

Huckleberry Therapeutic School

Manor Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 8NE

Inspection date

31 January 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were Checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f)–2(2)(h), 2A(1), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d), 3–4

- At the last standard inspection, it was found that the curriculum, including the programme for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, was narrow and not coherently sequenced. Teachers were not clear about the key knowledge that pupils should learn. Checks on pupils' learning and progress were ineffective. The teaching of early reading was weak. Pupils were not achieving well and were not prepared for the next stages in their education. To remedy these weaknesses, leaders planned to review the curriculum and ensure that teachers were sufficiently trained and knowledgeable to implement the curriculum well.
- The quality of education has strengthened remarkably. A new school curriculum has been devised and implemented. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Highly detailed schemes of work are in place for most subjects, including English, mathematics, science and PSHE education. Schemes of work are set out in 'steps', broadly reflecting the expectations of learning set out in the national curriculum. Plans are adjusted by each class teacher, in response to pupils' individual learning needs.
- Phonics and early reading are taught daily using a consistent approach. The lead for early reading is experienced and has ensured that teachers are trained and supported effectively. Additional resources and materials have been purchased and pupils have books matched to the sounds that they know. Texts, carefully selected as part of the English curriculum, ensure that pupils have a chance to hear and engage with a range of stories and texts, and to develop a love of reading.
- Systems to gather and consider information about pupils' academic, social and emotional development are in place. This includes provision for baseline and ongoing assessments. Assessments are used to consider the progress pupils are making through the school's curriculum, as well as charting progress towards education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets. Observations and assessments relating to pupils' emotional and mental health are routinely carried out and used to inform next steps. Leaders and staff know

exactly where each pupil is on their individual learning journey. Ambitious targets are set, known, and consistently worked towards by teachers and pupils alike.

- Leaders have ensured, through training or support, that teachers and teaching assistants have sufficient subject knowledge and skill to implement the curriculum effectively. Specialist part-time teachers are employed to teach physical education (PE) and music. Leaders identify correctly that support staff require further training in phonics.
- Pupils' workbooks and reading books scrutinised during the inspection confirm that the planned curriculum is being implemented successfully. Across the school, pupils' recent good progress in reading, writing and mathematics is evident.
- A play therapist, speech and language therapist and emotional well-being specialist form part of the core staff team. Specialist intervention and support contribute well to pupils' improving learning and behaviour. Behaviour management is effective.
- The PSHE education curriculum is comprehensive. It includes life skills, relationships and sex education (RSE) and opportunities to develop an understanding of values. In addition, leaders have ensured that the curriculum encourages respect for difference. Leaders are ensuring that new resources and reading materials support their promotion of diversity.
- The school now meets the previously unmet standards in part 1.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- At the last standard inspection, it was found that pupils were not prepared well for life in modern Britain. The curriculum did not pay regard to the protected characteristics and pupils lacked knowledge of other cultures, religions and backgrounds. The inspection identified that pupils were not given sufficient opportunity to learn to manage their own behaviour. Leaders planned to address these weaknesses through their curriculum review and staff training. A member of staff was identified to lead the development of PSHE education.
- A new, wider curriculum, including 'life skills', RSE and PSHE education, has been introduced. The PSHE education curriculum is viewed by leaders and staff as a 'golden thread' and fundamental to pupils' learning and experiences. Pupils learn about relationships and emotions, including managing their own feelings and behaviours. Opportunities to learn about modern Britain are planned across the school year.
- An experienced teacher has responsibility for PSHE education and has joined the PSHE education association. The curriculum lead is highly knowledgeable about the subject area and has ensured that previously identified weaknesses are now being addressed effectively and promptly.
- Thoughtful consideration and extensive research have gone into planning what and how pupils should learn about other cultures. Floor books record pupils' learning about other cultures. For example, they learned about a range of traditions associated with Chinese New Year. Pupils visited a traditional Chinese supermarket as well as a local supermarket. They then compared the two. Pupils particularly enjoyed sampling new foods.
- The school now meets the standards in part 2.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 9, 9(b), 9(c), 10, 11, 16–16(b)

- At the previous inspection, it was found that pupils' safety and well-being had not been prioritised. Systems to safeguard pupils were not secure. Staff were not trained thoroughly and records relating to child protection were of poor quality. Policies relating to behaviour and risk were not implemented effectively. To remedy this, leaders planned a comprehensive review of safeguarding, including staff training, and consultation with the local authority.
- Leaders know that safeguarding is their number one priority. This area of weakness has been addressed successfully and with urgency. Since the previous inspection, staff have undertaken additional training, including, for example, around child-on-child sexual violence and harassment. Leaders and staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and how and when to raise a concern. Systems for recording and responding to concerns have been reviewed and improved. Records have been scrutinised for quality and completeness by the local authority designated officer. Records reviewed by the inspector were thorough. Records clearly identified the concern, actions taken immediately and over time, and required next steps. Senior leaders now scrutinise records as a matter of routine.
- Policies linked to safeguarding, bullying, welfare, health and safety are suitable, comply with current guidelines and are published on the school website.
- The designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead are clear about pupils' vulnerabilities and about the risks they face. Leaders demonstrate understanding of the safeguarding of pupils who have experienced childhood trauma, as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders identify risk appropriately. Risk assessments are in place relating to the school site, activities and outings, and individual pupils and their behaviour. Mitigations to reduce risk effectively are considered, documented and implemented.
- Records indicate that bullying behaviour is rare. The anti-bullying policy is detailed and gives clarity about the way in which bullying behaviours should be tackled and responded to, including through the taught curriculum. Opportunities for seeking pupils' views about their feelings, concerns and experiences at school are established.

Paragraph 9

- The previous inspection identified that expectations of pupils' behaviour were low, and that staff did not respond consistently to poor behaviour. The previous inspection further considered that the pupils did not take responsibility for their own actions. To address this, leaders planned a review of the behaviour policy and identified ways to include pupils in establishing expectations.
- Fresh, clear expectations for behaviour are established and pupils have participated in writing the 'Huckleberry standards', which are displayed around the school. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to behaviour management. A range of agreed strategies are employed, based on understanding individual pupils' circumstances. For example, following an episode of dysregulated behaviour, reflective conversations are routine.
- The behaviour policy has been reviewed. It is known and implemented. Leaders and teachers balance the need for consistency with bespoke responses to each pupil.

Records are kept of transgressions of behaviour and of each pupil's well-being score. These records are used to help leaders to identify patterns of behaviour and to understand how well a pupil's well-being is improving.

- During the inspection, pupils were observed to behave well. Daily routines are established. Pupils are reminded of what to expect 'now and next', both verbally and via the use of a range of visual prompts. The inspector observed high adult-to-pupil ratios, with all adults aware of pupils' identified communication and social and emotional needs. Each pupil has three identified and known trusted adults in school who they can go to for help and support.
- The standards in this part are now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a)

- The previous inspection found that pupils were not being provided with PE lessons. To remedy this, leaders planned to employ a PE specialist.
- Since the previous inspection, a specialist teacher has been employed and pupils access PE lessons in accordance with the school curriculum. The school's outside space is safe, well maintained and inviting. PE provision includes swimming lessons.
- The previously unmet standards in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- At the time of the last inspection, a significant proportion of the independent school standards (the standards) were judged to be unmet. It was found that the proprietor did not have rigorous oversight of the quality of education or of safeguarding. To address weaknesses in leadership, the proprietor planned to appoint a suitably experienced executive headteacher and establish a governing board to strengthen oversight and accountability.
- Since the previous inspection, the leadership capacity of the school has strengthened significantly. The headteacher, who had taken up post six days prior to the full inspection, is now established in role. A part-time executive headteacher, with a background in independent special education, joined the school in November 2022. The arrangements for governance have been reviewed and changed. An 'education committee' has been established to ensure the achievement of core aims, including that pupils receive a good or better education and that the school is a safe, supportive, ambitious and rewarding environment.
- Leaders and teachers have worked closely together to bring about extensive improvements to the quality of education, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as strengthening systems and practices to secure pupils' welfare health and safety.
- Leaders have actively engaged with external bodies, including the local authority. This has meant that school improvement plans, actions and impact have been subject to scrutiny beyond the school's internal systems. Scrutiny has enabled leaders to refine

school improvement plans as well as to receive confirmation that safeguarding record keeping, for example, is comprehensive.

- The well-being of pupils is central to leaders' work. Therapeutic approaches and interventions are core to the school's provision. Pupils are known well, and highly individualised responses are made to their needs.
- The evidence seen by the inspector as part of this monitoring inspection reveals that a vast amount of work to improve the school has been completed in a short time. Unmet standards in parts 1, 2, 3 and 5 are now judged to be met. The post Ofsted action plan has been almost totally completed. Leaders have devised a school improvement plan to support the next stages in their work.
- The executive headteacher and other senior leaders have a secure understanding of the independent school standards. Systems for routine monitoring against compliance and quality are in place, albeit in the early stages.
- Leaders have the capacity to continue driving improvement. They have responded with vigour and consideration to the findings of the previous inspection. Many improvements are new, and some are particularly recent. It is too soon to judge that the requirements of the standards are 'consistently' met. Therefore, part 8 remains unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The previous inspection found that arrangements to meet schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 were not established. To remedy this, leaders planned to ensure that they reviewed and published their accessibility plan.
- The school has an acceptable accessibility plan, in writing and published on the school's website. The inspector saw evidence that the plan had been shared directly with the Department for Education (DfE).
- Arrangements to meet the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are in place.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	148625
DfE registration number	931/6025
Inspection number	10271547

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Harvinder Singh and Sukhbir Singh T/A Calcot Services for Children
Headteacher	Ms Louisa Skinner
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,750 to £77,000
Telephone number	01235 639 511
Website	www.huckleberrytherapeuticschool.co.uk
Email address	Huckleberry@CSFC.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	7 to 9 June 2022

Information about this school

- Huckleberry Therapeutic School is an independent school for pupils aged five to 11. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some have a medical diagnosis, for example for autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The proprietor is Calcot Services for Children Ltd. Huckleberry Therapeutic School is one of three schools belonging to the proprietor.
- An executive headteacher was appointed on a part-time basis in November 2022.

- The school was registered by the DfE in June 2021 and accepted pupils from September 2021. The school is registered for 35 pupils. The school's most recent standard inspection was in June 2022.
- The school uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspector met extensively with the executive headteacher, who was representing the proprietor, and with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspector also met individually with the curriculum lead, the reading lead and the lead for well-being and behaviour. A meeting was held with leaders, in their capacity as designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation before and during the inspection. In particular, policies and documents relating to the curriculum and safeguarding were considered. The single central record and records of safeguarding concerns and actions were reviewed.
- The inspector visited all classes and looked at pupils' workbooks.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(f) where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to

personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills;

- 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
- 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
- 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

■ 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–

- 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education
- 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,

■ 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
- 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
- 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
- 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils’ work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;
- 3(i) does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; and
- 3(j) does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the 2010 Act[10].

■ 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school’s own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
 - 5(c) precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school; and
 - 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils–
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school,
 - 5(d)(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
 - 5(d)(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable–
 - 29(1)(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act

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