

Hope House School

Barnby Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 3NE

Inspection dates

25–27 April 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Sixth form provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior staff provide effective leadership that enables staff to teach well and to develop pupils' confidence successfully.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and most pupils achieve well. Provision has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress, from mostly low starting points. A number of pupils make excellent progress in individual subjects and aspects of their learning.
- The curriculum for post-16 students enables them to reinforce their learning in English and mathematics and to extend their qualifications and experiences in work-related learning.
- The school implements its safeguarding arrangements meticulously. Staff ensure that pupils are safe and increasingly confident in their enjoyment of the school's facilities and curriculum.
- The school has improved its premises, staffing and curriculum considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning experiences, including excellent, extended animal care facilities.
- The school makes outstanding provision for the personal development, and increased independence of pupils and post-16 students.
- Pupils, who have had negative previous experiences of, and responses to, education, improve their attitudes and behaviour significantly.
- Teaching staff demonstrate patience and determination that all pupils will experience success. Occasionally, they do not have sufficient understanding of how to use assessment criteria to challenge pupils to make the best progress of which they are capable.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of learning and outcomes requires improvement.
- The board of directors provides effective support and encouragement to the headteacher and staff. However, they do not have sufficient educational expertise to ensure that senior leaders evaluate all aspects of the school's provision and outcomes rigorously.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide regular training for staff to ensure that they have a secure knowledge and understanding of:
 - the content of the subjects they teach
 - the level of challenge required to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress
 - the assessment criteria used to assess pupils' progress in individual subjects.
- Improve senior leaders' evaluation of learning and outcomes across the school to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Strengthen arrangements for governance to ensure greater challenge in the evaluation of the school's provision and outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- The headteacher demonstrates outstanding commitment and dedication to meeting the needs of pupils with autism. The headteacher, leaders and staff share high expectations for what can be achieved by pupils who enter the school with low starting points. They present effective role models and exemplary ambition for pupils to succeed.
- Senior leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. In particular, they have improved arrangements for the assessment of pupils' achievement and planning for further learning. The curriculum has been developed successfully to provide creative and stimulating experiences which encourage pupils to behave well and work hard.
- The staff have an excellent focus on the needs of individual pupils. The school evaluates the curriculum and day-to-day planning continuously and ensures that an appropriate emphasis is given to the next stage of learning for each individual pupil.
- All those parents that submitted a response to the inspection questionnaire agree that their child is happy and safe at the school; almost all agree that their child is taught well and makes good progress.
- The staff, in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, strongly agree that they are proud to be members of staff at the school and that the school is well led and managed.
- The school implements effective arrangements for managing the performance of staff. These include regular opportunities for staff training in essential requirements, such as safeguarding, first aid, and the management of behaviour. A number of staff also benefit from opportunities to improve their personal qualifications through externally accredited routes.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. There are no barriers to success and all pupils enjoy access to all that the school has to offer. All staff contribute to planned opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils are made aware of fundamental British values and these are evident in displays around the school and events planned for pupils.
- Pupils have access to an outstanding range of clubs and activities in the evenings and during school holidays. These are also attended by children from the local community and provide good opportunities to further improve pupils' social and emotional development.
- The school's focus on meeting individual needs is exemplary. However, leaders' lack a comprehensive analysis of whole-school outcomes. Consequently, pupils' planned targets are not always sufficiently challenging to lead to outstanding progress overall.

Governance

- The school's governance arrangements include oversight by the board of directors who carry the main responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the school's provision.

- The directors are extremely supportive of the work of the school and they meet regularly to review, for example, the management of finances, the premises and accommodation, staff recruitment and admission arrangements for pupils. They have supported the recent growth and development of the school effectively.
- The directors have a good understanding of the school's safeguarding arrangements and ensure that these reflect statutory guidance.
- The directors have limited expertise in education, including the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and progress. Consequently, they provide limited scrutiny of the school's outcomes and insufficient challenge to the headteacher and staff.
- The directors are aware of their limitations and have taken recent steps to increase their capacity. The directors have not yet implemented these new proposed arrangements and their impact cannot be evaluated.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has prepared an up-to-date policy for safeguarding which has regard to the latest statutory guidance. This policy is available to parents through the school's website.
- The school provides an extremely safe environment for all pupils. Access to the school grounds and to the premises is monitored effectively and levels of supervision are high.
- All staff, including the designated leads for safeguarding, are trained in safeguarding to the standards required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff receive regular refresher training, including updated awareness of issues such as e-safety, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- All staff are very aware of the potential risks to which pupils may be exposed. The school has established effective working relationships with parents and with a range of appropriate external agencies to ensure the well-being of pupils.

Material change request

- The school is unlikely to meet all the relevant independent school standards if the material change to increase the age range to 25 is implemented. The school has not provided sufficient information about:
 - policies, plans and schemes of work to demonstrate how the extended six-year curriculum will prepare vulnerable young adults for independent, or supported independent living and employment
 - how the safeguarding of all members of the school community will be ensured. In particular, how the separation of current pupils and young adults in the proposed new age range will be achieved
 - the experience and expertise of staff who will provide for the proposed extended age range, or any recruitment requirements to ensure suitable expertise
 - whether the extension of the school's age range will require an increase in the school's registered capacity.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good quality of teaching and learning results from the dedication of teaching staff and their willingness to constantly evaluate and improve their practice. They ensure that tasks and activities are continuously matched to the specific learning needs and characteristics of each individual pupil. The majority of pupils learn effectively through the one-to-one support and guidance provided by staff.
- Staff base the tasks and activities prepared for each pupil on the assessment of their previous work and learning. The school has prepared schemes of work for each subject taught and these are adapted to ensure that previous learning is reinforced and consolidated and new knowledge and understanding introduced to extend each pupil's learning.
- Staff have developed strong, positive relationships with pupils. Pupils trust their teachers. Staff set appropriate boundaries for pupils' behaviour and ensure that they implement these sensitively and consistently.
- Teaching staff provide sufficient time for pupils to reinforce and consolidate previous learning before presenting new challenges. They maintain continuous dialogue with pupils and extend their understanding through effective questioning, for example when comparing the book and film of 'Charlie and the chocolate factory', or when researching cyber bullying and its impact on victims.
- Pupils are aware of their successes and respond well to encouragement to improve and develop their work.
- Teaching staff place an appropriate emphasis on pupils' writing and electronic recording, matched appropriately to individual needs. Pupils also develop good skills in the use of computers for research and selection of resources, such as 'finding cafes and restaurants in my community', when working towards nationally assessed awards.
- Key stage 4 pupils, working in a group, completed effective research as they considered plans for the future, such as: Where can I study? courses I am interested in; and what qualifications do I need? All pupils were willing to ask questions, sustained their concentration and engaged in conversations with staff.
- Non-verbal pupils use picture exchange, signs and symbols effectively to assist them with their communication. Staff combine opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and emotional stability, together with their academic learning. Pupils enjoy aromatherapy or foot massage where this helps to create the right conditions to promote their concentration and engagement.
- Staff use imaginative approaches to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. These include opportunities for reluctant readers to read to the school's dogs in a calm and sensitive environment, or develop their sense of space and number sequences through structured horse-riding lessons.
- Pupils are mostly keen to learn and they sustain their concentration well once they have overcome initial anxieties and developed trusting relationships with adults in the school community.
- Pupils have good opportunities to research and find out for themselves through off-site activities that reinforce their learning in everyday contexts, such as shopping for

ingredients for cooking.

- Staff make excellent use of the school farm animals to provide a therapeutic environment for anxious or distressed pupils, to develop their knowledge of animal husbandry and to provide activities to develop literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Pupils enjoy opportunities to collect and count hen's eggs, to weigh and measure feeds for horses, pigs or goats, or to observe the eating habits of a barn owl.
- Staff assess pupils' progress across a number of subjects based on descriptions of learning outcomes. These procedures are mostly used effectively by teachers and teaching assistants.
- As a result of the number of adults involved in teaching and assessment, some staff require additional training in the content of the subjects they teach, and the use of assessment descriptors, to ensure that pupils' targets and outcomes are always sufficiently challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enter the school with fractured previous experiences of education; they are often uncertain or anxious and may take considerable time to adjust to new relationships with adults. Staff are resilient and persistent in finding the correct strategies to engage each individual pupil so that they develop well both academically and in their personal development.
- Pupils demonstrate outstanding improvements in their self-confidence, socialisation and attitudes to learning. They learn to take a pride in their achievements and to understand when they are successful.
- Staff have high expectations of the progress that pupils can make in their relationships with others and their engagement in learning. Staff are extremely patient and understanding about pupils' individual circumstances. Their tireless efforts to support and encourage pupils have a very positive impact on their ability to form positive relationships.
- Pupils are extremely safe in school and benefit from good opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe in school and in the wider community. All pupils learn about e-safety and about how to live healthy lives.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils with previously poor behaviour, and the inability to adjust to the demands of school, make excellent progress with their ability to manage their reactions and behaviour in school. Those who have attended for some time demonstrate sustained improvements in their behaviour.
- Staff are skilled in managing behaviour and enabling pupils to address their anxieties. They have established a welcoming and calm environment. Staff are very good at helping to reduce individual stress levels and to promote cooperation.

- Pupils demonstrate very little off-task behaviour and are not distracted by others. They work diligently on the tasks set and give of their best at all times. Staff have a consistent approach to the management of any incidents; they encourage pupils to find alternative strategies to overcome concerns, including time-out to visit the animals.
- Pupils' overall attendance is close to the national average and shows strong improvement for the majority of pupils. Persistent absence is the exception and the school implements appropriate strategies to work with parents to overcome any individual refusal to attend. Pupils have very little unauthorised absence.
- Parents express considerable appreciation for the manner in which the staff understand their children and the lengths to which they go to ensure that everyone feels comfortable at school and able to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Almost all pupils are achieving below the expected standard for their age when they enter the school. The majority have had negative experiences of school which have restricted their ability to learn successfully.
- Overall, pupils make good progress over time from their various starting points. A number of pupils make excellent progress in aspects of their learning, for example in their ability to read with understanding.
- The school's current arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements and progress are relatively new. These arrangements are leading to increasingly reliable judgements about the extent and pace of pupils' progress and their level of attainment.
- Pupils make good progress with their ability to work independently and to develop effective learning skills. Non-verbal pupils make good progress in developing their communication through picture exchange and signing. They learn to communicate their needs and understanding and, increasingly, to interpret communications by staff.
- Pupils increasingly achieve success in externally accredited courses, including entry level and Levels 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy awards. A small number demonstrate the potential to succeed with foundation level GCSE; in these cases, the school makes appropriate provision for the extension of their learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at a rate comparable with pupils of similar prior attainment. A number exceed this and gradually begin to close the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils make good progress with their reading. For some, this demonstrates good ability to recognise words and to decode them appropriately. Not all pupils experience the same success with their ability to understand the depth of meaning in the text. Others enjoy reading for pleasure, including the ability to find things out for themselves through individual research.
- Attainment in English and mathematics remains below the expected standard for their age but shows continuous improvement.
- The majority of pupils make good progress in their use of information technology, the development of life skills and preparation for life in the wider community.
- The school has recently extended the curriculum to include increasingly systematic

learning in science and humanities subjects. Staff require further training to ensure that learning and assessment opportunities are implemented accurately and consistently across the school.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The school's post-16 provision enables students to effectively extend and consolidate the learning experienced at key stage 4. The majority of students require additional time to achieve additional qualifications and awards in literacy, numeracy, life skills and preparation for working life.
- The provision for post-16 students reflects the strengths in the good leadership, teaching and learning for pupils throughout the whole school. Staff demonstrate the same commitment to ensure that each student has the opportunity to build on their earlier successes.
- Students have excellent opportunities to enhance their individual life skills. They help to maintain the gardens, to keep the post-16 accommodation clean and tidy, and they develop their independence skills by cooking in the kitchen.
- Students also continue with achieving accreditation in functional skills, literacy and numeracy, for example improving the accuracy of capital letters, full stops and grammar in their written work.
- The majority are achieving at standards well below the expected standard for their age, but they continue to make good progress and to work towards external accreditation. A small number of students undertake successful work experience or work-related learning that will enable them to take up employment or community-based service in the future. All are making progress towards independent, or assisted independent living in the future.
- A small number of students have made exceptional progress towards five higher-grade GCSE awards in a very short time. Although no students have yet moved on from the post-16 provision, the school is enabling students to achieve at levels beyond their expectations on entry to the school.
- The school, working together with local careers advisory services, provides high-quality advice and guidance for students as they prepare for the transition to further education and training. The majority will need continued support, education and training as they move into adulthood.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135393 |
| DfE registration number | 891/6032 |
| Inspection number | 10026051 |

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.

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| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 25 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 4 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Hope House School Limited |
| Headteacher | Terri Westmoreland |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £23,000–£74,000 |
| Telephone number | 01636 700380 |
| Website | www.hopehouseschool.co.uk |
| Email address | enquiries@hopehouseschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 11–13 February 2014 |

Information about this school

- Hope House School is an independent day special school for boys and girls aged five to 19 years. Pupils admitted to the school have autistic spectrum conditions. The majority also have additional needs, including 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 educational use, including outbuildings and grounds, which accommodate farm animals and ponies that

provide therapeutic and animal care experiences for pupils.

- There are currently 25 pupils on the school roll, almost all of whom have an education, health and care plan. The premises are also used to provide evening and holiday clubs and activities for children from the school and the local community.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school aims 'to provide a caring and calm environment where everyone feels valued, secure and able to learn'.
- The school's previous inspection was in February 2014 when the quality of provision was judged good. At that time, the school admitted pupils in the age range five to 16 years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the full age range of the school, including pupils working with animals on the school farm. He scrutinised examples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects.
- The inspector held discussions with representatives of the board of directors, the headteacher, senior leaders and additional members of staff. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire submitted by 42 members of staff.
- The inspector took account of the views of 12 parents, including 10 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. He also held informal conversations with a number of pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to consider an application from the school to make a material change. The school has applied to the DfE to extend the upper age range of the school to admit learners up to the age of 25 years.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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