

Old Warren House School

Warren Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4QD

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress from low starting points. They gain relevant qualifications, including in English and mathematics, enabling nearly all to enter further education or employment.
- Students' learning is good as a result of good teaching. They grow in knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons because learning activities are tailored to their individual needs.
- Teachers and support assistants set high expectations for learning and behaviour, enabling students to quickly re-engage with learning and make good progress.
- A wide range of work-related learning opportunities prepare students well for the next stage of their lives.
- Behaviour and safety are good, both in the unit and in the other centres students attend. Most make rapid progress in improving their behaviour and attendance. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with good support from the management committee, provide good leadership and management. Good quality teaching and good achievement have been sustained since the last inspection.
- Helpful support from the local authority aimed at improving the unit is valued by the staff and management committee.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The opportunities for students to study GCSE subjects are limited.
- Occasionally, learning tasks do not challenge the thinking of more-able students, or staff miss opportunities to develop students' independent learning skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector saw all teachers in the eight lessons observed. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector visited other sites where students were learning and held a telephone discussion with a local college with a focus on students' safety.
- Meetings took place with a small group of students, the education welfare officer, the school nurse, the senior social worker for Lowestoft and Waveney and three members of the management committee. Telephone discussions were held with six parents, the chair of the management committee and a local authority officer.
- The inspector took account of the unit's recent surveys of parents' views as there were very few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the unit's work and looked at a range of documents including the school development plan, records of management committee meetings, safeguarding policies, records of attendance, exclusions and behaviour, information about students' progress over time, and a sample of students' work.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Old Warren House caters for up to 24 students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who are referred for refusing to attend mainstream school, or have either been excluded or are at the point of exclusion from their previous school.
- All students receive support at school action plus and almost half of the students have a statement of special educational needs. Many of them have moderate learning difficulties and additional complex needs such as mental health issues, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autistic spectrum disorder.
- Nearly all students are White British and none speak English as an additional language. Students join at various points during the year.
- Most students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for certain groups such as students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Although the majority of students follow a full-time two-year programme to prepare them for further education, training and employment, a significant minority are admitted for less than one year.
- Students attend a number of off-site providers within Lowestoft for part of their education. These include the 'Breakout' and 'Education X' centres, Lowestoft College for work-related learning and the leisure centre for sporting activities.
- Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the proportion of students admitted with more complex needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and develop the quality of teaching further by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to study GCSE subjects
 - ensuring that learning tasks always challenge the thinking of more-able students
 - always providing opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the unit is low because students arrive disaffected with learning and with histories of poor attendance. These have led to significant gaps in their learning. For example, many students are four or five years behind their expected ages in reading, spelling and mathematics and few arrive sufficiently prepared for GCSE courses.
- As a result of accurate assessment on entry to the unit and good use of this information to provide tailor-made learning opportunities, students quickly re-engage with learning. Students quickly acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. As a result, by the time they leave, all students have gained a range of qualifications, including in English and mathematics.
- Students make good progress and the gaps in their attainment narrow significantly. The unit's accurate information about progress over time shows that all students at least meet, and many exceed, their challenging targets in English and mathematics. In the last three years the proportion of students taking GCSE subjects and their equivalent has increased, but these opportunities are still limited.
- Students develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills quickly and securely because these key skills are promoted well across a range of subjects, including practical subjects such as art and design, bricklaying, cookery, plumbing and building.
- More-able students generally make good progress. As a result, a few recently moved on to a sixth form college to further their academic studies. Occasionally, teachers either miss opportunities to extend their thinking in lessons or do not give them enough independent learning tasks to stretch them.
- Students make good progress in developing their workplace skills, and considerably enhance them within the off-site centres which prepare them well for work-related courses in further education, training and employment. As a result, nearly all students sustain their places in further education, go on to sixth form college or gain meaningful employment.
- Students for whom the pupil premium provides support are making the same progress in lessons as other students. Their levels of attainment in English and mathematics and at GCSE are similar to those of their classmates.
- Students who have a statement of special educational needs, including those with additional complex needs, make equally good progress. This is because teaching assistants develop students' understanding of new ideas by clarifying the meaning of technical language, breaking tasks down into smaller steps and challenging students to think for themselves.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in all subjects, particularly mathematics and English, is typically good and sometimes outstanding.
- All adults in the classroom engage students' interest in learning by creating a positive learning environment, and providing practical experiences that interest and engage students. This was seen in a science lesson when the few very new students were immediately engrossed in a

practical skipping activity alongside the teaching assistant, while the teacher used a stopwatch and enabled the students to accurately measure and record the effect of exercise on heart rate.

- Teachers use information about students' interests and skills to match tasks to their different levels of ability and personalise their educational experiences. Teachers and teaching assistants monitor the progress of individuals in lessons carefully and usually extend the learning as appropriate, through good use of probing questions. Initial assessments in literacy and numeracy are thorough, enabling careful planning, although staff occasionally miss opportunities to extend learning further during assessment sessions.
- All students are shown clearly how to improve their work, and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught well and promoted well across different subjects. This enables students to apply their skills in real-life situations. For example, in the preparation for an employment unit, students completed application forms and curriculum vitae accurately. In workshop activities, they accurately measured lengths of wood in carpentry, proportions of sand and cement in bricklaying and dimensions of copper tubing in plumbing.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning and progress. They are fully involved in daily planning and briefing meetings, and work seamlessly with teachers to set the same high expectations for learning and behaviour for all students. They also carefully resolve any misunderstandings by explaining the meaning of technical language and breaking tasks down into smaller steps.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons, around the unit, and in the other centres they attend for part of their education. They have good attitudes to learning in all lessons. Staff manage behaviour consistently well and students respond positively to this, as demonstrated by the lack of exclusions and the rapid improvements in students' behaviour during their time in the unit.
- Students kept themselves safe when working in the allotment, wearing protective gardening clothing and using garden tools safely. In the 'Breakout Centre', students successfully follow a two-day induction session on workshop and workplace safety before handling any tools. The college confirmed that students stay safe and behave well, developing similarly good attitudes to learning as in the unit.
- In discussion, students had a clear understanding of the need for good behaviour in their local environment, in lessons, at home and in the workplace. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying and the need to use mobile phones and the internet safely to prevent bullying. They said that bullying does not occur in the unit, and that everyone helps each other.
- Students are polite and courteous to visitors and show respect for all adults in the unit.
- Although attendance is below average, most students make good progress in improving their attendance from when they first arrive because staff 'go the extra mile' in doing everything they can to promote good attendance, including collecting students from home.
- In telephone discussions, all parents said how safe their children were and how their behaviour, learning and attendance had improved greatly since admission to the unit.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership and direction of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are demonstrated in the high expectations and ambition of all staff in the unit. This has led to good improvement in all areas identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection.
- The management committee has been considerably strengthened and is rigorously holding the unit to account for its work. Leaders ensure that the provision specified on students' statements matches their particular needs, so they progress equally as well as their classmates. Assessment systems have been sharpened, and subject leaders ensure that students always know how well they are doing as well as their next steps for learning.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff have improved, with clear links to priorities set in the school development plan. These are based on the outcomes of regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff and the chair of the management committee, together with the unit's tracking of progress over time. Good support and training are provided for staff to enable them to develop further. As a result, the good teaching identified at the last inspection has been maintained.
- Students benefit from good use of sports facilities in Lowestoft. This has led to a few students pursuing sports as a career. Strong partnerships with local businesses, schools and organisations, such as the 'Breakout' centre, local cafes, garages and hairdressing salons, have led to highly successful work experience placements. In turn, these have led to successful engagement with college courses and more options for suitable employment.
- Students enjoy rich and varied opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. These include outdoor and adventurous residential experiences on a Scottish island to build confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and resilience. There is a sharp focus on respect for the law and moral development within the programme for personal, social and health education, for example when considering the appropriate punishment for someone who commits murder. Students learn about other cultures through religious education, art and music, a visit to France and learning about fair trade and its impact on world poverty.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to ensure that students supported by the pupil premium do as well as their classmates.
- The unit has built strong links with parents, as reflected in their overwhelmingly positive responses to the unit's survey and in telephone discussions during the inspection. All would recommend the unit to others.
- The local authority is providing appropriately 'light touch' support for this good pupil referral unit, but maintains a good awareness of its performance through an adviser visiting regularly to review its work, focusing on students' learning and achievement. The local authority has strengthened the management committee and provided good support and guidance for its work, through focused training which has enabled members to use data more effectively to evaluate the achievement of different groups and to monitor the impact of teaching on students' progress. The unit greatly values the good partnerships with local authority support services, such as the educational welfare service, health and social services professionals to improve students' outcomes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee ensures that all arrangements for safeguarding meet legal

requirements, particularly in assessing any potential risks when students are working in other sites and ensuring that vetting procedures and all policies are up to date. They have a good understanding of the unit's strengths and areas for development, based on close monitoring of its work and sharp analysis of its data on the progress students are making. They have a clear view of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. They use information about the strengths and areas for improvement effectively to agree the performance objectives of the headteacher. They also ensure that objectives for other staff are clearly linked to those of the headteacher. The management committee manages its resources well and holds the school to account for how it spends additional funding such as the pupil premium.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124526
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	425181

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Val Cumberbirch
Headteacher	Elizabeth Rodgers
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2012
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