

Inspection of Ripplevale School

Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent CT14 8JG

Inspection dates: 11–13 February 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Prior to attending this school, many pupils had years of negative educational experiences. Pupils say that they feel safe, confident and happy, now they are at Ripplevale. Parents are delighted with how their sons have changed. One parent said that their child is 'a different person who now has friends'. Another parent said, 'He is now much more independent.'

Staff have high expectations of pupils' academic abilities. They ensure that pupils develop their skills in a step-by-step way. For example, in mathematics, when learning about fractions, pupils first learn how to halve and quarter a number. Teachers then help them to further their understanding until they are able to change fractions into decimals. Vocational and entrepreneurial skills are well developed. For example, many pupils enjoy upcycling furniture and then selling the items.

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. They learn to appreciate the feelings of others and are often very helpful to one another. Pupils say that they like earning reward points for their good behaviour. Any minor issues which do occur are resolved quickly. Pupils say that bullying of any kind is rare, but if they have any concerns they can talk to a member of staff

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils are often very anxious when they arrive at the school. One leader said, 'Firstly, we have to build trust.' Over a period of six weeks, the staff, including therapists, check the academic, social and emotional needs of each new pupil. Staff then create a plan to ensure that these needs are met.

The curriculum has been designed to provide a broad range of challenging experiences. The aim is to build pupils' confidence in their own abilities. Teachers make sure that the work they provide meets these aims. For example, in food technology, pupils worked together to create a tasty four-course lunch. They were delighted with the food they had produced. Many were keen to demonstrate their learning at home to their parents and carers.

The large therapy team plays an important role in helping pupils to regulate their emotions and social anxieties. Across the school, lessons proceed calmly and pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. For example, in science, they concentrated hard when learning about pigments.

In the majority of subjects, the curriculum is well sequenced from primary through to post-16. This enables pupils to achieve a range of qualifications, from entry level to GCSEs, in a variety of subjects. However, between key stages 2 and 3 in science and food technology, the sequence of learning is less clear. New leaders have identified this issue. They are in the process of ensuring that the order of learning for next year's science and food technology curriculums is clearer.

In reading, staff ensure that pupils develop effective phonics skills. Those who have arrived at the school with limited reading skills are given effective help to catch up. Teachers help pupils to become fluent readers. They develop a good understanding of plots and characters in books.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities to develop pupils' personal development. In outdoor learning, for example, staff encourage pupils to consider their spiritual understanding. They are taught to pause and look at the natural world, such as sunbeams through the trees.

Students in the post-16 provision are very positive about their learning. They like having most of their lessons and free time in the manor house, which is separate from the rest of the school. Students say that they appreciate the increasing amount of responsibility that they are given. Students enjoy the variety of academic courses on offer. The vocational provision in areas such as construction, catering and media gives students an appreciation of the different pathways available.

Staff take great care to ensure that students feel confident about their transitions into further education or employment. They make sure that students are well prepared. For example, they accompany students to the local college on open days to make sure that they do not feel anxious. Post-16 students learn to travel safely on public transport.

School leaders work closely with the proprietors. Together they ensure that the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The priority of all staff is to ensure that pupils feel safe and well protected in all aspects of school life. For example, the arrangements at the end of the school day are well managed. Staff ensure that pupils do not enter the car park unless they are with their parent.

Leaders ensure that staff have regular training in many areas associated with safeguarding. These include the signs and symptoms of abuse. Pupils know how to keep safe. For example, they know about the importance of staying safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculums in science and food technology are not sufficiently sequenced between key stages 2 and 3. This means that when pupils enter key stage 3, they do not develop their understanding in these subjects as quickly as they might. Leaders must ensure that pupils in key stage 3 are better prepared for their learning in these subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	118995
DfE registration number	886/6047
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10103858
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Christopher Danican and Clifford Davies
Headteacher	Jane Norris
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,763–£50,263
Telephone number	01304 373 866
Website	www.ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Email address	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January–2 February 2017

Information about this school

- Ripplevale School is for pupils who have an autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have other special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are funded by their local authorities.
- Most members of the senior leadership team are new in post from September 2019. The former chief executive officer and business manager of Ripplevale School Limited is now head of school. Two existing teachers have been promoted to positions of deputy headteacher alongside the previous deputy.
- The two proprietors are also directors of Ripplevale School Limited, which exists to run Ripplevale School.
- The previous standard inspection took place from 31 January 2017 to 2 February 2017, when the school was graded good. Since the previous inspection, the school has ceased to offer residential provision and all pupils are day pupils. In January 2020, there was a material change inspection to increase the number on roll from 99 to 125.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During the inspection we met with leaders, teachers, pupils and several members of the therapy team. We also met with the two proprietors.
- When considering the quality of education, we focused particularly on phonics and reading, mathematics, food technology and science. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.
- We took into account the 40 responses to the staff survey. We considered the 47 responses to the pupil survey. We also reviewed 34 responses from parents to Ofsted's online parent survey and the accompanying 27 free-text messages. We also held meetings with five parents during the inspection.
- We assessed the school's culture of keeping pupils safe. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies and documentation associated with safeguarding and the school meeting all aspects of the independent school standards. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Becky Greenhalgh

Ofsted Inspector

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