

Hardwick House School

190 Forest Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3HU

Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Proprietors and senior leaders promote a spirit of high expectations and individual care. This contributes strongly to pupils' excellent progress with their learning from very varied starting points, often including previous periods out of education.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding because teachers understand how pupils learn. They provide tasks and activities that challenge each pupil to achieve demanding targets and success in external examinations.
- Proprietors and school leaders manage an extremely effective programme of continuous review and improvement. Staff respond positively to opportunities for further training and to take on new responsibilities.
- Pupils with a variety of anxieties and barriers to learning make excellent progress in their personal development. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They develop greatly improved independence and self-confidence.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and effective. Parents and carers state that pupils are safe in school and pupils agree. Staff are vigilant in their attention to pupils' emotional and mental-health needs.
- Post-16 arrangements are outstanding. Students are given time, encouragement and challenge to develop greater independence. They aspire to and achieve placements in further education on leaving school.
- The most effective teaching includes a strong emphasis on visual reinforcement of concepts and ideas. This is not consistently strong across all subjects and year groups.
- Pupils and post-16 students make outstanding progress from their various starting points. Current pupils excel more in English. Their progress in mathematics and science is strong.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

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?

- Build on the school's excellence in teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that pupils' progress in mathematics and science matches the consistency of their progress in English.
- Ensure that all teachers consistently support pupils' learning by focusing on the full range of pupils' sensory needs, including their visual needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior leaders and staff share an outstanding commitment to a common vision. Pupils achieve extremely well because staff believe in them, know them well as individuals and continuously encourage them to achieve.
- Proprietors, senior leaders and staff share an unshakeable belief that each individual pupil can make outstanding progress from their personal academic, social and emotional starting points. They are extremely effective in implementing this vision.
- Staff agree that the school is well led and managed. They value the opportunities provided for regular training and discussion about how to improve teaching and ensure the well-being of all pupils. Proprietors and senior leaders ensure high levels of accountability, which are communicated effectively throughout the school. They achieve an excellent balance between high expectations and sensitivity to the personal circumstances of staff and pupils.
- All parents who completed the Ofsted inspection questionnaire agree that their child is safe, well cared for and making good progress. One parent commented, 'I truly couldn't ask for any more in such a fantastic, specialist school environment.'
- Senior leaders and staff extend and improve the curriculum in response to identified needs. Pupils have access to an increasing range of external examinations and accreditations which ensure that their individual talents and skills are recognised and rewarded.
- Staff are encouraged to continuously review their teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils. There has been considerable growth in the range of practical and vocational experiences available to pupils. Pupils have made an extensive contribution to the development of the external environment and the care of animals. The curriculum effectively combines academic and practical learning with invaluable opportunities for pupils' personal and social development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to their daily experiences throughout the curriculum. They develop mutual respect, together with an increasing awareness of the needs and feelings of others. They develop their understanding of British values and of how they may contribute to the school and wider community.
- The school implements effective arrangements to prepare pupils for the transition to further study, either at the school or elsewhere, at the end of Year 11. Staff have an excellent understanding of the challenges and anxieties associated with preparation for the next stage of their education. Pupils who require additional time to consolidate and complete their level 2 studies are able to return to the school's post-16 courses.
- All aspects of the school's organisation demonstrate a commendable commitment to equality of opportunity for pupils. Pupils' personal anxieties and uncertainties are continuously addressed and barriers to their success overcome.
- The outstanding leadership and commitment of proprietors and senior leaders demonstrate a strong capacity for continuous improvement.

Governance

- The proprietors and senior leaders demonstrate exemplary teamwork. They work successfully together to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and to plan effectively for further improvement. They, together with the staff, work tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable learners thrive and achieve.
- The proprietors have an effective, high level of involvement in the day-to-day activities of the school. They maintain continuous dialogue with senior leaders and are extremely well informed about all aspects of the school's performance. Senior leaders inform proprietors systematically through formal reports and meetings. Together they maintain an effective focus on the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' academic progress and their personal development.
- The proprietors take appropriate account of reviews and reports provided by independent partners to the school. They value the perspectives of external visitors and take these into account in all aspects of their evaluation of the school's performance.
- The proprietors and senior leaders oversee effective arrangements for the management of staff performance. Individual members of staff know their personal targets and are supported well to achieve these. Senior leaders encourage staff to continuously develop their practice and, where appropriate, to improve their personal qualifications.
- The proprietors and senior leaders maintain vigilant awareness of the independent school standards and of statutory guidance on their implementation. They have ensured that all the standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's written policy takes appropriate account of the latest government guidance. A copy of the safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website.
- Staff at all levels of responsibility demonstrate vigilance and commitment in fulfilling their responsibilities for the safety and well-being of pupils. Staff are trained to a high level to recognise the pressures and risks to which pupils may be exposed. Teachers ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to use the internet and social media safely.
- There is an open and trusting atmosphere throughout the school. Staff are alert and diligent in fulfilling their responsibilities. The school's procedures for managing concerns, maintaining appropriate records and working effectively with parents and external agencies are exemplary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They demonstrate commendable expertise in the variety of ways that they communicate and present learning to pupils with complex learning needs.
- Teachers plan work which develops pupils' understanding in gradual stages, continuously adding deeper challenges through high-quality questioning. Pupils in Year 9 and 11 English groups, for example, demonstrated profound and reflective ability to identify how

the author was using language to create atmosphere. Their initial responses were developed and extended superbly by skilful, probing questioning by the teacher.

- Teachers are sensitive to the individual emotional characteristics of different pupils. They provide sufficient time for pupils to process ideas effectively, while maintaining a brisk pace that motivates and engages pupils.
- Pupils' individual starting points and current levels of achievement are extremely well understood by staff. Work is presented at different levels, often on a similar theme, to engage pupils with different starting points. Work in English and mathematics with key stage 2 pupils is supported one-to-one by teachers and teaching assistants. Each has a thorough understanding of whether, for example, a pupil can accurately calculate the area of a rectangle or explore more complex, compound shapes with confidence.
- Pupils respect and value teachers' continuous monitoring of their work. They engage appropriately in individual conversations or work independently as the demands of a task require. Year 10 pupils demonstrated creativity and imagination in response to their teacher's questioning when evaluating a design for a toy.
- Pupils are aware of the next steps required to improve and extend their work. They talk positively about how staff provide oral and written feedback that evaluates and values their work. Pupils are keen to improve their work and respond positively to well-chosen advice and interventions from staff.
- Practical activities are an important feature of learning in a number of subjects for pupils of all ages. Pupils enjoy the hands-on experiences, for example when working with small animals in the outdoor environment.
- Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate high expectations that pupils will sustain their concentration and complete tasks to the required standard. Pupils of all ages respond with exemplary behaviour, focusing on learning and making excellent progress. They engage positively and develop excellent teamwork. Year 9 pupils cooperated and maintained their focus in a science experiment that required them to display excellent teamwork to achieve appropriate results.
- Staff use consistent strategies for regular assessment of pupils' progress. Pupils value the display of their personal targets and current levels of achievement in the front of their workbooks. They have a good understanding of the school's grading system and of how they may improve their results.
- Staff work extremely successfully to develop pupils' self-awareness and ability to reflect. Working with pupils who have autism spectrum disorder, this is a commendable outcome.
- The great majority of pupils respond very positively to information and ideas that are presented visually. This is a strength in most teaching but is not included entirely consistently across the full range of the curriculum.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Many pupils have previously lacked confidence in their own ability to achieve well. Some have experienced significant periods out of school due to their complex emotional or mental-health conditions. Staff throughout the school are extremely sensitive to pupils' individual needs and create an environment of care and trust in which pupils thrive.
- Pupils are proud of their school and they recognise how staff support and encourage them to do well. They state that staff understand them individually and that there is always an adult available to help with any personal concerns.
- Pupils state that they are well informed about e-safety, how to develop and maintain personal relationships and the risks of abuse, including radicalisation, to which they might be exposed. They know how to keep safe and demonstrate respect and trust in the staff. Pupils state that they do not experience bullying and school records support this view.
- During their time in the school, pupils make outstanding progress with the self-management of their anxieties and concerns. They develop the ability to understand and value the views of others and to take part in whole-school events. They are extremely well prepared, from anxious and uncertain starting points, to tackle new challenges.
- Pupils can explain what they have learned about healthy lifestyles. They enjoy cooking, and demonstrate good teamwork and the ability to analyse healthy diets in food studies lessons.
- Pupils take part in a school council which provides ideas, such as the provision of more playground equipment, to improve opportunities for pupils of all ages. Members of the council work well together, respecting each other's ideas and promoting a positive view of life in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations regarding behaviour for learning and a willingness to contribute. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Disruptions or off-task behaviour in lessons are extremely rare.
- Pupils follow instructions, behave considerately and cooperate well with the routines of daily school life. Pupils respect staff and learn to value the contributions of other pupils. Many pupils demonstrate increasing independence and the ability to manage significant elements of their own learning and to make informed choices.
- There is a low level of serious incidents which decrease over time, both for individuals and across the whole school. Staff maintain effective records of incidents and individual behavioural traits. These are used very effectively to establish behaviour plans and strategies for improvement.
- A number of pupils join the school with very mixed track records of attendance. Their

overall attendance improves considerably and this makes an important contribution to pupils' improved learning and progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress across a wide range of subjects, from very varied starting points. They are helped to overcome often significant barriers to learning. Pupils' achievement and progress are substantial across a wide range of subjects and across the full age range of the school.
- The extent and pace of pupils' progress are very individual, depending on their emotional and mental-health conditions. A major strength of the school is staff awareness of pupils' individuality and their ability to plan appropriately for each pupil. This is evidenced in the consistency of progress across the school.
- Pupils make up significant gaps in their learning and develop excellent study skills and the ability to persevere. They benefit from well-planned time to consolidate and extend their learning at each stage.
- Pupils make outstanding progress to achieve the challenging, aspirational targets set for them in each year group. They make above-average progress across the full curriculum and close significant gaps in their earlier education.
- Pupils make particularly outstanding progress in the improvement of their literacy skills. Standards of reading are good and provide a secure basis for pupils to develop maturity and accuracy in their comprehension. Some pupils struggle with handwriting but this does not impede their interest in poetry, fiction and narrative and their ability to interpret meaning and style in written texts.
- Pupils make rapid progress with their interpretation of English texts and their ability to write creatively and accurately from key stage 2 through to external examinations at the end of Year 11. The extent of their progress in English in each year group, across the full age range of the school, is substantial and sustained.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics and science is strong. Almost all pupils meet the challenging targets set for them in each year group and the extent of their progress increases as they move into key stage 4. Pupils' rates of progress in mathematics and science are not as consistently strong at key stages 2 and 3 as they are in English. In part, this reflects pupils' different strengths in various distinct aspects of these subjects, for example measurement compared with geometry or biology compared with chemistry.
- The average progress made by pupils across the year groups, from key stage 2 to key stage 4 in 2017, exceeded their targets in each year group in English, mathematics and science.
- The number of pupils in each year group is small. In 2017, pupils in Year 11 achieved an average of seven qualifications at foundation GCSE level or above. All achieved at least one higher-level GCSE grade, including a small number who achieved a level 2 qualification in both English and mathematics. These results represent strong progress from their starting points on entry to the school, despite considerable emotional, social and mental-health challenges in a number of cases.
- All key stage 4 pupils continue to study a broad range of subjects and all Year 11 pupils

achieved additional GCSE or vocational qualifications in subjects including design technology, construction, information and communication technology and Spanish.

- All pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2016 and 2017 moved on to further study at colleges of further education or into an apprenticeship. A small number moved on to the school's post-16 courses.
- Overall, pupils progress from below-average starting points on entry to the school to achieve a range of accreditation that equips them exceptionally well for further study and employment.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- The school's post-16 arrangements provide a one-year course for students who require additional time to prepare emotionally, socially or academically for transition to further education and employment. All have completed their key stage 4 studies at the school and have achieved success in GCSE and vocational courses.
- The excellent quality of leadership and management extends to the post-16 arrangements and courses. Senior leaders continuously monitor teaching, learning and students' progress. They make regular adjustments to the range and level of available courses in response to individual students' interests and needs.
- Students are provided with an extensive range of courses and experiences which prepare them very effectively for the challenges of entering a larger educational establishment and working with a diverse range of students and adults. These include employability qualifications and work experience. Students' needs are very individual and the school has great success in providing, for example, personally tailored work experience in hairdressing, farming, mechanics or working with younger children.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding and supports students extremely well to build on their previous successes. Staff understand the learning needs of each individual student and provide personalised support and challenge, encouraging increasing independence in response to students' readiness.
- Staff develop a clear understanding of the aspirations and ambitions of their students, together with a deep awareness of their individual emotional and social anxieties and concerns.
- Each student's programme is carefully individualised and includes personalised opportunities, for example to prepare for independent travel, develop new friendships or interact with members of the public in shops and cafes.
- Students are encouraged and supported to identify a personal career option. Representatives from further education colleges visit regularly to explain the options available. Students are very well supported in the preparation of application forms and taster visits to colleges. They experience helpful workshops to develop a personal CV, and attend informative events such as the national Skills Show at the NEC in Birmingham.
- The school makes excellent use of the support of the local careers service. Representatives attend annual review meetings for pupils in Year 10 and conduct individual interviews with Year 11 pupils in readiness for entry to post-16 courses. The school maintains continuous and effective dialogue with parents throughout the transition

process.

- All students continue with their studies in English and mathematics. They are successfully enabled to repeat examinations for which they may not have been emotionally ready at the end of key stage 4.
- Students have good opportunities to extend their qualifications, for example from functional skills qualifications achieved during key stage 4 to GCSE qualifications.
- Maintaining regular attendance is a challenge for a small number of students due to anxiety and emotional issues. The school works closely and effectively with parents and local authority health services to support students through personal crises. Staff are extremely persistent and supportive in their efforts to enable students to succeed.
- Previous cohorts have studied vocational options in construction, animal care, sport and health and fitness. Current post-16 students are experiencing particular success in vocational certificate courses in engineering and craft.
- Of the small number of students who left the post-16 course in 2017, all achieved five GCSE results. The majority achieved five higher-grade awards, including in English and mathematics. Students' outstanding achievements included grade 8 qualifications in English language and literature and higher-level GCSE grades in mathematics and science.
- All students made or exceeded the progress expected of them in English and mathematics, despite having significant periods out of education between primary school and their entry to Hardwick House. All moved on successfully to courses at colleges of further education.

School details

Unique reference number	141127
DfE registration number	855/6033
Inspection number	10043801

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mark Edwards and Cecilia Mitchell
Chair	Mark Edwards
Head of school	Sarah Unwin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,500
Telephone number	01509 218 203
Website	www.hardwickhouseschool.com
Email address	info@hardwickhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2015

Information about this school

- Hardwick House School is an independent special day school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Five local authorities, including Leicestershire and Leicester City, place pupils at the school.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and none speaks English as an additional language.

There are no pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is the additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.

- Prior to joining Hardwick House, many pupils have not attended school for significant periods of time.
- The school is currently registered for up to 28 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are 28 students currently on roll.
- The school makes use of Loughborough Leisure Centre to provide physical education for its pupils. Pupils do not attend any alternative provision.
- The school opened in September 2014 and occupies a large Victorian house in its own grounds on the outskirts of Loughborough. The school was refurbished to a high standard by the landlord, Leicestershire County Council, prior to its registration. Since the time of the previous standard inspection in January 2015, the proprietors have added additional buildings in the school grounds and developed the grounds as an outdoor learning environment.
- The school aims to develop pupils' abilities to foster positive relationships, independent life and living skills, and healthy and fulfilling lives, and enhance pupils' employment prospects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in academic and vocational courses across the full age range of the school. He scrutinised samples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietors, who also work closely on-site with the head of school. He discussed all aspects of the school's leadership and management and implementation of school policies. In addition, he held discussions with middle leaders, members of staff and representatives of the pupils.
- The inspector took account of the views of 13 parents, submitted through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire completed by 27 members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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