

Inspection of Life Skills Manor for Autism

Life Skills Manor School @ Baypoint Club, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9QL

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this happy, welcoming and inclusive school. Many join the school following disrupted schooling. Pupils speak honestly and maturely about their experiences of school before joining Life Skills Manor, and the negative impact this had on their learning and well-being. They talk movingly of the positive difference Life Skills Manor has made in their lives. The school nurtures pupils' hopes for the future and restores parents' faith in education.

Staff understand how to build pupils' trust and self-esteem. They welcome pupils in the morning with warmth, interest and a friendly smile. Pupils told inspectors that they feel noticed, valued and included. They say that one of the best things about this school is that adults really listen to what they have to say. This helps them to feel secure.

Pupils are clear about adults' expectations. They work hard in lessons and behave well most of the time. Sometimes, pupils struggle with anxiety and frustration. Adults provide sensitive and skilful support when this is the case. Pupils learn to understand their own feelings. They develop successful strategies to help them to manage situations. Adults investigate any concerns about bullying promptly and effectively.

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

The school is highly successful in re-engaging pupils in education, often following lengthy periods outside the school system. The teaching of life skills is fundamental to the school's work and helps pupils to develop independence, confidence and resilience. Pupils play an active part in all aspects of school life. For instance, they take turns helping the school's chef prepare and serve lunch, shop for provisions and learn how to fix minor repairs around the school. Activities such as growing vegetables, model-making and mountain biking take place throughout the school week, adding to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils learn a broad, balanced and well-sequenced curriculum. Subjects such as English and mathematics are taught alongside the school's 'creative curriculum', which includes subjects such as art, languages and history. Staff have high aspirations for their pupils. The school aims to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to gain at least five nationally recognised qualifications in future years, including in English and mathematics.

The school gives reading an appropriately high priority. Adults reignite pupils' interest in books. They display high-quality books attractively in the classrooms and read to pupils with expression and good humour. During the inspection, for example, the younger pupils thoroughly enjoyed joining in with the rhymes in 'Room on the Broom'. Pupils like being able to choose books for their classroom, quickly becoming absorbed in their chosen books. Some pupils struggle to read when they join the school. Adults read with pupils

daily. They teach them successful strategies, including phonics, although the teaching of reading to the weakest readers is not as rigorous as it could be.

Teachers assess pupils' learning continuously, adapting the curriculum according to pupils' individual needs and responses. Lessons are quiet, calm and busy. Adults provide sensitive support where pupils are finding it hard to stay focused. Pupils know that they are getting on well. They believe increasingly that they can and will succeed. Notable improvements in attendance reflect their growing confidence.

Adults prioritise building relationships with pupils and do so very well. They help pupils to make friends and teach them the importance of trust, honesty and equality. Pupils respect adults and each other. They often help each other out with a kind word or a friendly chat. One spoke of the importance of 'being who you want to be' when talking to inspectors about recent classroom discussions about 'Pride'. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The headteacher's ambitious vision for the school and its pupils lies at the heart of this school's success. He leads a team of well-qualified and committed staff who share his passion for the school's future. The school's upbeat atmosphere reflects strong teamwork and high staff morale. All staff who completed Ofsted's survey say that they are proud to work in the school.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. They use phrases such as 'life-changing' to describe the significant impact the school has had on their children. One commented, 'I will be eternally thankful to the school for helping my child,' while another said, 'My child was crippled with anxiety before attending this school and struggled to leave their room. Now they are flourishing and making friends.' All parents who completed Ofsted's survey feel that the school gives their children the right support to help them to succeed.

The headteacher, director and chair of governors have clearly defined roles. They work well together to support the school's development. All are equally committed to providing high-quality education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The director and chair of governors share the headteacher's vision for the school's future. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that pupils are safe and comfortable. Strong teamwork and clear communication ensure shared oversight of pupils' welfare. Staff are vigilant. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and listen carefully to their comments. Any concerns about pupils' safety are reported and recorded properly. The designated safeguarding lead and his team take swift action when needed. They work constructively with agencies such as children's services. Pupils are confident about

talking to an adult if they are worried. The school site is well maintained and secure. The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's approach to teaching reading ensures that pupils read increasingly well. However, leaders have rightly identified the need to strengthen the school's approach to teaching some of the weaker readers. The headteacher has already made suitable arrangements to develop this aspect of the school's work. An adviser is scheduled to support the launch of a new approach to teaching reading, which includes a stronger phonics element, in the autumn term. Staff will be trained in using the new reading programme. Leaders should implement these plans.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 148860 |
| DfE registration number | 886/6168 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10243544 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 10 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 15 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 2 |
| Proprietor | Life Skills Manor Ltd |
| Chair | Roger Silk |
| Headteacher | Paul Barrett |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £48,000 |
| Telephone number | 01304 747464 |
| Website | www.lifeskillsmanor.co.uk |
| Email address | paul@lifeskillsmanor.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Life Skills for Autism Manor provides full-time education for pupils aged 10 to 16 with a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school focuses on developing pupils' life skills alongside traditional curriculum content.
- The school has a proprietor body. One member of the proprietor body is also the headteacher. The school currently has a chair of governors. It intends to appoint further governors in the future.
- The school occupies part of a sports and social club premises, known as Bay Point. The premises are located between Sandwich and Ramsgate.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the director and the chair of governors. They spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and the 'creative curriculum'. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds pupils' knowledge over time.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during lessons, breaktimes and around the school. The lead inspector also met with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school.
- Inspectors assessed the school's safeguarding culture throughout the inspection. The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records. She also checked the single central record.
- The views of staff, parents and pupils were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions with inspectors.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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