

Somerset Progressive School

Bath House Farm, West Hatch, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 5RH

Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors ensure that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
- Pupils thrive in this welcoming, caring school. From previous unsuccessful experiences, and often low starting points upon arrival, they make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils leave the school with appropriate qualifications and move on to meaningful destinations in either further education or work. This is as a result of good preparation for their future and strong transition arrangements.
- The broad curriculum is enriched by a wide range of outdoor activities and visits. These are used very well to engage pupils and promote enjoyment of school life.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and specialist therapists work closely together to identify and meet pupils' complex communication, behavioural and emotional needs. As a result, pupils' anxieties decrease, their behaviour and personal qualities improve and their attendance in education rises rapidly.
- Promotion of equal opportunity and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development lie at the heart of the school's work. Pupils develop the qualities of respect and trust. They behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning, their teachers and their classmates.
- New leaders are quickly establishing a cohesive staff team who are eager to develop their skills further. Leaders know that arrangements for monitoring teachers' performance are not yet fully embedded or aligned closely enough to the school development plan. In the past, documentation and communication between home and school has not always been of a high quality.
- Teaching staff have good subject knowledge. They plan activities for pupils that provide individual learning opportunities. However, teachers do not put enough emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills both in English lessons and other subjects.
- As yet, the school's assessment framework is not fully embedded or consistently used across all subjects.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan tasks to support pupils to develop their writing skills effectively across a range of subjects
 - the school’s recently introduced assessment system is firmly embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- Further develop and strengthen systems for lines of accountability by:
 - outlining clear processes for managing the performance of teaching staff
 - ensuring that there are clear links between the school development plan and staff performance management
 - checking that all school documentation and correspondence sent to parents and carers is of a high quality.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met in full. They have created a positive ethos that inspires pupils to succeed in their lives. Staff morale is high and relationships at all levels are strong. Those who completed the staff survey indicated that they enjoy working at the school. They speak positively about the recent changes of the proprietor and school leadership.
- Adults know the pupils well and work very hard to develop trusting relationships with them. Pupils respond positively to adult direction because they receive personalised support. Consequently, relationships within the school are very strong.
- Meticulous pre-admission arrangements, including taking full account of pupils', staff members', parents', carers' and social workers' views before they arrive, ensure that the school meets pupils' needs. Prior to arrival, sensitive transition plans are put in place. The pupils' care and safety, and that of pupils already in the school, is ensured. Having often been out of school for some time, pupils successfully and quickly gain confidence and enjoyment in their learning.
- Support for pupils' next steps when they are ready to leave the school is equally strong because they receive good education and careers guidance. As a result, they are well prepared to move on to their chosen destinations. The school also effectively supports pupils' transfer back into mainstream where appropriate.
- Leaders have been highly effective at developing a well-organised curriculum. This has had a positive impact on pupils' personal development and has helped them to re-engage in their learning. Individualised programmes reflect pupils' personal interests and needs. For example, pupils have the opportunity to spend some time each week on the school farm. They take on responsibility for looking after the animals and crops. They use this experience to plan for the future and develop skills which help them prepare for further education or employment.
- The school places a high priority on health education. Pupils learn about the dangers of taking drugs and smoking. They receive information to help them lead a healthy lifestyle, to support their mental health needs and develop confidence and self-esteem. The school provides high-quality therapy to all pupils. This work successfully helps pupils to manage their anxieties, behaviour and personal worries. It also helps the pupils to deal with the challenges they face at school and in their lives.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn about other religions and thoughtfully reflect on events such as the Manchester terrorist attack. The trusting relationships developed, coupled with the culture of care and support, contribute well to the development of pupils' personal qualities.
- Discrimination or bullying is not tolerated and the principle of equality is evident in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils develop a growing understanding about the importance of valuing and respecting the views of others. For example, pupils politely took turns to be served at a barbecue lunch and showed their appreciation of the food that had been cooked and served by their schoolmates. In return, the hosts politely checked that all their guests had been served before tucking into their own meal.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The development of pupils' life skills is a major element in building pupils' independence and supports them to succeed in their chosen pathways. For example, food technology sessions not only help pupils to learn basic food preparation and cooking skills, but also provide a foundation for future learning pathways for a career in catering. Farm produce, such as free range eggs and poultry, are sold and the funds received are put back into the smallholding.
- Records of each pupil's behaviour and additional special educational needs are thorough. They provide a reliable basis for discussing their academic and social progress, both within school and when involved with outside agencies.
- Good systems for handing pupils over to staff at the beginning and end of the school day ensure that the safety and welfare of pupils are maintained at all times.
- The school makes good use of its funding for pupils placed in the school by local authorities. Most of this money is spent on employing teachers and teaching support staff.
- Reports to parents, carers and placing local authorities reflect the progress that the young people have made towards the targets set against the bespoke curriculum. They also detail each pupil's progress towards both their educational and individual learning and behaviour plans. However, too many reports to parents are sent out with spelling and grammatical errors. They are not of a sufficiently high quality. This is because they have not been checked by senior leaders.
- The school responds appropriately to complaints.
- Leaders have a good awareness of the school's effectiveness and their self-evaluation is realistic. They have an accurate view of teaching, learning and assessment. They know that systems for monitoring the performance of teaching staff are not as effective as they could be. Leaders also recognise the need to provide targeted professional development opportunities which link more closely to the school development plan.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the online inspection questionnaire and/or spoke to inspectors reported that they were very happy with the school. As they explained, 'The school overall does brilliantly in creating an effective learning environment...Everyone is really approachable and accommodating.'
- The proprietor ensures that school leaders demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.

Governance

- Governors have a good understanding about what is working well and what needs to improve. Since new ownership, leaders have been improving and strengthening policies and procedures. School leader accountability has been tightened up through the submission of weekly reports from the headteacher to the director of education, who also regularly visits the school.
- Governors recognise the uniqueness of the provision and understand the relevance of the activities which prepare the pupils for the next stage of their lives. They are highly ambitious for the school. They are clear that improved arrangements for monitoring the performance of staff will raise both teacher and pupil expectations.
- Governors provide a strong oversight on all aspects of safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting pupils and this permeates the work of the school. Staff are extremely vigilant in and around the school site. They are very aware of the vulnerability of pupils and prioritise their welfare and well-being.
- Risk assessments are in place for every pupil for their own safety and the safety of others with whom they come into contact. All outdoor activities and visits are carefully risk-assessed and suitable controls put in place to reduce identified risks.
- Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding policy, published on the website, is fully compliant with current government guidance. The policy is effectively implemented.
- Recruitment and vetting procedures for staff are strong. Thorough investigations take place when there are concerns about the practice of staff. As a result, pupils are kept safe.
- Effective links and regular communication with outside agencies ensure that each pupil is given the support they need. Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors during the inspection reported that their children were well cared for at the school. They praised the way in which the teaching staff work closely with them to support their children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils arrive at Somerset Progressive School often having suffered previous unhappy educational experiences and frequent absences. Each pupil is carefully assessed in their home environment prior to starting the school. Based on this, teachers plan work that builds on pupils' existing abilities. Pupils' transition into school is carefully managed so that their needs are clearly understood.
- Pupils know that their teachers care about their personal well-being and educational progress. Relationships are based on mutual respect. The learning environment is calm and this enables the pupils to apply themselves to learning and make progress.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning in their lessons. They stay on task, follow instructions and respond enthusiastically to teachers' questions. Well-deployed teaching assistants aid pupils' learning effectively and help pupils to work things out for themselves when they can.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Pupils learn best when they are encouraged to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. For example, in food technology sessions, pupils measure and weigh out their ingredients with accuracy. They read out the recipe they are using, carefully follow written and verbal instructions and record what they have done during the lesson. However, this is not a consistent feature of the teaching in all subjects. Consequently, pupils are not given sufficient support to develop their writing skills across a range of subjects.
- Pupils generally make good progress across a range of subjects and talk about their learning in detail. Workbooks and displays on walls and corridors celebrate the broad curriculum and pupils' achievements.

- Leaders have identified that assessment systems need developing and have recently introduced a new process that will ensure greater consistency across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Since coming to the school, the lives of many pupils have been improved considerably. Staff are highly committed to developing pupils' personal and social skills. They provide a very high level of care and welfare and this maximises pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' emotional well-being is promoted very effectively and pupils grow in confidence.
- Much of the school's success in developing pupils' personal development is as a result of the highly effective relationships. Pupils build trusting relationships with their individual keyworkers. They act as gentle guides supporting mental well-being and nurturing pupils' awareness of what they need to do to become successful learners.
- Pupils speak highly of the school and the way that they are treated by their teachers and teaching support assistants. They know that the adults in school are concerned for their welfare and future. Pupils talk to staff if they have a problem or a concern and they know that they will always be supported effectively. School records show that staff are tenacious in following up and supporting individual pupils. They work in partnership with external agencies, such as social services.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Internet safety is essential to the work of the school because of the extensive use of information technology. Pupils and staff discuss issues relating to sexual exploitation and pupils develop a growing understanding of personal relationships. They have a clear understanding of treating others with respect. Pupils admit that there is occasional anti-social behaviour but are adamant that staff deal promptly with any incidents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Many pupils join the school because they have had difficulty with their behaviour in the past. The very positive relationships in the school promote pupils' social and moral skills effectively. As a result, their behaviour improves. Pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and when attending activities away from the school premises is typically good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They enjoy their individualised learning programmes and are keen to do well. They especially value the advice and support they receive from staff, including careers advice.
- All pupils have improved their attendance since joining the school, often from very low levels. Comparisons with national figures are not possible because the number of pupils is very small. However, the school places attendance at the top of its priorities and works diligently with each pupil to improve their attendance. Parents and carers report that their young people enjoy the school environment and are 'eager and positive at the beginning of each day'.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Due to the complex needs of the pupils and the breakdown in their education placements they have experienced prior to starting Somerset Progressive School, most are working well below age-related expectations. Nevertheless, all pupils make the progress that is expected of them by the school, with some making accelerated progress. This is measured against their academic and personal development targets, which have been created according to the needs of the pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to read for a purpose and this is achieved by labels and posters which provide information in and around the school grounds. Pupils learn to read these out. For example, pupils can read all about the different herbs that are grown. They also read and take notice of the instructions for hygiene, such as 'now wash your hands', which are placed in and around the farm.
- Pupils gain confidence from the secure environment of the school and the outdoor activities on offer. Where pupils have the potential to achieve recognised qualifications, the school prepares them well for formal assessment and public examinations such as entry-level qualifications, unit awards, pre-vocational qualifications and GCSE.
- Older pupils benefit from independent careers guidance and start vocational training routes that interest them and can succeed. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is demonstrated by the successes of the most recent group of pupils, who left in summer 2017. These pupils have already started courses at a number of local colleges.
- Children who are looked after make at least the same progress as their classmates.

School details

Unique reference number	133527
DfE registration number	933/6203
Inspection number	10033891

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	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keys Group Progressive Care and Education
Chair	Nicola Kelly
Headteacher	Karl Templeman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,540–67,600 maximum
Telephone number	01823 481902
Website	www.somersetprogressiveschool.co.uk
Email address	karltempleman@keysgrouppce.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–10 July 2014

Information about this school

- Somerset Progressive School was registered in 2001 as a day special school to provide education for boys and girls who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school caters for pupils aged 9 to 19.
- In April 2017 Keys Group PCE, a national organisation which owns a number of health, social care and education settings, took over ownership of the school.
- The school is located in an extended farmhouse with adjoining buildings and cabins set in four acres of land near Taunton in Somerset. The school uses Wellington Sports Centre,

Blackbrook Sports centre and Taunton Vale Sports Centre for physical and practical activities.

- Fees are paid by a number of local authorities for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There are currently 19 pupils on roll, a high proportion of whom are children looked after.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2017.
- The school aims to 'help children towards a better future by supporting pupils in the change and growth that will lead to success and progress'.
- The previous standard inspection of the school was in July 2014.
- There are currently no pupils in the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons in most classes and looked at pupils' work from subjects across the curriculum. The headteacher joined the inspectors in these activities where appropriate.
- Meetings were held with the director of education, headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead) and senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included information on pupils' attainment and progress, pupils' education, health and care plans, and individual education logs, the admissions register and attendance reports. Inspectors also took account of staff performance management information, examples of reports to parents and records relating to safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during visits to classes and at social times.
- The views of five parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire were taken into account. Additionally, comments made by parents, carers, social workers and a local college by telephone were considered.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Steve Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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