

iMap Centre

Unit 4a Barrowmore Estates, Barnhouse Lane, Great Barrow, Chester, Cheshire CH3 7JA

Inspection dates

25–27 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have successfully established an ambitious culture that enables pupils to become successful learners. They have ensured that all independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher leads the school with an uncompromising commitment to ensuring that pupils are provided with a safe and nurturing environment in which they can flourish.
- Those responsible for governance provide good-quality support and challenge to leaders in most areas except for pupils' outcomes. Currently, governors do not have sufficient expertise to hold leaders to account in this area.
- Leaders and staff have carefully planned and implemented an engaging and exciting curriculum that meets pupils' specific learning and emotional needs.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils make good progress from their starting points when they join the school. The school is successful in removing many of the barriers to learning that pupils have previously experienced.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils. However, pupils are given too few opportunities to complete extended writing tasks. On occasions, support staff give pupils too much help with their work.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Support programmes and interventions rapidly build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' behaviour shows excellent improvement from the time they arrive at iMap Centre.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils' attendance levels improve significantly once they join the school.
- Staff ensure that there are plentiful opportunities to successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by strengthening governance so that members of the governing body have the knowledge and expertise to hold school leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that pupils are:
 - provided with more opportunities to write at length
 - not over-supported in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and proprietor have established a provision which ensures that all pupils have positive experiences of schooling. They demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to achieving the very best outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher is relentless in her drive to continually improve the school. She is highly ambitious for every pupil and is determined to make sure that pupils' past experiences do not limit their future achievement.
- Leaders have developed a culture across the school where pupils are encouraged to grow in confidence in their learning and develop as individuals. Leaders have achieved their aims of creating a safe environment, ensuring that pupils' well-being, safety and learning needs are given the highest priority. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff say that they enjoy working at the school. They display a total commitment to providing pupils with the best possible experiences. Staff who spoke to the inspector and completed the Ofsted staff survey said that the school continues to improve and that they are proud to be a part of it. Staff appreciate the support which they receive from leaders to improve their practice through professional development, which they describe as 'a real strength of the school'.
- Most pupils join the school having been out of education for prolonged periods. Consequently, some have negative attitudes to learning. Pupils' needs and their behaviours are fully understood by staff because of the careful transition arrangements that are made as pupils arrive. The school's positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour helps pupils to feel safe at school, improves their confidence and increases their ability to participate in learning. As a result, pupils can access the curriculum at their own level and make good progress.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It is tailored to the individual pupil and is constantly evolving to ensure that the curriculum offer motivates and interests them. Pupils enjoy learning and make strong progress academically, socially and emotionally. Good-quality curriculum plans are also in place for teaching younger pupils. By recruiting a primary phase specialist, the school has been able to plan for a comprehensive range of subjects and activities that will meet the needs of pupils aged seven to 11 years old.
- Parents, carers and local authority commissioning officers who place pupils at the school are extremely positive. They say that communication systems are first rate and that they are delighted with the progress pupils have made since they arrived.
- There is a good range of carefully considered opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of British values. These are achieved through topics on different cultures, world religions and occasions such as the celebration of Remembrance Day. British values are discussed and promoted during regular personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successfully promoted throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils have a growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities as well as the need to show respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values. Equality of opportunity is well promoted.

- Accommodation for pupils is spacious and well maintained, with numerous teaching spaces available so that pupils are able to work away from others should the need arise. A new building programme that will double the number of teaching spaces available is close to completion. It mirrors the current building and includes separate toilet facilities. The new building includes specialist areas, such as a sensory room, that are specifically designed to meet the needs of younger pupils. If required, the building will enable primary- and secondary-aged pupils to work and socialise separately.
- Leaders have planned strategically and effectively to meet the needs of the pupils they propose to admit.
- The requirements for these standards are likely to be met if the implementation of the material change is approved.

Governance

- Governance is effective. The proprietor, who is also the chair of governors, shares the headteacher's determination to ensure that pupils are offered the best possible opportunities to grow socially, emotionally and academically.
- The governing body is committed to the ongoing development and improvement of the school. Through regular discussions with the headteacher, they have a good overview of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Governors hold the school to account well in relation to statutory requirements, including safeguarding arrangements. The proprietor is strengthening the governing body by recruiting an independent member with expertise in the education of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). He recognises that the current governing body does not have the background or expertise to stringently hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes. This is because their knowledge of pupils' progress is not as strong as their understanding of other aspects of school life.
- Governors ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are implemented effectively through regular checks and scrutiny of reports.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school. Staff, regardless of their role, know the pupils extremely well. Leaders ensure that all staff are subject to the same checks on their suitability to work with children. Staff receive thorough safeguarding training that is in line with statutory legislation. This enables staff to carry out their responsibilities to keep children safe and protect them from harm effectively.
- Risk assessments for all aspects of the school's work are completed to a high standard. Risks involved in taking pupils off site are fully assessed. As a result, safety is maintained for both pupils and staff.
- Keeping pupils safe online is a priority for leaders. Appropriate filters are in place in order to protect pupils from potential harm.
- The designated safeguarding lead is tenacious in her approach to following up any potential concerns that suggest a pupil may be at risk of harm. This ensures that pupils are receiving the necessary support in a timely manner.

- All required safeguarding information is available on the school's website or from the school on request. Evidence from the inspection confirms that these policies are implemented effectively. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good.
- Teachers and support staff have excellent relationships with pupils and manage pupils' learning effectively. Staff establish clear routines that enable pupils to learn in a calm and orderly way. Consequently, even the most reluctant learners re-engage with learning.
- Teachers rightly focus on introducing topics and themes that pupils may have missed as a result of being out of education prior to joining the school. In addition, staff make sure that pupils are given the opportunity to practise any newly acquired skills in practical situations so that these become secure. For example, pupils regularly practise their understanding of money when they visit local shops with staff. Pupils are encouraged to shop for school groceries, making sure that they receive the right change.
- Well-trained support staff provide crucial support to pupils. They encourage pupils' independence while providing them with additional support and challenge in their learning. Just occasionally, staff over-support pupils by giving them too much help when they are working. For example, when pupils tackle number calculations and problems, some support staff intervene too soon and this prevents pupils from working out things for themselves.
- While staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, they are very aware of pupils' emotional and mental well-being when they decide how they react to situations. Staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and are highly skilled at de-escalating any potential incidents. As a result, pupils remain focused on the activities teachers set, are generally free from anxiety and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Staff ensure that opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in these subjects are embedded within the wider curriculum, because many pupils have experienced failure in studying English and mathematics in the past. Tasks set are interesting and engaging but, on some occasions, when asked to write, pupils respond with single-word answers or short sentences in their English tasks. This does not allow those pupils who are capable of writing more to improve their skills by writing at length using different styles.
- Staff use a good variety of strategies to encourage pupils to value and enjoy reading, including sharing newspaper accounts and talking about magazines they enjoy.
- Assessment procedures are effective. Teachers check pupils' starting points carefully so that the teaching accurately meets pupils' needs. Detailed records of progress are used well so that staff know when to intervene or redirect their support.
- Staffing levels are generous. Well-trained teachers and support staff are readily available to be deployed to best meet the needs of pupils and provide appropriate and timely support.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff provide excellent role models and impressive pastoral support for each pupil. A strong nurturing environment underpins all aspects of school life.
- Many pupils find it hard to communicate with strangers, and some pupils are non-verbal. Nevertheless, they make it clear to visitors that they are proud to be part of the school. They enjoy attending and value the support they receive from staff. 'I like it at this school and I'm learning much more than I did before' is typical of the comments made by pupils who talked to the inspector.
- The longer pupils attend the school, the better they become at coping with unfamiliar situations and knowing how to respond when they feel anxious or upset. Staff are very aware of any changes in pupils' behaviour and emotional well-being. They intervene with sensitivity and a calmness that invariably manages to defuse potential situations.
- Pupils develop a very good understanding of healthy living, and healthy eating is encouraged. A strong culture of safety is evident throughout the school. Pupils know that they can approach any adult and have their concerns dealt with sensitively.
- Although many find this difficult at first, pupils are encouraged to engage in conversation and listen to the views and opinions of others. At lunchtimes and breaktimes, pupils share a common room with staff and other pupils. As they grow in confidence, pupils often talk about tasks they have undertaken or about the lunches they have chosen. Commissioning officers from local authorities and parents of pupils at the school comment on the remarkable improvements they have seen both in pupils' social skills and in their ability to express themselves in the company of others.
- Voting for a school council representative is carried out through a democratic process which mirrors the British voting system. Pupils know that leaders listen to their views and opinions and take notice of their ideas. For example, decisions on lunch menus and the choice of trips are agreed as a result of suggestions made by the elected school council.
- A number of pupils are due to leave the school at the end of this school year, so trips and off-site activities, including travelling on public transport, are used effectively to support pupils' independent living skills. Making decisions for themselves enhances pupils' confidence and self-esteem as well as improving their understanding of risk.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils generally move around the school purposefully and calmly. Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning show exceptional and rapid improvement. Pupils are engaged in their learning, generally listen well and demonstrate respect to staff and visitors.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well. High expectations of pupils' behaviour are evident across the school. Pupils know and understand these expectations and do their best to meet them in lessons and as they move around the school.

- The school's behaviour logs indicate that incidents of challenging behaviour decline rapidly following a pupil's admission. Staff skilfully support pupils to develop the strategies they need to manage their own emotions. Helpful resources, including materials that explain what anxiety and anger are, and the opportunity to spend time with staff whom they trust contribute to the excellent progress pupils make in managing their own behaviour.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Pupils' rates of attendance show rapid improvement when compared to their individual starting points from their previous settings. This is because pupils now enjoy school and value their education. Exclusion of pupils is rare, with only one fixed-term exclusion recorded since the last inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils join the school with large gaps in their learning and with negative attitudes towards education.
- Progress records, assessments and scrutiny of pupils' work show that, following a transition period, iMap Centre succeeds in changing pupils' lives for the better. It achieves this by providing good-quality teaching and emotional support, which ensure that pupils begin to fill gaps, particularly in English and mathematics. While pupils' progress in writing is strong, it lags behind the progress they make in other areas. This is because pupils who are confident to write are given too few opportunities to complete extended writing tasks.
- Pupils make good progress towards the objectives set in their education, health and care plans because staff assess their needs accurately when they arrive. Staff then provide a package of support that matches pupils' individual needs.
- An increasing number of pupils access courses leading to external accreditation. These include Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network courses, Foundation Skills qualifications and GCSEs. Courses are geared to personalised learning and choice, with the aim of enhancing learners' confidence, self-esteem and resilience.
- Pupils proudly share their successes with visitors, including evidence of their work-based learning. Recent examples include feedback from pupils who volunteer in a local library and successfully complete an agreed list of tasks each week.
- The school provides good external careers advice and guidance for pupils. The relevance of the curriculum and close working relationships with familiar staff are key factors in preparing pupils for each stage of their education, training or employment. Changes in routines can cause stress for pupils and increase their level of anxiety. Leaders and staff successfully equip pupils with strategies to cope and do all they can to reduce these pressures, particularly at times of transition.
- The school is well equipped to support the learning needs of younger pupils. Staff expertise across the primary and secondary age ranges enables them to pitch work at just the right level.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	131792
DfE registration number	896/6028
Inspection number	10092578

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Martin McKevitt
Chair	Martin McKevitt
Headteacher	Sharon Beddow
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,300
Telephone number	01829 741869
Website	www.imapcentre.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@imapcentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–24 November 2016

Information about this school

- iMap Centre is a small, independent special school that caters for up to 10 pupils between the ages of 11 to 19.
- The school provides education for pupils who have severe autism spectrum disorder and associated severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There are currently seven pupils on roll. The school is sited on the Barrowmore Estate, which is set in 84 acres in a rural part of Cheshire.
- The iMap group of companies also provides supported living, outreach support and

residential care for young people and adults.

- The proprietor, the managing director and the director of quality and operations for the iMap group provide governance for the school.
- Places are funded through local authorities.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school has a website which meets the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The school's last standard inspection was in November 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in different subjects. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher and staff.
- The inspector had telephone conversations with a parent, a care home manager and local authority representatives that place pupils at the school.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He looked at pupils' work and the school's records of their progress. He also listened to individual pupils as they read in class.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector took account of one free text response to Parent View.
- The inspector took account of staff views following discussions with them. He also took account of 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for staff.
- The inspector considered staff expertise and the suitability of accommodation for younger pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and the curriculum, provided by the school. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.
- As part of this inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned a material change inspection to determine the suitability of the school to increase the number of pupils on roll from 10 to 20. The inspector also considered the school's request to extend the age range of pupils to admit pupils aged from seven to 19 years of age.

Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019