

Inspection of The Greater Horseshoe School

Little Bovey Lane, Heathfield, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 6RH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8, and 17 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

At The Greater Horseshoe School, pupils uncover their hidden talents. Before joining the school, many found it difficult to engage with education. Here, highly skilled, specialist staff work intensively with pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to try out the school's rich curriculum offer. This includes a music hub, known as 'Musers', and a farm site at 'Chipley Mill' where pupils learn horticulture and animal care.

Staff capture pupils' achievements and celebrate these with parents and the local community. Pupils learn the value of persistence and practice. For example, many become proficient musicians. They take enormous confidence from this, working together to put on public performances, where previously they have found social situations very difficult.

Pupils follow the example of staff by being kind to one another. The school is an accepting place where pupils' differences are valued. As one pupil put it, 'People are people.' Many pupils form strong friendships which they cherish. Staff keep a close eye on any bullying behaviours. They help pupils to reflect on their behaviour and build better relationships.

Trips to the theatre are a regular feature of school life. As pupils' confidence grows, they travel further afield, for example to Wales, where some pupils stayed away from home for several days, completing adventurous activities.

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

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff inspire pupils to overcome their struggles with reading and find enjoyment. In every corner of the school, there is a pupil reading with an adult, or choosing from one of many enticing bookshelves. Pupils, including sixth-form students, participate readily in reading competitions and events. All of this helps pupils to develop the reading habit.

Many pupils read with great fluency and expression. Even so, leaders recognise that some have gaps in their phonic knowledge. There is a school-wide approach to phonics which involves everyone. Pupils focus on sounds and the different ways these can be represented by letters. This supports pupils' spelling as well as their reading. For pupils in the very early stages of reading, leaders provide a phonics curriculum which is tailored to their interests and needs.

Leaders have designed a curriculum with broad appeal. They assess pupils' academic and personal development needs astutely. They encourage pupils in subjects they have not considered before. All of the pupils attending this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have education, health and care plans (EHC plans) setting out long-term goals. For each pupil, leaders provide a curriculum to maximise their chance of success.

Pupils take therapeutic benefits from the opportunities they have to compose and perform at the 'Musers' site. The music curriculum is remarkably ambitious. Pupils experiment with multiple instruments and also specialise. They receive highly effective music tuition through which they learn to read music and perform to a high level of competence. Pupils transfer their improved attitudes to learning into other curriculum subjects. As a result, pupils get much more out of their time at school than they have in the past.

The school equips pupils with a wide range of knowledge and skills which they can draw from in their adult lives. Pupils are taught how to live independently. There is an increased emphasis on this for students in the sixth form. For example, these students undertake work experience. Staff know about and show pupils what is on offer at local colleges. They rehearse bus routes and travel with pupils where needed.

At the Chipley Mill farm site, pupils work towards qualifications in animal care and horticulture. Pupils become keen gardeners, working together to keep on top of the weeds. They learn about the needs of a wide range of animals such as guinea pigs, pigs, goats and exotic reptiles, all of which are kept on site. This inspires pupils to consider different careers, for example, in equine care.

Pupils make notable improvements to their behaviour during their time at the school. An expert team supports staff to diffuse any heightened behaviour quickly. Leaders have overseen a dramatic reduction in the number of behaviour incidents. This is the result of leaders' work to learn lessons from any incidents. In addition, the careful work of mentors supports pupils with their personal development needs, leading to improved behaviour.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is exceptionally well designed. Where pupils have misconceptions, these are picked up in personalised sessions with their mentors. This supports pupils to maintain healthy relationships. The PSHE programme promotes pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of modern Britain. Leaders bring in external providers to provide sensory and immersive experiences. These help pupils develop empathy towards others.

Leaders take staff workload very seriously. They actively seek the views of staff and take meaningful action to address any concerns. Their approach has led to considerable improvements in staff well-being and a dramatic reduction in staff absence.

The proprietor provides a highly effective team of governors made up of headteachers drawn from similar schools within the organisation. These leaders review one another's work, driving ongoing improvement. The chair of this group provides further support and challenge to the school, ensuring that the school meets the independent school standards in full and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff have up-to-date and relevant training. As a result, staff are acutely aware of pupils' individual vulnerabilities. They help pupils to feel safe and behave safely. Staff are quick to share any concerns. Leaders are vigilant for signs that pupils may be at risk of harm and involve external agencies promptly.

Pupils place a high degree of trust in staff, including leaders. They know that the staff have their best interests in mind. There are regular opportunities for pupils to share their worries with trusted adults. Pupils receive well-focused support with challenges in their personal lives.

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

Unique reference number	146167
DfE registration number	878/6074
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10261642
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Mike Deacy
Headteacher	Lukasz Miecznikowski
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,600 to £72,131
Telephone number	01626 782038
Website	www.thegreaterhorseshoeschool.co.uk
Email address	lukazsm@enhancedlearningservices.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 to 4 July 2019

Information about this school

- The school operates on three sites. The main school site is The Greater Horseshoe School, Little Bovey Lane, Heathfield, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6RH. There is a second site at Chipley Mill Farm, Bickington, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6JW. Here, pupils follow courses in horticulture and animal care. The third site is known as 'Musers', Unit 1, Charles 1st Business Park, Old Newton Road, Heathfield, TQ12 6UT. At Musers, pupils follow courses in music and music technology.
- The Greater Horseshoe School is a specialist provision for pupils with SEND, including autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have EHC plans. All placements are funded by Devon local authority.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has risen considerably.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision: Combe Pafford School and Riviera Tuition.

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, members of the senior leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator, and a representative of the proprietor who is the chair of the school. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of Devon local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including a focus on early reading, mathematics, PSHE and music. 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 also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke with leaders about their processes for recruiting staff and scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the

designated safeguarding lead to discuss safeguarding practices and consider record-keeping. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils and staff to gather their views on the culture of safeguarding.

- The inspection team visited each of the three sites, checking the premises and observing the ways that staff and pupils use the different facilities.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. In addition, inspectors took into account the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Stewart Gale

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023