

Lawrence House School

8 Huyton Church Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 5SJ

Inspection dates

13–15 September 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Good

Sixth form provision

Insufficient evidence

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and managers were not aware of the independent school standards and have not ensured that the school is meeting these. Consequently they have not adequately met their duty to safeguard pupils.
- Safeguarding is not effective. The roles and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding leads are unclear. There is confusion about referral and monitoring procedures that has the potential to place pupils at risk.
- School leaders do not ensure that all procedures for safeguarding pupils are followed when appointing new staff and not all records are up to date.
- There are too many incidents where the conduct of pupils disrupts the learning of others and can cause emotional disturbance during lessons.
- The school environment has suffered some recent and significant damage. Leaders' slow response to remedy this damage has left pupils at risk.
- The routines and systems in place to promote personal development and welfare of pupils are not sufficiently rigorous. Pupils turn up late for the start of lessons and are not always prepared for school.

The school has the following strengths

- Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are starting to have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Effective teaching enables pupils to make good progress in basic skills from their often very low starting points
- School staff respond very quickly to individual needs, often adjusting lessons and timetables at very short notice, to help pupils remain engaged in their learning
- Good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel safe and well supported in times of need.
- Pupils, often with a significant history of disrupted education, learn to like school, engage with learning and develop skills to help them for their future.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers must familiarise themselves with the current independent school standards and use them to carry out an accurate self-evaluation which leads to appropriate actions to ensure that any weaknesses identified will be addressed.
- Immediately review and improve the school's policies to safeguard pupils and to promote their welfare, health and safety, making sure that:
 - procedures are in place to regularly check that the safeguarding of pupils is correctly conducted and appropriately recorded
 - managers agree who holds the single central record, make the required checks when employing new staff and keep the single central record up to date
 - the school premises are maintained to a high standard to ensure their safe use at all times.
- Improve the quality of the leadership and management of the school so that it is good or better by:
 - ensuring that leaders understand and effectively fulfil their duties
 - clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers so that there is a collective understanding of what they are each expected to do
 - providing the headteacher with a formal appraisal of her work on a regular basis, and that this information is used to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that safeguarding arrangements are explicit and understood by all staff and members of the management committee. These should be accurately recorded and regularly reviewed (paragraph 7(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils (paragraph 23(1) and 23(1)(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that there is suitable accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraph 24(1) and 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the accommodation and facilities on the premises are maintained to a standard that protects the welfare, safety and health of pupils (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor must ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 28(1) and 28(1)(c)).
- 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; and
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor and other leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Considerable change in the senior leadership of the school in the last four years has led to a lack of clarity about priorities and systems. In that time, four different education coordinators, who fulfil the role of headteacher, have been appointed, the most recent in January 2016. Consequently, many initiatives introduced recently are at a very early stage, and are not yet having a positive impact. These include procedures to review the education, health and care plans of pupils and ambitions to form a governing body.
- Self-evaluation is not accurate. For example, the school's self-evaluation document states that all of the independent school standards are met. However, both the proprietor and the education coordinator state that they have no knowledge of the standards and have not reviewed the school's compliance with them.
- There is limited capacity to improve leadership and management in the school because just one leader has responsibility for almost all aspects of the work of the school.
- There is a lack of consistency in the application of policies across the school because lines of responsibility are not clear. One example is the smoking policy of the company, which states that neither staff nor pupils are allowed to smoke anywhere on school premises, and yet leaders acknowledge that they do.
- There are good curriculum plans in place that cover a broad range of topics delivered in ways to interest and excite the pupils. However, the strategic vision for the curriculum is not consistent between the proprietor and education coordinator.
- Leaders have ambition for what they want the pupils to achieve. Recent developments to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are showing early signs of moving the school forward.
- Pupils learn about British values, democracy, the rule of law in personal, social and health education lessons and demonstrate good understanding of such issues.
- Performance management has improved since the appointment of the most recent education coordinator. Staff welcome the opportunity for additional training and effective professional development which is meeting the needs of pupils.
- The education coordinator has generated a strong team commitment and willingness to do more than is expected amongst the staff.
- Leaders are aware of the need for improvements and show a strong commitment to learn from the inspection.
- Since the last inspection the school has increased the number of sites on which it operates from one to five. In addition it has increased the school capacity to 28 pupils.

Governance

- The school does not have a formal governance structure in place. The proprietor has overall responsibility for the school along with a joint management committee. He recognises that he lacks the expertise to effectively monitor its work. External reviews are undertaken but the outcomes of these are not acted upon or rigorously followed up.
- Very recent steps have been taken to form a governing body to include representatives from interested parties. However, this has yet to be formalised.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is inadequate because there is a lack of vigilance in evaluating policy and

procedures, and the impact of actions to keep pupils safe. The designated safeguarding lead from the company does not recognise responsibility for the pupils in school and there is confusion over who should follow up checks on referrals. This was exemplified during the inspection when an incident occurred which required immediate medical assistance for a pupil. Leaders were not able to adequately explain who would take lead responsibility for investigating the incident or risk assessing the safety of the pupil. These issues have the potential to compromise pupil safety.

- Evidence indicates that a lack of communication between leaders has resulted in the single central record being duplicated and inaccurate.
- The company policy for safeguarding is different from the school policy and leaders are not aware of this. The lack of clarity has the potential for pupils to be placed at risk. The policy is provided upon request to the school.
- Not all of the school's premises comply with the standards for independent schools. Examples include a missing fire extinguisher, a lack of fire safety signage and lack of provision of a toilet for the sole use of pupils. Leaders say that one of the premises was vandalised during pupil disturbances several weeks ago but they have been slow to remedy the situation. In addition, none of the premises has appropriate medical facilities. This is partly because compliance against the standards has not been checked.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because teachers create positive learning experiences for pupils and are very flexible in their approach. Most often pupils are taught individually and programmes have been carefully designed to cater for their specific need. As a result, they are usually interested in their learning and achieve well.
- Creative cross-curricular work engages reluctant pupils quickly. The themed activities are designed to encourage maximum participation and overall are successful. One example included the good progress seen when a pupil planned the holiday of a lifetime. She was excited to use and develop mathematics, English, geography and information technology skills to complete the task.
- Teachers adopt a range of techniques to help pupils learn effectively and make progress. They use music to help pupils start the day feeling positive and ready to learn during a whole school 'sing-in.'
- Lessons are carefully and quickly evaluated. Information is shared between the team to allow staff to adjust teaching so that they respond to the needs of pupils rapidly. This reduces the risk of pupils becoming disaffected.
- The school has been successful in retaining pupils who have previously been excluded or disengaged from other institutions for extended periods. This is because they work very hard to meet individual needs and work closely with a wide range of experts and support agencies to accurately assess and target how to help pupils make progress.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils during the school day foster a safe environment for learning. Teachers adopt a flexible and calm approach in response to the complex emotional needs of pupils.
- There is limited challenge in some subjects, for example in geography, and an over-reliance on repetitive worksheets, which means that pupils cover the same work several times.
- The unpredictable behaviour of some pupils means that learning is disrupted at times and this impacts on the progress of others.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitude to their learning is inconsistent and new routines for attending lessons on time each day are not yet well established. While pupils' outcomes are good, they would be better if these inconsistencies and routines were ironed out in a more timely fashion.
- Pupils typically join the school having experienced a number of setbacks in their previous placements. For some, their social and emotional skills have not been supported well enough for them to overcome their considerable barriers to learning. During the school day, staff work hard to give pupils opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes a wide range of schemes to support emotional and mental health, drug and alcohol safety, healthy eating and an intense initial programme about keeping safe online. Work on anti-bullying is also strongly represented.
- The school has developed good links with a number of different agencies to help support the needs of individuals. A few pupils volunteer to dog walk at a local RSPCA centre.
- The school's efforts to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are effective. Work to help pupils develop tolerance and awareness of groups protected by the Equality Act is comprehensive. It includes topics about race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and gender.
- Most pupils attend the school on short-term placements and the aim is to move them quickly to mainstream or special education. The school tries to work with a wide variety of other settings to ensure that they can offer purposeful learning experiences for each pupil. The school has had some success with this, though it is dependent on the cooperation of other local settings.
- Staff in the school work hard to support pupils to understand their current position and to give them a sense of direction. On arrival each pupil is given an introductory booklet and helped to reflect on their personal and educational needs. This information is used to develop individual programmes to support learning and personal development.
- A primary focus of the curriculum is personal, social, health and economic education. There is a wide variety of accredited courses available to pupils to help them access college placements or work-based entry schemes.
- Pupils feel that their educational and personal needs are being well met. Many pupils are able to express feelings, show empathy and understand what might trigger anger in self and others. They are articulate and talk confidently about their past and current position. They usually take pride in their work and their school.
- There are good examples on some of the sites of the work the school does to develop self-esteem and self-confidence. Opportunities to develop these skills are evident in the work on sexuality, loss, memories and dreams.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils are offered a wide range of personalised support and care. However, leaders have not fully evaluated the effectiveness of strategies being used to improve behaviour and the impact is not always evident.
- Occasionally pupils' behaviour and attitudes are not tackled in line with the school's policies, for example where pupils smoke or swear.
- A 'low arousal' approach is adopted to reduce crises and maintain order. School staff

refer incidents to care staff and do not keep records themselves. However, the threshold for deciding incidents that warrant recording is high and therefore not all are recorded. This means that it is difficult for leaders and the management committee to check the impact of behaviour management strategies they have put in place.

- School records show that on one site there has been an unusual four-week period of disruptive behaviour outside of the school's timetabled day. This resulted in some pupils becoming unsettled and temporarily has an impact on the learning of pupils on this site.
- Pupils do not always show respect and one property has been damaged during a disturbance outside school hours. The slow response to repairing the damage means that the school does not meet the required standards with regard to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Many of the pupils have poor attendance records prior to starting at the school. However, their attendance improves well when placed at the school because of the effective help and encouragement provided by staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. From their often very low starting points there is evidence that pupils are making good progress overtime and achieving well.
- Many pupils have big gaps in their education and have been excluded from several schools, Lawrence House has not excluded anybody and staff are very concerned to keep all pupils in education; consequently the rate at which they make progress increases.
- Staff make great effort to ensure that there are specific programmes to suit the needs of individuals so that across a wide range of subjects they make progress.
- Most-able pupils are given appropriate individual support to help bridge gaps that have been caused through disruptions to their education before arriving at Lawrence House. They are challenged with open-ended tasks which cover a broad spectrum of the curriculum and as a result they achieve well.
- Pupils are given good support to prepare them for the next stage in their education, training or employment. External careers advice and a broad range of academic and vocational accredited courses allow pupils to explore pathways that are both purposeful and interesting.
- Staff take every opportunity to promote reading and to help reluctant pupils develop appropriate comprehension skills. This was demonstrated during a music session where reading the lyrics to popular songs was a key feature of the lesson. When pupils read aloud, they choose appropriately challenging texts and read with fluency, expression and enjoyment.
- The staff team works closely with on-site therapists to design work which will benefit the pupils. This level of collaboration works well and pupils are appreciative of the therapeutic support they receive. The therapeutic aspects of the pupils' curriculum have the desired impact and help pupils to develop their character and academic skills, knowledge and understanding.
- In English and mathematics there is good progress overall, though the standard of punctuation in pupils' written work is not always consistent.

Sixth form provision

Insufficient evidence

- There were no pupils on roll at the time of the inspection.
- The school policy is to transfer post 16 pupils to college placements or traineeships as soon as possible and it has done this successfully in the last three years. Therefore, staff at Lawrence House School do not teach post 16 pupils for extended periods.

School details

Unique reference number	136752
DfE registration number	340/6001
Inspection number	10006081

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	Secondary
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anthony Nolan
Education coordinator	Fay Donnelly
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,250–39,000
Telephone number	0151 480 8287
Website	None
Email address	lawrencehouseschool@qpconline.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2012

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection Lawrence House school has expanded from one site catering for four pupils to five sites catering for 28 pupils.
- The school cater for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, most of whom have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Pupils joining the school do so with histories of low attendance, challenging behaviour or having disengaged from mainstream learning.
- All pupils are looked after by the local authority and have special educational needs and most have an education, health and care plan or statement of special education need.
- Pupil mobility is very high, with pupils arriving and leaving at very short notice. The school aims to reintegrate pupils quickly into mainstream education and work or college placements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed five classes and saw several teachers, instructors and behaviour support assistants at work in lessons.
- They held informal discussions with pupils when the opportunity arose at breaks, lunchtimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the senior leader, the proprietor, a management committee and the clinical psychologist for the school, who also contribute to the management committee.
- Parent representatives who were contacted by telephone were not available.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the safeguarding policy and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of staff meetings, assessment data, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' work including English and mathematics books.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire received during the inspection.

Inspection team

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