

Inspection of Life Skills Manor

Baypoint Club, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9QL

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils talk very positively about their school and the nurturing haven it provides. Aspirations for their success are high. Staff understand their needs. As a result, pupils achieve extremely well in all aspects of their education. Importantly, they also develop and consolidate the key life skills they will need when they eventually leave the school.

Though a relatively new school, pupils who have been here longer are quick to share how it has improved since they joined. They feel that it has always been a happy place and know that expectations of their behaviour and their engagement in learning are high, though 'fair'. Because of this, relationships are positive and poor behaviour does not disrupt learning, even when pupils' anxieties are running high.

Younger pupils who joined at the start of this academic year talk about a friendly, welcoming environment. Those who attended a short residential trip during the inspection feel that the experience has already helped build their self-esteem. Pupils are also pleased with the progress they make in classrooms. They are equally positive about experiences such as trekking across the local countryside as part of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition.

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

This is a school where exceptionalism is everyday practice. Staff are dedicated experts, though modest in the way they present their successes to visitors. They work hard because they enjoy being here. Despite their understated approach, staff are unapologetically ambitious for all pupils, no matter what their backgrounds or barriers to learning. Because of this, pupils flourish and are well prepared for their next steps on leaving the school.

Leaders at all levels know the school well. Those in positions of governance are knowledgeable. They understand how the school operates and are heavily involved in ensuring that pupils are provided with the very best quality of care and education possible. Their experience and expertise play a significant role in supporting the proprietor to ensure that the independent school standards and other statutory requirements continue to be met over time. This includes schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils new to the school settle quickly because routines are well established and because staff make boundaries clear. Classroom visits reveal a lot of trust between pupils and staff. Older pupils in particular are deeply loyal to their teachers. Many pupils have been out of education for long periods of time before they join the school. Staff know it takes time, kindness and patience to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They know that relationships need to be nurtured before pupils can thrive. Staff invest considerable time getting to understand pupils' vulnerabilities, as well as the key gaps in their learning. Consequently, teachers are skilled at designing and adapting tasks that accelerate pupils' progress through the curriculum.

The school's curriculum is very bespoke. It has appropriate breadth. As well as developing life skills, it has the academic rigour for pupils to gain the qualifications they need for their next steps. Pupils enjoy learning about the world around them. Their GCSE artwork showcases their talents. Individualised learning is also part of everyday life here. This includes animal care, equine studies and a range of therapeutic learning that supports pupils with complex needs extremely well.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is of high quality. A personalised package of relationships and sex education is adapted to meet individual needs. Tailored careers education and guidance make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. A range of external visitors engage and motivate pupils about the possibilities open to them. The school is also proactive in facilitating a wide range of meaningful work experience opportunities. Because of this, pupils are well informed about their options on leaving the school.

Pupils have a sophisticated understanding of equality and diversity. Their discussions about aspects of equality, such as equal pay for men and women are well informed by what they have learned before. This was clear to see in a debate linked to football, where boys and girls talked confidently about potential discrimination linked to the law around protected characteristics. Pupils also have an appropriate grasp of what difference means, for example linked to neurodiversity or different lifestyles.

Staff are skilled at identifying pupils' changing needs as they move through the school. A range of specialist staff are also available when pupils' needs change over time. The school has an effective programme to support pupils who join the school who struggle to read. This impacts positively on pupils' confidence in accessing the wider curriculum, as well as successfully supporting their journey to become fluent readers.

Parents and carers are very positive about Life Skills Manor and the impact it has on their children's lives. All who replied to Ofsted Parent View would recommend the school. Their comments in free-text messages pay testament to the high-quality provision in this excellent school. This includes aspects of overall well-being, such as the welfare, health and safety of pupils, as well as the quality of education they enjoy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148860
DfE registration number	886/6168
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10342191
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Life Skills Manor Ltd
Chair	Paul Barrett
Headteacher	Paul Barrett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000
Telephone number	01304 747 464
Website	www.lifeskillsmanor.co.uk
Email address	paul@lifeskillsmanor.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 July 2022

Information about this school

- Life Skills Manor provides education for pupils who have autism spectrum conditions. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school operates from one site at Baypoint Club, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9QL.
- The school has a clear focus on developing pupils' life skills. The life skills curriculum sits alongside traditional curriculum content.
- Although registered for pupils aged 10 to 18, at the time of the inspection the school only had pupils in Year 7 through to Year 11.
- The school was subject to a material change inspection in December 2022.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. He also met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to an officer from the local authority that places pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and life skills. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors talked to pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. The lead inspector also talked formally to two representative groups of pupils on day three of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The school is currently registered for up to 50 pupils in the age range 10 to 18. Though the current registration allows for pupils in Years 12 and 13, the school does not provide a traditional sixth-form curriculum, instead, using this flexibility to provide additional time for pupils (often out of education for extended periods of time prior to joining) to catch up on time lost in education prior to joining the school.
- The proprietor wishes to extend the maximum number of pupil places to up to 56 pupils. This will enable the numbers in current cohorts of pupils to remain stable across year groups while allowing a small number of current pupils to stay for an additional year to gain the qualifications they need for their next steps in education or employment.
- The school's current accommodation has the capacity and resources to accommodate the material change should the proprietor's application be approved. The proprietor has sensible plans to expand the workforce should the application be approved and also dependent on the individual needs of the pupils concerned.
- The proprietor has taken into account the impact the additional numbers of pupils would have on pupils currently attending the school.

Information about the material change inspection

- This part of the inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's request to increase the maximum number of pupils from 50 to 56.
- This is the first time the school has applied for this particular material change.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to assess the likelihood of the school continuing to meet the independent school standards through a range of inspection activities as part of the standard inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Brinkley

His Majesty's Inspector

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