

Hope Corner Academy

70 Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 4TD

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Pupils are happy. Their attendance and enjoyment of learning are extremely good.
- Pupils achieve extremely well in most subjects from their starting points and in relation to their capabilities because of the outstanding teaching. Teachers provide very imaginative opportunities for pupils to gain basic skills in literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and this prepares them outstandingly for their future economic well-being.
- Pupils develop outstanding levels of self-confidence, exemplary attitudes towards learning, behave extremely well and blossom into responsible young citizens because of the school's outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers work very effectively with other adults in school, external agencies and parents and carers to ensure that pupils learn as well as they can.
- Provision to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils ensures that they feel very safe, secure and able to concentrate fully on their learning.
- Leaders and managers ensure that pupils are provided with a personalised curriculum which fully reflects their needs and interests and which enables them to achieve outstandingly well. They also ensure that teaching and the care, guidance and support offered by the school are of a very high standard.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed two lessons taught by two different teachers. The inspector looked at pupils' work and held meetings with the centre manager, teachers, a teaching assistant, trustees and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed in four questionnaires returned by staff and a letter from a parent/carer. The inspector also spoke with a parent/carer.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of pupils' progress, assessment records and documentation concerning school development planning and self-evaluation. Furthermore, the inspector looked at the school's welfare, health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures. The inspector checked the school's compliance with all the regulations for independent schools.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hope Corner Academy is an independent special, day school which is registered for up to 12 boys and girls aged from 14 to 16 years who primarily have autism. The school accepts pupils who have been excluded from other schools and other provision and who are nearing the end of their statutory education.
- The school was registered and opened in September 2012. It occupies part of a new building in a residential area of Runcorn, Cheshire. The school occupies the whole of the first floor of the building and accommodation. Other parts of the building serve as a church and community centre for Hope Corner Community Church Trust, the owners of the school. The proprietor is a charity which already provides a similar form of education in cooperation with the local authority in another locality.
- Currently, there are a small number of pupils on roll and they have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to engender positive attitudes to education; promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural well-being; and prepare pupils effectively for subsequent stages of education, employment and life.
- The school has a Christian ethos. It accepts students of any or no religion.
- This is the school's first full inspection since it registered.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders record more clearly, the many school improvements they have made since the school opened.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Achievement is outstanding because teaching and the curriculum are outstanding. Pupils are making rapid and sustained progress in almost all areas of learning over time, given their starting points and capabilities. Pupils learn exceptionally well because teachers frequently and regularly test pupils and modify their teaching to address any weaknesses identified in learning. Consequently, pupils gain knowledge and understanding very quickly in a wide range of different subjects. The emphasis on developing basic skills in communication, literacy, mathematics and ICT is relentless. Homework and pre-lesson tasks often involve research using computers in the very well equipped ICT suite. Reading skills development is also promoted very effectively in this way.

Following on from these tasks much time is spent in the classroom on teacher-led activities to develop these basic skills. Many different lessons include substantial planning to ensure that every opportunity is taken to consolidate pupils' basic skills. For example, a Functional Skills ICT lesson included many opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of percentages and statistics. Pupils were very keen to produce graphs in this lesson as part of their computer-based presentation. These factors ensure that pupils develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect so that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education. Work seen in food technology is excellent and pupils also excel in certain sports such as rock-climbing. Classroom support and interventions are very effective. For example, specialised teaching assistance is regularly provided to address specific learning needs. School records indicate that pupils on roll are successfully addressing many gaps in their education, re-engaging in learning very effectively and making up lost ground.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are outstanding. Pupils play a dynamic role in their learning and offer their ideas abundantly in lessons. They respond to challenges with great enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons. They engage fully and do their very best to achieve their goals. The level of self-discipline is remarkable. Pupils' consistently thoughtful behaviour is a significant factor in their successful learning and contributes very much to the calm, very positive school ethos. School records indicate that disruption to lessons through misbehaviour is never a problem. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue and they feel very safe at school. They have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and use learning resources sensibly with very good consideration for their own and other people's safety. Attendance and punctuality are extremely good, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of learning. Much work in personal development (PD) lessons and through the school's specialist teaching assistant results in pupils developing excellent strategies to manage their anger and emotions.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely effective. Personal, social, health and citizenship education, personal development lessons, assemblies, educational visits and interactions with visitors make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Raising self-confidence and self-esteem lies at the heart of the school's work. Every opportunity is taken to praise, reward and value pupils for their achievements, outstanding attitudes and behaviour. Consequently, pupils realise their full potential as learners. Pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They often discuss moral dilemmas and issues such as respect and human rights, in a moral context with their teachers in various lessons. Pupils give very well-argued points of view about religious clothing and symbols, saying for example that everyone has the right to dress as they wish, so long as it is lawful. Pupils develop remarkable social skills and form excellent relationships with others. They have many opportunities to mix with members of the wider community, for example, through participating in the local youth club's after-school activities. Pupils are courteous, polite and rightly proud of their achievements. They

make a strong contribution to the wider community. For example, pupils support many charities and give up much of their free time as volunteers in the organisation and distribution of food parcels for needy people. The school provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in the community. For example, pupils learn about the monarchy, parliament and democracy. There is no evidence that any political views are presented to pupils in an unbalanced way. Cultural development is excellent. Pupils appreciate cultural diversity and take a laudable stance over issues such as stereotyping, discrimination and narrow-mindedness. They have a well-developed knowledge of their own and other cultures in Great Britain and the wider world.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. This ensures that pupils learn and achieve as well as they can. Individual lessons are never less than good and most are outstanding. This is the case in all subjects. Teachers know the pupils' prior attainment and special educational needs, and pay attention to their preferred learning styles very closely. This helps them to plan lessons which match pupils' needs. Teaching methods and learning activities are fully effective, offering high levels of challenge to pupils. Teachers use very imaginative teaching strategies which engage pupils successfully and capture their interest from the outset. Interventions are sharply focused and teachers work very closely with other adults in the classroom. The teaching of reading, writing, communication, mathematics and ICT skills is very strong. It is planned for and taught very effectively across the curriculum in different subjects. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. They check pupils' understanding throughout lessons with very good questioning skills which ensures that pupils work hard and learn to think for themselves. The pace of work is very good and teachers use time and learning resources wisely. A very good example of teaching was seen in an English lesson. Pupils were very excited as they watched a very amusing video on the electronic whiteboard on how not to make a presentation as part of their accreditation studies. Pupils then discussed the right way to make a presentation and could hardly wait to role-play and develop their own presentations. Writing and ICT-based tasks rounded off this excellent period of learning.

Very thorough initial assessment of pupils' skills is followed by regular assessments and records of achievement are regularly updated by teachers. Subsequent teaching is modified where required. A very strong feature of teaching is the opportunity provided for pupils to self assess and then to write down their achievements on a daily basis. Verbal feedback from teachers on pupils' performance is very effective. Teachers also provide useful feedback on how to improve through marking workbooks and frequent progress reports to parents and carers.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum and other activities are outstanding. This ensures that pupils' needs are met very closely and helps them to achieve extremely well. The school's curriculum provides a sparkling array of very appealing and enjoyable experiences, enabling pupils to make excellent progress in their academic and personal development. Opportunities to develop and practise reading, writing, communication, mathematical and ICT skills are the cornerstone of the school's curriculum and activities. There are many opportunities to gain accreditation. These include Functional Skills in English, mathematics and ICT as well as Entry Level and GCSE awards in many different subjects. Other accreditation opportunities include personal, social, independence and basic first aid skills. Schemes of work are very detailed and enable pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, to be suitably challenged in their learning. Pupils are provided with excellent guidance and support in order to make important choices about further education and careers. For example, a Connexions officer regularly attends the school and works with pupils. Extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visitors make a strong contribution to learning. Pupils regularly participate in local youth club activities and visit different places of worship. They frequently receive coaching in different sports through sports centres and especially

enjoy activities such as rock-climbing and go-karting. Watching performances of choir-singing in the community are also regular events. Visitors include providers of music tuition, for example, in playing drums and percussion instruments.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Arrangements for pupils' welfare, health, safety and safeguarding are outstanding. All of the regulations in these regards are met and the school has effectively implemented all of the required policies. Policies are very detailed and this ensures that staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders monitor their implementation and review the effectiveness of policies on a regular basis. All staff and the proprietors are highly committed to pupils' well-being and consider this to be of paramount importance. Day-to-day care, guidance and support are extremely good and the school works very closely with external agencies. Safeguarding policies are effective. Arrangements for staff recruitment are of a high standard. The school carries out all of the required checks to ensure that all adults in school are suitable to work with children and these are recorded as required on a single central register. All staff are trained to the required standard regarding child protection; this includes the designated officer. Four staff are fully trained in administering first aid. Fire risk assessments and evacuation drills are carried out regularly. Electrical equipment is tested as required. A robust policy is in place to eliminate bullying and this is effective. The school proactively promotes healthy living and encourages pupils to adopt practices that assure their safety. Pupils feel that staff care for them very much and value them as unique individuals. They say that as a result, they make very strong friendships with others, are happy and take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. Parents and carers have confidence in the school's procedures for welfare, health and safety and comments include 'staff are always there for me and my child.'

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school's leaders deserve immense credit for their successful pursuit of excellence and for how quickly they have established an outstanding school. Parents and carers are delighted with the quality of education and care provided. For example, comments include 'we can't praise the school highly enough, our child is learning and developing as well as is possible, making new friends, trying new activities and achieving wonderfully well'. The effectiveness of the school's work is very clear and can be seen in pupils' extremely good achievement, behaviour and personal development. The centre manager works very hard with his team of dedicated staff to ensure that pupils receive the very best education. Everyone shares a unity of purpose. Self-evaluation is insightful and accurate. School improvement is based on a secure understanding of the school's performance and the individual needs of pupils. Modesty alone has prevented the school from recording the many improvements it has made to its educational provision since it registered. Leaders now recognise that it is important to take stock of all the improvements and are in the process of resolving this in order to better focus on the remaining improvements. The outstanding curriculum ensures that pupils receive a very thorough grounding in key areas of learning including communication, literacy, mathematical and ICT skills development. The school provides many rich and memorable experiences which have a very strong impact on pupils' behaviour and also contributes outstandingly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The leadership of teaching is very effective and many improvements are evident as a result of the close and regular evaluations which take place. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are strong. Consequently, teaching is never less than good and usually outstanding. The trustees hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance through frequent meetings and reporting requirements. The school's excellent premises and accommodation are very well maintained. The school meets all of the requirements regarding the provision of information for parents, carers and others and for the complaints procedures. The proprietors have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138597
Inspection number	420263
DfE registration number	876/6014

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special Day school for pupils with autism
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hope Corner Community Church Trust
Chair	Mark Finch
Centre Manager	Reverend Darrell Tunningley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,000
Telephone number	01928 580860
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