

Inspection of Mortimer House

17 Victoria Road, Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 7HS

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy, secure and nurturing environment where pupils and students feel safe to learn. As one pupil said, 'When you come here, the school fits around you, so you don't struggle to fit in with the school.' For most of the pupils who come here, this is the first time in many years that they have fitted in. They feel part of a community where learning is a positive experience because barriers are removed wherever possible.

Pupils and students have often missed significant chunks of their education. Leaders make sure that they know where the gaps are and what additional help pupils need in order to succeed. They have high expectations and help pupils to build the confidence that they need to achieve these.

Pupils develop their ability to take account of the needs of others. They learn to respect each other and the adults who help them. As a result, this is a calm and orderly environment.

Leaders have provided an extensive range of activities to support pupils' and students' personal development. As needs and aspirations emerge, leaders find creative responses to support pupils' understanding of the world and participation in their community.

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

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has built a team of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers and support staff who are dedicated to improving outcomes for pupils and students. Curriculum development has been a focus for improvement. There is now a broad, well-organised and carefully sequenced curriculum in place for most subjects. However, on occasion, the transition of learning from key stage 3 to key stage 4 is less well developed.

In this small school, all teachers are curriculum leaders. Leaders have ensured that training and support have been provided for them in the school and across the company. However, the curriculum leader role is not as clearly defined as it could be. This means that curriculum development is not always approached in a uniform way across all subjects. As a result, opportunities for sharing good practice can be missed.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders are rigorous in ensuring that the needs identified in EHC plans are shared with all staff and inform all planning. The assistant special educational needs coordinator has ensured that individual learning plans are highly effective documents. These support classroom staff to remove barriers, avoid known triggers and focus on learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in developing the learning activities that will support pupils to learn and remember as much as they can. They use every opportunity to check what pupils are learning and understanding through a wide

range of skilfully employed assessment strategies. However, formal assessment is not used as well as it could be to support the school's ongoing curriculum development.

Reading is now a priority in the school. Opportunities to read in different subjects and at different times of the day are specifically planned. Those who struggle with reading are now well supported. Leaders have ensured that staff are trained to teach phonics where needed. Consequently, pupils make great strides in their reading skills and also in their enjoyment of reading.

Leaders have rightly placed great emphasis on helping pupils and students to understand how their behaviour affects others as well as themselves. Staff know that pupils here can struggle to control their own behaviour. They do everything possible to help them avoid their triggers. Over time, pupils recognise the strategies used and, in some cases, begin to use them independently.

Personal development is at the core of everything the school does. Leaders have created a web of experience and opportunity for pupils and students. This is based on everything pupils and students have missed and everything they need to be prepared for as they take their next steps into the world beyond school. Pupils learn about their social and cultural heritage, about the diversity of Great Britain, and about their community and how they can contribute to it. They learn about growing their own food, about how to set up a community event and to undertake challenges to raise funds for charity. A wide range of opportunities to learn about different careers through visits and visitors, supported by one-to-one interviews, helps pupils to understand their options and to develop their aspirations.

The headteacher, supported by the proprietor, has worked tirelessly with staff, pupils, students, and parents and carers to develop supported pathways to success for all. This includes the opportunity to take GCSEs in all subjects. Nurture remains a vitally important part of leaders' work, but now there are high aspirations for academic development too.

Staff are proud to work at this school. Their well-being is important to leaders. If they need help, they will get it. They say that they are a family, working together to achieve the best for pupils.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is central to everything in the school. Staff are trained well and are always on the alert. They refer all concerns and have complete confidence that leaders will take the relevant next steps. Twice-daily meetings ensure that even the smallest signs of concern are seen and shared.

Leaders work effectively with local authorities to ensure that pupils and their families have access to early help when needed.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online and in the wider world.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Occasionally, curriculum plans do not set out the links in learning from one key stage to another. In these instances, pupils do not always build on prior learning as well as they could. Leaders should make sure that subject curriculum design takes account of transition points and supports pupils through these.
- The role of subject leader is relatively new in the school and is not as clearly defined as it could be. This means that not all good practice is shared and developed across the school. Leaders should ensure that expectations for subject leadership are set out and understood by all.
- Formal assessment is not used as fully as it could be. This means that leaders do not always use the information they have to inform their next steps in curriculum development. Leaders should ensure that they identify and utilise the link between formal assessment information and curriculum review.

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	135259
DfE registration number	860/6105
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10254653
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Young Foundations Ltd
Chair	Niall Kelly
Headteacher	Rebecca Bhageerutty
Annual fees (day pupils)	£68,741 to £96,232
Telephone number	01827 337998
Website	No website
Email address	rebecca.bhageerutty@youngfoundations.com
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 2 December 2021

Information about this school

- Mortimer House is a small school in Tamworth for up to 18 pupils.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education in May 2007.
- The previous standard inspection took place in December 2021. A material change request was also considered at this time.
- The school caters for post-16 students. However, the numbers are too few to provide a separate judgement.
- The school does not 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 second full standard 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 (who is also the safeguarding lead), senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils and parents. Inspectors also spoke with therapists and with those responsible for governance, including the director of education.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in mathematics, English and reading, science, and personal, social and health education. Each deep dive included discussions with curriculum leaders (who are also the subject teachers) and visits to lessons. A scrutiny of pupils' work in all subjects was carried out. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning and more generally their experiences in school.
- Inspectors met with teachers and teaching assistants to discuss the support they receive to develop their skills and knowledge and to manage their workload.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to curriculum and assessment. Inspectors also looked at school policies, minutes of governing body meetings and subject development meetings, and development planning documentation.

- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding documents, reviewed the school's processes for reporting concerns, checked recruitment procedures and checked complaints records.
- Inspectors checked all the independent school standards, including those relating to the school premises.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Mel Ford, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Spoor

Ofsted Inspector

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