

Inspection of The Limes School

73A Taunton Road, Ashton under Lyne, Greater Manchester OL7 9DU

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 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 Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The Limes School is a nurturing place for pupils to learn. Leaders provide considered support and encouragement to each pupil. Many pupils have been out of education for considerable periods of time. Staff work together to support pupils to regain their confidence. This enables pupils to reengage in learning.

Leaders support pupils who have previously experienced trauma with a range of effective therapeutic approaches. Staff get to know each pupil and are very understanding of their individual needs. Pupils are happy at this school. They achieve well.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils, including for their achievement and for their conduct. They are vigilant to any changes in pupils' mood or behaviour. This helps to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

For many pupils, their attendance and behaviour improve during their time at the school. Generally, pupils behave well in lessons and around the site. They are respectful towards each other and towards staff. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.

Pupils have access to a spacious outdoor area where they can play football. They enjoy planting and growing vegetables. They benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, such as visits to scooter parks and to museums.

Pupils told inspectors that the school has made a positive difference to their lives. They are proud to attend this school.

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

Pupils arrive at the school with different starting points. Some have had negative experiences of education. To address this, leaders have provided a broad, ambitious and interesting curriculum. This curriculum enables pupils to enjoy learning once again.

Staff work well together to share their subject knowledge and to support each other to design learning that meets pupils' individual needs. Subject-specific training encourages adults to think about how best to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils. They think carefully about the activities that they design. Typically, this enables pupils to learn well.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and in what order. The key knowledge that staff must teach pupils is clearly defined. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum is less well developed. In these subjects, the essential knowledge that staff want pupils to learn is not as clear as it should be, and neither is the order in which this should be

taught. In these subjects, leaders and staff are also not as clear about exactly what pupils must know and remember of the curriculum.

Leaders prioritise reading across the school. They have successfully introduced a phonics programme which identifies and supports pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. As a result, those pupils who fall behind with their reading knowledge catch up quickly. Leaders also schedule regular reading sessions for pupils. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide variety of different texts and genres. Most pupils develop a new-found love of reading.

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide effective support for their pupils to help them to learn and develop. Staff understand how to respond to pupils' individual needs. Leaders regularly work with external agencies and they are quick to identify where pupils may have additional needs.

Staff explicitly teach pupils how to behave. For example, adults skilfully develop pupils' understanding of the most appropriate ways to react and to behave in different situations. Over time, pupils successfully increase their ability to manage their own behaviour.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Staff support pupils in their understanding of the fundamental British values, including those relating to democracy and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs. Leaders have implemented a comprehensive programme of relationships and sex education. Leaders have introduced a programme of careers education. However, this is not fully developed. For example, leaders have not linked careers into different areas of the curriculum. Pupils have too few opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities.

The proprietor body has an appropriate range of skills and knowledge to fulfil its role effectively. Members are confident and skilled in supporting leaders and in holding them to account for the quality of education that the school provides. The proprietor body meets all of its statutory obligations. As a result, the school meets the independent school standards ('the standards') consistently and securely. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders are cognisant of staff's workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and they are alert to the signs of risk in pupils. Adults report any concerns about pupils' welfare and safety immediately.

Leaders are knowledgeable about safeguarding risks. They work closely with external agencies to support pupils. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Leaders ensure that appropriate pre-employment checks are completed to ensure that staff are suitable to work with the school's pupils. The safeguarding policy reflects the current statutory guidance and it is available on request to parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. This means that teachers are unclear about what to assess in these subjects. As a result, they do not know exactly what pupils must know and remember. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking in these few remaining subjects. Leaders should train staff so that adults know exactly what to assess and when.
- Some parts of the programme to support pupils' wider personal development are underdeveloped. As a result, pupils' careers education and the opportunities that they have to take on leadership responsibilities are not consistently strong. Leaders should further develop the personal development programme so that pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

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	130913
DfE registration number	357/6056
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10267612
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Proprietor	Hexagon Care Services Ltd.
Chair	Caroline Ashdown
Headteacher	Miranda Rathmell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	0161 339 7368
Website	www.hexagoncare.com
Email address	limes.headteacher@hexagoncare.com
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 17 January 2019

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was 15 to 17 January 2019.
- The school is located on 73A Taunton Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester OL7 9DU.
- There is a very small number of pupils in the sixth form.
- All pupils have SEND. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Leaders do 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 first routine inspection that took place since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and they have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the chair and representatives of the proprietor body, and a range of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included information relating to the standards, the school's curriculum, leaders' improvement priorities, leaders' approach to safeguarding pupils and the checks that leaders carry out on newly appointed staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff to check how well they understand safeguarding procedures.
- There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View. However, the lead inspector spoke with some parents and carers to gather their views.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey. However, inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, religious education, and personal, social and health education. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons and reviewed pupils' work. They also considered the curriculum across some other subjects.

- The lead inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents and information relating to the standards. She also made a tour of the school premises.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Pennington

His Majesty's Inspector

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