

Earlscliffe (Sussex Summer Schools Ltd)

29 Shornccliffe Road, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2NB

Inspection dates

16–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Exceptional leadership and management have ensured that the school has improved rapidly to become outstanding since its last inspection.
- Expectations of pupils and staff are high. The director's clearly stated aims and vision of excellence for the school are understood by all.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points. This is particularly the case with their English language skills.
- Teaching staff are knowledgeable and highly dedicated to ensuring that pupils' outcomes are the best they can be.
- Pupils show admirable attitudes to learning and are motivated to do their best due to the high quality of teaching and pastoral care they experience.
- The school's curriculum, including the extra-curricular offer, is of high quality. Leaders are mindful of the need to ensure this continues to be the case if the school roll increases.
- The school and boarding provision are safe and happy places to be. Safeguarding procedures are effective and given the highest priority.
- The school's sixth form provides highly effective and finely tuned personalised pathways, resulting in successful outcomes for students.
- All aspects of governance are carried out effectively. The joint directors' strategic overview of the school is particularly strong.
- The few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as other pupils, due to the excellent support they receive.
- Some aspects of record-keeping in the boarding provision would benefit from a more standardised approach.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Likewise, all of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the breadth and quality of the curriculum continues to fully meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils in light of the school's expanding roll.
- Ensure that leaders' regular reviews of the practice of boarding staff are recorded in a more formal manner.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision

Outstanding

How well children and young people are helped and protected in the boarding provision

Outstanding

- The director and the senior leadership team are ambitious and forward thinking. Together, they have moved all aspects of the school forward at a rapid pace. Their collective experience and expertise ensure that the school benefits from leadership and management of the highest order.
- The school's current aim of 'reflect and improve' is understood and embraced by all. Leaders understand the need to motivate and enthuse pupils and staff alike. They lead by example, generate confidence, and aspire for the school to be a place of academic and cultural excellence.
- Senior leaders are aspirational and are committed to providing an environment in which boarders thrive and achieve their full potential. Boarding staff share this vision and have established a stable, safe and caring community. This helps pupils to develop their independence and maturity, learn to take responsibility for themselves, and develop a wider sense of community responsibility. Record-keeping is fit for purpose, but leaders know that some aspects would benefit from a more formal system to record the good practice seen in the boarding provision.
- Self-evaluation is particularly strong. Leaders and those in positions of governance understand the school's strengths and next steps to develop. The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is also a strength. This allows leaders to act quickly and effectively to remedy any potential problems in the quality of provision, or when pupils are not making the progress expected of them.
- Boarding staff maintain a strong focus on monitoring the progress and welfare of boarders. They are particularly successful at balancing their support and respecting boarders' wishes to be treated as adults.
- Boarding staff receive effective support from leaders and managers who provide clear advice, guidance and direction. Performance management reviews incorporate regular reviews of practice within each boarding house.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils completing the international transition year (ITY) and students in the sixth form with excellent opportunities to study a wide range of subjects. Because the great majority of pupils attending the school are from overseas, there is a particular focus on improving English language skills. This is particularly important for pupils who are studying on the school's international transition year pathway, where a wide range of GCSE subjects are offered, as well as intensive English language support.
- While the majority of students study for A levels with an aim of achieving a place at a top British or international university, the school's curriculum offers other bespoke pathways. This is particularly useful for international students who may wish to spend shorter

periods of time preparing for entrance to university, or to simply hone their English language skills.

- The school offers an exceptional array of extra-curricular events and activities. The 'Sports, Culture and Service' programme provides pupils with a variety of options to develop their life skills, enhance their physical well-being and attend high-quality arts and cultural events. Attending public speaking events, conferences, or concerts in London are weekly occurrences.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are immersed in the values and culture of their host country from the day they arrive. Tolerance and a high degree of respect for the cultures and opinions of others is a non-negotiable aspect of attending the school. Service in the local community, helping at charity shops for instance, or visits to Parliament to learn about British democracy are all part of the wider curriculum enjoyed by pupils.
- Senior leaders strive continuously to improve the experience of boarders. Utilising feedback from pupil surveys, pupil committees and ongoing review of the boarding provision, they are totally committed to promoting the best outcomes possible for boarders.
- School leaders and the proprietor are effective in ensuring that all of the independent school standards, as well as the national minimum standards for boarding provision, are met.
- The school is currently registered for up to 60 pupils. At the time of this inspection there were 80 pupils on roll. The school has recently applied to the Department for Education for a material change to increase its registration for up to 90 pupils. Leaders fully understand the implications of an expanding roll, particularly the extra demands this may put on curriculum provision. Other aspects of an expanding roll, including provision of resources and appropriate accommodation, have been planned for well.
- In light of the positive outcome of this inspection, it is likely that the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding provision will continue to be met should the material change application be approved.

Governance

- The school's model of governance is effective. Those in positions of governance understand their roles and responsibilities well. This ensures that the school is a happy and harmonious place, where pupils are safe and staff work with energy and enthusiasm.
- As joint proprietors, the director and the school's business manager operate at the heart of the school on a day-to-day basis. This ensures that they have a unique understanding of the quality of provision, as well as working in close harmony with other leaders to shape the school's successful strategic direction.
- Useful partnerships exist with a range of professionals from outside the school. Recent reviews by professionals acting as 'critical friends' and an external consultant have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve. Attendance at local authority safeguarding conferences and other high-profile educational events ensures that those in a position of governance keep abreast of current guidance and best practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the safety of pupils, including publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.
- Staff are vigilant and ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is their very top priority. Other policies and procedures to keep pupils safe in school and when learning in the local and wider community are implemented well.
- A strong commitment to protecting boarders from harm underpins practice in the boarding provision. Staff are well-trained, alert and confident in their safeguarding role, with the necessary understanding of current issues that can present a risk to boarders. These include such issues as child sexual exploitation, e-safety and radicalisation.
- The designated safeguarding lead has undertaken appropriate training to perform the role and is diligent in ensuring that his knowledge of safeguarding issues is current. This is also the case with his deputy. Comprehensive health and safety measures protect boarders from the risk of harm. Appropriate fire safety checks are routinely applied.
- Staff have high expectations of conduct. Effective support from staff enables boarders to learn how to keep themselves safe. Behaviour is exemplary. Respect, courtesy and consideration for others are embedded in the culture of the school. Concerns in relation to the welfare of boarders are responded to appropriately. Staff implement individual strategies to support boarders and promote their well-being with appropriate tact and consideration.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Strong and respectful relationships between pupils and teachers ensure that classrooms are productive places. Staff know pupils well. Low class numbers and excellent resources allow teachers to plan and deliver bespoke learning packages which have an excellent impact on pupils' progress.
- Classroom visits provided inspectors with evidence of consistently high quality teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils are constantly challenged to improve. Teachers' questioning skills are highly developed and enable pupils to make connections with prior learning. This in turn helps pupils deepen their understanding, particularly with their developing English language skills.
- Most staff are very experienced. All possess confident subject knowledge in their particular fields. This means that pupils benefit from a curriculum delivered by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers who have very high expectations of pupils' progress and engagement in learning.
- Pupils following the international transition pathway in Year 11 and students in the sixth form benefit equally from the very high quality of teaching. Teachers are particularly skilful at pitching the content of their lessons at the right level. Expectations are high, but support is always available for those who need it.
- Pupils are extremely positive about the quality of teaching in the school. They appreciate the one-to-one coaching that is available if they need extra support, or when teachers judge that extra levels of challenge are required. Classroom visits during the inspection

confirmed this to be the case, especially for most-able pupils, who are particularly well served by expert staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Most pupils arrive at the school with a high degree of motivation and self-confidence. However, school leaders and teaching staff are particularly skilled at channelling this aspect of the school's unique culture, ensuring that this intrinsic motivation continues, playing a major part in ensuring that pupils succeed.
- Leaders understand that pupils, almost all from overseas and living away from home, require a high degree of care and support to ensure that their social and emotional needs are met. The 'small school' family ethos that pervades all aspects of day-to-day provision helps with this, as does the wide range of daily extra-curricular activities available.
- Teaching staff work closely with those from the boarding provision to ensure that pupils' personal development and welfare are given high priority. Communication is strong. Induction procedures for new pupils into the school are well-established and designed to ease pupils into their new surroundings with the minimum of worry.
- Leaders from both the boarding provision and the school work together closely to provide the very best levels of pastoral care for pupils. This includes ensuring that pupils are safe from potential risks, including when using the internet, or experiencing aspects of life in a new country, such as queuing or using public transport.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Expectations of both staff and the pupils themselves are high. Mutual respect underpins all aspects of the school and the way it operates. Leaders, including the proprietors, set high standards. Courtesy and good manners are expected at all times. Classrooms are places of learning.
- Inspectors felt very welcome throughout the inspection. Pupils were respectful and keen to explain about the great strides in progress they are making and how they feel about attending the school. It was clear they are proud to be members of the Earlscliffe family.
- Levels of attendance are extremely high. Absence is rare because pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils are expected to be punctual. Leaders follow up on the rare occasions when this is not the case.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress at Earlscliffe. Teachers and school leaders are very aware of the progress pupils make. Baseline assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding prior to entry and within the first few weeks of joining the school ensure that progress is accurately measured. This is particularly the case with pupils' English language skills.

- The school's unique culture and context ensure that pupils are eager to learn. Academic rigour goes hand-in-hand with high levels of pastoral care to create an environment where pupils thrive and are motivated to do well. This has an extremely positive impact on attainment and pupils' progress, which compare very favourably with other schools locally and nationally in GCSE and A-level results.
- Due to the low numbers of pupils and the bespoke pathways they follow, leaders are able to monitor the progress of individual pupils precisely. Baseline assessments are followed by weekly assessments, the school's 'TRaC' system (test, rank and coach), which highlights progress and allows teachers to intervene when required. Pupils spoke positively about this system and enjoy the challenge it presents.
- The school's provision for the few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is equally as effective as for other pupils. Because of the bespoke nature of the curriculum, these pupils are supported well by staff, who adjust their teaching to take into account the needs of each individual.
- Provision for the most able pupils is a strength of the school. Teachers' expertise and subject knowledge mean that pupils operating at higher levels are challenged well. This is especially the case in English, where higher-achieving pupils make rapid progress to overcome the language barriers many of them face on first joining the school.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- The school's sixth form provision is outstanding. The vast majority of students who attend the school do so as members of the sixth form. Accordingly, all aspects of outstanding provision reported on prior to this section of the report apply equally to the sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form follow a programme of study that typically includes studying four subjects at A level, including one in their own language. Students also study for the extended project qualification (EPQ), which allows them to broaden their studies and strengthen their university applications.
- The curriculum offer in the sixth form is particularly strong. Well-qualified staff teach a wide range of subjects, including in the sciences and the arts. As is the case for younger pupils attending the school, the extra-curricular offer open to students in the sixth form is particularly strong. Attendance at national conferences, or visits to Europe are regular occurrences.
- The few students who need to develop their English and mathematics further do so at an appropriate level during their time in the sixth form. This ensures that students have reached a suitable standard with their English language skills if this is a requirement for entry to university.
- The brokering of work experience and opportunities for students to learn outside school in the local community is a strength of the sixth form. The school employs a member of staff with specific responsibility for organising placements which enrich students' experiences to help shape their future careers.
- Central to students' programmes of study are sessions which provide high-quality careers information and advice. These are provided by staff in the school and supported by impartial advice from a range of external sources. Most students in the sixth form aspire to attend a top-class university after leaving the school. The school is particularly

successful at turning aspiration into reality.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Outstanding

- Boarders make exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives. Leaders and staff promote a culture of achievement which not only values academic success, but also develops boarders' unique abilities and character. Boarders benefit from routines, structure and support, resulting in significant personal growth and development.
- Mutually respectful, supportive and encouraging relationships between staff and boarders promote a caring and tolerant ethos. Boarders from many different cultures and nationalities develop considerate and cooperative relationships with a strong community spirit.
- Boarding staff are responsive and accommodating, recognising boarders' individual needs and providing support so that they flourish and develop their full potential.
- Arrangements to oversee the health needs of boarders are excellent. The school nurse ensures that boarders receive appropriate support to maintain their health and lead healthy lifestyles, with specific assistance for boarders with particular health issues. All staff are mindful of boarders' emotional needs and demonstrate an exceptionally caring approach to boarders facing significant pressures being away from their families or experiencing anxiety during examinations.
- Boarders have access to an extensive range of extra-curricular and recreational activities to extend and enrich their learning, support their self-identity, character development and holistic growth to sustain them through their future lives.
- Boarders know their views and opinions are important and welcomed by staff. In addition to informal interaction with staff and group house meetings, student forums provide boarders with opportunities to put forward ideas and contribute to the development of the school and the boarding provision. Knowing their views are taken seriously develops their confidence and self-esteem.
- Boarders live in high-quality accommodation that is welcoming, spacious and well-maintained, providing ample communal and study areas. All meals are taken in the dining room where boarders are provided with a variety of nutritious and wholesome food. Specific dietary requirements are catered for well.
- Parents acknowledge the positive impact boarding is having, noting their child's increased self-confidence and a developing sense of purpose and direction. A parent commented in relation to the pastoral care that 'the smallest issue is solved immediately'. Another mentioned that 'Earlscliffe is like one happy family.'

School details

Unique reference number	138405
Social care unique reference number	SC469113
DfE registration number	886/6138
Inspection number	10033679

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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	55
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	76
Proprietor	Sussex Summer Schools Ltd
Chair	Tim Fish
Headteacher	Tim Fish
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,998 to £19,980
Annual fees (boarders)	£31,095
Telephone number	01303 253951
Website	www.earlscliffe.co.uk
Email address	info@sussexsummerschools.com
Date of previous inspection	12–14 June 2013

Information about this school

- Earlscliffe opened in September 2012 in newly refurbished accommodation. It is a co-educational, independent international school offering boarding and educational facilities for up to 60 pupils. It is owned and operated by Sussex Summer Schools Ltd and situated close to the centre of Folkestone.
- The school was first inspected in June 2013 when the educational provision was judged to be good overall.
- The school offers a range of courses aimed at enabling young people, predominantly from overseas, to gain access to top-ranking British or overseas universities.
- The school is currently registered for 60 pupils, but at the time of this inspection had 80 pupils on roll. The proprietor has recently acquired additional premises and applied to the Department for Education to increase its registration for up to 90 pupils.
- The school does not make use of alternative off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out a wide range of classroom visits, some accompanied by senior leaders. During visits, inspectors talked to pupils about the quality of their work and assessed the progress they were making. Visits to the school's boarding provision allowed social care inspectors to speak to staff and pupils to gain their views about the quality of provision.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work and observed behaviour in classrooms, at the start and finish of the school day, and as pupils moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the director of the school, the director of studies, the director of pastoral care, who is also responsible for the boarding provision, and other staff in leadership roles. The lead inspector held a meeting with representatives of the proprietor who are responsible for governance.
- Inspectors took into account the three replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the views of 19 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils through informal conversations in the school and the boarding provision throughout the inspection, as well as holding a formal meeting with a representative group of pupils. The lead inspector also attended a pupil and staff 'forum'.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents and policies, including those regarding safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding schools. They looked at minutes of meetings, information about pupil outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and school improvement information.
- At the request of the Department for Education, inspectors considered the proprietor's application to make a material change to its registration, specifically to increase its current registration from 60 to 90 pupils.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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