

# Magdalen Court School

Victoria Park Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4NU

## Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of how the school is performing. They have not ensured that the independent school standards are met. Leaders' capacity to improve the school is weak.
- Leaders lack the knowledge needed to drive improvements across the school. They are unsure about what is expected of them to raise standards in their subjects. There is an over-reliance on external support.
- Leaders do not hold teachers to account for the quality of teaching and learning and the standards pupils achieve. Pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching does not meet the needs of pupils. It does not take account of what pupils know, can do and understand. Work set is often too easy and does not challenge pupils to achieve well and make good progress. As a result, progress is inadequate.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is weak. Activities do not meet their needs and teachers do not deploy support staff effectively.
- Assessments across the school are inaccurate. Leaders do not ensure that staff have the skills to assess pupils' achievement and progress. Leaders and teachers do not know if pupils are making progress.
- The school's curriculum is narrow and does not enable pupils to learn effectively across a range of subjects. Many subjects are not taught, including their understanding of other cultures. Consequently, pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are weak and their work is often poorly presented.
- Attendance is well below national averages. Leaders' actions have not improved attendance.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils who have had poor prior experiences in other schools settle in quickly at this school.
- Leaders have clear systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils feel safe as a result.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - trustees urgently establish processes for systematically checking the school’s effectiveness against the independent school standards
  - trustees hold school leaders stringently to account and develop the skills required to check the accuracy of the school’s self-assessment
  - staff and leaders receive high-quality professional development in order to support them in their roles
  - expectations of what pupils can achieve are significantly raised
  - leaders put in place a thorough programme of monitoring which checks the impact teaching has on improving pupils’ progress
  - senior leaders hold teachers rigorously to account for the performance of all groups of pupils
  - leaders develop systems to check the accuracy and robustness of the school’s assessment information
  - middle leaders develop the skills, knowledge and understanding required to fulfil their roles effectively
  - poor teaching is tackled swiftly and effectively
  - attendance rises for all pupils so that it more closely matches the national average
  - pupils learn about other cultures and religions to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that pupils achieve well and make good progress, by ensuring that:
  - staff have the highest expectations of what all pupils, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, can achieve
  - teachers plan work to meet the needs of pupils within each class and which provides appropriate challenge and support to enable pupils to make at least good progress
  - pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive the support they require to address gaps in their learning
  - teachers assess accurately what pupils can do and align this with age-related expectations
  - staff receive high-quality training to enable them to develop their skills in planning and delivering lessons to meet the needs of all pupils effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders preside over a culture of low expectations. They have prioritised the management of pupils' behaviour at the expense of improving the quality of education across the school. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is weak and pupils' outcomes are inadequate.
- Leaders have an inaccurate understanding of the school's performance. They do not have the knowledge and skills, particularly in the primary school, to be able to provide an acceptable quality of education. Leaders do not know how to improve outcomes without relying on external support. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate with no sign of improvement.
- The roles and responsibilities of school leaders are unclear and cause confusion. This has resulted in insufficient action to improve standards and a clear lack of accountability. In turn, this has led to a rapid decline in standards which has gone unnoticed.
- Leaders do not check the quality of teaching with rigour. Consequently, leaders have not identified the poor quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Where leaders do identify a particular weakness, they do not act upon it. As a result, leaders have an inaccurate view of the school's current performance and the standards pupils achieve.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is ineffective. Leaders have implemented an assessment system in an attempt to improve progress across the school. However, this system is not effective. Teachers and leaders do not know if pupils are making progress. As a result, leaders have no understanding of pupils' progress across the school.
- Leaders do not have an accurate oversight of how funding is used to support pupils who have an education, health and care plan. They cannot demonstrate the impact that funding has had on these pupils, except on improving pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils who have education, health and care plans do not make good progress and this goes unnoticed by leaders and staff.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils access a broad curriculum that meets their needs. Across the school there are significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, pupils achieve weak outcomes, particularly in religious education, personal, social, and health education, history and geography.
- Leaders do not provide effective training and professional development for staff. In some cases, staff are unable to carry out their roles effectively and say that they require more training in order for them to do so. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Leaders have low expectations of pupils. In an attempt to appease pupils and avoid disruption, leaders and staff prefer to give pupils work which is too easy and provides little challenge. This has resulted in poor teaching and inadequate progress. These low expectations are evident in every classroom and pupils' academic achievement is given less priority than behaviour management.
- Leaders have placed great emphasis on pupils undertaking their GCSE exams early in a narrow range of subjects. As a result, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not experience a rich curriculum. This approach results in substantial gaps in their understanding and

pupils are unprepared for the next stage of their education.

- Leaders have developed a school environment for pupils which is safe and takes into account their emotional needs. Pupils who have had poor prior experiences in other schools settle and behave well. Parents and pupils value the difference this has made.

## **Governance**

- Trustees do not have an accurate view of the school's performance. They take great pains to ensure that pupils who have had unsuccessful experiences in other settings settle and achieve well in their personal development. However, trustees do not focus on checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, leaders have demonstrated little impact on improving poor teaching and learning. Actions taken to improve the school are ineffective.
- Trustees place great emphasis on the GCSE results achieved at the time that the majority of pupils leave the school. However, they do not have the information they need about the progress that pupils make while in the school. They do not know if pupils reach the standards they are capable of in a range of subjects and year groups.
- Trustees have not ensured that leaders and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, the poor performance of teachers and the weak progress pupils make go unchecked.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a robust recruitment process and only employ staff who are suitable to work with children. Once employed, staff receive a comprehensive induction as well as regular updates. Consequently, staff know how to fulfil their roles in keeping pupils safe and pass on any concerns to those responsible for safeguarding in the school.
- Leaders keep detailed chronologies of the actions they take to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. They are vigilant in their approach to ensure that they take effective action when needed. Leaders make timely referrals to external agencies and share concerns appropriately to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe online. They are familiar with key strategies to make sure that their online experiences are positive. Leaders have placed great emphasis on promoting e-safety across the school.
- Pupils feel safe. They speak confidently about how they can share any worries they might have with adults and know they will be listened to. Leaders have also ensured that pupils can pass on their concerns in a variety of ways. This includes the use of an internet tool, suiting those pupils who find it more difficult to speak about their worries.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Inadequate**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate because it does not meet the specific and identified needs of the pupils. Planning does not take account of what pupils know, understand and can do. Where classes contain mixed-aged pupils, there is no consideration given to the standards pupils should achieve for their age. As a result,

teaching does not build on prior knowledge and pupils make inadequate progress.

- Teachers do not assess pupils' achievements accurately. Teachers do not have up-to-date or consistent approaches to assessing pupils' achievements and the standards they reach across the school. As a result, work set is too easy for most pupils and does not provide the stretch and challenge, and particularly for the most able, to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to apply and practise their writing skills across a range of subjects particularly in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Work in pupils' books confirms that they do not make good progress in their writing.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive effective support. Although staff support pupils to make good progress in their personal development, they do not provide the support in their academic work to ensure that they achieve well.
- Pupils do not make good progress in their understanding and use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In some cases, pupils' workbooks show that they have made little or no progress, but this goes unnoticed. Consequently, pupils do not acquire the skills they need to learn to write effectively.
- In mathematics, teachers do not plan learning which builds pupils' skills and understanding. The tasks set are not successful in developing pupils' fluency or problem-solving skills. Consequently, pupils fall behind and do not catch up or reach the standards they are capable of.
- The school's approach to the teaching of reading is ineffective. Where teachers assess pupils as 'free-readers' they are left to manage their own book choices and the amount of time they spend on reading. As a result, pupils often choose books which are not suitable or do not support them to develop their reading skills effectively.
- The quality of teaching in the Reception class is inadequate. Staff do not have the training needed to deliver an early years curriculum. As a result, pupils are not well supported and do not make progress to prepare them well for key stage 1.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Pupils do not demonstrate pride in their work. Teachers accept work which is poorly presented. As a result, pupils' workbooks are scruffy in appearance and the standard of presentation does not improve over time.
- Most pupils do as the teachers ask but carry out the activities with little engagement, enthusiasm or involvement. As a result, their academic development is not well supported and they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Pupils have little understanding of how to be successful learners. They are unsure of how to make progress or how to judge whether they have been successful in lessons. As a result, pupils do not engage fully with lessons. Teachers encourage them to celebrate successes that are too easy to achieve and which are not meaningful for the pupils.
- Pupils have limited access to careers information. They are poorly equipped for life

outside the school and do not know what qualifications they need to undertake a particular career pathway.

- Pupils have not been taught how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, they have a limited understanding of other cultures. This is due to a poorly designed curriculum that fails to provide pupils with a well-rounded education and an understanding of other cultures and religions. Consequently, they are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance is well below national averages. Although it shows some sign of improvement, leaders have not acted swiftly to secure substantial improvements. As a result, pupils miss too much school, which goes unchallenged.
- Pupils conduct themselves appropriately around the school. They demonstrate courtesy and respect for members of the school community. They walk calmly around the school and behave well at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Consequently, the school is a calm, orderly environment. However, as a result of a lack of challenge in their lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are not sufficiently strong.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Inadequate**

- Pupils make inadequate progress from their starting points. In some cases, pupils make no progress and do not achieve the standards expected for their age. Lessons planned fail to meet the needs of a significant proportion of pupils. As a result, pupils are working below age-related expectations with little sign of improvement.
- Pupils are not ready for the next stage of education. As pupils move from class to class, the gaps continue to grow between their achievement and age-related expectations. Consequently, pupils fall further behind.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive the support they need to make progress. Interventions are not well planned to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Expectations of these pupils are too low. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive a poor standard of education that takes little account of their needs and the support required.
- The school's approach for pupils to sit their GCSE examinations early is not effective. For some, this motivates them to achieve well. However, leaders have placed too much emphasis on the results achieved at the end of a pupil's school life rather than the progress they make from the start. Consequently, exam results have taken priority over high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Throughout the school, pupils have a weak understanding of how to apply spelling, punctuation and grammar rules accurately. Writing often contains multiple errors that make work difficult to read. Pupils do not develop their writing skills as they move through the school.
- The most able pupils do not receive the challenge they need to help them make good progress. Their work is too easy and limits the opportunities for them to work at the higher standards. Due to weak teaching, the most able pupils are not able to demonstrate

what they are capable of.

- Lower-ability pupils do not receive adequate support to ensure that they close the gap between their work and age-related expectations. Where pupils find the work too difficult, they fall further and further behind.
- Children in the early years make poor progress. A lack of challenge means that children do not access a broad curriculum to prepare them for Year 1. As a result, the early years provision is ineffective.

## School details

Unique reference number	113623
DfE registration number	878/6045
Inspection number	10035558

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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr and Mrs J Jenner
Chair of Trustees	Mr JHC Jenner
Principal	John Jenner
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,900–£9,450
Telephone number	01392 494 919
Website	<a href="http://www.MagdalenCourtSchool.co.uk">www.MagdalenCourtSchool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:Admin@MagdalenCourtSchool.co.uk">Admin@MagdalenCourtSchool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2016

## Information about this school

- Magdalen Court School is a co-educational, non-selective day school registered for 250 pupils aged between five and 18 years of age. Currently, there are 45 pupils on roll, aged from 5 to 18 years.
- There are a significant proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in February 2011. Since then, it has had two progress monitoring inspections, in November 2015 and November 2016.
- The school does not use alternative provision.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes across the school. The inspectors also looked at pupils' work in their books to establish the current quality of pupils' work and progress from their starting points.
- Discussions took place with the principal, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the head of trustees. In addition, the inspectors met with the school's SEN coordinator.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including school improvement plans and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- An inspector conducted a walk around the school with pupils to look at curriculum displays, the promotion of fundamental British values and to find out how they feel about their learning.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and considered 10 responses to the online survey, Parent View. There were nine staff survey responses which were also considered.

## Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Nash

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan;
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
  - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
    - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
    - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
    - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
  - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
  - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
  - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils’ work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

## **Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor—
  - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
  - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which—
    - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;

## **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].

## **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

## **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that—
  - 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State;
  - 32(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority;

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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