

Inspection of Mill House School

Whitestitch Lane, Coventry CV7 7JE

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **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 happily attend this small, calm and caring school. Staff meet and greet each pupil with a welcoming smile. They understand pupils' personal and academic needs and act quickly if a pupil is worried or anxious. Pupils feel listened to and valued and have no concerns about bullying. Staff create a sense of togetherness that permeates through the whole school. This makes school a safe place where pupils grow in confidence, behave well, work hard and learn lots. One pupil summed this up, saying, 'Everybody gets on well with everybody else here.'

All pupils have had a chequered experience of education. Many have not attended school regularly for a long time. This means they have significant gaps in their learning. Staff tackle these head on, working to identify and address these gaps to help pupils catch up.

The caring ethos is complemented by leaders' academic aspiration for pupils. All have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff encourage pupils to aim high and celebrate success. Pupils work towards a range of qualifications that will help them take their 'next steps'. Leaders weave pupils' careers education, academic curriculum, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) together into an ambitious package.

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

The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has a clear vision for the school. All aspects of the independent school standards are met securely and consistently. The headteacher has a wealth of educational experience and knowledge. This is accompanied by professional diligence and moral integrity. Staff share her vision, feel part of a team and enjoy working at the school. All place pupils' best interests at the heart of what they do.

As headteacher, the proprietor understands what is working well and what needs to improve. Improvement plans are robust, ambitious and sensible. The headteacher has bought in external expertise since the school opened to help realise her vision. A governing body is being established and new leaders are set to join the school. As such, wider leadership is still being developed to help sustain and build on a successful first year for the school.

Pupils learn a broad range of subjects that spark their interest. Leaders have given careful thought to what they want pupils to learn and be able to do in each subject. They have considered the order in which pupils will learn new knowledge. This has led to the construction of a robust curriculum in each subject.

Leaders recognise that several pupils have missed a significant part of their education. Pupils complete a range of assessments when they join the school. This helps teachers identify the missing pieces in pupils' knowledge. They then place pupils, including those in key stage 5, on an appropriate academic pathway.

Teachers constantly check prior learning in lessons. This helps them respond to pupils' specific learning needs. However, in some subjects, teachers are not helping pupils make clear links with what they have learned before. For instance, in geography, the curriculum does not set out how pupils can draw on what they have learned about rivers when studying coasts. In mathematics, teachers are not checking that pupils remember the important facts, formulae and methods that they will need to answer more complex questions. This means that pupils are less able to integrate new ideas with previous learning.

Leaders have provided all staff with a broad range of professional development opportunities. These range from in-depth training on mental health to training on teaching approaches and pedagogy. However, leaders have not focused enough on developing teachers' knowledge of how best to teach their subject. Leaders recognise the need to improve the focus on teachers' delivery of the curriculum.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan to address their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know the contents of these plans and contribute to the annual review process. They use the plans, alongside their knowledge of each pupil, to provide effective support.

Staff encourage pupils to read. Leaders have purchased a range of books to promote pupils' interest in literature. Pupils and staff read silently together every day as part of a well-established routine. This means that pupils see adults enjoying reading. Pupils talk avidly about the books that they have read and how they are now reading more.

Pupils attend well. They rarely miss a day at school because they enjoy attending. For some pupils, this is remarkable as they have struggled to engage with education for a significant time. This is testament to the support, care and nurture that staff provide for pupils daily.

Leaders place a high priority on pupils' personal development and building their self-esteem. The PSHE curriculum is comprehensive. Staff adapt this programme to meet pupils' needs and respond to the questions and issues that they raise. For instance, addressing important relationship issues with key stage 5 students. Pupils learn about, and respect, different family contexts. They celebrated diversity through 'Pride week' in school. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and has an appropriate accessibility plan in place. Leaders are alert to the risks that pupils face outside of school. For instance, inviting an ex-gang member into school to speak to pupils about the danger of knife crime.

Pupils can take part in a range of activities outside of their lessons, and all do. They learn about different jobs and careers and are encouraged to think about their next steps. All key stage 4 and 5 pupils receive independent careers advice. However, the pandemic has stalled leaders' plans for pupils to have meaningful encounters with the world of work. Leaders know that this is a crucial part of preparing pupils for life beyond school. They have rightly identified this as a priority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy adheres to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It is available on the school's website.

Staff know pupils very well. They are alert to changes in pupils' behaviour that could indicate that they are at risk. Staff know what to look out for and how to report a concern. Pupils trust staff to look after them and keep them safe. Staff follow up reports promptly, working with external agencies to make sure that pupils get the help and support they need. Leaders check and record staff's suitability to work with young people.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that teachers help pupils link new learning to what they have already learned at Mill House School. As a result, pupils learn knowledge in isolation and are not being encouraged to recall and combine their learning over time. Leaders should ensure that teachers support pupils to recall key knowledge and understanding so that they can integrate new ideas with what they have learned before.
- Training has centred on general teaching skills rather than on subject-specific pedagogy. This means that some teachers do not know enough about the most helpful strategies to boost pupils' learning in each subject. Leaders should focus their efforts on developing teachers understanding of how best to teach their subject, so that the curriculum is delivered effectively in all areas.
- Leaders have not yet secured sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about, and have meaningful encounters with, the world of work. This means that pupils are not as well informed about the possible careers they could pursue as they could be. Leaders should ensure that pupils experience and learn about a broad range of careers to help them prepare for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- The school's wider leadership is not yet fully developed. As a result, capacity to build on the successful first year of the school's operation is still evolving. Leaders should ensure that plans to develop the school's leadership structures and staff expertise are enacted swiftly, so that the school can continue to grow and flourish.

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

Unique reference number	148398
DfE registration number	937/6034
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10220453
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Special Educational Services Ltd
Headteacher	Claire Fyfe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £65,000
Telephone number	01676 478177
Website	www.millhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	office@millhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Mill House School opened in September 2021. It provides education for up to 20 pupils, all of whom have an EHC plan. The school offers provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have missed a substantial amount of schooling.
- The school moved to its current site in March 2022 and is in a rural setting.
- Places are commissioned by local authorities, including Birmingham, Warwickshire, Solihull, Staffordshire and Coventry.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

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 began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, who is also the current headteacher, as well as other leaders in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, art and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the history, geography and mathematics curriculum and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. They scrutinised policies and records relating to child protection and examined the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised policies and documents relating to the independent school standards. The lead inspector toured the premises.
- Inspectors considered the responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.

- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered the responses, including written responses, to Ofsted Parent View

The school's proposed change to its premises.

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **The material change has already been implemented. The school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change.**

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mike Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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