

# Inspection of Holbrook School for Autism

Portway, Holbrook, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0TE

---

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are keen to attend this school. They feel safe and appreciate the guidance and support provided to them by staff. As one sixth-form student typically explained, 'Staff help us, understand us and listen if we have a problem.' Another pupil simply stated, 'This school is a dream.'

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Staff know the pupils very well and provide them with individualised support. They help pupils communicate their needs and celebrate their achievements in various ways. Pupils respect their peers and accept them for who they are. Bullying is rarely a concern.

Staff help pupils manage their emotions and feelings. Consistent routines reassure pupils. Frequent praise for listening well and making good choices builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Staff use their skills to minimise the impact of any disruptive behaviour when it occurs. Their patience and understanding help most pupils flourish.

Leaders and staff are determined that every pupil can be successful. Pupils focus their efforts on achieving suitable targets, based on their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Post-16 students gain accreditations and often enjoy work placements at local businesses. Leaders work closely with parents and carers and external agencies to prepare pupils well for their next steps.

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

Leaders have devised four different pathways to provide each pupil with a curriculum that is relevant, meaningful and motivating. Informal pathways offer good opportunities for pupils to develop their speech, language and communication skills. More formal pathways increase pupils' knowledge of mathematics and English, as well as a broader range of subjects. When pupils join the school, leaders check which pathway is most suitable for them.

Pupils use different approaches to explain what they need, think or feel. Staff's close relationships and gentle persistence avoids pupils from getting frustrated. Pupils usually stay calm and focus well on their learning.

The quality of the reading curriculum has improved recently. Well-trained staff teach a structured phonics programme for as long as pupils need. Initially, pupils identify the different sounds that letters make and recognise their form. When they are ready, pupils use their knowledge of phonics to decipher unfamiliar words and write short sentences. Pupils discuss what happens in the stories they share and enjoy reading their own books. Staff support pupils to become confident readers as soon as they are able.

In most curriculum areas, leaders identify what pupils need to know and when in each pathway. Staff use specialist materials and approaches to make the learning

accessible. Pupils learn important knowledge and frequently revisit information to help them remember. Staff use guidance on each pupil's 'My plan' to make sure that the planned learning meets each pupil's needs. Staff closely track how well each pupil is doing and adapt the curriculum when necessary.

In a few subjects, the curriculum is not delivered as consistently. When this is the case, staff are not confident about what pupils need to know or how they should teach it. In these subjects, staff do not always choose suitable approaches to deliver new content. Mistakes made by pupils in these subjects are sometimes missed.

Pupils benefit from a range of enriching experiences. For example, they enjoyed recent trips to the Magna Science Adventure Centre and a local mosque. They supported the local community by delivering birthday cards to an elderly care home resident. Pupils appreciate leadership roles as anti-bullying ambassadors and school council representatives.

Post-16 students learn life skills, such as how to cook and wash and travel on the bus. They meet with educational providers and employees to discuss possible next steps. They gain accreditations in English and mathematics and life skills awards. However, the range of qualifications they study lacks ambition. Despite this, students usually move on to destinations that match their interests and aspirations.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate opportunities to develop their practice. However, a notable minority are concerned that leaders are not considerate enough of staff's workload and well-being. Some staff do not think leaders support them well enough in dealing with incidents of poor behaviour when they occur.

Trust leaders carry out regular monitoring to check that leaders' work to improve the school is having the desired impact. They help school leaders share best practice with other schools in the trust. Governors and trustees are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. They are committed to ensuring that pupils who attend the school are successful.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are well trained and knowledgeable. Staff know each pupil's particular needs well. They know how to report any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare. They report concerns promptly. Leaders act quickly when a pupil is at risk of potential harm. They make sure that pupils and their families get the right help.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when they are online. They learn about people who keep them safe. Pupils know that staff will take them seriously if they share a concern.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent. This is because some staff struggle with their own subject and teaching knowledge. They do not always identify and correct pupils' mistakes and misconceptions. This leaves pupils with gaps in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in every subject is implemented consistently and effectively. They need to check that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to teach each subject with clarity and conviction.
- There is a limited range of accreditations and qualifications available for pupils to study. Some of the qualifications that pupils study are not aspirational enough. They do not always gain sufficient credit for what they know and can do. Leaders need to ensure that pupils access a broad and ambitious range of suitable qualifications and accreditations in preparation for their next steps.
- A significant minority of staff do not feel well supported by leaders. They do not think leaders help them well enough when dealing with incidents of poor behaviour. They say that leaders do not take their workload and well-being into account when planning changes to improve the school. Leaders need to ensure that all staff feel well supported in their roles so that their workload is reasonable and their well-being is promoted.

## 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.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146058
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254079
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	140
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mark Emly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Samuel Bayliss
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk">www.holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Holbrook School for Autism is a special school for pupils aged four to 19 years who have a diagnosis of autism. Pupils who attend this school all have an EHC plan. They study one of four curriculum pathways, depending on their needs.
- The school converted to become an academy school with the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust in August 2018. When its predecessor school of the same name was inspected by Ofsted in December 2014, it was judged to be good overall. The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased notably since this time.
- The school is located on two sites. Pupils who attend the main school site in Holbrook are predominantly aged between four and 13 years. Most pupils who attend the school's second site located at 91 John O'Gaunts Way, Belper, DE56 0DA are aged between 14 and 19 years.
- The headteacher took up the role in April 2019.
- The school makes use of the services of one unregistered alternative provision.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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, who is also the coordinator of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also met with other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the vice-chair of the board of trustees and two members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors did deep dives in four subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and physical development, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and looked at evidence of pupils' work. They spoke with pupils and teachers. They heard pupils read. On the second day of the inspection, inspectors examined the curriculum in a wider range of subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences and observed pupils' behaviour during social times.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks, holding discussions with safeguarding leaders, staff and pupils and reviewing documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took note of the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also noted responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation audit and school improvement plan. They considered information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, examples of pupils' EHC plans and information about the wider curriculum.

## Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Rooney

Ofsted Inspector

Wendy Gordon

Ofsted Inspector

John Craig

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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023