. Consequently, leaders are more aware of their responsibilities and can articulate and evidence the difference they are making to improve the school.

- Governance of the school has been strengthened. For example, leaders have a common, agreed format for use on monitoring visits and the joint checks with leaders help governors to assess the quality of learning more accurately.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities are currently under review. This is a work in progress. However, this reflects and demonstrates that leaders have a deeper understanding of, and are more knowledgeable about, the expectations of leaders and how they contribute to effective school improvement.
- School leaders have high expectations for all pupils. While, as identified in the previous inspection as a strength, pupils' welfare and personal development are at the heart of the ethos and culture at White Trees, equally, this is balanced with leaders' high expectations of pupils to achieve the best they can.
- The proprietor and leaders have now ensured that the school meets this independent school standard.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- The school is currently registered for 11- to 16-year-old pupils and has applied for a material change to be registered for 11- to 18-year-old pupils.
- Leaders' rationale for this change is to ensure that they can further meet pupils' complex personal, social and emotional needs and enhance the transition for individual pupils into further education, training, employment or independent living.
- Leaders clearly stipulate that the intention is not to admit pupils between the ages of 16 to 18 with this extension and variation of the curriculum but more to ensure that there is flexibility to meet the unique individual needs of pupils who may require additional support or time to be successful in their future destination.
- Initially, the proprietor also requested a material change to increase the number of pupils on roll. However, at the beginning of the inspection, the proprietor requested for this part of the material change to be delayed, as building works are not yet completed which would facilitate the additional numbers of pupils. This additional material change was not considered during this inspection.
- The proprietor of Sure Care Residential is aware that they will need to make another request for a material change inspection in the future should it wish to increase the numbers of pupils on roll.
- In addition to the requirements of the independent school standards that were checked for the progress monitoring aspect of this inspection, as set out above, the following sections refer to additional checks made for the material change requested by the school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

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)(c), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)

- Leaders demonstrate that they know each pupil extremely well and are well aware of their needs, both academically and personally, social and emotionally. Evidence of each

pupils' personalised curriculum demonstrates that the request for a material change is securely based upon the individual needs of each pupil.

- Please see above on pages 1 and 2 for additional information relevant to this material change request.
- The school is likely to meet these independent school standards if the material change relating to the age range of pupils is implemented.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)

- Schemes of work for personal, social, health and economic education, together with personalised programmes, support pupils well in their development as active and responsible citizens.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good and staff are positive role models for promoting equality, diversity, rights and responsibilities.
- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard if the material change relating to the age range of pupils is implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection, safeguarding was judged to be effective and relevant standards were met. During this inspection, inspectors checked that procedures and practices continue to meet requirements.
- The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and up to date, taking into account the current legal guidance. The policy is available on the website, as required.
- Leaders routinely carry out work to review the safeguarding systems in place. As a result, the safeguarding culture at the school is well developed and all staff, including those who are new, understand their responsibilities. Staff are vigilant for any signs of abuse or neglect. They know what to do if they have a concern and use the school's referral protocols effectively.
- Leaders have continued to focus on the whole-school approach to keeping pupils safe. This is supported by increased staff training, awareness and understanding. Leaders share information about safeguarding appropriately. Regular reviews of actions take place, reflecting the needs of pupils and consideration about how to ensure that pupils are safeguarded well.
- Safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective. This is because leaders have further enhanced the effectiveness of the systems in place through their regular review and revisiting of how well the processes in place are keeping pupils safe and well looked after.
- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard if the material change

relating to the age range of pupils is implemented.

Paragraph 14

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Pupils are supervised well. Staff know when closer supervision is needed and when to let pupils self-manage their behaviour and learning.
- Leaders carry out detailed evaluations of the alternative off-site provisions they use to provide and personalise pupils' learning and development. They keep in regular contact with providers to check that pupils attend all their lessons, are being well educated and are being kept safe. For example, leaders regularly update pupils' risk assessments to ensure that all necessary support is provided and staff have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of pupils' well-being needs.
- The school is likely to meet these independent schools standard if the material change relating to the age range of pupils is implemented.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3)

Paragraph 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(2)(e), 19(3)

Paragraph 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c)

Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- At the school's standard inspection in April 2018, these standards were met. At this progress motoring inspection these standards remain met.
- Leaders' checks on staff's suitability to work with pupils are secure and thorough. Recruitment systems are followed meticulously. The required checks are recorded accurately and are fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- As part of leaders' rigorous adherence to safer recruitment practices, they ensure that all the required pre-employment checks on staff are carried out and recorded carefully. This inspection found that leaders' methodical processes to ensure that staffs' suitability to work with pupils are secure and are compliant with legal requirements remain effective.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to remain met by the school if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards not met at the standard inspection in April 2018 are now met at this progress monitoring inspection.
- Please see above on pages 3 and 4 for additional information relevant to this material

change request.

- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard if the material change relating to the age range of pupils is implemented.

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.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work that take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, is drawn up and implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(a)).
- The proprietors must ensure that teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress, according to their ability, so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range (paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(f), 3(g)).
- The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).
- The proprietors must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role;
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

School details

Unique reference number	140655
DfE registration number	919/6053
Inspection number	10101557

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.

The inspection of the school's provision in relation to the material change that the school has applied to make was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied for.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Proprietor	Sure Care Residential
Chair	Emma Barr
Headteacher	Richard McCabe
Annual fees (day pupils)	Scale £45,000, £55,000 and £75,000
Telephone number	01277 899955
Website	www.whitetrees-school.com
Email address	admin@whitetrees-school.com
Date of previous standard inspection	25–27 April 2018

Information about this school

- White Trees Independent School is a day special school providing for boys and girls who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school opened in February 2014 and moved to its current location in 2017.
- The school is registered to take up to 16 pupils in the age range of 11 to 16 years. Pupils

often do not remain at the school long term.

- There are currently 11 students on the roll of the school, nine of whom have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership, with a new headteacher in October 2018 and a new deputy headteacher in January 2019. In addition to leadership changes, there have also been some staff changes, with more qualified teachers being appointed.
- The school makes use of additional off-site locations regularly for day-to-day teaching, such as the library.
- The school provides individualised teaching programmes for each of its pupils in response to the complexity of pupils' needs.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out, without notice, 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 unmet independent school standards identified at the previous inspection.
- The purpose of the inspection was also to establish whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the requested material change is carried out.
- Leaders submitted two action plans to show how they would act to ensure that the independent standards would be met. The plans were evaluated on 6 September 2018 and 21 January 2019 respectively and, on both occasions, judged not to be acceptable.
- This is the school's first monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in April 2018.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised evidence to evaluate leaders' work to meet previously unmet independent school standards. This included observing lessons with senior leaders, looking at pupils' work and talking with pupils about their school life and changes to the curriculum. In addition, the lead inspector evaluated leaders' most recent action plans, the progress leaders have made in implementing the actions, and checked what difference these actions are making.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the proprietor, who is also the chair of governors, and spoke by phone with a representative from Hertfordshire local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe, the school's curriculum, pupils' assessment information, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, and pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Hemmings

Her Majesty's Inspector

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