

Sheldene House School

20 Main Road, Wisbech, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, PE14 0HJ

Inspection dates	21–23 April 2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- The quality of teaching is consistently good. As a result, students make good progress with their learning from standards which are mostly well below the national average when they enter the school.
- Students behave well as a result of effective teaching and individual support. They learn how to manage their emotions and their behaviour improves rapidly.
- Leaders and managers provide a secure environment in which students are kept safe and feel safe.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met well.
- The proprietors demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the lives of disadvantaged young people. This is implemented effectively through consistent teamwork between proprietors and staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not make consistently rapid progress in improving their writing skills.
- Planning for the teaching of science and humanities subjects does not always take sufficient account of students' previous experiences and learning in these subjects.
- The extent of students' progress is not checked regularly enough against national expectations.
- Senior leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching and students' progress are not informed sufficiently by rigorous independent assessment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited classrooms to observe students' learning and the extent of their progress. Students' work in a number of subjects was scrutinised.
- The inspector held discussions with a representative of the proprietors and with the headteacher. Additional conversations were held with members of staff and with students. Students' behaviour and relationships were observed during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector took account of surveys completed by students, staff, parents, carers and placing authorities. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into account.
- A number of school policies and procedures were checked in order to assess the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Shelldene House is a day special school providing full-time education for a small number of students who have experienced difficulties in their previous educational placements. Most have been excluded or were at risk of exclusion as a result of their emotional and social difficulties. A small number have communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum conditions.
- Students attending the school live-in residential accommodation provided by the company, 4D Care Ltd. This was not part of this inspection. All students are looked after in the care of their placing authorities.
- The school admits students in the age range 11 to 16 years. Students currently on roll are all boys aged between twelve and fifteen years; about half have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. A small proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides a curriculum which combines academic, personal development and vocational experiences. It does not currently make use of any alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to support the school's drive towards outstanding practice, further improve students' achievement by:
 - checking students' progress against national expectations and refining their targets for improvement more frequently
 - ensuring that new learning activities in science and humanities subjects build systematically on students' previous experiences in these subjects
 - widening the existing strategies for improving handwriting, grammar and spelling to include all students.
- Implement arrangements to provide a regular independent assessment of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership and management have a consistently positive impact on the quality of education provided and on students' achievement. School leaders ensure that all students leave school with external qualifications suited to their individual starting points and future needs.
- Proprietors and senior leaders promote a strong commitment to the all-round development of the students. School leaders and staff share a common understanding of the conditions required for students to overcome their barriers to learning. They work effectively together to ensure that each student makes good progress from their various starting points.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all students through the educational experiences provided, including good attention to the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs and their related individual education plans.
- In this small school, senior and middle leadership roles are combined effectively. All staff provide effective support for students in the classroom and around the school. Further training is planned to enable all staff to enhance students' learning consistently as effective teaching assistants. The tight-knit staff team implements all the required policies and procedures consistently and effectively.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all students have access to an imaginative and fulfilling range of educational experiences. Excellent attention is given to the balance between academic learning and the preparation of students for life beyond school and in the wider community.
- Staff give excellent attention to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. The school works extremely closely with staff in the students' residences and strong, effective support for students' well-being and behaviour is a shared responsibility.
- Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The school actively promotes British values and provides a rich range of rewarding experiences of diverse beliefs and cultures, through themed events, shared meals and off-site visits. As a result, students make an excellent contribution to the life of the local community, for example through making and selling items for sale during the annual village fete.
- The school's robust arrangements for the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements. These include effective arrangements for the recruitment of staff, together with rigorous attention to statutory requirements for the training of staff in child protection, first aid and the management of behaviour. All aspects of health and safety, including fire safety, are implemented and recorded appropriately.
- Students have achieved almost 100 per cent attendance during the current school year as a result of high expectations and diligent support from staff.
- Students are prepared well for life after school. Staff provide excellent support for students as they consider possible routes into further education or training. All students who have left since the previous inspection moved on to further education in their chosen vocational areas. The company also provides continued personal and material support for older students as they move into independent living. The majority of leavers remain in the local area and return regularly to meet with staff; they are treated as members of the extended family of the school.
- Leaders and staff have demonstrated considerable success with the preparation of older students for adult life. They are now ensuring that the current students, mostly in Key Stage 3, experience similar opportunities for personal development and achievement.
- Checks with national expectations about students' progress and achievement are too infrequent. This limits the extent to which students' targets for improvement are regularly revised.

- Leaders and managers have ensured continued compliance with the independent school standards. The proprietors, senior leaders and staff demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors are directly involved in the governance of the school. They ensure that arrangements for the review of the school's activities are robust and effective.

One of the directors is based at the school and maintains a challenging continuous dialogue with senior staff. As a result, the proprietors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The headteacher reports to the appropriate director and suitable arrangements are in place to maintain a continuous check on the quality of contribution by all members of staff. They ensure that effective performance is suitably rewarded.

The proprietors are well informed about the quality of teaching and the progress made by individual students, but their understanding is limited by the lack of independent checks and comparison with national expectations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It shows strong improvement in addressing their previous barriers to effective learning. They quickly learn to trust the staff; as a result they begin to reflect appropriately on the reasons for rules and instructions.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning based on respect for their teachers and enjoyment of the activities provided for them. They listen well to explanations and demonstrations by teachers and enter eagerly into discussion with the staff.
- Students demonstrate the ability to sustain their concentration and to have a go when tasks are challenging. They are happy to ask questions and to seek further support when they find things difficult.
- A number of students have complex behavioural difficulties and have been unable to settle effectively into teaching groups in previous placements. They respond well to the small group sizes and to the sensitive one-to-one arrangements which are provided at appropriate times for individuals.
- When students find it difficult to manage their emotions or to cooperate readily with their peers, staff work together consistently to implement agreed procedures such as providing alternative accommodation in which to complete their tasks. Students adjust appropriately over time to the expectations of behaviour within the school and in the wider community.
- Parents, carers and placing authorities comment positively on the improvements which they witness in students' behaviour and ability to manage their anger and frustration.
- Students make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They develop self-esteem and the ability to appreciate the contributions of others. They contribute to the local and wider community, for example through a range of creative events to raise money for various charities. They demonstrate appropriate respect for the diversity of backgrounds and cultures represented in the student and staff community.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students state that they feel safe. They are able to identify adults that they trust and in whom they can confide. Students develop increasing independence and a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying and understand how to seek help if they have any concerns. Staff support students well to develop increasingly positive attitudes to others and to ensure

that no student is isolated or anxious.

- Staff provide continuous, patient and good-humoured supervision throughout and beyond the school day. School staff and those responsible for students' home life work effectively together to provide reassurance and understanding of the challenges which students face.
- The proprietors and senior leaders implement robust arrangements for the recruitment of suitable staff, together with timely and comprehensive training in all aspects of safeguarding. Appropriate policies and procedures are implemented for the management of incidents and any sanctions are proportionate and understood well by students.
- Practical arrangements to ensure students' welfare, including suitable assessment of risk, first aid procedures, the maintenance of the premises, and arrangements for fire safety are all implemented systematically and rigorously.

The quality of teaching is good

- The consistently good teaching motivates students and enables them to make good progress with their learning. The range of subjects taught meets the requirements of the independent school standards and of students' statements of special educational needs.
- The teaching helps students enjoy their learning and persevere. In mathematics, for example, students persist in their attempts to tackle contrasting approaches to multiplying two and three digit numbers. Teachers provide learning experiences which are interesting and engaging, using humour and imagination and planning well because they know what helps individuals make the best progress.
- Teachers use effective, continuous questioning skills to deepen students' understanding and to require them to justify their answers.
- Teachers make effective use of different classrooms and ensure there are well-planned contributions by learning support assistants.
- Excellent opportunities are provided for outdoor activities and physical challenge. During the inspection students took part in a nine mile walk in preparation for the 'Iron Man' challenge to take place in Scotland in May. These activities also enable students to develop their social skills and emotional resilience, in addition to the requirement to plan together.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and provide good feedback in language which students understand. Students are helped to address the weaknesses identified in their written work and there is clear evidence of improvement in future efforts. Students, for example, are helped to refine and develop their ideas when completing a book or film review, work which they enjoy.
- Results from the assessment of students' work are recorded in a way which enables annual judgements to be made about the extent of their progress in English and mathematics. The regular marking of students work is not used in the same way to make more frequent judgements about how progress compares with national expectations. This occasionally slows students' progress.
- Students with disrupted previous experiences of education are helped to value learning and to take a pride in their achievements. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are high and students are helped to develop a range of effective learning skills which enable them to progress on to external qualifications.
- The teaching of English is based on a good analysis of the individual skills and needs of students. One-to-one arrangements are used effectively to develop greater precision in handwriting and spelling, aided by the use of imaginative computer software. Writing is the weakest aspect of students' literacy skills, however, because these focused opportunities to improve their writing, spelling and grammar are not

applied consistently to the work of all students.

- Students enjoy their learning in humanities and science lessons especially the effective use of video presentations and strong visual images in these subjects. These encourage students to ask searching questions and to make rapid progress in their knowledge and understanding. However, teaching in these subjects is not based sufficiently on a sequence of learning activities which build systematically on students' previous learning.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress with their learning from starting points which are mostly well-below expectations for their age when they join the school. Most students have had a fractured previous educational experience including extended periods out of school. They achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and the personal care provided for students enable them to gradually overcome their barriers to learning and to enjoy success. The current students on roll are mostly in Key Stage 3, and the subjects and learning activities provided enable them to make good progress across the full range of National Curriculum subjects.
- Students make good progress with their speaking, listening and reading skills. A small number of students for whom English is not their first language are well integrated into lessons with their peers and show evidence of rapid acquisition of the language required to learn effectively.
- There is a strong emphasis on the development of listening skills, and students are helped to think systematically, to deepen their understanding and to listen effectively to others. This in turn helps to improve the spoken contributions of students who have previously been reluctant to share their ideas publicly.
- Some students begin to choose their own books and to enjoy reading for pleasure. They are proud of the progress they are making and are willing to read aloud in class. Good attention is given to the use of spoken language and students are frequently challenged to demonstrate the extent of their learning in quizzes and competitions; they enjoy the resulting success.
- Students' standards of written work are more variable. They are often reluctant to write when they join the school. There is evidence of strong improvement over time in letter formation, the legibility of handwriting, spelling and grammar. This development is accelerated successfully for the weakest writers by one-to-one literacy sessions.
- The range of subjects taught enables students to apply their skills appropriately in different contexts. Students, for example in woodwork lessons, apply their measuring skills and knowledge of angles in the construction tasks which they complete. Numeracy skills are given a high priority and developed effectively across a range of subjects.
- Students are proud of their practical achievements, for example the pencil and storage boxes, wooden planters and items of furniture produced in the workshop. They apply their numeracy skills effectively and are taught to understand the economics of production and sales. A number of previous students have progressed to vocational further education courses on leaving school.
- Disadvantaged students begin to close the gaps in their learning and gradually make progress towards nationally-expected standards.
- Outdoor activities provide students with effective opportunities for physical development. They develop individual skills in a range of sports during physical education lessons. In addition, they develop their personal fitness, strength and endurance by preparing for and taking part in challenging activities such as the walking, cycling and canoeing involved in their planned visit to Scotland later in the term.

- Students who remain at the school into Key Stage 4 achieve success in external examinations and awards. Those who have left the school since the previous inspection have achieved sufficient foundation level qualifications to enable them to take up places on vocational courses in further education colleges. They typically remain in contact with the school and are proud to share their successes as they complete their further education courses and apprenticeships, and move into full-time employment.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	135380
Inspection number	462934
DfE registration number	873/6044

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	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	4D Care Ltd
Chair	Michael Coles
Headteacher	Stuart Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£500 to £924 per week
Telephone number	01945 861122
Fax number	01945 861115
Email address	stuartlloyd@shelldenehouse.com

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