

Hope House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Hope House School is a registered charity with a Board of Trustees and a Board of Representatives who take on a governance role. It provides for the needs and education of up to three pupils between the ages of five and 14 with autism. The school has a teacher and two assistants with a range of volunteers. It accesses an educational consultant, therapists and peripatetic teachers where necessary. The school's source of funding is currently through placing authorities for pupils and charitable donations. The school is partway through a renovation and refurbishment programme for its leased site which is set in open countryside near Newark in Nottinghamshire. One building is habitable and houses the school. Since opening in September 2007, it has provided for four pupils in a variety of situations, for example through outreach or part-time attendance. There is currently one full-time pupil with a statement of special educational needs on roll. There are a number of children with autism and their siblings attending grant funded after-school clubs across the week. The school aim is to provide a caring and calm environment where everyone feels valued, secure and able to learn. This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Hope House School provides a satisfactory quality of education and welfare for pupils. The caring and dedicated staff team have established strong relationships with pupils. The satisfactory teaching of an appropriate curriculum ensures that pupils are receptive to learning. Complementary therapies, individual tuition and tailored support work well in helping to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional skills, including their behaviour. The school meets all but one of the regulations and all safeguarding requirements are met. The school is currently achieving its aim.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education at Hope House is satisfactory. In the short time since admitting full-time pupils and employing staff rather than relying on volunteers, the school has made reasonable progress in developing the educational programme. Much thought has been given to how to structure the day and present the activities to autistic pupils. The school has been realistic in acknowledging where it lacks

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

expertise and has therefore drawn on the knowledge and skills of consultants and therapists, as appropriate.

The curriculum is satisfactory and, since the summer term 2010, it has been substantially and steadily developed, with long term and medium term plans in place. The curriculum has sufficient breadth and encompasses all necessary areas. It is broadly based on the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 but is adapted specifically for individual pupils' needs. Therefore, learning opportunities are enriched by the daily care of the farm and domestic animals, weekly occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, behaviour therapy, counselling, peripatetic music lessons, after-school clubs with other children to encourage social interaction, and regular trips out into the community. The curriculum meets the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs and currently rightly focuses on literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. The curriculum for physical education is under-developed and does not build sufficiently on individual existing skills, nor provide sufficient new skills and challenge. Through regular assessment, short term curriculum plans are adapted to reinforce learning which has not yet been secured. Progression to Key Stage 3 is not yet fully developed. Staff are planning to develop this in response to increasing maturity in both chronological and cognitive age. They are mindful of the necessity to prepare for increased pupil numbers within this age range in future. There are currently no formal individual education plans in place, but in essence, everything is currently planned around individual needs.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory, and provides a purposeful atmosphere in sessions. Lessons are reasonably well planned and include an element of choice. They are designed to maintain the pupils' interest and to gradually build up levels of concentration. There is flexibility to account for pupils' fluctuating needs. Staff mostly have sufficient knowledge for teaching all of the subject areas at the level currently required. This is not secure enough to cover the entirety of the curriculum for the registered age range of pupils, for example physical education, sex education, or providing a curriculum at Key Stage 3, which includes subjects such as modern languages. There is a comprehensive programme for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good specialist therapeutic teaching is considered to be an appropriate support and complements the educational programme well. There is a framework for evaluating pupils' performance. A baseline assessment is carried out and staff now better understand the levels at which learning needs to be provided; this enables them to set realistic and appropriate targets. The school rightly acknowledges the necessity to have moderation of these levels. Thorough evaluation of daily and weekly plans and learning objectives helps to determine where further repetition of tasks and consolidation of learning is necessary.

Current teaching and learning is ensuring satisfactory progress overall, including in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Work is set at a level that ensures success is regularly celebrated. Attendance at Hope House has contributed to significant steps forward in social and emotional development, including behaviour. The school now has a structured and consistent system for rewarding

good behaviour, recognising fluctuating behaviour and how to deal with it. This has ensured a calmer environment and improved receptiveness to learning. Staff regularly praise and encourage, helping to build confidence and self-esteem. The progress made can be attributed to this and as a direct consequence of continual opportunities for one-to-one teaching and support. Pupils' enjoyment of being in school is evident.

Staff, trustees and the school's representatives have a good understanding of priorities for further development, and have appropriate plans for this. There is a school development plan in place which covers the curriculum, resources and accommodation, to ensure that the school is able to meet future pupils' needs. However, teaching staff sometimes lack the necessary challenge and support in some areas of curriculum, teaching, assessment and pupils' progress. Although experienced in dealing with children with autism, they currently do not have qualifications specifically related to this type of special educational need.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. While the school environment is a little like 'being in a bubble', as pupils' personal stability and social awareness have increased, so have the number of outings into the community to provide experience of 'real life' situations. A successful grant application has secured the after-school provision for a small number of other children with autism and another small group of siblings. Pupils' involvement in this allows contact with children of similar age and positively supports social interaction and communication with others. Feeling secure with staff and receiving a relevant curriculum have ensured exemplary attendance. The contact with animals aids pupils' development in many ways including one of personal responsibility; as a result, pupils are keen to remind staff when the animals need feeding or grooming.

Pupils respond well to a structured routine, including a visual timetable and carefully considered strategies to manage any challenging behaviour. Social stories provide a visual representation of some activities and trips, helping to reduce anxiety. Consequently, personal development and behaviour are good. There is a successful system for rewarding effort and achievement which has assisted in promoting a positive attitude in lessons and overall enjoyment of school. Incidents are reducing in number as emotional changes are recognised and strategies learned to manage anxieties better, understanding any necessary consequences. Making choices helps to encourage initiative and being given responsibility for tasks ensures a positive contribution to the school community. Improving basic and social skills prepares each pupil for their future economic wellbeing. There are opportunities to learn about the role of public institutions and services through topics and visits, for example visiting the local library and fire station. A range of curriculum topics focus on developing the pupils' cultural awareness.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory. There is generally a calm atmosphere and a favourable climate for learning. Safeguarding arrangements have improved since the last inspection and now meet current requirements. A range of suitable policies, including first aid and safeguarding, are in place. A general risk assessment for the school and any outings is undertaken annually. However, the school has not undertaken individual risk assessments for pupils on roll prior to particular activities or visits outside of school. That said, staff are vigilant, they promote the safe use of equipment and resources routinely and staff ratios are favourable, ensuring that any pupil is well cared for. Hand washing is well emphasised, particularly in respect of pupils' regular contact with animals. Fire drills are held termly, but always at a similar time of day. Fire and electrical equipment is checked by a specialist company. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained.

There is focus in the curriculum to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, but not all meals and snacks are as nutritious as they should be and staff currently do not feel able to enforce the eating of fresh fruit and vegetables daily. However, they are acting as positive role models themselves and have recently appointed one of the trustees with the responsibility of improving this. The behaviour policy includes a plan which emphasises pupils' role in developing strategies to manage their behaviour themselves. The school has a system for recording incidents and accidents, but there have been very few incidents and no accidents since the school admitted pupils. Staff have received safeguarding training. Several trustees and representatives have also received child abuse or safeguarding training. The designated person for child protection has received confirmation of training to be undertaken imminently. Staff have recently undertaken the Management of Potential Aggression and First Aid training.

The school is aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 for ensuring accessibility and devising a three year plan. Although now incorporated into the school's development plan, there is no formal plan with timescales which adequately covers this.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Procedures for the recruitment and appointment of staff meet requirements, including the maintenance of a single central record which shows relevant checks of staff, volunteers, trustees and representatives with the Criminal Record Bureau and that identity and qualifications have been verified.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation used currently for the school are fit for purpose having benefitted from substantial renovation. There remain several dilapidated buildings in the grounds which are part of the renovation programme. Currently two of these rooms have been made safe – one for a music room and one for stimulating

sensory awareness and occupational therapy. However, these are only available under careful supervision and access is limited as there is no electricity, so they can be cold and dark. Classrooms in the main building are well maintained but are kept purposefully bare in accordance with the needs of autistic pupils, who do not have direct access to resources. Resources are reasonable given the limitation of funding and are adequate to ensure the current curriculum can be delivered. Physical play inside is somewhat restricted by the accommodation and the school has not yet begun to use local sports facilities. Pens and hutches for the animals are well maintained and ensure the safety of animals and pupils. There is suitable provision for pupils should they become ill. There is a well equipped kitchen and dining area which is kept scrupulously clean.

Provision of information

The school provides all of the necessary information for parents and carers as required by regulations. There is an informative prospectus and website. Information on pupils' progress is sent home weekly, which is appreciated by parents. The school has yet to produce a full annual report as no pupil has been at the school long enough for this to be relevant. The school understands its responsibilities towards the funding local authority and in order to fulfil the requirements of pupils' statement of special educational needs.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures for handling complaints meet all of the requirements. There have been no formal complaints over the past year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.³

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Carry out risk assessments specific to pupils' individual needs, activities to be undertaken and outings.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

- Ensure there is sufficient educational and specialist professional knowledge in autism to meet the continuing needs of pupils on roll and any others that may enrol at the school.
- Further develop schemes of work across all curriculum areas so that progression across each subject is evident and resourcing is adequate to deliver this curriculum.
- Enhance the provision for physical education ensuring that it adequately develops pupils' skills and provides sufficient challenge.
- Ensure trustees and representatives take an active role in the continual review of the school's development plan; monitoring the education and welfare, health and safety of the pupils and ensuring that the assessment of pupils' attainment is moderated.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	September 2007		
Age range of pupils	5-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,753.00		
Address of school	Hope House School Barnby Road		
Telephone number	01636 700380		
Email address	enquiries@hopehouseschool.co.uk		
Manager/Founder	Terrina A Westmoreland		
Proprietor	Registered Charity with Board of Trustees		