

# Inspection of Mountfield Heath School

John's Cross Road, John's Cross, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JN

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Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy learning, playing and making friends in this welcoming school. During the inspection, they happily exchanged Christmas cards with their friends and chatted about the upcoming Christmas parties. Pupils like to work in the school garden. They learn about nature, dig in the earth and explore the world around them.

Pupils told us that adults take good care of them. They feel safe, secure and well looked after. Adults are pleased to see them in the morning and greet them warmly. This helps pupils to settle quickly. They learn that their views matter and they grow in confidence. The school council listens to pupils' views and makes sensible suggestions for improvements. During the inspection, they talked enthusiastically about arrangements for the new playground equipment. There is no bullying in the school.

Adults expect every pupil to do their best. Pupils want to do well. They try hard to follow the school rules and do so most of the time. Pupils usually work hard in lessons, although they sometimes become frustrated and unsettled. Most adults respond very well when this is the case. They speak calmly and quietly so that pupils feel secure.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school teaches a broad, balanced and engaging range of subjects. Many pupils have negative views of education when they join the school. They often have gaps in their knowledge, which makes it difficult to learn. Teachers use a wide variety of activities to make learning interesting and fun. They adjust learning well to take account of pupils' individual needs. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to help new pupils to settle. Pupils soon feel at home in the school. They grow in confidence and learn quickly.

The curriculum is developing as the school grows. Leaders make continuous adjustments to the way different subjects are taught as new pupils join the school. Leaders know that some subjects are less well developed than others. They are currently focusing on improving the mathematics and science programmes of learning to ensure that pupils learn as well as they should.

The school's well-planned mathematics programme successfully plugs the gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders have identified differences in the way in which mathematics is taught across the school. For instance, practical resources, such as number lines, cubes and counters, are not used consistently well in all classes. Leaders are sensibly using training currently to support staff in the teaching of mathematics.

The school teaches reading skills particularly well. Pupils have often struggled to read before joining the school. They find reading difficult because they lack early reading skills. The school's reading programme puts this right. Pupils learn how to

use phonics skills successfully to help them to read. They love listening to stories. Pupils often choose to curl up with one of the school's books.

Pupils have a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which makes it hard for them to behave well all the time. Sometimes, individual pupils become anxious and agitated. Occasionally, individual pupils' frustrations boil over. This can make it difficult for other pupils to focus on their work. Most adults respond skilfully when this is the case. Some adults are less confident about what to do. In some cases, it takes longer to settle pupils than it should.

Pupils get on well with their classmates most of the time. They learn about different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils develop respect for the views of others. They take on increasing responsibility for their own actions. There are no problems with bullying. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The school provides lots of opportunities for pupils to find out more about the world. For example, during the inspection, pupils enjoyed exploring the school garden. They happily chatted about their ideas while collecting leaves, berries and twigs to make a Christmas picture.

The proprietors work closely with the headteacher. They have established a team of knowledgeable governors who check and discuss the school's work regularly. The headteacher provides detailed reports for the governing body. This helps them to keep up to date with developments. Links with other schools in the company provide staff with valuable opportunities to share ideas.

The headteacher has established an effective staff team. Strong staff morale contributes to the school's upbeat atmosphere. All members of staff work well together. Staff feel well supported by school leaders. They told us that there is always someone to talk to if they have a query or a concern.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school is clean, airy and well maintained. Clear routines help pupils to feel safe. Adults build strong relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils very well and provide skilful support. One parent said, 'The care and support my son receives are second to none.'

Leaders make sure that the independent school standards are met. They complete staffing and recruitment checks promptly. Leaders take any safeguarding issues very seriously. They act quickly where there are any concerns. Leaders keep scrupulous records of behavioural incidents.

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

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The work in pupils' books illustrates the school's success in equipping pupils with scientific knowledge. However, leaders know that more needs to be done to improve pupils' investigative skills. They have already begun work to develop this aspect of the science curriculum. They are introducing more opportunities for pupils to develop investigative skills, such as hypothesising and drawing conclusions. Leaders should continue with this work so that pupils develop a deeper scientific understanding.
- There are variations in the implementation of the mathematics curriculum. This is because some staff are more confident about teaching mathematics than others. Leaders have planned further training to strengthen staff subject knowledge. They should continue with these developments so that pupils achieve equally well in all subjects.
- The school's behaviour policy is not always applied consistently. This is due, in part, to changes in staffing since the school opened. Some members of staff are more confident about managing pupils' behaviour than others. Leaders should use training to develop staff understanding of how to help pupils who become frustrated or agitated in lessons so that they settle quickly.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145980
<b>DfE registration number</b>	845/6065
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10093437
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	13
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Craig Ribbons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lyndsey Jeffries
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£41,250–£65,050
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 914 600
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.mountfieldheathschool.co.uk">www.mountfieldheathschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@acorncare.co.uk">info@acorncare.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Mountfield Heath School is an independent special day school. The school occupies the site of a former primary school in John's Cross near Robertsbridge.
- The school provides education for pupils with SEND. Pupils have a range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school caters for pupils aged between five and 11 years of age. The school is registered for 32 pupils. There are currently 13 pupils on roll.

- Pupils are placed in the school by East Sussex and Kent local authorities. Pupils have often experienced a disrupted education prior to joining the school. Some have been out of formal education for an extended period of time.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school opened in December 2018. The first pupils were admitted in January 2019.
- This was the first standard inspection since the school opened.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- We met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and the chair of governors. We also held discussions with staff and pupils.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and personal development. We spoke with school leaders about these subjects, looked at curriculum documents, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils.
- We checked the school's safeguarding arrangements. We held discussions with the designated safeguarding leads and observed the everyday work of the school. We reviewed a range of safeguarding records. We also scrutinised the single central register of staff suitability to work with children.
- We considered the views expressed by three parents who commented through the free-text facility. We also took into account the views expressed by staff in a recent audit of the workplace completed by the proprietor.

## Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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