

Inspection of Harlescott House School

Harlescott House, Harlescott House Lane, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 3BA

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 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	Good
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Leadership and management	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?

Pupils join Harlescott House School after significant periods of disrupted education. Staff understand this and prioritise getting to know the pupils and building strong relationships. This puts pupils at ease and helps them to settle in and feel safe. Pupils are happy to come to school.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders understand the pupils and ensure that their needs are met right from the start. Pupils learn how to manage their behaviour. When pupils struggle to manage their behaviour, well-trained staff support them to regulate their behaviour effectively. This helps pupils to re-engage in their learning more quickly.

The curriculum is carefully designed to allow pupils to learn and succeed. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. Pupils achieve a wide range of academic awards that help build their confidence in subjects across the curriculum.

There are a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their passions and interests. For example, pupils play golf and learn to prepare a range of meals. They are able to watch the local football team and visit a range of cultural and religious sites. These opportunities help to prepare pupils for life beyond school.

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

During the school's first year, the proprietor has established an ambitious vision that is shared by all staff. Their moral purpose shines through. As the proprietor said, 'It's about the pupils' outcomes, not our income.' This ethos is at the heart of the school.

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Staff carefully assess pupils' starting points when they arrive. This means that no time is wasted in helping pupils to start learning straight away. Depending on the needs of the pupil, this learning may take the form of developing positive relationships and learning to work cooperatively, alongside academic learning. Learning is planned carefully so that pupils are able to be successful and feel a sense of pride. Staff work closely with the pupils to find out what they like to do and what they are good at, and build learning around this. This helps the pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. However, while leaders are ambitious for pupils, this ambition is not yet evident in the content and sequencing of some curricular areas. This means that in some subjects, learning does not always build purposefully towards ambitious end points.

There is a focus on ensuring that all pupils have a secure grasp of English and mathematics. Reading is prioritised throughout the curriculum. As soon as pupils arrive, staff introduce pupils to books related to their personal interests. Pupils regularly visit the library, and staff support them to find books that inspire them. For pupils who find reading difficult, the school has a phonics scheme in place, and staff are trained in the school's chosen approach. Mathematics is planned to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Pupils build their skills over time. Leaders assess the

pupils to identify gaps and then devise a sequence of work to address these gaps. However, at times, pupils complete tasks that are not fully matched to what they need to learn. This means that pupils do not always learn what was intended and, therefore, do not progress as well as they could.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils arrive at school requiring support to manage their feelings and emotions. Staff understand and support pupils' learning, social and emotional needs well.

The behaviour policy is clear and understood by staff and pupils. It accurately reflects the needs of the pupils in the school. Alongside the pupils' behaviour plans, staff ensure that they support pupils to de-escalate heightened and challenging behaviour. As a result, the number of serious behaviour incidents have declined significantly.

Pupils often arrive at school with a history of poor attendance. They have frequently been out of school for significant periods of time. Staff ensure there is a wide variety of trips and visits to help bring learning to life. Through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are taught life skills such as cookery, gardening and carpentry. As a result, pupils are proud of their achievements and their attendance is excellent.

The curriculum is designed to develop pupils' career aspirations. There are a wealth of opportunities for pupils to achieve awards that build up towards accredited qualifications. Pupils talk about life beyond school and how they are learning about different career options.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate how leaders ensure that workload and well-being is considered. Staff feel well supported by leaders.

The proprietor knows the school very well and has an uncompromising determination to continue to improve the school. The proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards are met consistently. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Occasionally, teachers plan learning activities that are not well matched to what the pupils need to learn. When this happens, pupils can struggle to understand and achieve the intended learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers match learning activities precisely to what they want pupils to learn to enable them to successfully achieve the desired learning.

- While leaders are ambitious for pupils, this is not fully evident in the curriculum content and sequencing in some subject areas. As a result, pupils' learning does not always build purposefully towards ambitious end points. Leaders should continue to refine the curriculum so that ambitious end points are clearly identified in every subject to help pupils achieve their full potential.

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	149268
DfE registration number	893/6047
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10284441
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Aspiration House Limited
Chair	Linzi Sim
Headteacher	Kirsty Treherne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,500 to £55,450
Telephone number	07584167323
Website	www.valscommunity.co.uk
Email address	Linzi@vals-place.co.uk

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 6 October 2022. This was the school's first standard inspection.
- The school provides full-time education for pupils with SEND aged between eight and 17 years. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils have a range of learning difficulties, including autism.
- Leaders do not make use of 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. Inspectors also consider the responses to the questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor and other leaders.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ant Edkins

Ofsted Inspector

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