

# Inspection of Holly House Special School

Church Street North, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 9QR

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

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

Most pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe. Pupils say the best thing they like about school is the outdoor education. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils to achieve the best they can. Staff work hard to model the school values of 'relationship, respect and responsibility'. Some pupils are starting to show some of these values. For example, some demonstrate responsibility by becoming a school council member.

Although behaviour is starting to improve, it is not yet good. The number of low-level incidents is high. Pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted as a result. Leaders have recently provided more support to help teachers manage behaviour. Leaders do not tolerate bullying and act quickly to resolve it when it happens.

The leadership team is relatively new to their role. Leaders have not had sufficient time to make the necessary improvements. While they are working at pace to improve the school, there is still much to do. Some subjects are more developed than others. The teaching of early reading is not embedded.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Some say the close relationships that staff build with their children are important to them. Some parents would like to be more informed about the progress their children make.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the curriculum they provide to meet all pupils' needs. However, currently, this is not the case for a few pupils who struggle to study the full curriculum due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have recently focused on ensuring that the curriculum in the core subjects, including mathematics and science, is well planned, enabling pupils to build on their knowledge over time.

In science, pupils enjoy the practical elements of the lesson and can remember what they learn. This is because some teachers use strategies to help pupils remember key knowledge. Such strategies include revisiting previous learning and asking pupils questions to check their understanding. This is not yet consistent across all subjects.

Leaders are not using assessment consistently in all subjects. They do not always identify how well pupils are progressing.

Not all teachers currently use the early reading programme to help pupils learn to read. Most pupils do not have a good understanding of how to use phonics to help them read. The books that pupils read from do not always match their phonic knowledge. Although some pupils can read fluently, they struggle if they come across an unfamiliar word. Some pupils enjoy visiting the local primary school to buddy read.

Low-level disruption can sometimes affect how well pupils are able to concentrate in lessons. Staff support these pupils by ensuring they have individualised timetables to support their needs. Nevertheless, the low-level disruption that occurs prevents other pupils from being able to concentrate on their learning.

Some pupils struggle to attend school regularly. This is having a negative impact on the progress they are making.

Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. All pupils have access to an extended day. Some of the activities include cooking, swimming, cycling and ice skating. Leaders have made strong links with the local community. These include the local church, primary and secondary schools and sports clubs. Pupils are proud of being the 'quick cricket' champions in Northeast Derbyshire.

Pupils understand the importance of respecting difference. They know about different types of relationships. There is a policy for relationships and sex education. Leaders have not yet consulted parents on this policy. Pupils have limited understanding of different cultures and faiths. They have some understanding of fundamental British values, including those of respect and tolerance. Careers education is not given enough priority. Therefore, pupils do not receive enough guidance on their next steps when they leave school.

Staff are proud to work at Holly House School. They understand the workload pressures are temporary.

The new leadership team has thoroughly self-evaluated the provision. They know what needs to improve. They are acting swiftly to make the necessary changes. Governors have not monitored the work of leaders closely enough. Consequently, they have not identified some of the school's weaknesses.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have prioritised safeguarding. Staff know there is a collective responsibility to help keep pupils safe. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. This ensures that they quickly identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders brief staff every week on safeguarding updates. Staff promptly report any concerns. Leaders ensure that they take the appropriate actions in response to any concerns. They make effective use of external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online. Leaders have ensured that they prioritise pupils' mental health and well-being. Pastoral support is in place to help pupils when and if they need it.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not consistently identify precisely what pupils need to learn and by when in all subjects. Pupils do not always get the chance to build on what they have learned before. Leaders should ensure that there is clarity about the really important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember from Year 4 to Year 9. They should ensure that teachers know how to check that pupils can recall and deepen this knowledge.
- A consistent approach to teaching early reading is not in place for those who are at the early stages of learning to read. Books do not always match the sounds that pupils know. Leaders should ensure that staff understand how best to check the sounds that pupils know well. They should make sure that the books which pupils have to read give them the opportunity to fluently blend the sounds that they know.
- Some pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not appropriate. Some engage in low-level disruption. This behaviour has a negative impact on other pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach to managing behaviour so that all pupils are able to engage fully with their learning.
- Some elements of the personal, social, health education (PSHE) programme and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum are not taught in sufficient depth to ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of the different topics that they study. Pupils are not yet gaining as strong an understanding of sex education, careers education and other cultures and faiths as they could, for example. Leaders should ensure that the teaching of the PSHE and SMSC curriculum enables pupils to understand their next steps and how to live in modern British society.
- Governors do not monitor leaders' work closely enough. Consequently, they have not identified some of the school's weaknesses, notably in relation to behaviour and the curriculum, nor have they held leaders sufficiently to account. Governors should ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to understand the quality of the school's provision across all areas and to provide leaders with robust challenge.

## 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.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131322
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254856
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	43
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Stephen Pacey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marc Hughes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hollyhouse.derbyshire.sch.uk">www.hollyhouse.derbyshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 and 3 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Holly House Special School is a specialist school for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher; the deputy headteacher; local authority school improvement partners and a local authority consultant; and the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with a leader from the alternative provision that the

school uses.

- Inspectors undertook deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. They visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. She met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- The lead inspector met with leaders responsible for behaviour, personal development, children looked after, pupil premium, attendance and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors considered responses recorded on the Ofsted Parent View survey, including free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff gathered through meetings with groups of staff and responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with members of the pupil council.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information relating to attendance and behaviour; the curriculum; and governance.

## Inspection team

Anita Denman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Hayes

Ofsted Inspector

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