

# Inspection of Hopespring Sunderland

10 Sea View Road West, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR2 9HA

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Inspection dates: 28 to 30 September 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils speak highly of the staff at Hopespring, Sunderland. They say adults treat them like grown-ups. Relationships with staff and between friends are usually very positive. The parents and carers spoken to during the inspection said that, since starting the school, their children have matured and now look forward to getting up in the morning. This is a big change considering many of the pupils at the school have missed large parts of their education over the years.

Staff take on multiple roles willingly. Some take responsibility for teaching, cooking and counselling. Other staff continue to work on making the curriculum even better. There are frequent, carefully crafted conversations between staff and pupils which help to identify when pupils' emotions may be running high and when extra support is needed. In this way, staff know pupils well. Pupils feel safe and say everyone looks out for them.

Pupils know what they want to do when they leave school. There are lots of opportunities for them to discuss and explore different types of jobs. Staff are creative and think of ways to help pupils gain work experiences or develop skills that will help them in the future. This is, in part, why many of the pupils who leave Year 11 move into further education, employment or training.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum which they often adapt to meet the needs of pupils, particularly those in Year 10 and 11. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly during one-to-one conversations in class. Teachers have the confidence and subject knowledge to ask different questions or move away from the planned activity when a pupil does not understand it fully. The curriculum, as it stands, is focused heavily on older pupils. The school has seen more younger pupils join it recently. Leaders have to consider more carefully what subject content these pupils should know and remember in depth. The curriculum in some subjects, such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, does not always match the starting points of every pupil.

Pupils do well at school. This can be seen in the qualifications they achieve, their destinations when they leave school and particularly in their improved attendance. Pupils say that something has 'clicked' for them at Hopespring, Sunderland. Prior to attending the school, most pupils had missed months or even years of education for a variety of different reasons. Now, pupils attend school nearly every day.

Pupils engage with learning and are beginning to take ownership for their educational success. Staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and effectively. While some pupils misbehave now and then, staff manage these incidents well. In lessons, pupils engage in friendly banter with each other and staff. They want to do well for their teachers.

Leaders know they need to build pupils' confidence and develop their trust when they start at the school. They do this well. However, there has been little time put aside to develop the culture of reading in the school. Pupils are encouraged to read in class or look up important words. For example, in a 'society' lesson, pupils were researching the history of Hylton Castle, a local landmark to the north of the River Wear. Staff asked pupils to find the meaning of words such as 'plantation', 'absentee' and 'descendants' so that they understood more clearly the work of Lord Hylton, the owner of the castle. However, there are too many missed opportunities for pupils to improve their reading fluency or to read for pleasure.

Leaders, governors, trustees and the proprietor all sing from the same hymn sheet. They are passionate, have pupils' best interests at heart and understand their roles well. Staff's morale is high. Leaders check in with staff daily during afternoon debrief sessions. During this time, leaders review pupils' progress and ask staff how they are feeling and what, if any, extra support they might need. Leaders' personal approach in this way is helping to develop a real team spirit at the school.

Staff use every opportunity to have meaningful group and individual discussions with pupils. Many staff operate in dual roles as teachers but also as trained therapists, with conversations happening throughout the school day, during social times and in lessons. The varying topics of conversation help to raise pupils' awareness of cultural events or help them to reflect on the appropriateness of their own actions. Some pupils have had success following smoking cessation activities. However, other, more heavily-dependant pupils continue to smoke on the premises, while supervised by staff. Leaders need to double down on their efforts to reduce the need for this and to ensure more pupils stop smoking.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make a lot of progress from their different starting points. Leaders ensure plans to support these pupils are of a high standard. All staff have a deep understanding of how to support pupils with SEND. Staff adapt activities and conversations appropriately, ensuring pupils with SEND are fully involved in every lesson.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They have a strong awareness of pupils' vulnerabilities and home circumstances prior to their arrival, due to a very comprehensive review and induction process. Leaders and staff put in place personalised pupil risk assessments and safeguarding policies, outlining how staff should engage with each pupil, and the support the pupil is likely to need.

All staff are trained and able to stand in as the school's designated safeguarding lead. There are regular training events for staff, covering themes such as online safety and suicide prevention.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The school's curriculum is ambitious. In many ways, it is focused more on pupils in key stage 4. This is because most of the pupils attending the school since opening have been in Years 10 or 11. However, the school is accepting more pupils in key stage 3 now. Some pupils have missed large parts of their education and/or have significant gaps in their learning. The curriculum does not always match the starting point of every pupil, particularly those who have joined more recently. Leaders should ensure they develop a curriculum that is more closely matched to pupils' starting points. Furthermore, leaders should identify the most important subject content they want pupils to know and remember. Leaders should also ensure pupils have more opportunities to revisit their learning and strengthen their understanding.
- Staff emphasise the importance of literacy in lessons. This is helping pupils develop their vocabulary. However, the reading culture across the school is not fully developed. Some pupils struggle with basic reading fluency. Leaders should introduce more effective ways to improve pupils' fluency in reading and endeavour to find more ways to ignite pupils' passion for and love of reading.
- The introduction of smoking cessation classes for pupils has been partially successful. There are fewer pupils who smoke now than before. However, some pupils continue to smoke on the school premises. Leaders should strengthen their efforts to help all pupils give up smoking. Leaders should also take reasonable steps to ensure that pupils do not smoke while at school.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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>	147648
<b>DfE registration number</b>	394/6005
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10202203
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	10
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	2
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lois Gott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacob Vart
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26,750
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5420338
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hopespringeducation.org.uk">www.hopespringeducation.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:jacob.vart@hopespringeducation.org.uk">jacob.vart@hopespringeducation.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This was the first standard inspection of the school. The school was registered by the Department for Education on 5 March 2020.
- The school is part of the Hopespring charity and aims to meet the needs of a small number of pupils aged 11 to 16 years, most of whom have social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils are at risk of permanent exclusion or have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of therapeutic support from teaching staff who are trained as therapists.
- The school is located on the outskirts of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear.
- The school admits pupils from a range of local schools referred via the Sunderland local authority vulnerable pupils panel.
- The school is located in a former residential care home.
- Six pupils are dual-registered and spend one day each week under the care of the referring school.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- Pupils join the school at different times of the year. Currently, pupils on roll are in key stages 3 and 4.
- The school is registered to admit 18 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 10 boys on roll.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, trust leaders, trustees, governors, staff, pupils and the proprietor.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising a wide range of evidence, including attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files and recruitment checks. They observed the work of leaders and talked to staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with school leaders from the commissioning schools, a representative of the local authority, a trustee and a number of parents and carers of pupils attending the school.
- Inspectors toured the premises and looked at a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The lead inspector visited the one alternative provider used by the school.

### **Inspection team**

Lee Elliott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Phil Riozzi

Ofsted Inspector

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