

The Yellow House School

1 Alderford Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3HX

Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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 school that requires improvement

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has not ensured that checks on the school's premises and the accommodation are completed systematically, or that weaknesses are quickly addressed.
- Over the last year, turbulence in leadership has had an impact on the capacity of the school to make necessary improvements.
- Leaders have only recently started formal self-evaluation. Consequently, school improvement planning has yet to focus clearly on the strategic development needs of the school.
- Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance is too informal. It does not give leaders precise information to identify what needs to improve.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to most able pupils, so they do not make as much progress as they should.
- Leaders have yet to implement fully a consistent system of tracking, so that teachers can more accurately judge pupils' progress across all areas of learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor and leaders provide an education that transforms the life chances of almost all pupils.
- The majority of pupils successfully transfer to college or employment on leaving school.
- Pupils feel happy, secure and safe at the school. Staff provide a nurturing environment and unwavering care that allows trusting relationships to form.
- Pupils value their education at the school and they attend regularly.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities to allow pupils to develop their social skills and to attain nationally recognised qualifications.
- Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school and supports pupils' emotional development and engagement with their learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014 and associated. The details are listed in the report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all of the independent school standards are thoroughly understood and consistently met
 - the proprietor establishes systems to systematically monitor the school’s overall effectiveness, so that leaders know how well they are doing in raising standards in the school
 - leaders’ self-evaluation of the school accurately identifies key areas that the school needs to improve
 - a system is developed to review and support staff performance so that pupils’ progress can be further improved.
- Improve pupils’ learning and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of those pupils who have the aptitude and ability to access more difficult work
 - fully embedding the new assessment and tracking system, so that pupils can benefit from careful tracking of their academic progress across all subject areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been diligent enough in checking that premises and accommodation meet the independent school standards. On the Clare site, cleaning was insufficiently thorough and worn carpets presented a trip hazard. Fabric hand towels, not changed for a number of days, were present in the pupils' toilets. At the Sible Hedingham site, worn carpets and trip hazards were also present. The water coming from the hot water tap in the girls toilet was a scalding risk.
- At the start of the inspection, some important policies and documents did not reflect current statutory requirements. However, leaders ensured that these were all compliant by the end of the inspection.
- The school website is currently under review and inaccessible, but the school has ensured that all required policies, including the up-to-date safeguarding policy, are available for parents to read if requested.
- Leaders do not systematically monitor standards of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. Monitoring processes currently in place are informal and lack sufficient thoroughness to identify how improvements to pupils' progress can be made.
- There has been turbulence in the leadership of the school. Despite previous difficulties, the new headteacher, in post since September 2017, is already having an impact. Staff say that he is a 'positive influence for change'.
- Since his appointment, the headteacher has instilled confidence in the staff that necessary improvements to the school will be put into place. The introduction of a school self-evaluation document and a school development plan are the first steps in this journey.
- Leaders have created a secure environment where pupils say they feel safe and are safe. Teachers work hard to gain the trust of pupils, a number of whom have been out of school for up to three years.
- Contact with parents is supportive and very regular. Parents responding to the Ofsted Parent View online survey say that the school is an 'amazing place' where 'staff work really hard and believe in the children', for example. Responses received from parents were overwhelmingly positive. The placing authority also commented: 'The school does a remarkable job in building pupils' confidence.'
- Attendance registers are routinely checked and any absence followed up by 'first-day response'. Welfare calls, when required, form part of the culture of safeguarding that exists in the school.
- The school has improved the curriculum since the previous inspection. It offers a range of nationally recognised vocational qualifications that support pupils' transition well into the next steps in college, apprenticeships and employment. A number of GCSEs are also available to pupils, including mathematics and English.
- Extra-curricular experiences are an important aspect of the therapeutic work of the school. The school is rightly very proud of the 'Yellow Shed Project'. This takes place on an allotment rented by the school. Pupils learn how to grow fruit and vegetables as well as engaging in craft activities. Pupils enjoy being outside and engaging in physical work.

They said that they are proud of the craft items produced, many of which are displayed in the school's front windows. This project has triggered a number of links with the local community, including offers of work experience for pupils.

- Pupils say that they enjoy the chance, recently made available, to play competitive sports.
- There is an ethos of mutual respect and cooperation between pupils and staff. The proprietors' original vision for the school to provide the 'freedom to learn and grow into caring, assertive, responsible adults' still drives the work of the school today. Staff are very successful in turning round the negative views that pupils initially have about school and other aspects of life. Staff consistently ensure that pupils engage with the productive learning experiences provided.

Governance

- The proprietor has a guiding vision for the school, articulated in the school statement of ethos. Providing specialist support for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues is at the heart of the vision. This philosophy defines the work of the school to which staff are uniformly committed.
- Minutes of staff meetings attended by the director and by the proprietor indicate that school leaders are not challenged sufficiently, so that improvements can be made in a timely manner.
- The proprietor and director do not have an accurate understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards or the current Ofsted inspection framework. They have not fully engaged in the systematic monitoring of all aspects of school provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school ensures that levels of supervision for pupils' complex emotional needs are such that pupils are safe at school and during off-site activities.
- Leaders carry out regular assessments of any potential risks to pupils while participating in activities in school or when participating in physical education or extra-curricular events at other locations.
- Attendance and admissions registers are kept up to date and the school takes all possible steps, through checking with outside agencies, to ensure that no children are missing from education.
- Staff know the pupils very well and are highly vigilant, responding quickly to any causes for concern. The school communicates regularly with parents, often on a daily basis, to ensure that pupils are fully supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school provides individual timetables that help to meet each pupil's emotional, social and behavioural needs well. The timetable for each pupil is listed on a whiteboard each day, so that pupils can look ahead and prepare themselves for their lessons, especially

those that they find most challenging.

- The one-to-one teaching ensures that pupils benefit from the full attention of their teacher. The pupils greatly appreciate this approach, as almost all find a busy classroom environment unmanageable – too noisy and stressful.
- Staff now plan lessons effectively using the targets from the education, health and care plans (EHC plan) and baseline assessment information as a starting point. Baseline assessments in English and mathematics identify the gaps in pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In the past, targets and tracking have been quite broad and not sufficiently focused on how to improve pupils’ progress. Teaching activities are now well considered to meet the needs and interests of each individual, for example writing a letter of application to become a private detective.
- A new pupil tracking system, being trialled successfully in science and with the support of the headteacher, will be implemented across all subject areas. Pupils understand the new system and say that it helps them recognise how well they are doing.
- Teachers use questioning well to check understanding and challenge pupils’ thinking. Teachers skilfully and sensitively address misconceptions and pupils are encouraged to ‘think again’.
- Pupils’ work improves over time due to the accurate feedback that teachers provide. Pupils respond well to this feedback and are grateful for the care and attention that teachers give to their work.
- The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and allow pupils to make good progress. This includes pupils being supported to catch up on work they have missed through being out of education for prolonged periods of time.
- Some most-able pupils who could achieve more are not always given the opportunity to do so. Staff are too ready to allow pupils ‘down time’ when they are still ready and able to challenge themselves further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils can talk confidently about the dangers of the internet, including sexting, extremism, ‘stranger danger’ and drugs.
- Pupils are accepting of the diversity of others’ backgrounds and lifestyles. The personal, social and emotional curriculum provides extensive guidance on many issues of personal safety, including the safe use of mobile phones. The school makes sure that pupils have ongoing reinforcement about the safe use of technology.
- There is an open culture in the school. Pupils know that they should tell someone they trust if they have any concerns for their own safety.
- Pupils receive careers information from an independent adviser. Teachers and social workers work together to ensure that most pupils successfully transfer to work or college

when they leave.

- Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school and that everyone is fully accepted. If bullying did occur, pupils believe teachers would deal with it quickly. Pupils are kind to and supportive of each other.
- Pupils are well looked after. High levels of support and supervision ensure that pupils' welfare is a priority at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. They say: 'It is like a second family here' and 'Coming to school is like coming home.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils value their education and the majority attend very well. They enjoy learning opportunities that they have not experienced before. As one pupil said, 'What is the point of coming to school if you don't learn?'
- Parents speak positively about the behaviour of their children since coming to the school, stating that family life had been transformed.
- Pupils are respectful of their teachers. They are courteous and polite, opening doors and standing back for visitors to go through.
- Pupils' conduct at breaktimes and around the school is highly positive. They are keen to talk about their school and show their work.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education supports pupils to understand the world and their own community well. They learn to understand different faiths and cultures and to appreciate art and explore environmental issues.
- Pupils talk confidently about right and wrong and how democracy works. A prominent interactive display enables pupils to show their understanding of British values.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' rates of progress are in the context of their individual needs and starting points. The inspector looked at how the school cross-references pupils' targets in their EHC plans with their achievements. Inspection evidence shows that the vast majority of pupils show good levels of improvement from their various starting points.
- Pupils often enter the school with very low levels of attainment because many have missed so much school before they arrived. From challenging starting points, pupils are supported to make accelerated progress so that they can achieve a range of qualifications.
- The most able pupils are encouraged to take GCSE public examinations. Results from 2016 and 2017 show that the majority of pupils entered for these examinations gained a pass. Some pupils achieved a good pass in mathematics, English and art. Progress for current pupils looks strong in recent GCSE mathematics assessments.
- All pupils leave school with some vocational qualifications that help them to develop confidence and employability skills. Already this term, most of the Year 11 cohort have achieved a number of credits towards their final qualifications.

- Pupils are encouraged to write and read whenever possible to improve their basic literacy skills. This is having an impact on their achievement and pupils are making good progress from low starting points.
- The proportion of pupils who progress onto college, apprenticeships or employment is high and they do so at an appropriate level.

School details

Unique reference number	134398
DfE registration number	881/6048
Inspection number	10026066

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	13 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	15
Proprietor	Mrs Debra Pester
Chair	Mr James Pester
Headteacher	David Ollier
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,087–56,184
Telephone number	01787 462504
Website	theyellowhouseschool.essex.sch.uk
Email address	yellowhouse@btconnect.com
Date of previous inspection	3–5 December 2013

Information about this school

- The Yellow House School is a small independent special school owned by a sole proprietor. The school is based on two sites, one in Essex and one in Suffolk. The detail in the report applies to both sites. Use is made of an allotment site in Clare for therapeutic provision.
 - The main site is at 1 Alderford Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3HX.
 - The second site is at 1 Nethergate Street, Clare, Suffolk CO10 8NP.
- The school opened in Sible Hedingham in 2002 and Clare in 2006, and is registered with

the Department for Education to admit 15 pupils.

- The school provides full-time and part-time education for young people and all pupils have an EHC plan. All pupils have histories of poor attendance in their previous schools. Some have not attended school for three years. Pupils are admitted to the school at various times during the year and most stay until the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' part-time provision is agreed with the placing authorities.
- The school aims to ensure that pupils can restart their education, in a safe and supportive environment.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in December 2013, when it met the independent school standards and was judged to be good.
- In the last year, there have been three changes of headteacher. The new headteacher has been in post since September 2017.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited parts of a range of lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work over time.
- The inspector examined the school's information about the progress pupils are making, including the destinations of pupils who had left in the previous school year.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, the proprietor and the director, the headteacher, middle leaders and teachers. The inspector also made phone calls to one placing authority and to family members of two pupils.
- The inspector took into consideration seven responses to Parent View free-text.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This included the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils.
- The inspector viewed the school premises and accommodation, on both sites.

Inspection team

Kay Leach, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the school's premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are assured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor must ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users (paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently

(paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

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