

# Serenity School

88–90 South End Lane, Croydon CR0 1DQ

## Inspection dates

14–16 May 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They have created a culture of high expectations. They ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders, proprietors and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors hold leaders to account using precise and measurable targets identified in the school's improvement plan.
- Staff understand pupils' needs. Teachers' planning of learning is well matched to the different abilities and interests of pupils. Therefore, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive programme is in place to support pupils' well-being and personal development.
- Pupils make the strongest progress in English and mathematics. This is a result of effective teaching, supported by targeted and timely interventions.
- Pupils learn strategies that help them to manage their behaviour and become less reliant on adults. Pupils show respect for each other and their environment. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The attendance of almost all pupils has improved significantly since they joined the school.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the quality of education that the school provides.
- Pupils learn well in English and mathematics. However, they do not have enough opportunities to practise their literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Sometimes, teachers' questioning is not as effective as it could be. As a result, on these occasions, pupils' knowledge and understanding are less well developed.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well considered. It has a strong blend of academic and therapeutic elements, and is implemented well. Currently, the science curriculum is too narrow. This limits pupils' progress in science.
- Leaders regularly monitor pupils' progress in all subjects. However, the evidence they use to make their judgements about different subjects is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics.

### 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 and strengthen achievement by:
  - extending and embedding opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum
  - ensuring that all teachers use questioning more effectively to develop understanding and check pupils' learning in lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - implementing a broad and balanced science curriculum for all pupils
  - ensuring that judgements about the progress pupils make in different subjects are based on a good range of evidence, checked by leaders for its quality and accuracy.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders, proprietors and governors work hard to bring about improvements in all aspects of the school's work. Leaders ensured that all key management systems were up and running before the arrival of the school's first cohort of pupils, six months ago. Consequently, staff 'hit the ground running', and the school has made substantial progress since January 2019.
- Leaders have a well-developed understanding of the needs of pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have designed a curriculum with strong academic and therapeutic strands, which successfully motivates pupils and sustains their engagement. As a result, pupils who have previously had a history of exclusion and poor attendance have started to thrive since they joined the school.
- Staff work closely together so that pupils can benefit from the best practice and strengths of different adults. Teacher coaching and professional development form an important part of the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. The school's consultant oversees this part of the school's work effectively. He works with individual teachers on their personal targets for improvement.
- Leadership and management of behaviour and personal development are strong. Staff and pupils understand the rewards system, and leaders use the analysis intelligently to inform their support and actions.
- Leaders ensure that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through the curriculum. In a personal, social, health and economic education lesson, for example, pupils reflected on the impact of one person's vote. They were shown the difference that one vote can make in a hung parliament, for instance. Leaders ensure that pupils gain an understanding of their community and the wider world.
- The curriculum provides a good range of academic and practical subjects. These include humanities, food and nutrition, music and physical education. Some elements of science are currently taught through food technology and on planned science days in the school year. Consequently, pupils make less progress in science compared to other subjects. Leaders plan to teach science as a separate subject from September 2019.
- Leaders take steps to improve the school, based on increasingly rigorous monitoring and evaluation. However, judgements about pupils' progress in subjects other than mathematics and English are not sharp enough. This is because the evidence on which these judgements are based is too narrow and fails to give sufficient weight to progress in pupils' work.

### Governance

- Governance is effective. Governors regularly visit to check on the work of the school, for example in relation to safeguarding and pupils' academic development and well-being.
- The school's improvement plan is detailed and well crafted. It has clear milestones and measurable success criteria. These enable governors to keep a check on the impact of

leaders' work. Governors and proprietors are advised well by the school's consultant on all aspects of quality assurance.

- Proprietors have provided a building that is fit for purpose and increasingly well resourced. A specialist area for food technology and an art room are almost complete and ready for use.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils said that they feel safe and know whom to go to if they have a problem.
- The safeguarding policy is up to date and complies with the statutory guidance from the Department for Education. Staff are clear about procedures for reporting any concerns. Staff have regular training and updates to ensure that they meet pupils' safeguarding needs.
- Leaders work with the local authority and external agencies to protect pupils. They maintain detailed records, which they keep and store securely.
- The school has appropriate risk assessments in place for on-site and off-site activities, for example trips and excursions. Teachers teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, and pupils can talk about examples of this, such as the dangers of knife crime and gang affiliation.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on all staff and contractors.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' conduct. They establish clear routines, which support pupils well to settle to their learning quickly. Most pupils respond positively. For those few pupils who need more time, there is a flexible but consistent approach. This encourages small steps towards re-engagement with the whole class.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs to plan interesting and engaging lessons. As a result, pupils participate well, and said that they enjoy learning. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils experience a rich variety of learning contexts and topics.
- Additional, well-focused programmes of support are carefully tailored to pupils' needs. For instance, the weekly one-to-one therapy sessions make an important contribution to pupils' overall progress and personal development.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is a strength of the school. This is supported by additional interventions to close identified gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. This targeted approach ensures that pupils keep up to speed with their learning and do not fall behind. As a result, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, which prepares them well to learn successfully in other subjects.
- Leaders deploy progress partners (teaching assistants) very effectively. Progress partners contribute well to pupils' learning and enable pupils to learn how to manage themselves. They also play an important role in developing pupils' speaking, listening and wider communication skills.

- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan for pupils' learning. However, the use of questioning to check pupils' understanding in lessons and demonstrate how to apply a particular skill is not routinely strong. In addition, some staff do not check when pupils are ready to move on or deepen their understanding. This prevents some pupils from making stronger progress over time.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- As a result of the positive relationships fostered by staff, most pupils support each other in lessons and work together happily. They share in the achievements of others and take pride in their own successes. Pupils enjoy the simple routines, which encourage them to take some responsibility for their learning. For instance, they select resources and tidy them away.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, in and out of school. They could explain, for example, the immediate and longer-term consequences of getting involved in a gang. Their understanding of e-safety is good, and pupils explained how and why this is important. Pupils stated that they feel very safe in school, as staff will always support them.
- All pupils spoken to indicated that bullying does happen from time to time. Equally, they were confident that any incidents that occur are dealt with by staff quickly and effectively. All staff are trained in behaviour management and safe ways to restrain pupils. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils are based on mutual respect and trust. As a result, physical intervention is very much a last resort, and the number of these incidents is small.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is due to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning and effective management by staff. Pupils said that behaviour in school is good, and parents and staff also support this view.
- Although pupils enter the school with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, they make rapid progress in learning self-control and self-worth. As a result, there are few cases of fixed-term exclusions, and no permanent exclusions.
- Pupils want to be in school, and several stated that they were not happy about having to miss school, even for medical appointments. The majority of pupils have had a history of non-attendance in their previous schools. However, since joining Serenity School, the attendance of half of the pupils has been 100 per cent. The attendance of almost all pupils is significantly higher than it was in their previous school. This is because pupils' individual needs are met as a result of the hard work the school does to remove barriers to learning.
- Occasionally, the behaviour of a few pupils disturbs the learning of others. However, this is well managed by staff through the school's effective behaviour management system.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders use assessments in reading, spelling, English and mathematics to assess pupils' attainment on entry to the school. These indicate that almost all pupils are below or well-below average, in relation to what is expected for their age. Pupils' 'flight paths' are generated based on this initial information, and their progress is tracked against their targets.
- The school's assessment information indicates that most pupils make good progress across the curriculum. As a result, most pupils have been entered for functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at entry level and level 1. The majority have also been entered for entry level and level 1 accreditations in food and information technology, and sports leadership in physical education.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Scrutiny of pupils' English books indicates that, over time, they learn to write more coherent sentences and organise their ideas into logical paragraphs. Pupils' mathematics books show evidence of repeated practice to consolidate their understanding of different operations, such as division and multiplication. This prepares pupils to apply their skills and knowledge more confidently when solving word problems.
- Leaders give a lot of attention to developing pupils' social and emotional skills, so that they are well prepared for life beyond school. They are assessed on a range of social and emotional competencies when they join the school. Regular therapy and counselling sessions have a strong impact on building pupils' resilience, confidence and self-esteem. The school uses well-being indicators to measure the success of these interventions, which show pupils' strong progress over time. The school's data is supported by the inspector's observations and discussions with pupils and parents. Parents spoken to said that they have seen a transformation in their child's engagement with learning over the past few months.
- Leaders have invested in a range of age-appropriate fiction books. The school's 'drop everything and read' sessions ensure that reading is given importance in the school's curriculum. As a result, pupils read more than they did previously and enjoy the experience. Pupils who need additional support to improve their reading skills are identified quickly. Interventions are then put in place, which have the desired impact.
- Pupils' work shows that they do not have regular opportunities to practise their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils frequently practise their grammatical skills and use mathematical operations to solve problems. However, this is mainly confined to English and mathematics lessons, rather than across other subjects. This limits the progress pupils make.
- Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in subjects such as history, geography and science are not as secure as in English and mathematics.

## School details

Unique reference number	146660
DfE registration number	306/6018
Inspection number	10092536

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Serenity School Limited
Chair	Maura Armstrong
Headteacher	Jude Onye
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000 to £50,000
Telephone number	07941 054464
Website	<a href="http://www.serenityschool.org.uk">www.serenityschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@serenityschool.org.uk">office@serenityschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is registered as an independent special day school in the London Borough of Croydon. It started operating with its first cohort of pupils in January 2019.
- The school offers day places to boys aged 11 to 16 with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. These comprise autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan. Places are currently commissioned by four local authorities: Croydon, Lewisham, Merton, and Brighton and Hove.

- The school has a few pupils on roll who are disadvantaged and supported by pupil premium funding.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- This is the school's first full independent school inspection, following its registration in November 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning across the school in a range of subjects. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector evaluated pupils' work in books and talked to them about their learning and progress. He observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at play and breakfast times. The inspector gathered pupils' opinions about the school through formal and informal discussions.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, the school's consultant, the chair of the governing body and one of the proprietors. He also met with a small group of parents to gather their views about the quality of provision.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents, and monitoring records of the quality of teaching and learning. The inspector also viewed information relating to pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for parents, pupils or staff.

## Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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