Inspection of The Lioncare School

87 Payne Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5HD

Inspection dates:	5 to 7 November 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The Lioncare school provides pupils with a fresh and welcoming start when they join. Many pupils have experienced a disrupted education in the past. Consequently, they struggle to trust adults to provide the help they need. Kind, nurturing staff quickly forge caring, professional relationships with pupils. The school works in partnership with parents, carers and professionals to provide consistency of care. Pupils quickly learn that making mistakes are opportunities to learn. As they settle into school life, they grow in confidence and ambition, excited for their potential in the future.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. Pupils learn important life skills such as independent travel, being safe in the community and learning to cook healthy meals. Learning outside of the classroom helps pupils to learn important skills such as growing food or recording music in a local music studio. The school works extremely well with parents and carers and professionals. This ensures that pupils receive the specific help and education they need to support their well-being and development.

Staff treat pupils with the upmost dignity and respect. Pupils have the space and support that they need to regulate their feelings. Most pupils behave well because, generally, staff are consistent and clear in their expectations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is astutely aware of pupils' previous educational and life experiences. Staff use this knowledge and pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans and, where applicable, personal education plans (PEP) to design a responsive curriculum. This curriculum positively integrates pupils' therapeutic needs with their academic education. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects with a key focus on functional literacy and numeracy. In most subjects, the curriculum builds important ideas and concepts in an ordered, logical way. Teachers routinely recap prior learning, checking that pupils can remember important knowledge and skills. Typically, this means pupils can connect new ideas together.

When primary phase pupils arrive in school, teachers check how well pupils can read. Teachers provide effective phonics support to help them learn to read well. In addition, teachers are precise when helping pupils to learn to write. This means pupils learn to read and write with increasing fluency.

However, staff are not fully aware of the specific gaps in older pupils' reading and writing skills. Staff do not always adapt learning to take pupils' literacy gaps into consideration. At times, they ask pupils to demonstrate literacy skills that pupils have not yet confidently acquired. This means pupils do not understand everything that they learn. Furthermore, this can impact on how positively pupils engage with learning in a purposeful way.

While staff know pupils well, they do not always use this knowledge to adapt tasks to make them fully accessible for pupils. At times, learning is not broken down into simple enough steps. This can be confusing for some pupils who struggle to understand what they are learning. Consequently, some pupils do not learn as well as they should.

The school enriches the curriculum with well-planned and delivered off-site educational provision. Pupils practise important employability skills such as teamwork and horticulture through gardening projects. They are proud of learning new skills such as cooking a tofu curry to share with others. Pupils gain in-depth knowledge from experts using specialist music studio facilities, achieving arts accreditation when appropriate. Pupils who have a keen interest learn trade skills such as woodwork and mechanics. This builds pupils' confidence and inspires them to pursue employment routes when they leave school. Pupils receive thoughtful careers education to help prepare them to make ambitious decisions about further education and employment.

Pupils value their education, so most attend well. Most pupils follow the clear rules and routines. They know what staff expect of them and trust adults to help them work through difficult feelings. Pupils learn about the impact of discriminatory language. This has helped promote a culture of respect. Pupils learn to influence social change by working with members of the local council, for example increasing road safety in the local area. Pupil leadership is a real strength of the school. Pupil leaders ensure that pupils have a say when deciding which charities to support or changes to the running of the school day. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The proprietor ensures that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are met. They also make sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure that the school fulfils statutory duties such as safeguarding. However, some of these polices are not reviewed in a systematic way or are fully reflective of school practice. Parents and carers do not always have access to the most up-to-date information about the school.

A community approach pervades much of the school's work. Parents and carers receive regular communication about their child's welfare and education. Staff feel invested through regular training to help them understand how best to support pupils' needs. There is a united vision by all to support pupils to achieve their best.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Staff are not always aware of the gaps in pupils' literacy knowledge and skills. This means that pupils do not always receive the additional help that they need to learn to read well. The school must ensure that all staff have the knowledge and information they need to develop pupils' literacy skills to enable all pupils to access the full curriculum.
- Some teachers do not adapt learning to meet the specific needs of some pupils. As a result, these pupils do learn as much as they could. The school must ensure that staff have the expertise they need to structure learning so that all pupils learn and achieve well.
- The school does not consistently review and share updated school policies in a timely way. This means some parents and carers are not provided with the most up-to-date information that they need about their child's provision. The school must ensure that the processes for reviewing and sharing policies are systematic, to enable all stakeholders to be aware of the school's processes and systems.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	131356
DfE registration number	846/6043
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10342020
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	16
Proprietor	Lioncare Ltd
Chair	Matthew Vince
Headteacher	Dale Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,500
Telephone number	01273 734 164
Website	www.lioncare.co.uk
Email address	schooladmin@lioncare.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 to 23 September 2021

Information about this school

- Pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan, and the majority are cared for by their local authority. Many pupils require a high level of support. Many have had gaps in their education or have been excluded from other schools.
- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative providers of education for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included discussions with the headteacher, school operations manager and the therapeutic support team manager. They also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection. The lead inspector also met in person with representatives of companies that are commissioned to provide alternative provision.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical development and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times of the school day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Compliance with the standards was checked throughout the inspection, including tours of the school site, discussions with leaders and a review of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Cole	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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