

Sedgemoor Manor School

Blackford Road, Mark, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 4NP

Inspection dates

15–17 January 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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor has made substantial changes to the organisation of the school and has ensured that leaders receive valuable support. As a result, all the independent school standards are met, and the school provides a good quality of education.
- Leaders, including governors, have high expectations for pupils and a clear vision for the school. They ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' individual needs and enables them to achieve well.
- Leaders promote fairness and equality well. Pupils feel valued and trusted.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Lessons and other activities help pupils to gain confidence and to learn new knowledge and skills.
- Staff skilfully attend to pupils' emotional needs and enable them to learn how to manage their anxieties and join in with lessons. As a result, the school is a calm and safe place to learn.
- Pupils speak highly of the positive support they receive from staff and how this helps them to enjoy learning through new experiences such as caring for animals.
- The sixth form is led effectively and provides a stepping stone towards both independent living and future education, employment or training. Students make good progress in the sixth form.
- Staff support pupils to address most of the considerable gaps in their learning that they have when they join the school. However, weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills require further attention.
- Subject leaders are new to their roles. They are enthusiastic and keen to make further improvements to the curriculum. However, the school development plan does not outline timescales or how these leaders will secure improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Pupils' independence is growing. However, some are too reliant on staff to support them with their learning.

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?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school improvement plan includes clear actions, monitoring and timescales that demonstrate how and when subject leaders will secure improvements in their areas of responsibility
 - subject leaders' roles develop further so that they have a greater impact on pupils' achievement.
- Further improve pupils' achievement so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - staff support pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning and correct their own mistakes
 - more pupils overcome weaknesses in their writing, particularly in spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a substantial change in direction and a sharp focus on improving the quality of education at the school. The newly established leadership team prioritises understanding and meeting the needs of pupils at the school, all of whom have complex barriers and emotional challenges to overcome. This has ensured that provision meets pupils' needs effectively and that they achieve well. Consequently, the school is now good and all of the independent school standards are met.
- The new headteacher has high expectations. She provides staff with continual support and feedback so that they know what needs to be done. There is a buzz about the school and ongoing improvements are evident. Staff are excited by the changes and can see the impact of their work. All say that they are proud to work here. As a result, leaders and staff work together to identify and make important changes that further improve the school.
- Leaders are uncompromising in their efforts to ensure that pupils are listened to, understood and respected. The motto of 'Respect for ourselves, respect for each other, respect for our environment' underpins life at the school. Leaders ensure that a culture of fairness and equality prevails.
- Leaders involve pupils, parents and carers in making important changes to the school. As a result, they value the recent developments. One pupil explained, 'The school was a dark place, now they understand us, they listen to us and they give us time.' Parents also are highly appreciative of the improvements seen. Comments from parents included 'The school has made massive improvements' and 'We find the school very supportive to all of our family and feel very lucky to have our son here.'
- The effective curriculum is planned around the needs and interests of pupils. This includes a programme that helps pupils joining the school to feel safe and learn how to manage their anxieties. Pupils then go on to study a wide range of subjects, including art, design and technology, mindfulness and – the very popular – animal care. Extra activities include offers of additional learning and private study time after school. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders have started to share responsibilities more widely. The new subject leaders have clear areas of responsibility. However, these roles are not fully established. Subject leaders have not yet had enough impact on pupils' achievement.
- The school development plan sets out the key priorities for further improvement, based on leaders' accurate assessment of the strengths and next steps needed. However, the plan does not show how or when subject leaders will introduce further improvements or check the impact of the improvements on the progress that pupils make. As a result, some areas – such as pupils' weaknesses in their spelling – are not improving as quickly as others.

Governance

- The proprietor has transformed the effectiveness of the school through the appointment of the headteacher and by providing the support of the operations director. Brave and substantial decisions have resulted in rapid improvements. For example, closing the residential part of the school has enabled school leaders to focus on improving the quality of education. There is also a commitment for substantial investment to develop and continue to improve the school environment.
- A team of managers – including those with expertise in staff recruitment and in health and safety – offers strong support and guidance to the school team. These managers have contributed to the improvements seen at the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The operations director regularly reviews the standards carefully and checks to ensure that the school meets requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a safeguarding policy which meets all current requirements on the school's website. All necessary procedures and policies are in place to keep pupils safe. The designated lead for safeguarding acts swiftly when staff raise concerns about pupils' safety and seeks advice from other agencies appropriately. Recruitment processes are particularly strong and secure. The site is maintained well. Health and safety checks are meticulously carried out and checked by managers. These rigorous approaches help to create a strong culture of keeping pupils safe.
- Staff receive valuable safeguarding training and apply the training to their everyday work. At the start of every day, there is a 'motivational briefing'. Staff discuss appropriate safeguarding scenarios, which keeps safeguarding relevant and real to the needs of pupils at the school.
- Staff help pupils to learn how to understand their emotions and keep themselves safe. Pupils learn strategies to help them manage their emotions. For example, staff enable pupils to make decisions to go to another part of the building to have some time and space when they need it. They can choose to go to the Heron base – where there is a warm welcome and an understanding ear – or to the animal care centre – where they can look after a variety of animals, including bearded dragons. As a result, pupils learn to recognise and manage their emotions safely.
- Parents appreciate the positive communications they receive and how well they are involved in decisions about their child's safety, as well as their education. Staff share this information with parents so that they can help their child make the right choices and stay safe. As a result, parents say that their child feels safe at school. One parent said: 'Our son finds school a safe and supportive environment. He makes good use of the Heron base when he feels anxious or confused.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good across the school. Teachers have a solid understanding of their subjects and use this to support pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils have good learning experiences because of the successful adaptations that staff make to ensure that they are able and ready to learn. Positive relationships based on respect and trust are key. Staff are skilled at ensuring that their conversations with pupils help to boost their self-esteem and confidence. As a result, pupils want to learn and lessons – and times between lessons – are generally calm and productive.
- The organisation of the school enables pupils to receive appropriate teaching and support that suit their individual needs. At the Heron base – where each pupil starts their time at the school – there are high staff-to-pupil ratios to help them adjust to their new routines. Staff assess each step that pupils take and use this to ensure that teaching arrangements are suitable. When the time is right, pupils move to the next stage of independence, where they take part in small-group lessons with the support of extra staff. This helps them to form social relationships with their peers. At each step, staff ensure that pupils have an appropriate level of challenge.
- Staff plan teaching that takes account of pupils' needs and interests. They consider pupils' sensory needs and they adapt the environment for each pupil. They also listen to what pupils are interested in, and the curriculum is designed around these interests. In addition, projects reflect what pupils want to research. For example, pupils produced good-quality work in art with their designs on a theme of superheroes. Strategies such as these enable pupils to engage successfully with learning, boost their self-esteem and ensure that they enjoy their time at school.
- During lessons, staff notice when pupils have not understood an aspect of the learning and they quickly put in extra explanation or use resources to support understanding. This helps pupils to succeed and make good progress in learning new knowledge and skills. For example, pupils responded well to clear, individual instructions during a trampolining session.
- Staff provide extra learning time for pupils so that they can stay on after school, perhaps to complete work or engage in some activity they want to do. This supports pupils' positive outlook on learning and helps them to build resilience to make sure that they complete their tasks.
- Staff provide frequent and helpful feedback to parents about their child's learning in a variety of ways. Some have daily diaries. Others speak regularly to parents on the telephone. All parents receive progress reports throughout the year, which provide details about pupils' achievements and next steps across subjects. This enables parents to support their child and helps to sustain pupils' progress.
- Staff form strong relationships with pupils that help to build their confidence. However, some pupils show that they are sometimes too reliant on the support that they receive. This means that these pupils do not take enough responsibility for their own work or correct mistakes in their writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. At the core of the work of the school is the focus on supporting pupils to become more self-aware and to understand their own emotional needs. Staff interpret skilfully what pupils say to support their understanding on how best to move them forward with their learning and development.
- The school council ensures that pupils contribute to improvements. Pupils proudly explain the differences their suggestions have made. For example, the introduction of recycling bins around the school – as well as additional drinking water points – have come about following school council initiatives.
- Pupils spoke positively about the school's system to award points for effort during the term. The points build towards a bronze, silver or gold award that leads to a special treat or outing. Pupils say that this increases their motivation to do the best they can in school.
- A wide personal, social and health education curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to live healthy lives and how to keep themselves safe. Assemblies deliver messages that support pupils' development of morals and values. For example, pupils found out about the meaning behind Remembrance Day as a member of staff performed 'The last post'. At some lunchtimes, special dishes are provided to help pupils celebrate religious festivals. In addition, during tutor times, pupils discuss and explore events from the global calendar and current events. Because of these activities, pupils develop their understanding of values, tolerance, law and respect and are therefore prepared well for life beyond school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The core business of the school is to support pupils to manage their emotions so that they are able to learn. Staff support pupils to do this very well. Pupils are polite and courteous to everyone – including visitors – and when they attend local colleges.
- Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviours well. Any disruptions to lessons are managed well and staff usually avoid any interruption to pupils' learning. Staff are highly vigilant and quick to guide pupils to make the right choices.
- Attendance is very good for most pupils. Once settled, pupils really enjoy school and want to attend. For those who have additional challenges that prevent them attending well, staff do all they can to keep communications open and to support their families. For these few pupils, attendance is gradually improving due to the extra help the school provides.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils arrive at the school with many gaps in their learning. This is usually because they have missed time at school for various reasons. Over the first few weeks, staff assess exactly where the gaps are. They also take time to get to know and understand pupils' interests. They use this information well to plan appropriate support and learning

that enable pupils to make good progress over time.

- Pupils achieve well across the rich range of curriculum subjects that are available. Teaching in subjects such as humanities, science, art, physical education and design and technology captures pupils' interests effectively.
- Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils learn to read well. As a result, pupils make very good progress in this area of learning. Most pupils read widely and use the school library each week.
- The close attention from staff to support pupils to overcome their barriers to learning enables pupils to become effective and successful young learners. The school plans pupils' experiences on a three-tier system that acknowledges the amount of support that pupils need. The first tier provides pupils with intensive therapeutic support. Pupils then move through to supported independent work. Then – in the third tier – pupils go on to follow a variety of accredited courses. Because of this careful support, most pupils make strong progress in their personal development and learning over time.
- Pupils' attainment is good. By the time they leave the school, they achieve qualifications – such as GCSEs – according to their abilities. Pupils are aspirational. For example, some explained that they want to be engineers, writers or to be in the navy. Because of the support offered by staff, all pupils at the end of Year 11 continue with further education, training or employment. Most stay in the school's sixth form.
- Pupils' books show that pupils practise and build their knowledge and skills in different subject areas. However, in written work, pupils' handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation are often weaker than expected for their ages. Some pupils become reliant on staff to write for them and therefore do not improve these basic skills fast enough.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The newly established sixth-form centre is a real home from home that promotes students' personal development well. Students can find a place to be safe and calm but also to be sociable and to learn practical skills, such as washing up and cooking. Students follow a 'learning for independent living' course developed by the school. This supports students to develop their understanding of areas such as money and managing finances, home cooking and independent travel. Students also receive ongoing guidance from staff about career choices, as well as advice from an independent careers support adviser.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for students. They plan individualised programmes of study that build on students' interests, achievements and aspirations. They have established successful partnerships with local colleges. Staff accompany and support students as they attend a range of courses at the colleges, including vocational, BTEC National Diplomas and A-level courses. Pathways are chosen carefully through close communication with students and their parents. As a result of this effective support, students achieve well in the sixth form.
- Students value the opportunities they have and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They work hard and show commitment to meet work deadlines. Students are able to – and often do – stay on after the school day finishes to complete their work or to study further. This ensures that they make good progress.
- The combination of personalised programmes of study, good-quality courses, careers

advice and independent living skills provides an effective and suitable curriculum for students. This – along with good teaching – prepares them well for their next steps in life. As a result, students leave the school and move successfully to further education, employment or training. For example, recent students have moved on to work at Heathrow Airport and L'Oréal and to continue their study independently on a range of college courses.

School details

Unique reference number	123933
DfE registration number	933/6185
Inspection number	10056309

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd
Chair	Andy Holder
Headteacher	Jo-Anne Houston
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000
Telephone number	01278 641 632
Website	www.priorychildrenservices.co.uk/find-a-location/sedgemoor-manor-school
Email address	sedgemoormanor@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	17–19 January 2017

Information about this school

- Sedgemoor Manor School – previously named Mark College – is owned and operated by Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd, a national organisation which manages a number of health, social care and educational settings.
- It is an independent specialist day school for children and young people with a range of

special educational needs that are associated with autism spectrum disorder.

- The last standard inspection was in January 2017. This judged the school to be inadequate. A further monitoring inspection found that some of the independent school standards remained unmet. A further monitoring visit took place in September 2018, which found that all the independent school standards were met. This inspection also considered a request for a material change to its registration. The request was to decrease the number of pupils the school could have on roll from 103 to 60 pupils and to extend the age range from 10 to 19 to seven to 19. Additionally, the school requested to resign its residential status and rename the school as Sedgemoor Manor School. These requests were approved.
- The school does not use any alternative providers. However – with staff support – post-16 students access two local further education colleges – Strode and Weston – which provide a wide range of courses in a mainstream setting.
- A new substantive headteacher took up post in September 2018. At this time, the proprietor closed the setting's residential provision. As a result of this, some of the previously unmet standards are no longer applicable.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. She evaluated the school site with regard to the independent school standards.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents. These included those relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the curriculum. She also reviewed policies and the school development plan.
- The inspector met with leaders from the Priory Group, who support the school with recruitment and health and safety. The inspector also met with the operations director and the chief executive officer for Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd.
- Alongside the headteacher and other senior leaders, the inspector observed learning across the school. She met with the school council and talked to other pupils informally. She scrutinised a range of pupils' work, including art and design and technology work.
- The inspector visited Strode College with the leader of the sixth form and a leader from the Priory Group. There, she met with senior leaders and tutors to discuss the partnership they have with the school and the impact that this has on students.
- The inspector gathered parents' views from several telephone calls made to parents, as well as a letter from a parent and the 16 views and free-text replies on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The inspector spoke to representatives from North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset local authorities.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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