

The Annex School House

Ash House, Centre Road, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent DA3 8JF

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and have brought about noteworthy improvement since the last inspection.
- Achievement is good. From their different starting points pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and consequently, they are able to achieve accreditation in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers plan motivating activities and impart their good subject knowledge effectively. Consequently, pupils are engaged and keen to learn.
- Pupils are prepared well for life. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is mingled seamlessly within the curriculum and reflects the ethos of the school.
- The curriculum is broad and expectations of how well pupils can succeed are high. The curriculum is enriched by trips, visits and an exciting range of sporting activities.
- Pupils are very well looked after in a nurturing environment that puts them first. Arrangements to help keep pupils safe and secure are effective.
- The headteacher and proprietor have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. However, leaders could use information available to them more effectively to hone in on areas for improvement.
- Staff are well supported by leaders but performance management of staff has not focused on raising pupils' outcomes and school improvement sufficiently well.
- Structures for holding leaders to account for the effectiveness of the school lack rigour.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are not outstanding because staff's questioning skills do not consistently deepen pupils understanding and pupils are not applying their English and mathematics skills often enough to embed their skills and maximise the progress they make.

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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - making more detailed and effective analysis of the information the school collects, such as for pupils' performance and evaluation of the quality of teaching, to target precisely areas for improvement and gauge the impact of actions taken
 - ensuring that highly effective systems are in place to hold school leaders to account for the standard of education that the school provides
 - seeking ways to work alongside other schools to share good practice and validate the school's effectiveness.
- Improve the quality of teaching and outcomes of pupils, by:
 - continuing to develop the skills and expertise of staff so that they become highly adept at asking probing and challenging questions so pupils' knowledge is deepened
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their English and mathematics skills in a wide range of subjects and ensuring that pupils are consistently using the skills that they have been taught
 - ensuring that procedures for managing the performance of staff contribute effectively towards improving outcomes for pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders have been resolute in their determination to bring about school improvement and have successfully galvanised staff to be ambitious for pupils. This tireless pursuit of improvement has effected positive change in the school's effectiveness since the last inspection.
- The school has matured into a learning-focused environment where leaders have high expectations of pupils both pastorally and academically.
- Leaders have an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are reflective about what the school needs to do further to ensure that pupils have the best possible experience of education.
- School staff set the tone for the school by leading by example in their attitudes and behaviour. They are resilient and persevere and act as superb role models to the pupils in their care.
- Very positive relationships between adults and pupils help to create a climate where pupils feel safe to take risks and develop new ideas. This has resulted in pupils being able to confidently express their feelings, both rationally and articulately.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and provide teachers with useful feedback that staff say helps them to improve. However, leaders do not use all of the information available to them, such as pupils' performance information and the work in pupils' books, highly effectively to hone in sharply on areas for improvement.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. They are proud to work at the school and for the opportunity they have to make a difference to pupils' lives. Staff value and welcome the open culture of support for each other. They are reflective and eager to become more skilled in the areas they are responsible for.
- Access to supervision and regular discussions have enabled staff to feel supported and valued. This has resulted in a highly positive and trusting environment where staff enjoy teaching and most pupils enjoy learning. A member of staff reflected this by saying, 'This is not just a job, it is important to my life. I love to watch the pupils do well.' And yet, the systems in place to monitor the performance of staff are not focused sufficiently on improving pupils' outcomes and contributing to school improvement.
- The range of subjects taught is broad for all pupils. The curriculum is bespoke to pupils' needs and is a strength of the school. Regular trips, visits and extra-curricular activities help pupils to make connections in their learning with the world outside of school. Pupils have access to an impressive range of sports, including kayaking, swimming and horse riding.
- The curriculum is supported by visitors who teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in areas such as sexual health, road safety and how to protect themselves against the risk of radicalisation. The school works closely in partnership with other agencies, such as the school's nurse service, to provide pupils with the best possible support and guidance.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils engage in daily discussions about current affairs and issues that affect society, such as changes in technology, politics and child sexual exploitation. Pupils make choices, express their

views clearly and are increasingly able to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Tolerance and respect are key aspects of the school's ethos. Pupils have a meaningful understanding of equality and equality of opportunity.

■ Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven seamlessly throughout the curriculum. A recent visit to a Sikh temple (gurdwara) had a transformational effect on pupils' understanding of different faiths and culture.

■ School leaders ensure that behaviour strategies and policies are consistently applied so that boundaries are clear. As a result, pupils quickly understand what is expected of them and incidents of poor behaviour reduce significantly while pupils attend the school.

■ Pupil premium funding is used to provide highly personalised intervention for each pupil at the school and includes access to additional tuition, technology and activities outside of school. Unquestionably, this funding has been used wisely by leaders to make a difference to pupils' progress, achievement and positive feeling of self-worth. School leaders are held to account for how this funding is spent by various local authorities who ensure that it is making a difference.

■ Parents and other agencies are positive about the work of the school. They recognise the positive difference the school is making to the children that they care for. They are particularly complimentary about the communication and dedication of leaders and staff in their pursuit of good outcomes for pupils. Collectively, they feel that pupils are safe and cared for well.

■ Leaders have welcomed feedback provided to them from an independent school improvement adviser and have reacted positively to the advice given to them about ways to improve the school. Leaders recognise the usefulness of building partnerships and forging relationships with local schools to ensure that the school is outward looking and to verify and validate the judgements that teachers are making about pupils' achievements. Leaders know this will strengthen the school's effectiveness and strengthen leaders' and staff's skills further.

Governance

■ The school has no recognised governance arrangement. However, the headteacher meets regularly with the proprietor to discuss the effectiveness of the school. She is acutely aware of what the school does well and what could be better.

■ The proprietor has a clear strategic vision for the school's future and shares leaders' ambition for pupils. However, the proprietor has not ensured that highly effective systems are in place to hold school leaders to account for the standard of education that the school provides.

■ The proprietor contributes to the education and care of pupils, taking her responsibility to safeguard pupils extremely seriously. For instance, the proprietor is available to pupils at all times should they wish to share any concern they might have. She delivers training to staff and oversees behaviour records and incident logs on a daily basis.

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. The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with the most recent government legislation, including the statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education', 2016. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and, by request, from the school.
- Safeguarding practice is underpinned by strong relationships and because staff know pupils and their needs exceptionally well. Pupils thrive whereas previously they did not.
- 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, including access to therapy, during times of transition and distress.
- All staff receive important training relating to safeguarding and in some instances, pupils participate in this training, for example in fire safety. Staff 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.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are enthused to help pupils learn and are aspirational for them. They provide pupils with engaging activities that sustain pupils' interest. Teachers know the needs of pupils very well and most tasks are accurately targeted to meet pupils' varying abilities and challenge them.
- Teachers assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all subject areas and use this information to help pupils overcome gaps in their knowledge and make good progress.
- Learning intentions are shared effectively so that pupils are aware of what they are learning. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers provide activities that build on prior learning and relate to pupils' targets that are identified in their individual education plans.
- Learning support assistants are integral to pupils' well-being and academic success in lessons. These skilled staff allow pupils to think for themselves, access learning and provide the emotional support pupils require to experience success. They support pupils well.
- Interventions are delivered successfully and enable pupils to make rapid gains in their reading and spelling in particular. Pupils' accomplishments and areas for improvement are communicated to teachers so that activities can target gaps in knowledge and build on what pupils can do.
- Reading is given a high priority by staff. They have worked hard to provide pupils with a range of reading material to instil a love of reading and to improve pupils' vocabulary. Pupils study texts such as, 'Of mice and men' by John Steinbeck, and read newspaper

articles out loud to one another daily. Teachers make the most of every opportunity to facilitate reading in lessons.

- The most able pupils are supported by teachers and school leaders to access work that is appropriate to their ability. Leaders have facilitated additional tutors to make certain that these pupils are suitably challenged.
- Staff consistently expect pupils to behave and participate in lessons and consequently, a calm and purposeful atmosphere that is conducive to learning pervades in most lessons. Pupils are often keen to learn more, with one enquiring of staff at the end of the school day, 'Can we have another lesson?'
- Staff commonly reinforce British values and structure lessons to help prepare pupils for life outside of the school. They challenge stereotypical views and provide pupils with access to a plethora of information about current affairs so that pupils gain a more profound understanding and appreciation of the country in which they live. Every day begins with 'tea and papers' when pupils peruse newspapers and share articles that interest them. This forms the basis around which pupils discuss issues on themes such as, alcohol, pregnancy, disability and hygiene.
- Effective teaching across the curriculum helps pupils to become immersed in learning for the vast majority of the time. Teachers impart their strong subject knowledge effectively. Adults give pupils sufficient time to think about their responses and draw on what they know from a range of subjects. However, adults' questioning skills do not consistently deepen and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Questioning by staff is largely focused on recalling facts and prior learning at the moment.
- Sometimes, teachers do not make certain that pupils have sufficient opportunities to use new learning in their work, for instance in areas such as grammar and punctuation, so important skills are embedded. In addition, there are not enough opportunities in mathematics for pupils to use their skills to reason, investigate and to solve problems, particularly for the least able pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils grow in emotional maturity because they are taught to be more responsible for their own behaviour and to develop compassion and empathy for one another and for adults. Pupils are able to successfully transfer these positive characteristics when they undertake activities off-site, such as when they participate in sport.
- Strong relationships between staff and pupils facilitate respect which deepens throughout pupils' time at the school. Pupils trust staff to help them.
- Relatively quickly, pupils make huge strides in their ability to engage with learning, following periods of disruption to their education over time. As a result, pupils re-engage with education when previously they did not.
- Pupils have become increasingly aspirational for themselves because they have witnessed the success of some of their peers. Pupils have clear goals for what they want to achieve and are excited by the prospect of going to college or following a career that interests

them. Staff work very hard to take account of pupils' aspirations, talents and interests when they are planning activities, offering accreditation and supporting pupils with careers guidance and work experience opportunities.

- The school endeavours to prepare pupils for life outside of school and to enable them to manage when they leave. Staff go to great lengths to secure the best onward journey for pupils and continue to support pupils after they have left the school. Staff care deeply for pupils.
- There is a strong emphasis on tolerance, respect and responsible citizenship throughout the school, which means that pupils have healthier feelings about themselves, are growing in resilience and their ability to persevere. Consequently, they are better equipped to deal with the challenges they might face in life.
- Occasionally, pupils' frustrations and emotional anxieties 'bubble to the surface' and adversely affect their own and others' ability to concentrate fully on their learning. In these circumstances, pupils' positive attitudes to learning and ability to focus are not as strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During this inspection, the vast majority of pupils were polite, well-mannered and communicative. Pupils answered questions thoughtfully and shared their feeling about the school and their own future dreams with the inspector.
- When pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions, they are ably supported by highly trained and dedicated staff who quickly re-engage pupils in lessons. Due to this tireless and diligent approach by staff, pupils' behaviour improves significantly while they attend the school and they respond increasingly well to activities that are provided for them.
- Overall, pupils are considerate towards one another. Pupils celebrate each other's achievements and are eager to find out how well their classmates have done in examinations or whether a college visit has been successful. Pupils demonstrate growing empathy for adults, enquiring after their well-being on one of the hottest days of the year, for example.
- Behaviour targets for each pupil are used well to remind them of the necessary skills and attitudes required to be ready to learn. Staff ably support pupils to make huge strides in managing their own behaviour and because of this, pupils are able to make progress in their learning as a result.
- Pupils arrive to lessons on time and are ready to learn because routines are embedded. Short breaks between lessons help pupils to sustain their focus on learning. On the whole, pupils have positive attitudes to their education because staff work hard to instil the value of education to their future lives.
- Leaders expect pupils to attend school every day. Strategies are in place to engage pupils in education in order to overcome pupils' historical poor attendance before starting at The Annex School. The school is successful in this endeavour. Although attendance is intermittently erratic, pupils' attendance improves dramatically. This impacts very positively on the progress that they make.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at various ages after considerable difficulties or disruption to their education. Consequently, pupils often start with typically lower levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils of their age. Despite these challenges, pupils make strong progress from variable starting points in a wide range of subjects.
- There is a clear focus in helping pupils to be ready to learn when they arrive at the school. All staff help pupils to engage with learning and dispel the negative feelings they often hold towards school and education.
- Pupils make rapid gains in their reading skills because they are heard daily and because staff ensure that they are interested in the material provided to them. Without exception, pupils have made substantial progress in improving their reading ages since the beginning of this academic year. Differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally have diminished rapidly or been eradicated.
- Pupils take pride in their written work, demonstrating perseverance and improving their ability to write at length. Pupils are encouraged to undertake additional writing tasks as part of their Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards; for instance, by writing an autobiography and, in one case, writing a novel which already stands at 15,000 words in length. However, pupils do not consistently demonstrate that they are able to use a range of punctuation and grammar in English and in other subjects. Nonetheless, pupils' ability to spell accurately improves appreciably.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They are able to tackle a range of calculations and handle data with confidence. On the whole, pupils are given work that matches their ability, but the least able pupils have less opportunity to investigate and problem solve in mathematics. These pupils are not always provided with work that challenges them and work does not sufficiently require them to apply what they know.
- School leaders have established a system for tracking pupils' progress and for measuring the progress pupils are making in personal development. The information this provides is generally used well by staff to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils. However, performance information and work in pupils' books is not used precisely by leaders to target areas where pupils' progress could be even better. For example, pupils do not consistently use what they have taught to increase the range of punctuation and grammar that they use to write more complex sentences.
- Pupils typically leave the school with a range of qualifications. Pupils have access to a plethora of accreditation, including functional skills in English and mathematics, GCSEs and ASDAN awards, which cover a wide range of subjects such as life-skills challenges and sport. Pupils typically achieve bronze or silver ASDAN awards.
- Staff make certain that pupils achieve well in areas that they are particularly interested in. For example, pupils have secured interviews with modelling agencies and won art and photography awards.
- Pupils have been supported extremely well 'to chase their dreams'. All pupils who have left the school at the age of 16 have secured purposeful college placements. There are many examples where pupils have made substantial gains in their learning and personal development over a short period of time. For instance, pupils who arrive with levels of literacy and numeracy that are significantly below that expected for their age have been

supported to gain qualifications in English and mathematics and are now sustaining successful careers, in the armed forces for example.

- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education and to continue to build on the accreditation offered by the school. As a result, pupils' life opportunities are enhanced. Pupils cope well with this period of change in their lives as they face new challenges. They learn to manage their emotions with less support from adults and demonstrate increasing awareness of social expectations and what it means to be part of a community.

School details

Unique reference number	135198
DfE registration number	886/6122
Inspection number	10026025

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	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Jane Parish (J & R Care Ltd)
Headteacher	Brendan Aherne
Telephone number	01322 618776
Website	www.theannexschool.co.uk
Email address	brendan@jandrcareltd.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–7 November 2013

Information about this school

- The Annex School House is a special school that provides education for up to five boys and girls aged between eight and 16 years who have special educational needs relating to social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- There are currently five pupils on roll aged from 13 to 16 years, all of whom are boys. All pupils are looked after and in the care of the local authority that places them in the school. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Since the last inspection there has been a change in the leadership structure of the school. A new headteacher has been in post since May 2015. He is supported in his leadership role by the proprietor and the special educational needs coordinator.

- The teaching team consists of two part-time teachers, one full-time learning support assistant and a number of part-time learning support assistants.
- The school uses local sports centres and facilities to offer pupils a wide range of sports, namely, White Oaks Leisure Centre, Timbertops Equestrian Centre and Southmere Boating Centre.
- The school uses external tutors sourced through a tutoring company to provide additional lessons in mathematics and science.
- Most pupils access college when they leave the school, such as Bromley College and Hadlow College.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in November 2013.
- The school's stated aims include providing 'a safe, secure environment in which learners feel valued in order to make academic and social progress'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning on a number of occasions with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read during lessons.
- The inspector spoke to pupils in lessons and on other occasions to gather their views.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents and carers. There were no responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector contacted a social care representative to obtain their views about the quality of education and care provided by the school.
- The school's website was examined.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the proprietor, the special educational needs coordinator and members of staff.
- The inspector also gathered the views of staff from the five survey responses completed while the inspection was underway.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents, including health and safety requirements, records relating to behaviour and child protection, a range of policies and pupils' performance information.
- The inspector reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Abigail Birch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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