

Seadown School

Seadown House, 1a Farncombe Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 2BE

Inspection dates

11–13 October 2016

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- When the current headteacher joined the school, it was in a state of decline. She has worked tirelessly to raise standards by successfully improving teaching, behaviour and leadership.
- The school meets pupils' different and challenging needs well. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively and help them develop useful skills and strategies to manage their behaviour so they can access education.
- The newly appointed deputy headteacher and senior teacher support the headteacher's vision for the school to 'engage, inspire, equip'. They are developing the necessary skills to support school improvement.
- Teaching is good. In addition to maintaining a positive classroom environment, teachers plan and deliver interesting, practical lessons. As a result, even pupils who struggle to concentrate are able to stay on task and learn.
- On a few occasions, tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' abilities. Targets are not as specific and measurable as they should be.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, do as well as other pupils. The funding they receive is used effectively to provide specific support to catch up and achieve even more.
- Pupils' wide range of academic needs are met well. All pupils, including the most and least able, make at least good. Achievement in reading, writing and managing emotions is stronger than in mathematics.
- Parents speak highly of the headteacher and staff, commenting on the improvements they see in their children. They are rightly confident that the school keeps pupils safe.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils learn skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. They enjoy and do well in design and technology, art and computing. Pupils have many opportunities for exercise.
- The proprietors' understanding of their responsibilities is increasing. They have begun the process of setting up a governing body to fulfil their responsibilities, but this is in the early stages. Their decision to delegate part of the budget to leaders is positive but this does not yet support school improvement.
- Pupils say they feel safe and happy at Seadown. This is reflected in very good attendance in key stage 2. Although older pupils say they like coming to school, their attendance is noticeably lower.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (the independent school standards) and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils' targets are more specific and measurable
 - tasks are consistently well matched to pupils' abilities
 - teachers give sufficient priority to developing pupils' understanding of number.
- Embed improvements in leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governance arrangements are established so that leaders are properly supported to bring about improvement
 - the delegated budget is sufficient to support school improvement
 - newly appointed leaders' skills are developed further to support school improvement
 - attendance in key stage 3 and 4 matches national averages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's inspirational, but understated, leadership has brought about significant changes in a short space of time. From a school which was in decline, Seadown now provides a good standard of education and care for pupils who have previously struggled to cope with mainstream school.
- The headteacher values staff highly. She recognises that their commitment and dedication is a fundamental reason why she has been able to drive improvement so quickly. She has raised expectations of behaviour, teaching and achievement. Through implementing useful policies, procedures and routines, staff are clear about what they should be doing. Now that there is clear guidance and support, they enjoy working at the school and meet pupils' needs well.
- The newly appointed deputy headteacher and senior teacher have recently taken on aspects of leadership which had previously fallen to the headteacher. They know the priorities for improvement and their plans for driving improvements are useful. However, they are in the early stages of these roles and their skills are developing.
- Leaders' checks on teaching provide useful feedback in helping teachers to know exactly what they need to refine to be even more effective. This, combined with analysis of pupils' behaviour and achievements, enables leaders to identify where further development is required.
- Performance management processes are rigorous. Leaders identify and provide appropriate professional development for staff. The training and development opportunities are well planned and delivered. As a result, staff provide very good educational and behavioural support for pupils.
- Leaders and teachers check progress carefully. They sensibly take a holistic approach to pupils' progress, considering whether pupils' behaviour, attendance and academic progress is moving in the right direction. Where a few pupils do not appear to be making the same progress their peers, leaders and teachers review this carefully and provide additional support. They are rightly pleased with the progress pupils are making in their learning and personal development.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. Pupils are involved in choosing the topics they study, and subjects are appropriately linked to these. The introduction of qualifications in key stage 4 ensures that these pupils make good use of their learning time and develop useful skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well. Taking account of the limitations of some pupils' ability to empathise and respond appropriately to other people's feelings, teachers weave these conversations through every day lessons. An example of this was seen in Year 3, where pupils created a piece of textured art using a range of materials. While looking at each other's pictures, pupils were asked to write 'kind words' on sticky notes for one another. Although their vocabulary choices were limited, they gave positive feedback.

- Pupils learn how to be citizens in modern Britain in a range of ways. They develop an understanding of democracy through their work on the school council, where they share their opinions on subjects such as breaktimes and topics. They enjoy raising funds for charities and being part of the school community.
- Leaders carry out useful analysis of many aspects of school life, for example, behaviour, physical restraints, attendance and progress. When this analysis is most effective, leaders use the findings to identify priorities for school improvement. An example of this was the recent separation of key stage 2 and 3 breaktimes. Leaders identified that the highest number of behaviour incidents occurred during this period. Since this change, incidents have reduced.
- Leaders' work to support and develop relationships with parents is very positive. The text communication is effective and parents appreciate the instant contact and responsiveness of staff in getting back to them. Leaders provide useful support and advice to parents.

Governance

- Governance is in the early stages of development. The three proprietors have significant experience of residential settings. Through this, they have a thorough understanding of finance and safeguarding. However, until recently, they did not recognise how the requirements and practices for residential homes differ to those of a school. With some input from the headteacher and an external adviser, they are beginning to broaden their understanding of what is required and their responsibilities within this. Proprietors' plans to set up a governing body are positive but are in the early stages.
- Proprietors are very supportive of the headteacher and recognise many of the improvements she has made. They have begun to carry out visits to the school and increase their understanding of the priorities.
- Proprietors' decision to delegate part of the budget is positive but the planned amount is not enough to enable the headteacher to make necessary school improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy is up to date, contains all necessary information and is available to parents through the website.
- Staff are trained to the appropriate level and know what to do in the event of a concern; records show that they rightly record even the most minor incident. Referrals are made immediately, when required, and followed up robustly.
- All physical restraints are documented carefully and analysed to ensure that staff are using interventions appropriately. The training in this area is similarly robust.
- Recruitment processes ensure that appropriately detailed references are received for all staff members and any gaps in paperwork or evidence are taken very seriously. Consequently, all possible checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching meets pupils' needs well. When pupils join the school, teachers take account of their previous learning and, using the national curriculum, identify what skills and knowledge they need to develop further. They plan lessons at different ability levels to enable all pupils to make progress.
- Teachers always make sure that pupils know what they are learning and how they will know if they have been successful. Pupils appreciate this consistency because they know what to expect and it reduces their anxiety.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide a calm and purposeful learning environment for pupils. There are simple but effective displays, picture timetables and uncluttered surfaces. Resources are well prepared and available so that pupils do not have to move around the classroom or become distracted. This means that pupils make good use of time to learn.
- Teachers make lessons interesting by choosing carefully the subject area and, as much as possible, involving a practical task. Pupils benefit from this approach as it maintains their focus and so they are calmer and more engaged in their learning.
- All teachers plan in the same way, demonstrating leaders' work to develop consistency. Teachers think carefully about what they want individuals to achieve, but sometimes the personal objectives are not specific enough to help staff and pupils concentrate on exactly what needs to improve.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities to write for a range of purposes. They structure pupils writing through a sequence of lessons, so that they can use their learning over a few days to create longer pieces of writing. As a result, pupils are less reluctant to put pen to paper and their writing is developing well.
- Reading is taught well. Through a combination of effective phonics teaching and reading lessons, pupils develop good decoding skills and learn to read well. They enjoy reading and, for some, this is the treat they choose to reward their good behaviour. As a result of this effective support, pupils make very good progress.
- Maths lessons are taught well, with clear explanations and helpful examples. Pupils have time to practise and ask questions when they do not understand. However, at present not enough lessons are given to developing pupils' understanding of number concepts. This means that pupils do not develop their skills to the same standards in this area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe. They learn about stranger danger, internet safety, the dangers of drugs and alcohol and road safety. When the inspector arrived, a Year 3 pupil queried whether the inspector should be allowed to walk around the school as she was a stranger.
- Pupils also learn about healthy eating and taking exercise. Pupils run along the beach each day. They behave extremely well on the walk to and from the beach, and are carefully supervised by staff. Pupils say that it is a much better way to start the day.

- Leaders check attendance thoroughly by comparing each class. Pupils' attendance has improved significantly in key stage 2, but attendance in key stages 3 and 4 could still be better.
- Parents are extremely positive about the impact the school has had on their children. One parent said, 'I think the school saved my child's life!' Others spoke with similar enthusiasm about the change in their children since starting at the school.
- Careers advice and support is appropriate and useful. Support for pupils moving onto new settings is very good, particularly at times of transition. At the end of Year 11, teachers meet with representatives from the local authority and with parents to identify the right placement, whether academic or vocational. The move is supported through visits, meetings with staff from the new setting and trial days.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from tailored work experience. Pupils are placed appropriately so they develop responsibility and independence, as well as preparing them for life after Seadown.
- Occasionally, teachers do not support pupils' personal development quite as well as they could. For example, in some lessons opportunities are missed to promote respect and good manners.
- There are strict routines and documentation to support the giving of medicines. Staff take very good care of pupils' differing needs and raise any welfare concerns with parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Despite their needs, pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. They mainly demonstrate good manners and respect towards staff and each other.
- Staff use a range of effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour. Pupils review their own behaviour throughout the day. Good behaviour is recognised through a daily treat, chosen by individuals. These rewards include activities such as electronic games, using a laptop or reading. Pupils respond well to having their positive behaviour recognised.
- Behavioural incidents are recorded and analysed well. Behaviour has improved significantly and there are currently no fixed-term exclusions.
- Pupils say that bullying is sorted out and that staff make sure they feel happy in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress in their behaviour and develop a range of strategies to manage their emotions. Where these work really well, pupils are sometimes able to return to mainstream schools. A few pupils are currently on track to do so at the end of this academic year.
- The majority of pupils make good progress academically. For most pupils, learning had slowed or stopped at their previous schools. Because Seadown meets their specific needs well, many pupils, once settled, are then able to concentrate on learning and make rapid progress from their often low starting points.

- Pupils make very good progress in reading. Phonics is taught well in key stage 2 to those pupils who need to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds. Pupils are given books at the right level for them and read to adults regularly. Pupils who require more frequent practise are heard reading more often. Pupils like the reading books, especially the new ones which are very well chosen for their appropriate storylines and text at the right level for pupils who are developing their skills.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. They are encouraged to write in other subjects and are supported to structure their ideas well. Consequently, they are developing good stamina for writing and achieve well.
- In mathematics, pupils do not achieve quite as well as in reading and writing. They learn a range of concepts and demonstrate effective problem-solving skills. However, their understanding of number is not as developed, reflecting the imbalance in coverage and the attention given to developing number skills and concepts.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar gains to other pupils. The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able, are challenged and supported effectively and so achieve equally well.
- Many pupils achieve a good level of physical fitness. The daily running, weekly swimming and other physical education sessions enable many pupils to develop their stamina and skills rapidly.
- In other subjects pupils do well. They are encouraged to develop useful life skills such as computing and food technology. Pupils enjoy these practical activities and many achieve at a good level.

School details

Unique reference number	135691
DfE registration number	938/6228
Inspection number	10006052

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	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Proprietor	Terry Goble
Headteacher	Amanda Curry
Annual fees (day pupils)	£22,800
Telephone number	01903 608750
Website	www.seadownschool.co.uk
Email address	amanda.curry@seadownschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 November 2012

Information about this school

- Seadown School provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues. Many pupils have additional needs, such as autistic spectrum conditions.
- Pupils are organised into four classes. Although the school can take pupils in key stage 1, there are currently no pupils within this key stage in the school. The classes are organised into a lower and upper key stage 2 class, a key stage 3 and a key stage 4 class. With the exception of the oldest class, which has two pupils, there are between five and seven pupils in each class.
- The majority of pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Approximately half of the pupils are eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- All pupils attending Seadown School have an education, health and care plan.

- At the time of the last inspection, the school was called Child First School and Learning Centre. In 2014 the school was renamed and is no longer associated with a residential home.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed seven lessons or parts of lessons across all classes. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school and off-site when participating in school activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, two of the three proprietors and two pupils.
- The inspector gathered parents' views through the school's own survey. She also held telephone conversations with four parents.
- School documentation was reviewed, including the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and the development plan, reports completed by an external adviser and the school's own analysis about pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- Her Majesty's Inspector also scrutinised safeguarding documentation, including records of the school's work with other agencies.
- Staff views were gathered through informal conversations and nine responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Louise Adams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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