

The Bridge

67 Albert Road, Romford, Essex RM1 2PS

Inspection dates

14–16 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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 headteacher's skills, values and expertise have ensured that pupils can resume their education successfully. They enjoy school and thrive in the inclusive, nurturing environment.
- Leaders and staff at all levels provide strong role models for pupils to become reflective, successful learners.
- Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for the school and the pupils. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Leaders' capacity to take the school forward to its next stage successfully needs review.
- The curriculum meets the requirements of the independent school standards but is still developing. At present, opportunities for physical education are limited.
- The school's ethos of 'hope and a future' has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and welfare, which is outstanding.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teaching is consistently strong across all subjects. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils show exemplary behaviour in classes and at social times.
- Outcomes for pupils are good and they make strong progress. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are confident and articulate. They are empathetic and respectful of each other.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through the careers programme. Pupils, who previously struggled to engage with education, are positive about their future at college.
- Parents are hugely supportive of the school and have great respect for the headteacher and staff. One parent described the school as, 'an absolute lifeline'.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils learn how to stay safe and learn how to evaluate risks for themselves.

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 leadership and management to ensure that:
 - there is capacity in the leadership team to sustain and build on the school’s effective practice
 - leaders continue to develop and extend the curriculum and in particular increase the range of opportunities for physical education.
- Improve teaching and outcomes to ensure that:
 - pupils have opportunities to improve the quality of their writing and so deepen their learning, across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school successfully with kindness, compassion, understanding and professional skills. This ethos has a positive impact on pupils' personal development, learning and progress. It is shared by all staff, permeates throughout the school and is encapsulated in the school's mission statement, 'hope and a future'.
- Leaders set high standards for pupils' learning and academic work. Systems for monitoring teaching and learning and how teachers use assessment are strong and effective. Staff have access to a range of professional development opportunities. Consequently, the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils and enables them to succeed. The requirements of the independent school standards are met. However, the school is relatively new, and leaders continue to work hard to expand the subject options and the visits and trips which complement the taught curriculum. In particular, the range of sport and physical education activities for pupils is limited.
- Leaders provide pupils with a range of provision, including counselling and coaching to support them. Pupils speak very highly of the support that they can access at or through the school. Leaders are effective in addressing the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they can learn and make progress.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. A high proportion of parents responded to the online survey and all respondents were positive about the school and the impact it has on their child. Parents wrote, in moving terms, about how their child's life and often that of their whole family had been turned around by The Bridge. One parent, typical of many, described how their child was now 'happy to go to school and not frightened about what each day will bring'.

Governance

- The trust, as the proprietor, has the oversight and scrutiny of the work of the school and pupils' performance. The trust's model of self-evaluation, the 'health checks', is effective in uniting school leaders, governors and trust staff in a common approach to providing support and challenge to drive the school forward. All leaders have a consistent understanding of how to evaluate the school's performance accurately. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school is relatively new, and the trust's effective support has been a key feature of ensuring its success. However, more leadership capacity is needed in the school to move it forward from this point on and so strengthen the way in which the school, the trust and the local authority work together.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Adults are skilled in delivering important messages to support young people in keeping safe. For

example, clear and specific messages about grooming, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and account hacking (computer and financial). Adults teach pupils to test out relationships, remain confident and aware, but without losing the ability to trust adults that earn it.

- Safeguarding training is in place for all staff and leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date through weekly updates. Staff understand how to follow up any concerns and leaders work effectively with the local authority and other agencies to support pupils. The safeguarding policy meets requirements and is available to parents on request. The recruitment checks on the suitability of staff and leaders are completed and recorded on the single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good across all subjects. Teachers set high expectations and learning is calm and purposeful. There is a strong rapport between teachers and pupils.
- Teachers consolidate and build on pupils' previous learning effectively. For example, in food technology, pupils are able to reflect on and evaluate their learning, so that they know what skills they need to practise.
- Teachers have strong questioning skills and challenge pupils to think deeply about what they are learning. For example, in science, the teacher's expert 'why' and 'how' questions about deforestation enabled pupils to stay focused on the effects of important scientific processes such as photosynthesis.
- Leaders assess pupils' starting points effectively when they join the school. Teachers use assessment information successfully to plan activities to meet pupils' learning needs. Teachers check pupils' understanding and give feedback to individuals to ensure that they make good progress.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and show pupils how to use specialist subject vocabulary confidently in discussions. However, at present pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their own writing in subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding
- Pupils are highly motivated and show very positive attitudes to learning. They know their own strengths and weaknesses and are self-confident. They enjoy being at school and feel safe and well supported. School leaders, who pupils trust, create the ethos and set the expectations for this to happen. One pupil, spoke for many, saying, 'This school is the best thing that has happened to me.'
- Pupils say that there is no bullying. Leaders have created an inclusive community, which is reflected in pupils' attitudes towards one another. They are empathetic and respectful. There is no racist or homophobic name-calling. Pupils have a strong understanding of equality and protected characteristics.

- Pupils appreciate that the school helps them to stay safe in other ways not just from the outside world. Pupils are very well cared for. The school has effective links with child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS) and pupils can also access counselling and life coaching on the school site. This is readily accessible and confidential. Pupils greatly value this service.
- In addition to the school's powerful ethos, pupils' personal development is underpinned by a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. This includes a wide range of topics such as what it means to be British and sex and relationships education. Pupils develop a range of knowledge and skills which enable them to become articulate, sensitive and socially aware young people.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in classes is exemplary. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning across the range of subjects. This is because of leaders' vision and high expectations, well-planned teaching and the strong relationships between adults and pupils.
- During social times, pupils' conduct is also impeccable. Students get on very well together. They chat in small groups enjoying one another's company or play table tennis and other activities. The common social space for staff and pupils ensures that staff are easily accessible and promotes pupils' self-confidence.
- Pupils' overall attendance has improved significantly. Pupils join the school with previously poor attendance history. Pupils and parents commented on the impact the school has had on attendance and hence pupils' learning and progress. Leaders follow up any patterns of concern diligently and provide strong support for families.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils make strong progress across the range of subjects. Pupils who have attended the Bridge for some time and whose own attendance is consistently good make particularly strong progress. Pupils with SEND make progress in line with their peers.
- Pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills, which they can apply across the range of subjects and in social situations. Pupils read fluently. However, pupils' writing is underdeveloped in comparison with other aspects of literacy. Pupils lack opportunities across the curriculum to write at length for themselves.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They understand their methods and can explain clearly how they solve mathematical problems. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary, such as 'inverse' and 'Pythagoras' fluently.
- Pupils enjoy art and attain well. Their sketch books show strong progress; for example, in drawing, shading and use of perspective. Pupils can discuss art and how it enables them to express themselves, even though many had previously not thought of themselves as artistic.
- Pupils receive effective impartial careers advice and support. All pupils have attended careers fairs in Havering and further afield and visited local colleges. They all have

ambitions for their future and Year 11 students have secured places at colleges for September. They are confident and resilient learners, and define their future by their ambition rather than their social and emotional needs. They are well prepared for their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	145510
DfE registration number	311/6003
Inspection number	10083771

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	LIFE Education Trust
Chair	Anna Hawkins
Headteacher	Toni Cox
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,600
Telephone number	01708 764370
Website	https://bridge-life.co.uk
Email address	info@bridge-life.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is an independent special school in the London Borough of Havering. The school occupies the site of a former school and youth centre, which has been refurbished for use by the present school.
- The school is registered for up to 50 pupils between the ages of 11 to 16. There are currently 27 pupils on roll. The school caters for pupils with diagnosed mental health needs, who have been referred through the local authority. Typically, pupils' previous schooling has been disrupted through poor attendance and medical conditions. There are a few pupils with SEND, including some with an education, health and care plan. Places at the school are commissioned by the local authority.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE), the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the school provision against all the independent school standards.
- This inspection is the school's first full standard inspection since its registration as an independent school in August 2018.
- Inspectors visited lessons across year groups. Some of these visits were made jointly with school senior leaders and trust staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books with Year 9 and Year 11 pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, representatives of the proprietor and other senior leaders.
- A telephone conversation was held with the local authority commissioner for alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from the 20 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and three letters received from parents.
- Inspectors considered the nine responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors met with the school council and Year 11 pupils. There were 23 responses to the online Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including: records relating to safeguarding; health and safety; the curriculum; teaching; and pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Moon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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