

Community Mentoring and Support School

The Annexe, Church Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 5DZ

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor has ensured that there is an effective system of governance in place to support the school's development. All independent school standards are met.
- Directors know their school well. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and the priorities for improvement.
- The head of school has developed an effective team which shares her high expectations. Staff work together seamlessly to help pupils achieve success.
- Leaders have designed an aspirational curriculum that is the bedrock of the school.
- Teaching staff use their good subject knowledge and understanding of the pupils to make learning interesting and memorable.
- Staff have successfully nurtured a caring, inclusive school ethos. As a result, pupils who were previously disengaged and uninterested in learning attend well and enjoy school.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. This is particularly notable, given the limited time pupils have been in the school. However, transition arrangements into the school are not consistently secure.
- Pupils behave well. They respect staff and each other, the school environment and the work they produce.
- Staff ensure that pupils receive the high-quality careers advice and guidance they need in order to prepare for life beyond the school.
- Leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date by providing training, including that related to safeguarding.
- Leaders' effective communication channels with external agencies aid close liaison to support pupils and their families when needed.

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 leadership and management, by leaders:
 - making good use of information about pupils' behaviour and achievement to direct and measure the impact of improvement work more precisely
 - ensuring good-quality assessment information is available for pupils when they first join the school, to enable teachers to help pupils to catch up more swiftly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. Directors keep a close check on the school's development, through their regular visits to the school. Premises are well maintained and organised.
- The executive principal and head of school demonstrate strong leadership. Their work reflects the organisation's deep commitment to and care for each pupil. All pupils at the school had negative prior experiences of education and have missed a lot of their schooling. Staff re-engage pupils with education and persevere in helping them to achieve qualifications. This is made more difficult, because of the limited time many pupils have been in the school.
- The carefully sequenced curriculum is at the heart of the school's success in meeting pupils' diverse needs and provides a hook which re-engages them in education well. The strong focus on pupils' social and moral education helps to prepare pupils well to engage positively and to follow society's rule of law.
- In designing a curriculum, leaders have acted on the understanding that academic qualifications are vital to securing better opportunities for pupils in later life. Consequently, the school makes good use of accredited courses.
- Leaders have recruited well, so that all staff are good role models to encourage the development of tolerance and harmony. Dedicated 'mentors' are highly effective at supporting pupils' personal development, so that pupils can re-engage in education. The close work and daily liaison with families enhance pupils' trust and confidence in the school.
- The head of school has implemented effective systems to check the quality of teaching. Consequently, staff are well informed and use their significant subject knowledge to provide appropriate, relevant and challenging learning experiences for all pupils.
- Leaders have developed a comprehensive system to record information about each pupil. The leaders' analysis of pupils' development and the standards they work at is accurate and supports pupils' progress. However, the quality of assessment information about pupils when they first join the school is variable. This hampers teachers' ability to help pupils catch up swiftly.

Governance

- Directors are committed to, and actively promote, the school's vision to support vulnerable young people. They share leaders' belief that the school plays a crucial role in equipping pupils for life after school and helping them to become good citizens.
- Directors have a detailed understanding of the school's effectiveness, because they are heavily involved in its work. Currently, the board is going through a restructuring, and directors' consideration of the way forward reflects their vigilance in meeting standards and providing a successful education for pupils.
- Directors use their relevant backgrounds and skills, such as in education and social care, to ask probing questions of themselves and others.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Designated safeguarding staff take their responsibilities seriously and liaise closely with each other over the two school sites currently in use. This ensures that a consistent approach is taken towards the training of staff and the way child protection issues are dealt with.
- Staff are trained appropriately, and checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children are up to date and comprehensive. Staff know the importance of reporting anything they are concerned about, however small.
- Staff use the school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the website. The policy is written in accordance with the latest guidance and contains all necessary information.
- Leaders ensure that staff carry out appropriate risk assessments for trips and daily activities and for individual pupils. Staff are clear about the actions that need to be taken to reduce risks.
- The school's new system for referral is helping designated staff to monitor individual complex cases more effectively. This is because it clearly records the chronology of events and the actions taken by staff to resolve issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff help pupils in their understanding by asking appropriate, well-constructed questions. These questions encourage pupils to think around the subject and consider different viewpoints. Consequently, pupils are drawn into the subject matter, engage with their learning and deepen their thinking.
- Pupils benefit from positive relationships with teaching staff. Pupils trust staff, because they are treated with patience, tolerance and respect. This has a very positive impact on their learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they use this to plan effective learning. As a result, pupils work with positive attitudes and focus well on the tasks they are given.
- Teachers make good use of the curriculum plans in place to plot pupils' learning. They have a clear understanding of how well pupils are acquiring skills and knowledge at any given time. Work in pupils' files shows that, where pupils have gaps in their understanding, teachers act swiftly to unpick where those gaps are and consequently, support pupils to catch up.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Much of the school's work supports pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. On collecting pupils from their homes in the morning, staff are able to

support pupils' readiness for learning that day. Pupils' engagement in the school breakfast provides a good start to the day and ensures that pupils are in a good frame of mind. Throughout the school day, pupils participate in activities that teach them the value of teamwork, persistence and self-reliance.

- Pupils are well looked after by staff, who have their best interests at heart. Pupils, who can be wary of placing their trust in adults because of negative past experiences, speak highly of staff at the school. They know that staff work hard for them.
- Staff understand how important it is for pupils to have realistic plans once they leave the school. They provide pupils with good guidance that matches pupils' aspirations and abilities to help them with their next steps after the school.
- Pupils are successfully encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. For example, pupils frequently prepare their own snacks for lunch.
- Staff ensure that pupils understand how to relate to each other and support them to develop friendships. They also ensure that pupils behave safely and appropriately towards each other, so that bullying is extremely rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's behaviour policy has a positive impact. Leaders ensure that staff know and understand the triggers that cause pupils to feel anxious and plan to minimise these.
- Staff support pupils in understanding their feelings. Consequently, pupils learn to manage their behaviour. Pupils are polite to staff and visitors and conduct themselves well during the school day, including during breaks and lunchtime.
- Behavioural incidents are rare and reduce significantly for each individual as they settle into the school.
- Staff work hard to combat the culture of pupils' poor attendance at previous schools. The school's mentoring system is highly effective in breaking this cycle. Pupils have high levels of attendance and enjoy the school.
- Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils show respect for each other, listen well and take turns during lessons.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils show respect for each other, staff, visitors, school resources and the fabric of the school building. Every part of the school buildings across the two sites currently in use is well maintained and cared for.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at different times of the school year and have complex needs. From their varied starting points, in the short time they have been in the school, they settle into routines and make strong progress in their behaviour and attitudes towards learning.
- Some pupils lack basic social skills when they join the school. Staff successfully teach pupils to become better citizens and contribute to wider society. Pupils learn to become more tolerant, understanding and respectful of others' differences and the world around

them. They understand the importance of achieving qualifications to help them secure work and are motivated to achieve.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because support is tailored to their needs. Teachers make sure that learning activities match pupils' education, health and care plans precisely.
- The school supports pupils to acquire skills for life particularly well, including ensuring that pupils are ready to learn. Pupils benefit from dedicated personal, social, health and economic education and citizenship lessons, and from day-to-day interactions with staff.
- Pupils develop a sound understanding across a range of subjects across the curriculum. Effective use of trips and visits deepens pupils' understanding.

School details

Unique reference number	146671
DfE registration number	916/6025
Inspection number	10094918

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 School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Community Mentoring and Support CIC
Executive Headteacher	James Evans
Headteacher	Victoria Madeley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,000
Telephone number	01242 224509
Website	www.communitymas.co.uk
Email address	james.evans@communitymas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Community and Mentoring School is based in Gloucestershire and currently operates two sites, situated in Lydney and Dursley. The school has another registered site in Churchdown.
- The school is an independent special school that is registered to provide education for boys and girls with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The proprietor is CMAS and has four directors.
- During their time in the school, pupils follow a range of national curriculum subjects, taught through short units tailored to individual need.

- The school opened in February 2019 and is currently registered for up to 32 pupils aged between 14 and 16. Currently, seven pupils attend; most have education, health and care plans.
- Pupils join the school throughout the year. Most pupils join the school having been excluded or having attended a number of mainstream and specialist schools. Many have been out of full-time education for more than a year.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first inspection since the school opened in February 2019.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in science, mathematics and at social times. In addition, the inspector looked at pupils' work and information kept by the school about pupils' learning and progress.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, staff members and leaders throughout the inspection. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority commissioning officer. The lead inspector also held meetings with directors of the company, the executive and vice-executive principals and the head of the school.
- An inspector scrutinised the curriculum plans, and other resources provided by the school. Inspectors also scrutinised records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. School policies and documentation, including risk assessments, were also examined. In addition, the inspectors undertook a tour of the three premises registered to the school.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bragg

Ofsted Inspector

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