

Inspection of Sycamore House School

365 Queens Street, Withernsea, East Riding of Yorkshire HU19 2NT

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

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?

Sycamore House School is a warm, caring and compassionate setting. Adults have strong supportive relationships with the pupils. They know them well. As a result, pupils respond positively to adult interaction. The school provides bespoke behaviour management strategies for each pupil to specifically meet their needs. For example, some pupils use a traffic light system to help verbalise how they feel.

The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities with a diagnosis of autism. Adults support their needs sensitively and effectively. The school teaches pupils to recognise and manage their emotions and behaviours. Staff ensure that they involve pupils in the co-production of strategies to help them control their emotions.

The school considers the individual needs of the pupils when devising schemes of work. As a result, staff use pupils' interests to create activities that will extend their engagement in learning. The school uses regular theme days to broaden the curriculum experiences for pupils. Recently, they have enjoyed activities around Chinese New Year, National Hot Chocolate Day and Internet Safety Day.

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

There is a new Hexagon curriculum in place for the wider curriculum and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This provides a structure for adults to use but it is at a very early stage of development. As a result, some subjects need further refinement. In some subjects, the order of lessons does not support pupils to routinely build and deepen their understanding.

The school bases their English curriculum around a range of text extracts and short videos to generate pupils' engagement and interest. The school maps the knowledge and skills across each year group, linking them closely to the national curriculum objectives. Pupils use reading journals to record the books or audio books they have enjoyed.

The school has high aspirations for the pupils in mathematics. The school breaks the learning into small chunks to make it accessible to the pupils. The school ensures that pupils have resources, such as multiplication mats, three dimensional shapes or money to make their experience of mathematics as real as possible. The school checks at the end of a session what each pupil understands. They use this to inform the school's assessments. However, when adults identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, it is not clear how and when they follow this up to address misconceptions.

The school interacts well with external agencies, such as the clinical psychologist. The school is very responsive to advice. Staff benefit from regular reflective practice sessions where they discuss pupils' behaviour and therapeutic needs. They use these sessions to design new approaches to emerging behaviours.

The school has recently adopted a new curriculum for PSHE that includes aspects such as fundamental British values and protected characteristics. Staff provide a very personalised approach dependent on pupil understanding and needs. The school has purchased books about body changes and puberty for both the classroom quiet areas and library so that pupils can access them on an individual basis. The school has started to use a careers package to support pupils to consider their career or further education options. However, the school does not routinely ensure that careers information links to subjects in the curriculum.

The proprietor body shares the school improvement vision that the school has. For example, it recognises that staff have raised their expectations around pupil achievement. The chair of the proprietor body holds the school to account where necessary. The staff are positive that leaders are mindful of their workload. They work effectively as a team to support the pupils. Leaders and the proprietor body demonstrate good skills and knowledge to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In some subjects, the school does not use its assessment information to address the gaps in pupils' learning swiftly enough. This means that gaps in knowledge and understanding can remain. The school should ensure that there is an effective system to address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- In some subjects in the wider curriculum, the sequences of learning do not help pupils to deepen their learning over time. As a result, learning moves on before knowledge and skills are embedded. The school should ensure that staff have the training to embed the sequences of learning in each subject.
- Careers education is not fully embedded in the curriculum. Pupils do not find out how subjects can support their career options. This limits pupils' knowledge of progression and transition routes. The school should ensure that plans for pupil's transition include effective personalised careers information.

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	146333
DfE registration number	811/6018
Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	10299245
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hexagon Care Services
Chair	Caroline Ashdown
Headteacher	Karen Jessop
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,000 to £72,000
Telephone number	01964 247224
Website	www.hexagoncare.co.uk
Email address	sycamore.headteacher@hexagoncare.com
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 July 2019

Information about this school

- Sycamore House is a special school for pupils with autism.
- The school is part of Hexagon Care Services. The service has 14 schools.
- The headteacher took up post in October 2022.
- The school does 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.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum design in art and design and computing.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during a sensory breaktime.
- The views of staff, pupils, parents and carers were considered from meeting with them and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Thorp

His Majesty's Inspector

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