

Inspection of Philpots Manor School

West Hoathly, West Sussex RH19 4PR

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Philpots Manor is a place that is full of kindness. Pupils describe this as a school like no other. One pupil said, 'It's like a second home.' Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Staff develop very strong working relationships with pupils. As a result, they feel understood and enjoy attending school. One pupil summed up the views of many, saying, 'I love it here.' The way in which pupils develop personally during their time here is exceptional. Staff work tirelessly to change pupils' lives for the better. Consequently, by the time pupils leave, they are very well equipped for adulthood.

The beautiful surroundings make this a unique school. The rural setting has a positive effect on pupils. Horses, rabbits, chickens and dogs help to create a sense of calm. The practical nature of the curriculum is something pupils benefit from greatly. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Clear routines help pupils to achieve success. Pupils talk positively about the friends they make. Some have struggled to make friends before, but here they experience what it is like to have a good friend. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue. Staff tackle any problems swiftly.

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

Pupils enjoy studying a range of subjects that prepare them well for the future. Importantly, the curriculum is matched well to pupils' interests as well as their individual needs. Together with a focus on numeracy and literacy, staff ensure that pupils learn about science, art, pottery, physical education, computing, horticulture, outdoor education and equine studies. Leaders have themselves identified that what pupils learn could link together even more precisely in a very small number of curriculum areas. These minor tweaks are already planned ready for the new academic year.

Often, pupils start at the school with significant barriers to learning. Sometimes, they have been out of school or experienced difficulties in mainstream schools. Pupils have all struggled with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Attendance has typically been an issue too. Staff take a measured, careful approach to finding out about pupils' learning. A series of assessments are undertaken. However, leaders prioritise settling pupils into the school and building trusting relationships before they assess them. Staff regularly check how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum by asking them questions and monitoring their work. This helps them to make tweaks to what they teach next.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening are priorities. Pupils follow a curriculum that ensures that their English skills develop well over time. Pupils who struggle with reading receive additional support so that anything that prevents them from learning well is resolved quickly.

Leaders have developed a very strong equine provision that is the school's unique selling point. Pupils get great satisfaction from helping with the horses, rabbits and

chickens. They show immense care for the animals. The work they do helps to instil a sense of purpose in the pupils, as well as developing their ability to stay calm. They thrive on the responsibility they are given and take it seriously.

An exceptional personal development offer ensures that pupils are exposed to a rich set of experiences during their time at school. A wide variety of trips and visits helps to bring the curriculum to life and make it relevant. The personal, social, health and education programme covers the important content pupils need to know. An emphasis on developing life skills sits right at the heart of the curriculum. This programme is particularly well thought through. The work of the well-being hub in supporting pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils all say that the staff who work in the well-being hub are their 'go-to' staff.

Pupils receive careers advice and support that help them make important decisions about their future pathways. Many pupils complete work experience and this helps them to explore what they might want to do in the future. It also instils a work ethic in pupils. All pupils pursue suitable education, employment or training when they leave. They all leave with a selection of appropriate qualifications and accreditations.

Some staff have worked here for many years. They enthuse about how great the school is. One member of staff said, 'I love seeing the difference we make to pupils.' Staff collectively feel well supported by leaders, particularly in relation to their workload.

The proprietor knows the school very well and makes sure that its statutory duties are fulfilled. The school ensures that section 10 of the Equality Act 2010 is met. The proprietor has clear plans in place to further strengthen the scrutiny of all areas of the school's work, including the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make checks on new staff to ensure that they are suitable. Staff are carefully selected to make sure that they are the right fit for the school and its pupils. A regular programme of training means that staff know how to keep pupils safe. They show kindness and compassion, and are vigilant about changes in pupils' behaviour or anything that might suggest there could be a concern that they need to tackle. Strong systems and processes are followed which help safeguarding leaders take appropriate actions to protect pupils from harm. Pupils are taught how to stay safe at every opportunity.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a very small number of curriculum areas, the sequencing of what pupils learn is not as precise as it could be. This means that some of what pupils learn does

not link together as well as it could. As a result, it makes it more difficult for pupils to remember what they have learned. Leaders need to ensure that the sequencing is more precise so that it is equally strong in every curriculum area.

- Leaders, including the proprietor, recognise that, while there is scrutiny of the schools' work, including but not limited to the curriculum, it could be even stronger. While leaders are highly knowledgeable and skilled in their areas of responsibility, the proprietor needs to ensure that there is stronger oversight of leaders' work at all levels to help them make improvements more rapidly.

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	126141
DfE registration number	938/6219
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10282340
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Steven Ogilvie
Headteacher	Darin Nobes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000
Telephone number	01342 810268
Website	www.philpotsmanorschool.co.uk
Email address	info@philpotsmanorschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 to 23 May 2019

Information about this school

- Philpots Manor School is an independent special school which caters for up to 55 pupils between the ages of seven and 19 years. The school is located on the outskirts of West Hoathly village in a rural part of West Sussex .
- The school caters for pupils who have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Some also have other learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have been placed at the school by a local authority.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in May 2019.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision. However, a number of pupils attend registered colleges on a part-time basis, including Brinsbury College and Plumpton College.

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 held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, and teaching and support staff at the school. The lead inspector also met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils and staff during lesson visits. Inspectors also met with leaders to discuss the school's curriculum and other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked at a range of curriculum areas during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The lead inspector met with a group of staff to explore their views about the school.
- Inspectors gathered evidence about the independent school standards during meetings with leaders and the proprietor. Inspectors also considered policies and documents and toured the school's buildings and grounds with the headteacher and other leaders.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. They considered a wide range of documents, policies and records, including the pre-appointment

checks for staff. The lead inspector also met with the proprietor, the headteacher and safeguarding leaders.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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