

Sallygate School

Buckland House, Crabble Hill, Dover, Kent CT17 0RX

Inspection dates

5–7 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved markedly since its previous inspection. Current leaders and staff are ensuring that the school continues to move resolutely towards realising the directors' vision of what they want it to be.
- For pupils who have usually had very negative previous experiences of education, the sense of hope, positivity and aspiration is almost palpable in the school's warmly welcoming environment and atmosphere.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about school. They feel safe. For pupils whose previous experiences often make it difficult for them to trust, the positive relationships evidently fostered are striking.
- School staff work closely with on-site therapists and other professionals. Rightly, leaders have begun work to make this joined-up approach even tighter.
- The new headteacher and deputy have accurately recognised the school's strengths and identified pertinent next priorities. They have made a good start towards important improvements to teaching, assessment and the range of accreditations available for pupils.
- The school is highly successful in its work to promote pupils' outstanding personal development, behaviour and welfare. A recent change in the ethos and approach to behaviour management has already resulted in further improvements.
- Effective teaching helps re-engage pupils successfully in their education. Pupils make strong progress from their often low starting points. Some teachers and learning mentors work seamlessly together to help sustain pupils' concentration and progress, but this is not consistent. Some staff are not adept at teaching phonics.
- Teachers and learning mentors use effective strategies to support pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The new SEN coordinator (SENCo) has begun work to ensure that the particular needs of each pupil are met as well as they possibly can be. This work is still at a relatively early stage.
- The management committee is unafraid to challenge school leaders, sharing a determination to secure further improvements. Together they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

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?

- Build on work already started to ensure that all professionals work even more closely together for the benefit of pupils by:
 - moving quickly forward with checks, so that strategies to meet pupils' education, health and care plans, and associated recommendations from professionals, are as effective as they can be and implemented consistently
 - fully realising the school's vision of dovetailing seamlessly the work of therapists with other aspects of the school's work to promote the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Secure the best possible teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that teamwork between teachers and learning mentors is as highly effective in all classes as it is in some
 - embedding new systems to check that pupils make as much progress as can reasonably be expected
 - further broadening the range of accreditations and recognised qualifications pupils are able to achieve before they leave
 - providing additional training for staff so that they are able to teach phonics consistently effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- With the support of staff and school leaders, the directors are moving ever closer to realising their vision, where a 'therapeutic community' and approach is at the heart of the school's work.
- From leaders at different levels there is a clear sense of vision, desire and determination to make the school the best it can be so that pupils thrive. Although there has been some staff turnover recently, there is a strong sense of positivity among current staff. They are committed to moving forward as a team and making the school even better for its pupils.
- With the strong support of a very able deputy headteacher, the new headteacher has rapidly and precisely got to grips with how to further improve the school. The swift action they have taken together, for example shifting the culture and ethos around behaviour management, is already making a positive difference. However, it is too soon to see the full extent of the difference recent changes may make to the school's overall effectiveness.
- Leaders know the school very well. Their own thorough evaluations show a strong understanding of the school's effectiveness. A varied quality-assurance cycle gives depth to leaders' checks on the quality of education.
- Despite the highly challenging behaviour exhibited by pupils in the past, and sometimes currently, leaders are determined that this is not an excuse for not learning. Throughout the school, it is clear that everyone is sharply focused on pupils' best interests. Leaders strike a careful balance between this rightful attention on individuals and important strategic planning to improve the school for all pupils.
- The high focus on pupils' personal development, mental health and well-being shines through the life and work of the school. The public celebrations of pupils' achievements that adorn virtually every wall in the school are very well respected by their peers. Classroom environments are attractive and welcoming, and clearly spaces where pupils feel safe to re-engage with education.
- Leaders place a very high priority on training and continuing professional development for staff. Staff-appraisal systems have been recently strengthened to make them a more integral part of the improvement strategy. They link closely with whole-school priorities and pupils' outcomes, as well as reflecting individual professional-development aspirations and opportunities. Appraisals now also feed directly into decisions about pay progression.
- The newly appointed SENCo has made a good start in further strengthening links with the clinical psychologist and the therapeutic teams that work with the school. She has rightly prioritised checking that requirements of pupils' education, health and care plans are being met as well as they possibly can be, including taking full account of any recommendations from other professionals. However, this review is at an early stage.
- The curriculum offers pupils a wide range of opportunities and experiences. Ambitious for pupils, leaders are currently expanding the range of qualifications and accreditations pupils can work towards, right across the school. The school's teaching promotes British values well, especially those of tolerance and respect. Pupils take important steps towards being better prepared for life in modern Britain through keeping abreast of current affairs

and exploring issues such as 'fake news' and 'Brexit'. Pupils write and vote on their own manifestos as part of the school's own democratic council.

- Leaders and staff ensure that the curriculum is routinely enriched, for example through the strong new drive to develop outdoor learning. This has been warmly welcomed by pupils and is already helping to build greater resilience and self-esteem. The recent health and well-being summer school was popular, well attended and well received by the community.
- A range of other professionals that work with or in the school are highly complimentary about what it provides. Therapeutic professionals that work with the school described the communication as 'amazing', an adjective describing communication that was repeated by a number of different people. However, all parties agree that the full potential benefits of securing a completely joined-up and complementary approach between therapists and education staff is not yet fully realised.

Governance

- The management committee, which includes the company's directors, forms the effective governance arrangements for the school.
- Directors are strategic in recruiting the right, typically well-qualified staff to the right roles. This includes the recent strengthening of the management committee to secure greater educational expertise, including a highly experienced chair.
- The management committee has kept a watchful eye on the progress made by the new senior leadership team and how changes have been managed. The committee has approached this important work with wisdom and sensitivity. Consequently, staff are appreciative of their interest and concern, and school leaders reflective and responsive to the feedback they have been given.
- The committee's checks on different aspects of the school's work are well considered, meaningful and insightful. There is no sense of complacency, and the strong desire to continuously improve shines through.
- Directors, the management committee and leaders have successfully ensured that all independent school standards are met. They seek and welcome external scrutiny of both these and other aspects of the school's work, making effective use of any feedback they receive.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A comprehensive safeguarding policy that takes account of the most recent guidance is in place and readily available on the school's website. Prominent and helpful flowcharts at the front of the policy make individual responsibilities and lines of communication clear.
- School staff work closely with other professionals and agencies for the welfare and protection of pupils. Lines of communication to pass on any safeguarding concerns are clear. With the added complexity of pupils' children-looked-after status, and a wide range of 'home' local authorities, concerns raised are usually taken care of by the company's care side, which oversees pupils' residential placements and therapy.

- The premises are spacious, tidy, bright, attractive, clean and well maintained. Security is tight, inside and out. A wide range of detailed risk assessments take good account of the particular needs of pupils and include suitable control measures to minimise risk. Effective safer recruitment procedures are well established. The single central record is complete and meets all requirements.
- Leaders systematically audit safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that these are fit for purpose. Members of the management committee test thoroughly the impact of training through talking to pupils and staff to gather their views and checking their understanding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The strength of classroom relationships lends a nurturing and supportive tone to the industrious learning atmosphere. Behaviour is positively and successfully managed. Adults set and control clear boundaries based on their well-developed understanding of each pupil.
- Definite and well-defined routines help maintain the security and stability of the school day for pupils. Staff make effective use of a range of strategies and support to help pupils successfully navigate through and participate in varied learning experiences. Across the school, there is a strong focus on developing pupils' vocabulary, language and other communication skills.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes. Where pupils struggle to sustain a positive approach for very long, adults work effectively together to cajole valuable extra moments of concentration, or switch between short, sharp tasks. In some classes, the teamwork between teachers and learning mentors is exceptionally strong, their work dovetailing seamlessly together. However, the quality and use of support is not consistently as highly developed as this.
- Teachers typically judge well the most effective questions to ask pupils to develop their understanding. At times, this approach supports pupils to take very small steps in grasping simple information. At other times, teachers probe more deeply to challenge pupils, for example, to develop their inference skills, rather than just taking what they read at face value.
- Adults make skilful use of a variety of strategies to support pupils. However, pupils' precise individual special educational needs are not as consistently well met in daily teaching as they could be. That said, expectations are high and adults successfully adapt teaching and tasks according to pupils' different abilities. There is evident challenge, including of the most able, for example in the high-quality reading texts and language that pupils are exposed to.
- Teachers are now much more involved in using their professional judgement to make assessments of how well pupils are doing. Consequently they are more aware of pupils' gaps in learning, enabling them to plan how these will be filled accordingly to accelerate their progress.
- Leaders' own varied checks of the quality of teaching over time consider a wide range of indicators. Collectively, these quality-assurance activities build up a convincing evidence base to support leaders' overall evaluation of good teaching and learning. Leaders are

accurate in their diagnosis of the remaining relative weaknesses in teaching. Teachers are reflective about their own practice and receptive to the feedback they are given.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A high degree of mutual respect, between and among pupils and adults, is an indelible hallmark of the incredibly strong relationships that exist. Pupils are very supportive of each other, recognising and encouraging each other's success. Considering their previous experiences and often complex issues, their love of school is a remarkable achievement. As one professional that works closely with the school put it, 'for pupils the school is a reliable, safe space'.
- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum and teaching is exceptionally strong. The early morning group check-in sessions get the day off to an exceptionally positive start. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their feelings and express any anxieties about the forthcoming day so that solutions or support can be explored. Pupils engage well because they feel safe in this nurturing environment, and because adults are excellent role models for how to participate.
- Pupils are confident that there is either no bullying at all, or that any issues are dealt with rapidly and effectively by staff. Bullying and other prejudice-based behaviour is exceptionally rare. Older pupils use the correct terminology around ethnicity and race, and are well informed about all of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. They, and staff, are quick to challenge any prejudicial language that they hear, which they say is often from younger pupils 'before they know better'.
- Pupils are taught a wide range of points about how to keep themselves safe using new technologies. They can readily recall what they should or should not do and what action to take if they are concerned. The school promotes positive health, both physically and mentally, extremely well.
- A wide range of professionals are involved in working with pupils to plan for their post-16 futures. Through the PSHE programme, pupils are taught a useful range of skills to support them in college applications. There is real depth to this work, going beyond routine CV, letter-writing and interview techniques, to creating the right first impression and managing personal emotions to be ready for the transition. Pupils value the school's early start and forward planning with this work. They say that it gives them time to adjust and get used to things they may not previously have considered.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school provides for pupils with complex behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Pupils are usually placed at the school following the breakdown of previous placements, sometimes multiple placements, due to their emotional needs and challenging behaviour. Despite this, pupils' behaviour around the school, inside and out, is typically well ordered

and conducive to the environment and activities. Although the levels of adult supervision are high, this is within a calm and relaxed atmosphere.

- Other professionals who work closely with the school and understand its particular context, and most staff and pupils, are overwhelmingly positive about pupils' behaviour.
- Early indications are that the behaviour-management approaches introduced by the new headteacher and deputy have led to a further drop in behaviour incidents. There have been no fixed-term exclusions since the start of the previous academic year. The new reward system is being implemented effectively and pupils are clearly very well motivated by, and responsive to, this.
- Pupils attend exceptionally well. Figures are well above national averages for special schools, which is a remarkable achievement considering pupils' particular contexts and histories.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When pupils join the school, they are usually behind their peers nationally, and often well behind. Most have significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding in addition to their special educational needs. Often they have missed significant periods of recognised schooling. Taking all of this into account, from this baseline, pupils make strong progress overall across a broad range of subjects.
- Leaders' recently refined tracking systems are starting to show more clearly the progress that pupils make. The complex needs and previous experiences of some pupils mean that their progress is often understandably uneven. Previous systems for tracking progress did not show clearly the small but significant steps of progress pupils sometimes make, particularly those with much lower starting points.
- With high ambition and determination to improve pupils' future life chances, leaders have begun work to expand the range of well-recognised qualifications or accreditations available to pupils of all ages. In addition to English and mathematics, current pupils are taking the important first steps towards accreditation in physical education, information and communication technology, sex and relationships education, PSHE and various awards through the enrichment programme.
- Leaders recognise the potential of some current pupils to gain a range of GCSEs before they leave. Rightly, they believe that realising this ambition is an important next step in further improving pupils' outcomes and ensuring that they are as well prepared as possible academically for the next stage of their education.
- The importance and value of reading is routinely reinforced. Pupils are willing to read aloud in class, and often do so well, reading sometimes with considerable fluency and expression. However, pupils at an earlier stage of learning to read demonstrate limited phonics skills, and adults are not consistently adept at teaching or reinforcing these valuable techniques.
- Over time, pupils improve the technical aspects of their writing well, such as vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, as well as how to begin to adapt their writing for different purposes and audiences. Most-able writers use a wider range of punctuation and complex sentence techniques to support some lively and effective writing.

- Leaders are rightly taking action to sharpen assessments and evaluations of pupils' progress against their education, health and care plans, educationally as well as therapeutically. This work is still at a relatively early stage.

School details

Unique reference number	137795
DfE registration number	886/6137
Inspection number	10008591

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	8 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Channels and Choices
Chair	Alan Barham
Headteacher	Warren Dean
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000
Telephone number	01304 212 510
Website	www.channelsandchoices.co.uk/
Email address	Sallygate@channelsandchoices.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2013

Information about this school

- Sallygate School is a day special school for students with complex behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan or statement of SEN.
- The school opened in December 2011. The school was housed in different premises at the time of its previous standard inspection in February 2013.
- All pupils are children looked after who are placed in care provision overseen by the proprietorial company, 'Channels and Choices'.

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post in April 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes at least once to gather evidence. All observations were carried out with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke with pupils both inside and outside of lessons, looked at their work and heard some of them read. He also scrutinised a sample of pupils' work provided by leaders.
- The inspector spoke with a variety of people to gather their views of the school. This included pupils, staff, school leaders, other professionals and therapists linked with the school or employed by the proprietor, a social worker and representatives of the management committee, including the company's directors.
- In addition to the two responses received to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the inspector considered recent surveys of a wide range of people connected with the school, including pupils. The 11 confidential inspection questionnaires returned by staff were also analysed and taken into account.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to the independent school standards and the quality of education, including a review of the school's website.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
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