

# Inspection of The Quest School

Bell 3, The Hop Farm, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6PY

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Inspection dates: 29 November to 1 December 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

The Quest School is a very special school, and pupils are rightly very proud of it. The education that pupils receive is exceptional. The school motto, 'achievements never thought possible,' sums up life here. Staff place the safety and care of pupils at the heart of everything they do. They get to know an impressive amount about each pupil and their learning quickly. Consequently, each pupil is taught a highly personalised learning programme. Pupils love to attend school and nearly all attend very well. Those who struggle are well supported. As a result, their attendance improves swiftly.

Pupils are happy and safe, and bullying is never an issue. Pupils benefit highly from the well-established routines that are followed. This leads to a calm, purposeful learning environment. While pupils' behaviour is very complex and often challenging, staff know pupils incredibly well. This allows them to provide the right amount of support at the right time.

Pupils take part in a wide range of experiences that help them to develop as well-rounded individuals. Inspectors particularly enjoyed watching pupils prepare for their parts in the Christmas show. Expert support from staff enabled each pupil to participate fully, with some pupils using their communication systems.

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

Leaders and staff have crafted an engaging and ambitious curriculum that is highly personalised for each pupil. There is no 'one size fits all'. Staff identify the most important knowledge and skills that each of the pupils needs to learn. Individual learning programmes are well planned and sequenced so that they incorporate what each pupil needs. They offer a range of experiences. Pupils' targets from their education, health and care (EHC) plans are broken down into small chunks. As a result, pupils master their learning before moving on.

A range of approaches and therapies support pupils' learning and personal development. Speech and language therapy and autism-specific approaches are used expertly. Leaders and staff use the applied behaviour analysis (ABA) approach to ensure that teaching is consistent in every classroom. This gives staff a wealth of information about pupils' behaviours and learning. This is put to good use to develop highly effective learning programmes.

Staff place a high priority on communication. They are highly trained and spend time working with pupils to find out which communication system will be most effective. They are focused on ensuring that all pupils have a voice. For some pupils, this may mean using a handheld device or pictures and symbols. Some pupils start school with very limited communication. The support they receive has a significant, positive impact on their ability to communicate.

Staff are focused on building positive relationships with pupils and their families. When pupils start, staff use the initial days and weeks to learn everything they can about pupils. They work together with parents and carers to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of pupils' individual needs.

Leaders have developed a love of reading across the school. They have ensured that there is a range of interesting books for pupils to read. Staff regularly read to pupils. In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to read. Pupils' reading is assessed regularly and systematically. This helps staff to figure out what it is that pupils will need to focus on. Consequently, every pupil has a personalised phonics programme.

The personal development of pupils is exceptional. A wide range of opportunities prepare pupils for adulthood. Pupils are taught about a wealth of topics, such as dangerous substances, consent, appropriate touch and relationships. They experience a range of creative, practical and cross-curricular learning. Pupils receive impartial careers advice and support when it is time to move on. Nearly all achieve qualifications and accreditations. Pupils are very well prepared for adulthood, and all move on to suitable education, training or specialist settings.

Leaders support staff very well. Staff are positive about the support they receive. Staff workload and well-being are top priorities, and leaders listen to staff and take on board their suggestions. Staff professional development is taken seriously. Each member of staff has an individual training programme that is tailored to what they need. This helps them to support pupils exceptionally well.

Trustees bring a wealth of skills, knowledge and expertise to the school. They have clear roles and responsibilities. They know the school very well and are highly ambitious for pupils. They visit the school regularly to check on the work of leaders and staff. The work of the trustees ensures that the independent school standards are consistently met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their responsibilities to safeguard pupils seriously. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and is suitable. Staff joining the school undergo a rigorous recruitment process. Leaders are focused on making sure that staff are the right fit for the school. Meticulous record-keeping and the subsequent actions staff take ensure that pupils are safe. Regular, effective safeguarding training ensures that staff are highly vigilant and alert. The curriculum is planned well to include a range of topics that teach pupils how to stay safe. Importantly, leaders think carefully about the vulnerabilities of their pupils. They have ensured that there are several ways in which pupils can voice concerns.

## 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134605
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6108
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10232309
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	23
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Quest School
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Martin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Martin
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£52,500 to £56,200
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 522700
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.questschool.co.uk">www.questschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@questschool.co.uk">office@questschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 15 March 2018

## Information about this school

- The Quest School is an independent day special school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Most pupils also have complex and severe learning needs. All pupils have EHC plans funded by their local authority.
- The school was founded by a group of parents and ABA professionals in 2003.
- The school moved to its current premises in April 2014. The Hop Farm is used by a number of businesses.
- Most pupils currently on roll are boys.
- The teaching staff consists of teachers and highly qualified supervisors.
- Staff deliver sessions based on the principles of ABA.
- Pupils receive speech and language therapy as part of their individual programmes.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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 headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees and other members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, communication, personal, social and health education, and preparation for adulthood. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to and communicated with several pupils during the inspection. These discussions were supported by staff who understood pupils' individual communication systems.

- Inspectors spoke to several members of staff to gather their views about the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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