Inspection of Hope House School

c/o Bridge House, 1 Stuart Road, Bredbury SK6 2SR

Inspection dates: 10–12 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff provide pupils with a well-organised framework for their education. Staff care about pupils and help them to build their confidence. Pupils learn how to play a positive part in society. The school supports pupils to overcome the difficult experiences that they have had in their past.

Pupils receive clinical support to help them to live in positive ways and to join in learning. They also follow a subject timetable, similar to that in other schools. Staff organise each pupil's curriculum to meet their needs. For example, pupils enjoy different physical education activities as part of their timetable. Staff make sure that learning matches pupils' interests in other ways, for example through regular visits to a music studio.

Pupils belong to a small and close community. Staff develop positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils feel safe. The school's expectations of everyone in this community are high. Pupils know that they should behave well. Some find this hard, particularly in the early stages of their time at the school. Pupils sometimes swear and can be very demanding if they don't get their own way. In general, pupils get along well together. The pupils that we spoke with said that there is no bullying.

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

The curriculum is organised in three phases. Pupils follow these in turn as they stay at the school. All current pupils have been at the school for less than three months, and some for much less time than this. This means that they are all working in phase one. In phase one, an important feature is how staff support pupils to start to take part in school. This is well planned. It involves a close partnership between school staff and clinical psychologists. In the later phases, the focus of the curriculum shifts to preparing pupils to be ready to leave school.

Teachers know pupils well. Teachers adjust the curriculum to match pupils' interests and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that each pupil's timetable includes a wide enough range of subjects to give pupils a broad education. This also means that the school meets the independent school standard (ISS) about the different subjects that pupils must study. However, teachers also include subjects and activities that motivate individual pupils. For example, in music technology, pupils are enthusiastic about using a professional studio to record their own compositions. Over time, the curriculum successfully builds pupils' knowledge and skills. In the past, pupils have gained suitable qualifications to let them take up college courses and other learning. In turn, these have often led to employment in construction or other trades.

Staff help pupils to improve their English skills. For example, pupils use the local library and reading is part of the weekly timetable.

The medium-term plans for the curriculum match the requirements of the unit awards and other qualifications that pupils take. However, teachers' long-term planning does not always give a fully helpful framework for this.

Pupils' experiences before they join the school have often included long periods of time when they have been excluded from school. They have often had contact with gangs and may have been involved in criminal activity, sometimes including knife crime. Staff successfully ensure that pupils attend well. In addition, they check on how well pupils are participating when they are at school. Pupils attendance and participation typically increase over their time at the school. The curriculum helps pupils to develop their understanding of society. For example, pupils study for a qualification on the impact of crime on others and have heard visiting speakers talking about knife crime. The well-being curriculum helps pupils to understand themselves and their feelings, including the stresses that they may face.

Pupils are closely supervised throughout the school day. Sometimes they are reluctant to take part in learning. Teachers use the school's well-established systems to manage such situations well. Over time, the school's records show that pupils' attitudes and behaviour improve.

Leaders base many of the systems for managing the school on the approaches used in the proprietor's other schools. These include regular checks on how well the school is performing and whether any problems have happened. The lead teacher works closely with the senior lead teacher, who oversees a number of the proprietor's schools. This relationship is at an early stage because of the recent leadership changes in the school. However, it is already providing insight into the school's work and helpful support for all staff. Some of the documents provided for use across the proprietor's settings are not as well matched as possible to the particular context of this school.

The proprietor is fully aware of the requirements of the ISS. Leaders organised some minor adjustments to documents during the inspection to ensure that the ISS were met. The school's routine work allows leaders to make sure that pupils have the resources that they need and that the premises are well maintained. Leaders have detailed plans to make sure that people can use the school premises and benefit from the learning provided whether or not they have SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are aware of the types of risks the pupils at the school may face. The proprietor ensures that staff receive the training about safeguarding they need to be able to respond to any concerns that they identify.

The proprietor has well-established systems for checking that staff employed at the school are suitable to work with pupils.

The safeguarding policy used by the school is closely based on that used in all the proprietor's organisations. School leaders arranged for some small changes to be made to this policy during the inspection. These changes made sure that the policy fully reflects the latest statutory guidance about safeguarding in schools.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders and teachers use curriculum plans and long-term schemes of work to organise pupils' learning. They also need to be flexible in their planning to meet pupils' individual needs and to match the different qualifications that pupils take. This sometimes means that teachers' shorter-term planning does not closely match the longer-term plans. In turn, this presents a risk that pupils will miss learning about important pieces of knowledge. Leaders and teachers should ensure that curriculum planning systematically sets out what pupils need to learn.
- Many of the school's policies are based on guidance that applies to all schools owned by the proprietor. Many were also developed by previous leaders of the school. This means that the detail of policies sometimes does not accurately reflect what the school does, or identify the people who are responsible for what happens in the school. Therefore, some policies do not fully support effective leadership as well as possible. Leaders should continue their review and redevelopment of school policies.

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

Unique reference number	143041
DfE registration number	888/6064
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10145457
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Care 4 Children Limited
Chair	Kamran Abassi
Headteacher	Adam Craig
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,000
Telephone number	0345 521 5155
Website	None
Email address	adam.craig@care4children.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–28 September 2017

Information about this school

- A new lead teacher, with responsibility for this school, and a new senior lead teacher, with oversight for this school and others owned by the proprietor, have taken up their posts during this school year.
- All the pupils currently in the school have joined since November 2019.
- The school currently uses Preston Vocational Centre for alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in September 2017.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During this inspection, we looked closely at how the curriculum is provided in history, English, music technology and well-being. We talked with leaders, members of staff and pupils. We looked at plans for the curriculum, including the schemes of work used at the school. We visited lessons and looked at pupils' books. This included a visit to talk with staff and see pupils working at a music studio used by the school as part of its provision.
- We gathered evidence about pupils' behaviour and attitudes, their personal development, and the school's leadership and management throughout the inspection. We met with staff to consider these aspects and talked with pupils. We met with the clinical psychologists who work at the school supporting pupils. We had telephone calls with the managing director of Care 4 Children Residential Care Limited, which is the proprietor, and a social worker who works with one of the pupils.
- We considered the school's approach to safeguarding pupils. To do this, we used our discussions with leaders, other staff and pupils to find out about the arrangements for keeping pupils safe and how well these work. We examined documents, including the school's safeguarding policy and the record of safeguarding checks on staff.
- We checked the school's compliance with the ISS. As part of this, we scrutinised documents, including school polices, risk assessments and reports on pupils. We considered case studies of past and present pupils.
- We received no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils or to Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents. There were too few responses to Ofsted's survey for staff for us to use these to build a comprehensive picture of the school.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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