

# Helen Allison School

Longfield Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0EW

**Inspection dates**

9 October 2019

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i) and 3(j)*

- The previous inspection found that Part 1 was fully met. Teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for pupils, were also judged to be good. However, as part of this monitoring inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) asked that paragraph 3 be checked for compliance.
- During classroom visits on both sites of the school, which included discussions with pupils, staff and leaders, the lead inspector found no evidence to doubt that all aspects of paragraph 3 continue to be met.
- Pupils follow bespoke pathways of learning. This requires teaching staff to constantly assess pupils' progress and attainment to plan learning. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. However, some find this difficult because of their complex needs. Despite this, staff constantly seek opportunities to build pupils' self-confidence and independence. This includes visits into the local community to develop their life skills, for instance.
- Teachers plan learning that meets the needs of individual pupils well. Pupils access a wide range of subjects according to their own interests, as well as more traditional academic subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Older pupils access a range of courses with alternative providers.
- Pupils on both sites of the school were happy to talk to the inspector during classroom visits. One pupil in the main school talked about his favourite books and was proud of the progress he had made with his reading. Older pupils at The Hub told the inspector about their hopes of successfully completing a GCSE in science this year, as well as courses in hair and beauty or animal husbandry.
- Specialist staff cover some aspects of the curriculum, including music and science, for instance. The school employs a range of therapists to supplement pupils' learning in and out of the classroom.
- The school is resourced appropriately for pupils to access learning. This includes specialist therapeutic equipment as well as a range of technology used in classrooms to

support teaching and learning.

- The school has its own scheme of work to cover pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures through the wider curriculum and through special assemblies. Mutual respect and tolerance of others are important parts of the curriculum here. This is particularly important within the school environment, where pupils from different backgrounds and with different complex needs are expected to mix freely and behave responsibly.
- Classroom visits and observations of pupils at breaktime showed that they are supervised well. However, because of their complex needs, some find it hard to regulate their emotions, and their behaviour sometimes falls short of what is expected. Staff are increasingly confident to deal with these situations. They expressed confidence in new senior leaders and said that they are more supportive and 'visible' than was the case in the past.
- This standard continues to be met.

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

#### *Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 15*

- At the time of the previous inspection, safeguarding was found to be ineffective. Leaders and staff did not know enough about statutory guidance for keeping children safe. Record keeping and monitoring were poor. Some staff had little faith in the ability of leaders to improve the school. Other staff felt unsupported by leaders when dealing with challenging behaviour.
- The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, is compliant with current guidelines. Staff receive routine updates on all aspects of safeguarding. Their training is up to date. This includes appropriate training for leaders who have enhanced safeguarding responsibilities.
- A new focus on safeguarding has increased the workload of leaders. However, the new principal, in partnership with the proprietor, has ensured that leaders have the capacity to deal with this. The designated safeguarding lead is supported effectively by the wider safeguarding team. Regular meetings, which are attended by senior leaders and specialist staff, ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed properly.
- Teaching and support staff report that they feel better informed about all aspects of safeguarding and providing for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. They know what to do if they have concerns. They feel that leaders act on their concerns. They feel that the culture to protect pupils is much stronger, because new leaders have made this their number one priority. They also feel that leaders are more consistent with their support for staff when managing the challenging behaviour of some pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that admissions and attendance registers are now maintained appropriately. Key members of staff have undertaken specialist training to enable them to administer these statutory documents properly. The school is working with education welfare officers from the local authority to ensure that these records are maintained correctly.
- Because school leaders have addressed the shortcomings found in these paragraphs, this

standard is now met.

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

### *Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)*

- The previous standard inspection found that the proprietor had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met. Safeguarding was not effective. Leaders' management of the welfare, health and safety of pupils was not strong. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be inadequate. Weaknesses in leadership and management led to the school having unmet independent school standards.
- Much has been done to improve the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. Those in positions of governance, including the proprietor, are better informed about the quality of provision and the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- A new principal is in position after a period where the school was led by an interim principal. Unmet standards identified at the last inspection have been rectified. Leaders have new self-evaluation and improvement planning documents, which are being acted on.
- Previous systems to monitor the effectiveness of the school on behalf of the proprietor have been reviewed. New positions of education director and deputy education director are now firmly established. Working directly for the proprietor, the education director has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A new 'education quality and standards framework' is also in place. This ensures that leaders understand their roles and responsibilities, that clear lines of accountability have been established, and that an effective monitoring schedule is now in place.
- A new safeguarding team is in place. Leaders in this team, including the designated safeguarding lead, have undertaken appropriate training and understand their roles well. Crucially, teaching and support staff express confidence in leaders to act on their concerns and offer support and guidance where needed.
- The culture to safeguard pupils is much stronger. Staff have attended appropriate training, including in de-escalating and dealing with challenging behaviour. Statutory policies and guidance are up to date and understood by staff. Communications with outside agencies, including the local authority and other government departments, are managed effectively.
- Leaders are fulfilling their roles consistently and effectively to actively promote the well-being of pupils. They have addressed the shortcomings identified at the last inspection. All the independent school standards looked at during this inspection were found to be met. Therefore, Part 8 is fully 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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

#### Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 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 uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
  - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;
  - 3(i) does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; and
  - 3(j) does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the 2010 Act.

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

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

### **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.

## School details

Unique reference number	118993
DfE registration number	886/6046
Inspection number	10118755

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 status	Independent special 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	70
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Janet Corcoran
Principal	Simon Collins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,076 to £75,959
Telephone number	01474 814878
Website	<a href="http://www.autism.org.uk/helenallison">www.autism.org.uk/helenallison</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:helen.allison@nas.org.uk">helen.allison@nas.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	29–31 January 2019

## Information about this school

- Helen Allison is a special school, part of the National Autistic Society, offering full-time education to male and female pupils between the ages of five and 19. The school is registered for up to 83 pupils. The school is situated on two sites, the main school and The Hub, which is attended mainly by older pupils.
- The school caters for children and young people with autism spectrum disorder. There are

currently 70 pupils on roll.

- The school uses the following schools and other organisations to complement the curriculum: Rowhill School, Hadlow College, Rochester Independent College, and Medway Education Business Partnership.
- The school's last full integrated inspection was in January 2019. That inspection was an integrated inspection because the school provided residential provision for some pupils at that time. Since that inspection, the school has shut its residential provision.
- The current principal was appointed in July 2019. Prior to this, there had been an interim principal following the departure of the previous principal after the last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the previous inspection in January 2019. As a monitoring inspection, this inspection was carried out without notice.
- The school's action plan to address the unmet independent school standards and national minimum standards identified at the last standard inspection was found to be acceptable by the DfE in July 2019.
- During this inspection, the inspector carried out a range of activities. These included brief classroom visits on both sites of the school to assess the quality of pupils' work and to talk to them about their learning. The inspector also observed pupils during their break and as they moved around the school.
- A number of meetings were held with school leaders, teaching and support staff, and a representative of the proprietor.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's safeguarding and other associated policies. The single central record of staff checks was also scrutinised, as well as staff training records and documents regarding leaders' work to address unmet standards identified at the last inspection.

## Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2019