

Olsen House School

85–87 Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 5TD

Inspection dates

11–13 July 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	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has created a clear vision and direction in driving the school forward.
- The committed and effective staff team share the vision to create a school where pupils' needs are at the forefront of everyone's work.
- The governing body, members of the Kedleston Group, provide strong support and challenge. Group members have the skill and knowledge to ensure that the school continues to improve. Together with school leaders, they carry out rigorous checks to ensure that the school fully meets the independent school standards.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. Almost all pupils achieve their targets and most exceed them. All pupils continue into further education or training.
- Senior leaders regularly make rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils' interest is engaged and that lessons are stimulating.
- Pupils' safety is a high priority at the school. Staff recruitment and child protection arrangements are excellent.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They indicate that there is little or no bullying and they feel well informed about how to keep themselves safe.
- The school curriculum is rich and interesting, with a good focus on literacy and numeracy. Sometimes, however, there are missed opportunities to promote pupils' reading skills. The 'learning outside the classroom' initiative allows pupils to develop new skills in a wide range of activities.
- The focus on pupils' personal development is excellent. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all learning activities.
- Behaviour is good across the school, including behaviour for learning, although a minority of pupils do not always complete the expected amount of work set in lessons.
- Attendance has improved but is not yet in line with national averages.

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?

- Further improve teaching and learning and thus enhance pupils' progress by:
 - making sure that pupils complete set tasks
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills across the curriculum, for example through reading aloud.
- Build on the effective strategy to improve attendance so that more pupils reach and exceed national figures.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The combined understanding of the headteacher and deputy headteacher about strengths and areas for development in the school enable them to make very effective improvements. Their determination to achieve the best for all pupils has transformed the school.
- Teaching and learning is consistently good in all subject areas and key stages. Staff appreciate the high-quality training they receive and the opportunity to enhance and develop their teaching skills. The performance management system ensures that there is continual improvement. All staff are Autism Education Trust qualified.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. School leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, are able to identify and put in place the right actions to bring about improvement.
- Leaders track pupils' achievement and progress with rigour and accuracy. The progress tracking system has played a key role in improving teaching, the curriculum and outcomes for pupils. Leaders are in the process of developing a new tracking system, which will be unique to the school.
- All pupils, including girls, boys and disadvantaged pupils entitled to receive the pupil premium grant, make good progress. At present there are no disadvantaged pupils on roll, but data on past pupils shows strong progress.
- The curriculum has a necessary focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information technology. These subjects are enriched by the 'opening minds' programme, sports, music and modern foreign languages. The school places strong value of 'learning outside the classroom' and so there are weekly cultural events such as visits to museums and galleries, preparation for adult-life sessions, cooking, biking, water sports, gardening and bush-tucker activities.
- The school provides a wide range of therapeutic practices along with academic subjects. A speech and language specialist provides one-to-one support for students who have communication difficulties so that they gain confidence and make good progress. Students very much enjoy the presence of Henry, the therapy dog, who brings an aura of calm enthusiasm to the corridors and classrooms.
- The emphasis on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all activities. The school aims to develop an appreciation of the intangible, beauty, mystery and ambiguity. Teachers use 'opening minds' lessons to broaden pupils' horizons and follow their interests.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of intrinsic British values through the curriculum. They have completed work on recent general elections and the referendum and have an understanding of the different political parties. Pupils have attended the Liverpool youth parliament. There are regular visits to different types of law courts, which help pupils to understand the British justice system.
- Parents are very satisfied with the school and speak with enthusiasm about how the staff nurture their children and support their learning. This is summed up by a typical comment that the school is 'second to none'.

- School leaders are seeking to continually improve. There are plans in place to further develop the successful 'Involve strategy', which is helping to improve attendance. The Bluebird ASC unit will admit its first pupils in September 2017. The unit has been designed to support pupils with a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (ASC) and other related conditions.

Governance

- The chief executive of the Kedleston Group, along with other board members, has a good understanding of the school and its effectiveness. Governors provide consistent support and challenge to encourage school improvement. They hold leaders to account for the performance of pupils and staff and systematically check all aspects of the school's work. The group provides opportunities for staff development across the whole group of schools and so enables good practice and expertise to be shared and enhanced.
- Governors ensure that the school provides a warm and welcoming environment and that pupils access a good range of stimulating resources and equipment.
- Governors check that all safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The Kedleston Group maintains a strategic role to ensure that the school is financially stable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website. The policy is regularly updated and takes account of all government requirements.
- Safeguarding is an absolute priority for all staff. Rigorous systems ensure that pupils are safe. Safeguarding is recognised as the responsibility of everyone in school and all staff are highly trained. Many staff have undertaken enhanced training so that there is always a named person on site when other groups of pupils are on trips and visits elsewhere. The headteacher and the Kedleston Group ensure that staff recruitment and child protection arrangements are excellent. The school has meticulous risk assessment arrangements for all activities. Health and safety checks are frequent and comprehensive.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching results in pupils of all ages, backgrounds and abilities making good progress across all subjects.
- Strong, positive relationships and mutual respect between adults and pupils underpin all learning and give pupils the confidence to try answers, even when they are not sure if they are correct. Teachers sometimes complete 'witness statements', which record learning for those pupils who need to overcome a reluctance to write.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and plan lessons which engage and enthuse their pupils. They set clear, precise lesson objectives so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers ask precise, patient questions, which extends learning further.

- Often there is a practical aspect to learning so that pupils learn through actually doing, rather than talking. For example, in a food technology lesson pupils were very successful in developing more-healthy recipes for fast food.
- The teaching of English and communication skills is a crucial element in all learning across the school. There is a good focus on correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Strong progress is evident in a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks as they tackle a variety of different genres and progress from one-word answers to continuous, detailed accounts.
- Pupils develop better communication skills through the extra support of a speech and language therapist who works in the school one day each week. The therapist provides one-to-one sessions for pupils to build up their confidence.
- In mathematics, clear, methodical explanations ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of concepts and learn calculation methods over time. This methodical approach particularly helps less confident pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in teams. All pupils work regularly with teaching assistants, who are very skilled in supporting their learning, asking probing questions and making sure that progress is made in lessons. Personalised targets are set for every individual. Nevertheless, sometimes pupils do not complete the expected amount of work in lessons.
- Pupils have the opportunity to develop better reading skills in one-to-one sessions but sometimes opportunities are missed to promote reading across other parts of the curriculum.
- Teachers follow a clear and consistent marking and feedback policy so that pupils know how well they have done and what they can do to improve. Teachers combine regular praise with useful advice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The physical and emotional well-being of pupils is paramount to all that the school does. Once a pupil has joined the school, staff work in a highly effective partnership with the pupil and the family to ensure that their transition into school is as smooth as possible. As a result, the majority of pupils settle quickly.
- Staff liaise closely with a range of agencies, including health and social care professionals, to make sure that pupils' medical, physical, emotional and social needs are met extremely well. Each pupil has a key worker trained in solution-focused therapy, which focuses on the future and solutions rather than problems.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school, far less anxious than in other placements, and very well cared for. Some pupils indicate that they have never felt safe in school until coming here. They agree that there is little or no bullying and no one is picked on because of their race or gender or for any other reason. Pupils feel well informed about how to keep themselves safe in risky situations. They are able to confidently explain how to use the internet and social media safely and securely. Pupils are well informed about other aspects of safety such as the dangers of knife crime.

- Pupil voice is very strong. Through the school council, pupils have a weekly opportunity to discuss all aspects of school life and to contribute to the school development plan. Pupils comment that they feel that they are listened to at Olsen House.
- Pupils enjoy working with the local community. For example, they worked with the 'Friends of the park' to improve the local green spaces and repaint benches. Some pupils especially enjoy working with the site manager to tend the horticulture area and have the satisfaction of watching seeds they have planted through to harvest.
- Henry, the school pet therapy dog, contributes significantly to pupils' sense of well-being and the calm atmosphere in school. Pupils enjoy taking him for walks and his presence in lessons and therapy sessions is always welcome.
- A key aim of the school is to build pupils' resilience, to develop a sense of personal achievement and to prepare pupils academically, vocationally and socially for adulthood. The school's highly successful work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare contributes significantly to achieving this aim.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly and pleasant around the school because of the very positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils.
- All pupils have individual behaviour management plans which are used effectively to support them and to help them to move on. Reflection time is used well, enabling pupils to learn over time how to manage their own feelings and behaviour.
- School records show that the number of incidents of poor behaviour and of exclusions have reduced significantly over the last three academic years.
- Leaders track the attendance of pupils very carefully. The school uses the 'Involve' strategy, good practice shared with another of the Kedleston Group of schools. This sets realistic targets, in discussion with the pupils and their families. The strategy has led to a marked improvement in the attendance of pupils over time. As pupils become less anxious and start to feel more involved, they want to be at school. Nevertheless, attendance figures overall are well below the national average.
- School leaders have effective systems for checking the attendance, behaviour and progress of the pupils who are attending some alternative vocational courses elsewhere.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school significantly behind national expectations for pupils of a similar age. They have often experienced a number of different school placements before joining Olsen House. Some may have been out of education for a considerable period of time. Pupils start at different points in the year. From these unsettled beginnings, the great majority of pupils make good and better progress.
- Pupils achieve a wide range of external accreditations and qualifications at the end of key stage 4. In addition to achieving functional skills in English and mathematics, pupils gain qualifications in science, information technology and food technology.

- Pupils follow, and achieve success in, a wide range of courses in subjects such as art, physical education, catering, construction, hairdressing, life-saving and first aid. All pupils follow a useful course in preparation for working life. The most able pupils complete several GCSE subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are already gaining useful Level 1 qualifications in some subjects.
- All pupils, including girls, boys and those who are disadvantaged make equally good progress towards their targets. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan tailored to their needs. As a result their potential is maximised and they are successful in a range of subjects.
- Older pupils are provided with useful careers education and guidance, starting with regular meetings with a representative of the careers service in Year 9. By the time they reach Year 11 they are well informed about future opportunities and most have completed some work experience. As a result, for the past three years all pupils have been able to progress to further education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	136088
DfE registration number	343/6134
Inspection number	10026016

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	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Alison Ford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,042
Telephone number	0151 924 0234
Website	www.olsenhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	hello@olsenhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- Olsen House occupies a former local authority primary school in Crosby, Merseyside. The school was purchased by Kedleston Group Ltd in April 2013.
- The school is registered for up to 40 boys and girls aged seven to 16 years. It supports pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, those who need extra help to engage in education and pupils with autism or other learning difficulties. Currently there are 10 pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4, the great majority of whom have experienced severe disruption to their education. All have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Two pupils are looked after by the local authority.

- In September 2017 the school will admit its first pupils to 'The Bluebird Unit', a new facility for pupils with a primary diagnosis of ASC. The aim of the unit is to support pupils' needs and to work with them holistically. The learning environment has been designed to enable pupils to work in an environment that is comfortable for them and takes into consideration their sensory needs.
- The school website is fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- The school sets out to provide an environment where pupils are consulted, valued and supported. It aims to present opportunities for them to reach their full potential in life.
- Pupils are encouraged to attend courses at local colleges. The school currently uses alternative provision at The Vocation College, Wallasey, Cornerstone, Bootle and Mode Training, Liverpool. Pupils are following courses in construction, media studies and photography, barbering and hairdressing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in most year groups and in a range of subjects. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with staff, pupils and trustees, including the chief executive of the Kedleston group. She met with the Connexions adviser and the speech and language consultant who regularly works with pupils in the school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector scrutinised all policies and procedures in order to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards. She toured the school site, checking on the school's compliance with the independent school standards regarding the suitability of premises.
- The views of staff were gained from the nine responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and from discussions with teachers, teaching assistants, administration and other support staff.
- The views of parents were gained from the three responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, letters and emails and a brief meeting with parents during the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records, curriculum planning and school policies. She looked at the work in pupils' books in all year groups.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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