

Inspection of Hopewell School

Harmony House, Baden Powell Close, Dagenham, Essex RM9 6XN

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils get a fresh start at Hopewell School. Most have missed significant time in education. Pupils feel lucky to have this opportunity. They value the positive working relationships they build with staff. Pupils enjoy being part of a safe and secure school environment. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They do not have equally high expectations of the work that pupils can produce.

Most pupils improve their attendance and punctuality. Pupils stated that bullying is not accepted here. If a pupil said something rude or unkind, teachers would tackle it. Pupils can speak to any member of staff if they have a problem. Staff support pupils to manage difficult situations, including through therapeutic sessions. They help pupils to build their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils leave school with qualifications that enable them to take their next steps into college.

Senior leaders are ambitious for pupils to succeed. However, the quality of education is inconsistent. Some subjects are taught and planned well, but not all curriculum areas help pupils make the progress they should.

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

The school provides a broad curriculum that includes academic and vocational subjects. The vocational offer is ambitious in preparing pupils for their next steps. Increasing numbers of pupils are taking vocational qualifications at a more advanced level. Staff use pupils' talents and interests to provide useful hooks into learning. Typically, teachers' expectations for pupils in lessons are not ambitious enough. They focus too much on different activities rather than meeting the aims of the curriculum. Teaching does not routinely check and address any misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This limits pupils' progress through the curriculum.

Curricular thinking is further ahead in some subjects than in others. Several subjects have been carefully considered. Teachers have identified and planned for important knowledge and skills. Other subjects are not as well planned and are inconsistently implemented. Teaching in these subjects does not provide opportunities to check and revisit pupils' knowledge and skills. There is no systematic approach to the teaching of the vocabulary that pupils need to know.

Leaders know that the arrangements for teaching reading to those who struggle are not good enough. Their plans have been hampered by difficulty in recruiting staff. Leaders are in the early stages of assessing pupils' reading ability and implementing a phonics programme. The school does not have a culture that promotes reading for pleasure.

Leaders, staff and therapists work together well. They identify and support pupils' emotional and behavioural needs. Parents value this approach. Typically, staff adapt their curriculum and teaching plans based on pupils' individual targets. They assess

pupils on arrival at the school to identify gaps in knowledge. Teachers use support staff effectively to tailor the curriculum for individual pupils.

For the most part, the school is a calm environment in which pupils can learn. When pupils struggle to self-regulate, staff get them back on track quickly. Pupils' behaviour rarely disrupts learning. Pupils know that if they need extra help to manage their emotions, then a member of staff is always available.

The school provides pupils with a strong personal development offer. This includes weekly activities such as rock climbing and water sports. Pupils go swimming and visit a local farm to look after the animals. Leaders focus on developing pupils' positive character traits. The school's well-planned assembly programme supports pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils have recently celebrated Eid and the anniversary of the NHS. Through the school's personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn about healthy living. Staff emphasise the importance of developing positive mental health. Older pupils are helped to take their next steps in education. They receive impartial careers advice. Staff assist pupils with college applications and accompany them on open days.

Leaders have taken steps to manage staff workload during a time of high staff turnover. They have ensured that the independent school standards continue to be met. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan. Governors have not recognised that the school's leadership have too many responsibilities and lacks capacity. Subject leadership is not in place, which makes it difficult for leaders to make improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff receive relevant safeguarding training, for example around harmful sexual behaviour. Staff know pupils well and are alert to changes in behaviour that could indicate any concerns. There are clear procedures in place for the reporting of safeguarding concerns. Leaders make timely referrals to safeguard pupils and families. Children learn to keep themselves safe online and outside the school environment. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy published on its website.

Records show that while incidents are recorded, often the actions that leaders have taken are unclear. This makes it difficult for leaders to have a clear understanding of any follow-up actions that may be needed.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not have a well-planned approach to teaching pupils to read. Pupils who are not reading fluently do not get the support they need to catch up and

learn to read. This hinders their ability to learn across the curriculum. The school must ensure that every pupil who struggles to read gets the right support from a well-trained adult, including through being provided with a broad range of texts that pupils read regularly.

- The quality of education is inconsistent. Some subjects are not planned well enough around the key vocabulary and concepts that pupils need to understand. In some subjects, teaching is not sufficiently ambitious. Senior leaders should make sure that all subjects are consistently well planned and taught so that pupils' learning across the curriculum is deep and secure.
- The school's leadership has too many responsibilities. This limits leaders' ability to identify and make improvements, including to the quality of education. The school must make sure that leadership capacity is strengthened further so that the school can identify and address any areas for improvement quickly.

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	134388
DfE registration number	301/6002
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10286408
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Proprietor	Herman Allen
Headteacher	Susan Douglas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000 to £65,000
Telephone number	020 85936610
Website	www.hopewellschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@hopewellschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Hopewell School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is located within shared premises, Harmony House. The school operates over two sites. The school's vocational provision is located at Motorvations, Romford, Essex, RM7 0JB.
- The school provides placements for pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs. The school does not offer sixth-form provision, but some individual pupils stay beyond the age of 16 to complete qualifications.
- Currently, the school has pupils from Year 5 upwards.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Pupils are referred to the school by five local authorities.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last standard inspection was in June 2019 when it was judged to be good.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the leadership team.
- Additional off-site training activities are made available to pupils at Lambourne End Centre for Outdoor Learning, Lambourne End, RM4 1NB.

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 school leaders, including those responsible for the quality of education, behaviour, attendance, personal development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into computing, creative media, English and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked to pupils about their learning and considered a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors spoke to a representative from a local authority that refers pupils to the school.

- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annabel Davies

His Majesty's Inspector

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