

Hope House School

Barnby Road, Newark, NG24 3NE

Inspection dates	11–13 February 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils make good progress from low starting points in a short time.
- Teaching which creates a calm learning environment and meets the identified needs of pupils ensures that they make good progress.
- The curriculum gives pupils the opportunity to succeed, particularly by building on their own strengths and interests.
- Pupils' improving behaviour is the result of good personal development and, in particular, their engagement with the animal unit.
- Leaders and managers have established good policy and practice to monitor teaching quality. This has been instrumental in bringing about improving in the school since the last inspection.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Assessment procedures do not yet provide evidence of pupils' sustained long-term achievement.
- Schemes of work are not clear enough about the personalised focus of teaching and learning.

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

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons. Discussions were held with the director, the head of education, the head of the animal unit, key teaching staff and support staff.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the standards for independent schools. He viewed a wide range of documentation including policies, schemes of work, data on pupils' performance, pupils' work and information for parents and carers.
- There were no responses available to Ofsted's Parent View and 14 questionnaires were returned by staff.

Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hope House is an independent special day school for up to ten boys and girls between the ages of five and 16 years who have autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils also have additional needs which often include behaviour and moderate learning difficulties.
- The school, set in open countryside near Newark in Nottinghamshire, is a registered charity with a board of directors and a board of representatives. The school has extensive grounds and accommodation. Buildings have been refurbished for school use, including outbuildings to accommodate practical sessions in animal care.
- There are currently nine boys on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. A number of other children with autism, and their siblings, attend grant funded after-school clubs across the week. Pupils from a local primary school regularly visit the animal unit.
- The school's work is supported by an educational consultant, therapists and peripatetic teachers, where necessary.
- The school's aim is 'to provide a caring and calm environment where everyone feels valued, secure and able to learn'.
- The school opened in 2007 and had its first inspection in January 2010, when the quality of education was judged to be satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the assessment information to provide further evidence of pupils' long-term achievement, to inform lesson planning and to motivate pupils.
- Revise schemes of work to take greater account of the personalised nature of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good. From low starting points, pupils' progress in English and mathematics at least meets national expectations and often exceeds them. Some pupils demonstrate good skills in mental arithmetic. Older pupils are on track to gain qualifications through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and in adult literacy. This progress is a result of good teaching and good provision for pupils' personal development which increases their self-confidence and skills, such as in decision making. Pupils learn well because activities are planned and delivered for each individual. Pupils may lack the confidence to read to an adult but make good progress when reading to Honey, the school's Labrador dog. Progress is often linked to activities the pupils enjoy, for example calculating and measuring the amount of food for one of the school's animals. A pupil with communication difficulties has given excellent presentations when taking a barn owl to visit the residents of local nursing homes. Each pupil is well known by a teaching assistant who understands his needs and is able to ensure that the pupil is ready to learn. Pupils' work shows that their learning is moving forwards; it is well-marked and also discussed with them. Pupils achieve well when work is competitive; they enjoyed a competition to put on their safety equipment for a climbing lesson in which good learning was taking place.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They come to Hope House with a history of aggressive behaviour which has often resulted in exclusion from other schools. Staff understand the pupils on an individual level and know that each individual has different needs. Taking advice from therapists and the pupils' statements of special educational needs, they use the transition period at the beginning of the day to get pupils ready to learn. For example, a pupil who has a long journey by car is able to have a period of strenuous activity in a soft room before settling down to work. During this period, others choose their own activity; adults do not select these activities, they support when asked. Behaviour in lessons can sometimes be challenging. The response from adults is consistent and is always based on restoring a calm atmosphere. The need to manage actual and potential aggression (MAPA) with physical restraint is rare. Pupils' work with the school's animals plays an important role in creating this calm atmosphere. All the school staff agree that behaviour is good and recognise the progress pupils have made in managing it. Pupils' attendance is high and punctuality is good.

Pupils' personal development is based on restoring self-confidence and building self-esteem. Pupils with autism may be wary of strangers and the general public. In preparing them for life after school, staff realise the importance of breaking down these barriers. Therefore, pupils go on visits to places of interest and receive visitors in school. Progress is slow but positive. One pupil is now spending two sessions a week working in a local café which employs people with disabilities. The school is preparing to cultivate fruit and vegetables and set up a business to sell this produce to the local community. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs. They have partner schools in Europe and Africa; they have studied the Holocaust and the story of Anne Frank, celebrated Diwali and the Chinese new year. They know about public services, including the local hospital and college. Pupils recently attended an environmental planning meeting with local government officers, gaining insight to public services and organisations.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is good. It is well planned and resourced, and provides a variety of activities which create a positive climate for learning and keep pupils engaged. Some lessons are based on planning for individual pupils; others are delivered to the whole group, with the individual support coming from teaching assistants. Teaching and individual support ensures that pupils achieve well. Teachers

have high expectations and assess pupils' progress step-by-step during the lesson. They challenge pupils to progress to the next step. They use praise well and include basic skills in other learning activities. In preparation for a visit to a climbing wall, pupils were taught about safety helmets. They fully understood and could explain the types of helmets they had seen and why some offered better protection. Their concentration was outstanding. Teachers skilfully develop pupils' personal interests and use their enthusiasm to make good progress in basic skills and other subjects that they can relate to the topic.

Recent developments in assessment are beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. Pupils are tracked according to the school's framework and practice based on National Curriculum levels and 'P' scales. New information is entered throughout the school year and can produce reports at any time. The previous lack of baseline data on entry is being remedied so that pupils' progress can be assessed over a longer period. The information is not yet being fully used to plan lessons or to motivate pupils.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs. It is broadly based on the National Curriculum and covers all the areas of learning required by the regulations. Schemes of work are in place but are generic and do not always reflect the highly personalised curriculum delivered to pupils. The curriculum is not focused on pupils' ages as much as on their interests and needs. It provides opportunities for pupils to practise and develop activities in which they excel, or have a strong interest. Pupils work towards qualifications in adult literacy and functional skills and through ASDAN in such areas as animal welfare, food hygiene and rock climbing. The school always respond to a pupil's specific needs. In this way, careers education is delivered by introducing a pupil into the work environment, which teaches them how to respond to instructions and deal with the public in a service context.

Much emphasis is placed on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop growing self-confidence and self-esteem from the success they find in the wider curriculum. The animal unit is a particularly valuable and successful part of the curriculum. Pupils establish relationships with the animals which help to further develop their self-confidence; they enjoy success in working with the animals and in the opportunities it provides to improve their learning in other areas such as basic skills. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong; they may sometimes do wrong but are able to recognise the impact of their actions. Staff understand the reasons for pupils' behaviour, always resolving difficulties in a calm manner. Pupils interact well with the community, although many come to school from further afield. They enjoy a range of visits, have developed a partnership with the local primary school, raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund and have been to a local agricultural college to make cheese.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. All the independent school regulations are met. One of the directors has specific responsibility for this area of the school's work. The single central register of the checks on staff suitability to work with children meets requirements and the Principal has current accreditation in safe recruitment practice. Safeguarding training at the appropriate level is up-to-date for all staff, including the designated person. All the required policies, including statutory guidance as required, are in place and implemented. The school's procedures for dealing with and eliminating bullying are well implemented. Risk assessments are in place for activities in the school, on educational visits and in practical lessons as appropriate, including specific policy and practice for the animal unit. Fire safety and first aid provision, including relevant training, are in place and all welfare, health and safety policies are reviewed regularly. Pupils are trained to follow good practice in e-safety in keeping with the school's policy. All staff are trained in food hygiene. Fire prevention equipment and portable electrical appliances are maintained and tested as

required. Adults supervise pupils well throughout the day and during their arrival and departure. There is always an adult nearby if they need help. Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. Staff who returned questionnaires agree with this view. All staff receive MAPA training and incidents are carefully documented. Pupils understand risk and are able to respond appropriately. Parents and carers believe that their children are safe at the school.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. The proprietors have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. There is a board of directors, a board of representatives and a leadership team. Every board member has a particular responsibility in the areas of school leadership. All these groups have an accurate understanding of the school's progress and display high ambition for its continuing development. A recent restructuring of the leadership team has resulted in significant improvement in the school's understanding of pupils' progress. All staff have confidence in the leadership of the school and its ambition for further development. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and developing assessment processes, together with a good curriculum designed to meet the specific needs of the pupils. Approaches to improving behaviour are based on a calm and understanding approach. The drive to give pupils increased self-confidence and self-esteem is at the heart of the school's ethos and direction.

The school is based in refurbished premises which provide a spacious, well-equipped learning environment and with extensive grounds which support the extended curriculum. Pupils benefit significantly from individual programmes of work experience and other connections with the community. The management of staff performance is good and staff engage in a relevant programme of training and development. The school demonstrates good practice in assuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils. It provides information for parents and a procedure for handling complaints, both of which fully meet the regulations. The good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is giving pupils increasing self-confidence and self-esteem as a basis for taking their place in society. Parents and carers are provided with annual reports on pupils' achievements and the school provides reports for reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs.

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	135393
Inspection number	440222
DfE registration number	891/6032

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	Independent Special Day
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hope House School Ltd
Chair	Mr T Hill
Principal	Mrs T A Westmoreland
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,753
Telephone number	01636 700380 and 0798 417 6373
Email address	enquiries@hopehouseschool.co.uk

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