

City of Rochester School

Bradbury House, View Road, Cliffe Woods, Kent ME3 8UJ

Inspection dates

24 September 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h) and 2(2)(i)

- The last standard inspection found that leaders and trustees had failed to establish a curriculum that equipped pupils sufficiently well for their future lives. The curriculum was limited to a narrow range of subjects. Impartial careers advice was not available.
- A new headteacher joined the school shortly after the last standard inspection, taking up a substantive position in March 2019. Much progress has been made since her arrival. Although ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff have been a high priority, significant and rapid improvements in the quality of education were evident during this monitoring inspection.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum policy, schemes and teaching plans. The present curriculum is based broadly on the national curriculum. Curriculum schemes and planning take into account pupils' ages and aptitudes. Because of their complex needs, all pupils follow a bespoke pathway as they move through the school.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is given a high priority. A new scheme of work has been introduced to ensure that pupils are supported well in these key areas of their development.
- The school has started to provide careers advice to pupils. A specialist company has been engaged to provide them with independent, impartial advice. Leaders are actively engaged in developing opportunities for pupils to undertake work experience. This aspect of the school's work is now overseen by a newly-appointed member of staff with responsibility for community partnerships.
- The curriculum is designed so that all pupils can make progress across a range of subjects. Leaders intend that pupils will be better prepared for life when they leave the school than was the case in the recent past.
- The curriculum focuses on giving pupils real-life experiences. Six week blocks of work cover specific themes, such as 'farm school' or 'film school'. Pupils talked with enthusiasm to the inspector about how they enjoy learning about new things. This

included their weekly trips to a farm and the trip to a local castle they had experienced the day before the inspection.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g) and 4

- The last standard inspection judged teaching, learning and assessment to be inadequate. Leadership of teaching was weak. Wide variations in the quality of teaching led to significant inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers' expectations were not high enough.
- New teaching staff have been employed since the last standard inspection. Significantly, four new teachers are in place. Classroom visits during the inspection showed that relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Staff know pupils well and plan learning that better meets the needs of pupils than was the case in the past.
- An experienced assistant headteacher has also been appointed, taking up her position in recent weeks. Consequently, leaders' capacity to monitor and improve the quality of teaching has greatly improved.
- Leaders have introduced an 'accountability cycle', which provides them with better information about the quality of teaching and how it impacts on pupils' learning. The cycle includes setting targets for pupils and monitoring their learning. Visits to lessons and reviewing pupils' work, as well as identifying and acting on aspects of teachers' classroom practice that could to be better, are also part of leaders' work.
- A new system to assess the academic progress pupils are making has been introduced. Leaders acknowledge that this needs further time to embed. A new system to monitor pupils' social and emotional development has also been established.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in these paragraphs, this standard is now met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi) and 5(b)Vii)

- At the last standard inspection, it was found that the school's curriculum did not sufficiently develop pupils' understanding of British values.
- Leaders have reviewed this aspect of the school's work. They are very clear that the spiritual, moral, social and emotional, and the cultural, development of pupils needs to have a high priority. This is especially the case when pupils' complex needs are taken into account.
- Pupils learn about democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance and respect for the faiths, cultures and beliefs of others through the taught curriculum. The new PSHE education scheme of work covers aspects such as relationships, celebrating difference, resilience and change.
- Leaders have introduced an equality and diversity calendar. This highlights key landmarks and events for pupils to learn about. These include Black History Month, anti-bullying week, Holocaust Memorial Day and the 'world day for cultural diversity'.
- Staff have supported pupils in forming a new school council. Pupils now have a greater part in influencing aspects of the school such as after-school clubs and the introduction of a new school uniform. Not all pupils agree with the new school uniform policy.

However, those who talked to the inspector were able to discuss the merits, or otherwise, of this new initiative, acknowledging that different people may hold different opinions.

- Pupils learn about the faiths and beliefs of others throughout the school year. Pupils will visit the Medway Towns' Gurdwara in coming weeks for instance. Older pupils are also due to visit the Knife Angel at Rochester Cathedral, taking part in an educational workshop to raise awareness of knife crime.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in this paragraph, this standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 11, 12, 15, 16, 16(a), and 16(b)

- At the time of the previous standard inspection, safeguarding was found to be ineffective. Leaders and staff did not know enough about statutory guidance for keeping children safe. Other requirements were also found to be weak, including the need to implement a written health and safety policy, aspects of fire safety, and the effective implementation of a risk assessment policy. Other policies or statutory documentation were also not in place or not fit for purpose. This included behaviour and anti-bullying policies, and admission and attendance registers.
- The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, is compliant with current guidelines. Staff now receive routine updates on all aspects of safeguarding. Meetings at the start and finish of the school day ensure that communication between staff is strong, including about aspects of the safeguarding of pupils.
- A safeguarding audit has been carried out by suitably qualified professionals from outside the school. Problems identified have been acted on. These include improving the school's site security and some aspects of record-keeping.
- Leaders have ensured that all staff have a better understanding of keeping pupils safe. Appropriate safeguarding training has been undertaken. This includes for the school's designated safeguarding leads. Consequently, staff understand what to do if they have concerns about pupils.
- Key staff have also undertaken a range of other training, including for the safer recruitment of staff, first aid, including the administration of medicines, and fire warden training.
- Although the behaviour of pupils was judged to be good at the last standard inspection, the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies were found to be not fit for purpose. These policies have been updated. They follow statutory guidance and are implemented effectively.
- Leaders have reviewed and updated the school's health and safety and risk assessment policies. Risk assessments are in place that cover different aspects of the school's accommodation, and for activities held on or off the school site. Key staff now have a tight overview of how these policies and risk assessments are implemented.
- A fire risk assessment is now in place and is updated annually. Fire risk assessments are completed by independent consultants who are suitably qualified. A range of remedial work has been carried out since the last standard inspection to address shortcomings

identified after that inspection. The most recent review of the fire risk assessment confirmed that the school is now compliant with current guidelines.

- Leaders have ensured that admissions and attendance registers are now in place and maintained appropriately.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in these paragraphs, this standard is now met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(3), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii) 21(3)(a)(iv), and 21(3)(b)

- The previous standard inspection found evidence that some pre-employment checks on staff had not been carried out. It also found that not all the required checks on trustees and leaders had been carried out, and that the single central record of checks on adults did not contain all the information required.
- The headteacher and other leaders have completed training to give them a better understanding of the safe recruitment of staff. This includes the school's registrar, who is responsible for maintaining the school's single central record. Consequently, pre-employment checks on new staff are now fit for purpose and recorded correctly.
- During this monitoring inspection, a check of the single central record found that all required checks are now fully in place. This includes checks on prohibition orders and appropriate checks on trustees and school leaders.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in these paragraphs, this standard is now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 25 and 28(1)(c)

- At the last standard inspection, the school's premises were found not to provide adequately for the welfare, health, and safety of pupils.
- Leaders moved fast to introduce key policies and address aspects concerning the welfare, health and safety of pupils after the last standard inspection. A fire risk assessment was obtained as a matter of urgency. This resulted in major remedial work on the premises, including the introduction of emergency lighting, fire doors and signage.
- A programme of refurbishment was started. Phase one is complete, with £180,000 being spent on improving all aspects of the premises and accommodation in the school. Phase two is about to begin.
- Current leaders are very aware of the minimum requirements under this part of the independent school standards. They ensure that appropriate monitoring is carried out, including the testing of alarms and electrical equipment, for example. Drinking water is clearly labelled as such. Other aspects of Part 5 are routinely checked to ensure compliance.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in these paragraphs, this standard is now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d) and 32(3)(f)

- At the time of the previous standard inspection, the school did not meet all aspects of the paragraph regarding the information that should be provided to parents and others. A wide range of information was found to be either not fit for purpose, or not available at all.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have systematically reviewed the school's policies and the way that they provide key information to parents and others who may require it.
- All information required to be provided under Part 6 is now in place and available. Most is provided on the school's new website. This includes key documents such as the curriculum policy and documents regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Information about complaints is also available. Policies and key information that are not published on the website are available to parents on request.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in this paragraph, this standard is now met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33(b), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33 (k)

- At the last standard inspection, the school's complaints policy met some, but not all, of the requirements of this part of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have reviewed the policy. Those aspects that were missing in the previous policy, such as the provision for a panel hearing and other requirements, including efficient record-keeping, have been fully addressed. Consequently, the complaints policy is now fully compliant with all aspects of Part 7.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in this paragraph, this standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The previous standard inspection found that the proprietor had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met. Safeguarding was not effective. Leaders' management of the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff was not strong. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be inadequate. Weaknesses in leadership and management led to the school having many unmet independent school standards.
- Since the last standard inspection, a new headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. Other leadership roles have been created, including a registrar and positions to support the well-being of pupils.
- New leaders are suitably qualified. Most have extensive experience in independent special schools. The pace of improvement has been rapid, especially in addressing concerns about the safeguarding of pupils, which is now effective.
- Trustees have a clearer understanding of the quality of education the school provides. They have sought advice from outside the school. A small group of suitably experienced

and independent professionals provide trustees and leaders with support and guidance, including with regard to school improvement and the requirements of the independent school standards.

- Policies, systems and routines have been reviewed. Many changes have been made. Leaders' monitoring of all aspects of the quality of education is beginning to impact positively on the quality of teaching, including the way that staff deliver the curriculum and assess the progress pupils are making.
- Self-evaluation and development plans have been introduced. Teaching and support staff express confidence in new leaders. Pupils are very positive about most aspects of the school, although less so about the new uniform.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings identified at the last inspection, and all the independent school standards looked at during this inspection were met, Part 8 is also 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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
- 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed on pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person's identity.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate

named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if–

- 20(6)(a) MB–
 - 20(6)(a)(i) is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 20(6)(b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB–
 - 20(6)(b)(i) where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check;
 - 20(6)(b)(ii) checks confirming MB’s identity and MB’s right to work in the United Kingdom.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
- 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S’s identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff (“S”), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.
 - 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(a) particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions;
 - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2;
 - 32(3)(d) particulars of arrangements for meeting the standards contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 13;
 - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which–
 - 33(b) is made available to parents of pupils;
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;

- 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
- 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
- 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is–
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
- 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e); and
- 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	145231
DfE registration number	887/6011
Inspection number	10114608

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 status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Magic (UK) Ltd
Chair	Claire Cooper
Headteacher	Alicja Emmett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,884 to £54,896
Telephone number	01634 570 706
Website	cityofrochesterschool.org
Email address	enquiries@cityofrochesterschool.org
Date of previous standard inspection	27–29 November 2018

Information about this school

- The City of Rochester School is located in a suburban area in Medway. The school was previously called Magic Arc School. The proprietor registered the name change with the Department for Education in September 2019.
- The school is governed by a board of trustees.

- The school's last standard inspection took place in November 2018, when the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be inadequate and a number of independent school standards were found to be unmet.
- The City of Rochester School provides education for boys and girls who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have additional learning and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils join the school at different times during the school year and at different ages. Their length of stay in the school varies according to their individual needs.
- The school is registered to admit a maximum of 60 pupils in the age range five to 18. There are 21 pupils currently on roll.
- The school broadly follows the national curriculum, while providing bespoke packages of learning to meet individual pupils' needs. Older pupils work towards nationally recognised qualifications, including functional skills qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision, White Rocks Farm, based at Sevenoaks, Kent.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the previous standard inspection in November 2018. As a monitoring inspection, this inspection was carried out without notice.
- The school's action plan to address the unmet independent school standards identified at the last standard inspection was rejected by the Department for Education in April 2019.
- During this inspection, the inspector carried out a range of activities within the school. These included visits to lessons in all classes. The inspector also viewed different parts of the school's accommodation and facilities, including communal areas and pupils' access to drinking water.
- Meetings were held with a range of school leaders, including trustees, the headteacher, designated safeguarding lead, registrar, and the finance and health and safety officers. The inspector also met with a group of teaching and support staff, and a representative group of pupils.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's safeguarding and other associated policies. The single central record of staff checks was also scrutinised, as well as staff training records, and other records regarding leaders' work to address unmet standards identified at the last standard inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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