

Inspection of Manor House School

Stane Street, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0QX

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

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?

Most pupils have often had extended periods of time outside the education system prior to joining the school. They have significant gaps in their learning as a result, and are often highly anxious. Leaders know this and understand what is needed to ease pupils back into school routines. They and their staff take the time to get to know the pupils, carefully working out what will work best in each case. The care and attention given to pupils ensures that they gradually settle and grow in confidence. They make friends and learn that they are liked and respected. Pupils want to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and usually behave well. Leaders take any allegations of bullying seriously and act swiftly wherever concerns arise.

Breaktimes are important parts of the Manor House school day, giving pupils the opportunity to enjoy lunch with friends, learn new skills and let off steam. Staff build strong relationships with the pupils, helping them to play and socialise successfully. During the inspection, for instance, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lunchtime break, playing football, joining in with parachute games and taking part in a game of tug-of-war, while others chatted to friends happily in the shade of the trees.

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

Several key appointments have been made to the senior leadership team since the previous inspection, including that of substantive executive headteacher and a new head of school. Together, they have successfully steered the school through a period of change and improvement since the last inspection, ably supported by the wider leadership team. Important developments in safeguarding, behaviour and the curriculum mean that pupils learn increasingly well.

Leaders have established a secure curriculum framework across a wide range of subjects. This means that teachers are clearer about what needs to be taught than at the time of the previous inspection. A carefully thought-out programme of training is helping staff improve their subject knowledge. Leaders are still working on some subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. They have well-developed plans afoot to strengthen the curriculum in these subjects in the coming months.

Reading was identified as an area requiring improvement at the time of the last inspection. This is no longer the case. Leaders have overhauled the teaching of early reading skills. A new approach to teaching phonics is now well established, with specialist teaching provided for those who are struggling. The introduction of an assessment system means that staff are now able to identify precisely where pupils need help with their reading. The impact of these improvements is clear. Pupils are spurred on by their own success and read with increasing enjoyment and confidence.

Leaders rightly prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils are often troubled and traumatised by past experiences when they join the school. Leaders and staff work sensitively and perceptively with pupils. They supplement the school's personal, social and health education programme with support tailored to each pupil's needs. The school teaches a suitable relationships, sex and health programme. The curriculum is enriched with plenty of trips, visits and special activities. Recent activities have included, for example, boxing, golf and climbing. Opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and religions are more limited, however.

Pupils' needs mean that they find it hard to behave well all the time. Staff respond to incidents of challenging behaviour quietly, calmly, and with gentle good humour. Pupils are encouraged to understand the impact of their behaviour on others, and their responsibility to put things right when they make a mistake.

Secure procedures are in place to oversee the school's performance, including comprehensive headteacher reports to the governing body and executive board. The chair of governors is knowledgeable about the school's work and understandably proud of the school's progress since the last inspection. Most parents and carers are very positive about the school's work, and about the progress their children have made. A minority of parents are less positive about aspects of the school's work. These concerns were explored fully by inspectors during this inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders always prioritise pupils' safety. They make sure that staff are suitably trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Leaders have introduced a new centralised record system since the previous inspection. This is now well established and used effectively by leaders to check and monitor safeguarding concerns. Staff are alert to pupils' well-being. They work constructively with parents and agencies to ensure pupils' welfare. Leaders use regular staff briefings well to keep everyone informed about safeguarding issues. Pupils know that staff will look after them and feel secure as a result. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day. The school building and its grounds are safe and well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is less well developed in the humanities than in subjects such as English and mathematics. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders have appointed a member of staff with specialist subject knowledge in the humanities. They should implement their plans to strengthen this aspect of the school's curriculum.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of, and respect for, different faiths and religions in a cohesive and coherent way are at an early stage of development.

This hampers pupils' preparation for life in the United Kingdom. Leaders should develop this aspect of the school's work.

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	131139
DfE registration number	938/6255
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10267616
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Outcomes First Group
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Lyndsey Jeffries (executive headteacher) Robert Fauvel (head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,150
Telephone number	01403 790939
Website	www.acornmanorhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	robert.fauvel@acornmanorhouseschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 June to 1 July 2021

Information about this school

- The school opened as Hillcrest Slinfold School in 1996. The school's name changed to Manor House School following a material change inspection in July 2018. The number of places provided by the school increased from 24 to 45 following a further material change inspection in July 2022.
- Manor House School provides education for boys and girls with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have been diagnosed with autism and attention deficit order. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils often display challenging behaviours and require a high level of support. Most have significant gaps in their education, and some have been excluded from their previous schools.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Outcomes First Group (OFG), which owns several schools across the country. Governance is provided by a governing body, which is made up of the regional director, who is also the chair of the governing body, and headteachers from other OFG schools in the south-east of England.
- There have been a number of appointments to the leadership team since the last standard inspection. The executive headteacher was appointed substantive executive headteacher in February 2022. She oversees two OFG schools, Manor House School and Mountfield School, dividing her time between the two schools. The assistant headteacher was appointed to the substantive role in September 2021, with two additional assistant headteachers appointed in September 2022 and March 2023 respectively.

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.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included discussions with the executive headteacher, head of school, assistant headteachers, OFG's regional director, and other senior leaders. The inspectors also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions. Inspectors spoke with pupils in

lessons, during breaktimes, in the dining hall and around the school. They also met with representatives of the school council.

- Inspectors considered the school's culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection. The lead inspector checked the single central record and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also considered a range of documentation associated with the independent school standards, including the school's safeguarding policies and records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, physical education, and personal, social and health education. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector also reviewed documentation relating to the teaching of mathematics, spoke with leaders about the mathematics curriculum and looked at a sample of pupils' work in this subject.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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