Inspection of Hope House School

Barnby Road, Balderton, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 3NE

Inspection dates:	14 to 16 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending the school. The staff are kind and caring. There are positive and strong relationships between staff and pupils. The pupils know that staff will look after them and keep them safe. Staff understand pupils' individual needs well. They are very aware of the difficulties pupils experience. They offer a nurturing approach to help pupils understand themselves.

Staff provide 'sensory spaces' and time for pupils to regulate their emotions. This proactive approach helps pupils to manage their anxieties. As a result, few pupils resort to expressing their frustrations through outbursts. Pupils benefit from learning in a structured and calm environment that is rarely disrupted.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils to fulfil their personal potential. As one comment, typical of those made by parents and carers, explains: 'My child has grown so much in the time they have been at this school. Staff support and nurture their needs so that they are happy and thriving.'

The 'PRIDE' values help pupils respect the differences and similarities found in society. Pupils develop confidence and independence through well planned and varied activities. The school's outdoor environment gives pupils many opportunities to play and explore, and to take appropriate risks. Life skills lessons such as cooking prepare pupils well for adulthood.

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

When pupils join the school, staff check what pupils know and can remember. They use this information to plan a personalised curriculum that is matched well to the outcomes in each pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils who follow a formal curriculum benefit from well-structured lessons that build their knowledge and skills in the subjects they study. For example, in English, pupils use what they learned in a previous lesson to help them understand how a character's feelings develop through a story. High-quality resources help pupils access their learning. For instance, emotions mats help pupils identify what different feelings look like.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge to present information clearly and engage pupils in interesting learning activities. They are skilled in using questioning to identify exactly what pupils have understood and plan what pupils need to know next.

Young pupils and those who follow a less formal curriculum are well supported by skilful staff. The sensory needs of these pupils are provided for incredibly well. They complete meaningful activities that help them to develop the personal and learning skills they need to move on to their next stage. These pupils make good progress in developing their early communication skills.

Secondary-age pupils receive advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about further education, employment and training. Students in the post-16 provision follow a curriculum that prepares them well for their next steps into adulthood. Staff arrange work experience and prepare pupils well for transitions into further study or work.

The school prioritises reading and takes every opportunity to ensure that pupils are exposed to books. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read benefit from a carefully sequenced phonics programme. However, not all staff who support pupils with their reading or who teach phonics apply a consistent, systematic approach. As a result, some pupils struggle with accuracy when reading.

Information about each pupils' needs is shared through their 'personal development' plans. However, these plans do not always contain the precise targets and success criteria that staff need to know. This limits staff's ability to know how best to check that these pupils are making the progress they should.

Pupils benefit from high-quality personal development. They love the opportunities they have to ride horses, play tennis and go swimming. Trips and visits to places of interest widen their experiences and expand their world view. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, as well as British values. Visits to shops and travel training help them develop independent living skills.

The proprietor and senior leaders have focused their efforts on the areas that will have the most impact, particularly improving the quality of education that pupils receive. Those with responsibility for the school know it well. They understand their statutory duties and have a good understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). The premises are well maintained. Frequent investment continually improves the school's facilities. Thorough checks ensure that all the health and safety and fire safety regulations are met. Risk assessments are routinely updated. Policies are up to date and reflect the latest national guidance.

Staff say that senior leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being. They appreciate the 'open door policy' that leaders have. Staff are proud to work at the school.

The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The policies for relationships and sex education, and safeguarding, are available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of reading. Some staff do not have the knowledge they need to support pupils who are learning to read. As a result, this is slowing the progress of pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. The school should ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to help pupils read with accuracy and fluency.
- The targets set on each pupil's 'personal development' plan often lack precision. They do not consistently identify what success looks like for each pupil. This limits staff's ability to know how best to check that each pupil is making as much progress as they should, including when considering the outcomes stated in their EHC plans. The school should ensure that all pupils' targets have the necessary precision and focus so that staff can support pupils to achieve as well as they can.

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	135393
DfE registration number	891/6032
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10299201
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hope House School Limited
Chair	Brian Jones
Headteacher	Michelle McRae
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,540
Telephone number	01636 700380
Website	www.hopehouseschool.co.uk
Email address	hopeadmin@hopehouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 June 2022

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils aged five to 19 who have additional needs related to communication and interaction and autism. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- For students who are above the compulsory school age, the school provides a programme of activities that is appropriate to their needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There have been several changes to the school's senior leadership team since the last standard inspection. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2022.

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 judgement 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 meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with a trustee from the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: English, reading, mathematics and the 'informal curriculum'. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered curriculum plans for personal, social, health and economic education and reviewed a sample of pupils' work in this subject.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of 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 took note of parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss different aspects of the school's provision.

- Inspectors toured the premises and reviewed the school facilities.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steven Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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