

# Magdalen Court School

Victoria Park Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4NU

## Inspection dates

21 February 2024

## Overall outcome

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(h), 3(a), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h)*

- The proprietor has ensured that a written curriculum policy is in place. The policy is supported by appropriate planning across a broad and balanced range of subjects. Planning takes into account the age, ability and the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of pupils well, as all pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Leaders' rationale for the curriculum is clear. The school intends that pupils learn a core curriculum that matches the scope of the national curriculum and prepares pupils for adulthood. Leaders utilise the skills and experience of staff to develop subject specific planning. Where useful, the school utilises published schemes to ensure that the curriculum is well sequenced and ambitious. As a result, the intent of the curriculum is clear, well understood and strong.
- The school recognises that each pupil needs unique and individual support to access the core curriculum. Regular assessments are used to inform 'progress reviews' which focus on pupils' long term EHC plan targets and shorter targets linked to pupils' individual learning needs. Pupils' individual 'progress review plans' consider carefully what adaptations are needed to enable each pupil to learn and make progress.
- The implementation of the curriculum is effective. Staff now benefit from regular and routine training and development opportunities. For example, all staff have received training related to the improved early reading curriculum. The school has raised the profile and impact of the therapists that work with or for the school. Together, staff have implemented an 'interoception curriculum' written by the occupational therapist to support staff to meet the sensory and behavioural needs of pupils. Staff and pupils recognise this is helping manage anxiety and individual need so that teachers can focus more on what they need pupils to learn.
- Staff and pupils are clear about the expectations of behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils show increasingly positive attitudes to their learning, as seen in the lessons visited and in pupils' work. Sometimes, pupils struggle when moving from one

lesson to another, or at unstructured times of the day. However, the behaviour policy is applied effectively. Pupils say staff know how to support them when they are finding something difficult.

- Utilising their improved knowledge of pupils' therapeutic needs, staff promote and secure positive relationships with their pupils. Teachers and support staff work in sync and effectively with each other. They know the pupils they work with well. This helps ensure that lessons are generally calm and purposeful. Pupils learn considered sequences of lessons that build on what they already know and can do. As a result, pupils are learning a curriculum which they say this is already much better than it was in the past. Consequently, leaders have ensured that the independent school standards checked on this inspection within part 1 continue to be met.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraphs 7 to 7 (b)*

- The proprietor has ensured there is a robust, up to date safeguarding policy. The policy is published on the school website. It clearly outlines key staff who oversee safeguarding and how to contact them. The policy has due regard for statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State. For example, it directly references Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and its intended impact on the school's practice. Staff implement the policy effectively.
- Leaders' values are driven by a 'child first' culture. Safeguarding is led and managed effectively. Those responsible for overseeing safeguarding meet regularly. They ensure that they are appropriately focused on the pupils that most need support. Leaders insist that all staff act in a way that always promotes and protects the welfare of pupils. Staff respond to this well. They ensure they act diligently when concerned about a pupil. Appropriate records are kept and reviewed. Pupils say they feel safe. As a result, paragraph 7 within Part 3 of the independent school standards remains met.

#### *Paragraphs 9 to 9(c)*

- The school has a sound behaviour policy that is published on its website. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is responsible for leading behaviour. She has sensibly trained staff to improve the consistency of the implementation of the policy. This includes improving the quality of records relating to pupils' behaviour. By the nature of their needs, some pupils present with challenging behaviour. Nevertheless, the policy is implemented effectively. The school has developed useful ways to review how they support each pupil with their individual behavioural needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils' behaviour is improving. Lessons are calm and purposeful. This all means that paragraph 9 of part 3 of the independent school standards continues to be met.

#### *Paragraph 10*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is an up-to-date anti-bullying strategy. This is published on the school website. Staff at the school promote positive relationships and interactions at every opportunity. They take any allegations of bullying very seriously. Pupils say bullying is rare. Pupils believe staff know them well and so help them to navigate the developing relationships they have with their peers. As a result, the

proprietor has ensured that bullying is prevented as much as is reasonably practicable and paragraph 10 within Part 3 of the independent school standards is met.

#### *Paragraph 11*

- The school benefits from the robust management of health and safety policies and procedures. Dedicated staff have oversight of the management of the school site. This includes completing regular checks on fire safety, water safety and the condition and suitability of the site. Useful links are made between health and safety and other policies, such as the curriculum, behaviour and risk assessments. As a result, the proprietor has ensured that health and safety and risk assessment processes are in line with health and safety laws and paragraph 11 of the independent school standards remains met.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- The school benefits from a large and skilled workforce. Most pupils come with enhanced packages as part of their education, health and care plans. Staffing reflects the needs described in these plans. As a result, pupils are suitably supervised throughout the day, including in lessons, through transitions and during unstructured parts of the school day. As such, the standard in paragraph 14 in Part 3 of the independent school standards remains met.

#### *Paragraph 15*

- Leaders keep an up-to-date admissions register for when pupils are allocated a school place. Appropriate registers are taken formally twice a day in pupils' tutor groups. Where pupils move to different classes for lessons, the registers are checked to ensure that pupils are where they are supposed to be. Some pupils are part time. Others have significant medical needs. In the past, the manner in which their attendance was recorded varied. Current leaders have already addressed this and now ensure that all registers are kept consistently. As such, paragraph 15 within Part 3 of the standards remains met.

#### *Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)*

- The school has ensured that policies relating to assessing risk are secure and widely understood. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed, including those relating to pupils' behaviour. These appropriately identify how risks can be reduced. Staff recognise the importance of following these processes to keep themselves and pupils safe. As a result, the proprietor has ensured that risk assessment processes are robust and paragraph 16 of the independent school standards remain met.

### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

#### *Paragraphs 33 to 33 (k)*

- The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards relating to Part 7 continue to be met. The school has a complaints policy which is published on the website. The policy allows for parents to raise issues on an informal basis in the first instance. It also outlines the process for raising more serious complaints or to escalate concerns if parents are not happy with any initial response. There are clear timeframes for each stage of the process. Should a complaint be formally

investigated, and a parent is still not happy, they can take this to 'stage 3' where a panel will consider if the complaint has been handled appropriately. The panel will include at least one person that is not a part of the school or proprietor, and parents are able to be accompanied if they so wish. Formal complaints are appropriately kept in a paper file. Records demonstrate that the policy is followed appropriately.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)*

- Magdalen Court is an improving school. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They utilise this to plan how to improve provision effectively. Leaders work well together. They have ensured that all the standards checked remain met, including those relating to the concerns raised with the Department for Education and Ofsted.
- The proprietor has sensibly reviewed the systems and processes in place to govern the school. This includes introducing a governing body to add a new layer of accountability for leaders. Furthermore, externally commissioned third party checks, including from the Special Partnership Trust and Devon County Council, means that those in governance positions have a more accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of provision and the impact of leaders.
- Staff are positive about their experience of the school. They speak confidently about the training they have had, including from therapists. Some are very positive about the impact of the relatively new leadership team on provision and how they are looked after, as well as supported, to be effective. They buy into the school's new vision and high expectations for pupils' education.
- Leaders have a range of expertise relating to running effective specialist provision. They have very high standards for what they want pupils to achieve and how they want them to achieve it. They have a clear, ambitious vision for the future. This is set out in their considered, systematic plans to improve the school. Leaders have rightly focused on improving the curriculum design and implementation. As a result, the curriculum in place is now better constructed to ensure pupils can make progress. Consequently, the proprietor has ensured the independent school standards in Part 8 remain met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	113623
DfE registration number	878/6045
Inspection number	10320986

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	Mr James Jenner, Mr Jeffrey Jenner and Mr John Jenner
Chair	Mrs Katie Howard
Headteacher	Mrs Rowena Schofield
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,500
Telephone number	01392494919
Website	<a href="http://www.magdalencourt.org">www.magdalencourt.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@magdalencourt.org">office@magdalencourt.org</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	23 to 25 November 2022

## Information about this school

- The majority of pupils are placed at the school by Devon County Council.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school no longer uses alternative education provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to check whether the school continues to meet the independent school standards following a number of complaints received by Ofsted and the Department for Education.
- The inspection was unannounced.
- Inspectors were asked to check whether paragraphs 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(h), 3(a), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h) from part 1, paragraphs 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 16 from part 2, part 7 and 8 of the independent school standards remain met.
- The inspector met with senior and middle leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils, looked through some pupils' books, checked records relating to safeguarding, behaviour, bullying and complaints, reviewed a range of policies and checked planning related to the curriculum and pupils' individual needs.

## Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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