

Cherry Tree School

29 All Saints Avenue, Margate, Kent CT9 5QN

Inspection dates

19–21 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the school opened in October 2017, leaders have successfully established a provision that ensures all pupils have the opportunity to become successful learners.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the school's operations manager, leads the school with an uncompromising commitment to ensuring that pupils are provided with a safe and nurturing environment in which they can flourish. As a result, all independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have carefully planned and developed an engaging and broad curriculum that meets the specific academic, social and emotional needs of all pupils.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is impeccable. Pupils are well mannered and polite, and show respect for each other's views and opinions.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils to plan activities that fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, the quality of teaching does not consistently mirror the best practice seen within the school.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum. They make rapid progress in mathematics, their social communication skills and their behaviour. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates a more varied picture than the school's assessment system suggests.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Most pupils have not been absent from school since they joined. If a pupil fails to attend school, leaders ensure that they are safe.
- Leaders ensure that there are plentiful opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Those responsible for governance provide rigorous support and challenge to leaders. They have played a pivotal role in moving the school forward. The introduction of the school's management committee aims to improve the rigour of governance arrangements further. However, this is yet to be fully established.

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?

- Ensure that systems to monitor pupils' progress are further refined so that leaders' evaluations of pupils' outcomes are more reliable.
- Continue to establish the new management committee so that it is able to hold leaders fully to account for all aspects of the school's work.
- Share best practice effectively so that the quality of teaching consistently matches the examples of excellence already evident within the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, school's operations manager and chair of the management committee have established a provision that ensures all pupils have positive experiences of schooling. They demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to provide the very best outcomes for pupils.
- Since the school opened in October 2017, the headteacher has been relentless in her drive to continually improve the school. She is highly ambitious for every pupil and is determined to make sure that pupils' past experiences do not limit their future achievement.
- Leaders have developed a cultivating ethos across the school where pupils are encouraged to take risks in their learning and develop as individuals. Leaders have achieved their aims of creating a safe environment, ensuring that pupils' well-being and safety are given the highest priority. As a result, all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and honest. Leaders know the school exceptionally well. Regular visits to classrooms and discussions with staff and pupils provide leaders with an in-depth knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Staff thoroughly enjoy working at the school. They display a total commitment to providing pupils with the best possible experiences of school. All staff who spoke to Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) said that there was nothing that they would change about the school and that they are proud to be a part of it. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders to continue their professional development.
- Pupils join the school having been out of education for prolonged periods. Consequently most pupils join Cherry Trees with negative attitudes to learning. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils' needs and their behaviours are fully understood by staff. The school's positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour enables them to feel safe at school, improves their confidence, and increases their ability to participate in learning. As a result, pupils are able to access the curriculum and make progress.
- Pupils enjoy the school's extra-curricular trips and activities. Leaders makes effective use of the local community to increase the chances pupils have to participate in leisure activities. Pupils appreciate the thought that staff put into providing them with opportunities to pursue their individual interests. For example, pupils talked to HMI excitedly about attending gardening club and hair and beauty after-school clubs.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about all aspects of the school. All parents and carers who expressed their views on the Ofsted survey, Parent View, would unreservedly recommend the school to another parent. One parent stated that: 'My child is pushed to the limit of his ability and an ethos of trying your best runs throughout the whole school. It is a truly wonderful place with amazing staff.'
- Pupils benefit from a well-thought-through curriculum that meets their individual needs. Leaders constantly evaluate and review the effectiveness of the curriculum to ensure that it is suited to the needs and interests of the pupils currently in the school. As a result,

pupils enjoy learning and make strong progress, both academically and socially as well as emotionally.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders. Visits to the school by local police community support officers provide pupils with an understanding of the rule of law and an opportunity to discuss what constitutes inappropriate behaviour in the community. Planned enrichment days enable pupils to work together as a team, developing their social skills and understanding. Trips to local museums allow pupils to gain an understanding of the historical context within their local community. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Governance

- Since the school opened, the chair of the management committee has played a valuable role in both supporting and challenging leaders in the work of the school. She demonstrates a clear understating of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- The chair is aware of her statutory responsibilities and is suitably knowledgeable to evaluate the information she receives from leaders. Regular meetings between the chair and headteacher are held to discuss the effectiveness of the school. Any actions identified from these meetings are completed swiftly.
- The chair ensures that safeguarding arrangements are kept up to date. Minutes of meetings show that she routinely asks challenging questions and that the safeguarding arrangements of pupils remain crucial to all aspects of the school's work.
- The recent introduction of the school's management committee aims to increase the level of support and challenge that school leaders receive for their work across the school. However, this committee is in its infancy and it is therefore too soon to evaluate its impact on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school. Staff, regardless of their role, know the pupils extremely well.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive thorough safeguarding training that is in line with statutory legislation. This enables staff to carry out their responsibilities to keep children safe and protect them from harm effectively.
- Risk assessments for all aspects of the school's work are completed to a high standard. The risks involved in taking pupils off-site are fully assessed. As a result, pupils' and staff's safety is maintained.
- Pupils' online safety is a priority for leaders. Appropriate filters are in place in order to protect pupils from potential harm. The curriculum ensures that pupils know how to protect themselves online so that they are able to stay safe when using technology outside of school hours.
- Leaders make effective use of other agencies and professional expertise to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The designated safeguarding lead is tenacious in her approach to

following up any potential concerns that suggest a pupil may be at risk of harm. This ensures that pupils are receiving the right support in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good. Teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to plan a range of activities that meet pupils' needs.
- Where teaching is highly effective, pupils engage fully and make rapid progress in their learning. Teachers' subject knowledge allows pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects.
- Teachers and learning mentors rightly focus on introducing new topics that pupils may have missed as a result of being out of education prior to joining the school. In addition, staff make sure that pupils are given the opportunity to practise any newly acquired skills so that these become secure.
- Teachers skilfully question pupils, consolidating their learning. They also routinely check pupils' understanding of tasks to ensure that they identify errors or misconceptions promptly.
- Well-trained learning mentors provide crucial support to pupils. Learning mentors facilitate pupils' independence while providing them with additional support and challenge in their learning. This effective support contributes positively to the progress pupils make.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are extremely high. Staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently during lessons. As a result, pupils remain focused on the activities teachers set and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- The teaching of English is effective. Teachers and learning mentors ensure that opportunities for pupils to develop their writing are embedded within the curriculum. Regular reading sessions encourage pupils' love of reading and develop their fluency.
- Highly effective teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils achieve well in this subject. The many opportunities that pupils have to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to real-life situations consolidate pupils' learning.
- While teaching is consistently good across the school, it does not always match the high quality seen within the school. Leaders recognise this and are using training effectively to strengthen practice across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are proud to be part of the school. They enjoy attending and value the support they receive from staff.
- The extremely positive relationships between pupils and staff reinforce the culture and ethos of the school. Staff intervene effectively when pupils' behaviour is challenging, and support pupils well to develop their social and emotional skills.

- Pupils comment that they feel safe in the school. They state that bullying never happens and they view each other as friends. Should pupils have any worries or concerns, they are confident to speak to staff about these.
- Pupils are encouraged to listen to the views and opinions of others regularly. During lunchtimes, pupils take it in turns to ask each other the 'question of the day'. This provides pupils with the opportunity to listen to their peers and hear opinions and views that may differ from their own. Pupils provide mature and well-considered answers to these questions and show respect for each other's points of view.
- Voting for a school council representative is carried out through a democratic process which mirrors the British voting system. Pupils feel strongly that leaders listen to their views and opinions and take on board their ideas. For example, a recent trip to a local museum was the result of a suggestion made by the school council.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils move around the school purposefully and calmly. Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are exceptional. Pupils are engaged in their learning, listen well to each other and demonstrate respect to staff and visitors.
- All staff manage behaviour with absolute consistency. High expectations of pupils' behaviour are evident across the school at all times. Pupils know and understand the school rules and follow these both in lessons and during unstructured times.
- The school's behaviour logs indicate that incidents of poor behaviour decline rapidly following a pupil's admission. Staff support pupils to develop the skills they need to manage their own emotions. Helpful resources, such as books to explain what anger is and the opportunity to spend time with the school counsellor, contribute to this.
- All groups of pupils attend school regularly, with absence rates well below the national average for special schools. This is because pupils now enjoy school and value their education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment well below that found nationally. All pupils have considerable gaps in their basic numeracy and literacy skills, knowledge and understanding due to extended periods out of education. Over time, this unique school succeeds in changing the lives of pupils by providing good-quality teaching which ensures that pupils begin to fill these gaps, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from the well-run small classes and the support they receive from their learning mentors. In lessons observed, pupils understood what they were learning about and why. Pupils are clear about what they need to do in order to improve.
- Pupils' work indicates that almost all pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics. This is because of the highly effective strategies that are in place to develop pupils' basic skills.

- Parents and carers are complimentary about the progress that their children have made since joining the school. One parent commented that: 'My child is pushed to the limit of his ability and an ethos of trying your best runs through the school.'
- Most pupils read with fluency and appropriate use of expression. They are confident to read aloud to others and do this well.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their social communication skills. Pupils share their views and opinions regularly with staff and other pupils. This helps them to practise and embed these skills successfully. Pupils also demonstrate progress in their ability to form and maintain friendships with their peers over time.
- Pupils' outcomes in reading, although good, are not as strong as those found in writing and mathematics. Leaders recognise that they need to develop reading further across the curriculum so that pupils consolidate and embed their reading skills.
- The school's assessment data indicates that current pupils are making sound progress, and a very high proportion are exceeding the school's expected standards, in a number of subjects. However, scrutiny of pupils' work and visits to lessons indicate a more varied picture. Leaders are aware of this and have plans to refine the school's assessment system.

School details

Unique reference number	145064
DfE registration number	886/6145
Inspection number	10045500

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Soo Finn
Chair	Deborah Bridger
Headteacher	Soo Finn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,995
Telephone number	01843 229633
Website	www.cherrytreeeducation.co.uk
Email address	soo.finn@cherrytreeeducation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Cherry Tree Education is an independent special school for pupils who have complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of pupils have suffered emotional trauma at some point in their lives. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher. The core aim of the proprietor is to provide pupils with a provision that meets the diverse, emotional and aesthetic needs of all pupils.

- The school caters for a maximum of 10 pupils aged 11 to 16 years. There are currently nine pupils on roll aged between 11 and 16 years. Almost all pupils are children looked after.
- The majority of staff joined the school shortly after it opened in October 2017. A management committee responsible for the governance of the school was recently formed in April 2018. Up until this time, the chair of the management committee was responsible for holding leaders to account for the school's work.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- HMI observed five lessons across all classes, all jointly with senior leaders. Pupils' behaviour during lessons, lunch and breaktimes was observed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the school operations manager, the chair of the management committee, staff at the school and groups of pupils.
- HMI analysed school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, reports provided by the school's external improvement adviser, pupils' pathway plans, annual review information, risk assessments, and tracking information about pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour and exclusions.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures were scrutinised, including correspondence between the school and the designated officer. Records linked to work with other agencies were also reviewed.
- There were a small number of responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. HMI considered responses to the school's internal staff, pupil and parent questionnaires.

Inspection team

Emma Sanderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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