

Inspection of SMS Changing Lives

Ferranti House, Wickentree Lane, Failsworth, Manchester M35 9AY

Inspection dates: 4–6 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

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 feel safe and valued at SMS Changing Lives. Those we spoke with said that behaviour is good most of the time and that bullying rarely happens. Leaders deal with it effectively when it does. Pupils know what discriminatory behaviour is. They told us that there is no racism or bullying in school because people are respected for who they are.

Pupils enjoy being creative. They like to combine lyrics with music samples and perform their own compositions. In the health and beauty salon, pupils practise their customer-care skills and create new patterns and designs for synthetic nails. In the gym, pupils keep fit and hone their boxing skills.

Visits to local care homes and homeless shelters develop pupils' awareness of other people's needs. This helps them to understand how to be respectful and responsible. However, few opportunities are available for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Their understanding of different religions and cultures is not strong enough.

Most staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, expectations of pupils' achievement are not as high as they should be. Pupils do not know as much as they should in English and mathematics.

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

The proprietor, leaders and staff are committed to improving pupils' lives and helping them get into further education, training and employment. Staff work hard to improve pupils' behaviour and they are successful. Parents and carers and representatives of local authorities use words like 'transformed' to describe how much better pupils' behaviour becomes.

Leaders provide a range of subjects that is broad enough to meet the independent school standards. Pupils can get recognised qualifications in a range of subjects. These include functional skills in English, mathematics and vocational studies. They can also get certificates in art, science and food technology. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 study for GCSEs in English and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy learning about music, sports, hair and beauty, and childcare. They do well in these subjects. Pupils' knowledge of English and mathematics is improving. However, leaders have not made sure that pupils remember enough to help them with the next step in their learning.

Leaders' work to develop pupils' personal, social, health and economic education is in its early stages of development. Pupils like to express their views and discuss issues that are in the news. However, some of the pupils we talked with showed little understanding of things like democracy or other cultures and religions.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All full-time pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Until recently, some staff were not familiar with the targets in pupils' EHC plans. Leaders are beginning to put this right. For example, the new headteacher is working closely with staff, helping them to adapt the curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Pupils do well in music. They have good knowledge of sound recording and how to use video-editing equipment. They also play keyboard and percussion instruments competently. Pupils love writing lyrics to go with the music they create. They are often moving and explore topics such as mental illness, peer pressure or gang culture.

After a difficult start and problems with recruiting staff, the school has turned a corner. For example, the proprietor is in the process of appointing a specialist English teacher. The newly appointed headteacher has already had a positive impact and is working closely with staff to improve the way the curriculum is delivered.

The proprietor is hands-on. He knows the school exceptionally well and is determined to see it continually improve. He sees to it that pupils have suitable resources to help them to learn well. For example, pupils learn sports from highly skilled coaches, many of whom are professional sportspersons. Pupils also benefit from excellent equipment and facilities in the hair and beauty salon.

Together with the headteacher, the proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school building is well looked after. Leaders think carefully about pupils' welfare and make sure that the premises are safe. They provide suitable toilets and drinking water.

The standards that are to do with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are met. For example, pupils are disciplined when they are training in the gym and develop their confidence through boxing. Leaders also cater for some aspects of pupils' development beyond the classroom well. For instance, pupils raise funds for different charities and enjoy volunteering their services in the community. However, there are not enough opportunities available for pupils to take on tasks to help them become responsible citizens.

The proprietor provides pupils with helpful independent careers advice. Staff help pupils to write personal statements and application letters for jobs. They also help them prepare for interviews. Pupils know what skills and qualifications they need for different further education courses, apprenticeships or careers in the armed forces.

Staff follow the school's behaviour policy. They know pupils very well and help pupils to develop ways to manage their own behaviour. This helps to ensure that the school is usually calm and purposeful. Disruption in classes is rare. Leaders have made sure that staff supervise pupils well.

Staff told us that the proprietor and headteacher are mindful of their workload, well-being and mental health. They said that they are well supported in managing pupils'

behaviour. They also said that training has helped them to deal with difficult situations. However, staff have had little training to improve their teaching or knowledge of their subjects. They have had few opportunities to learn from good practice in other schools, for example.

The proprietor has set out a plan to make access to the school as easy as possible for pupils with disabilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant when it comes to safeguarding. They are trained well and have good systems in place. Leaders gather information on pupils, most of whom are vulnerable, and help staff to minimise risks. All staff are trained to spot the signs of neglect and abuse. They know exactly what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a pupil. Pupils know that staff respect and care about them.

Staff work closely with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils at risk of harm are promptly given the support that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, the order in which pupils gain knowledge is not sequenced carefully. Furthermore, teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong enough. As a result, pupils cannot build their learning carefully so that they have the knowledge to succeed in the next stage of their education or employment. Leaders should ensure that, across all subjects, the curriculum is clearly sequenced and teachers are trained well enough to deliver it effectively. In this way, pupils' knowledge will be better developed and enhanced as they progress through the curriculum.
- Leaders' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of British values is poorly coordinated. While some pupils are developing their personal and social skills well, their appreciation of other cultures and knowledge of different religions is limited. Leaders should hasten the work already started to develop and implement a full programme of activities to develop pupils' understanding in these areas.
- Provision for pupils with SEND has not been well organised. Because of this, some staff are not aware of pupils' individual learning and development targets as stated in their EHC plans. Leaders need to take immediate action to ensure that teachers' curriculum plans are carefully tailored so that all pupils are supported effectively in their learning and can acquire the knowledge they need to succeed in the next stage of their education or employment.

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	146646
DfE registration number	353/6004
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10128825
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	40
Proprietor	SMS Coaching Ltd
Chair	Jonathan Davies
Headteacher	Sharon Rowland (Acting Headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000
Telephone number	0161 6826462
Website	www.smscoaching.co.uk
Email address	jonny@smscoaching.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first standard inspection since it was registered with the Department for Education in July 2019. The headteacher started at the school this term and is employed on a temporary basis. The proprietor is also the chair of the governing body.
- The school works in partnership with a number of local authorities, including Salford, Oldham, Stockport and Manchester, offering bespoke education programmes to pupils at risk of being permanently excluded from schools.
- The school currently provides for 23 full-time pupils, most of whom have been permanently excluded from schools. It also provides for 40 part-time pupils. These numbers exceed the maximum for which the school is registered.

- All pupils on role have special educational needs and/or disabilities including autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and complex social, emotional and mental health needs. All full-time pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school offers a range of vocational programmes in areas including sports and fitness, hair and beauty, food technology and childcare. The school does not use alternative providers.

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.

- We met with the proprietor, who is responsible for most aspects of provision, including vocational learning. We also met with the acting headteacher, who oversees the provision for pupils with SEND.
- We met staff responsible for safeguarding and the welfare of pupils, attendance and behaviour management.
- Telephone discussions were held with parents and carers and representatives of placing authorities. We considered responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by five members of staff.
- We focused deeply on English, mathematics, sports and music during the inspection. In each subject, we met with teachers and tutors. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning.
- We met with pupils, teachers and other staff. We talked about safety, personal development and behaviour. We checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with children. We also talked with parents about matters relating to documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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