

Inspection of Access School

Holbrook Villa Farm, Harmer Hill, Broughton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 3EW

Inspection dates: 30 April to 2 May 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 Requires improvement

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Building positive relationships to support pupils to re-engage with learning is the key focus of Access School. Pupils appreciate the fact that the staff understand them. As a result, they trust the staff, and this helps them to feel safe.

When pupils join the school, many have been out of education for some time. Pupils often have no interest in learning and struggle to work alongside their peers. Staff, supported by leaders, work well as a team to help pupils manage their behaviour. They work tirelessly to get pupils to a point where pupils are ready to learn.

The school is aware that pupils need to experience high-quality teaching and learning, underpinned by a therapeutic approach, to prepare them for the next stage of their education and training. As a result, with the backing of the proprietor body, they have made many improvements to improve the curriculum and wider enrichment activities that pupils experience. Nonetheless, the school is keen to improve the quality of education even more.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value the fact that the staff understand their children and never give up on them.

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

Leaders and staff understand the complexity of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers place learning in a context, so pupils can see how it relates to everyday life. Support staff work alongside pupils to help them manage their emotions and engage in their learning. Staff check what pupils have understood and identify any misconceptions, which are then addressed. Consequently, pupils experience success in their learning, which builds their confidence and self-esteem.

The school organises a range of checks on pupils' abilities and learning behaviours when they join the school. This helps them to understand pupils' starting points. Staff use this information, alongside targets from pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) to set targets for all pupils. However, some of these targets are too general. In these instances, staff are unclear on how the targets can be used to inform their teaching.

In many subjects, the school has mapped out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn within and across year groups in a logical order. With the help of the therapist and support staff, teachers focus their efforts on making learning interesting and accessible. However, there are a small number of subjects where the content and the order of learning are not as clear. In most instances, teachers have secure subject knowledge, especially when they are teaching the subject they specialise in. However, in a small number of cases, if staff are teaching outside of their specialist area, their subject knowledge is less secure. In these cases, the delivery of the curriculum is not as effective.

The school has not lost sight of the importance of reading. Primary and secondary-age pupils are assessed on entry to identify any gaps in their phonics knowledge. Where required, staff give pupils extra help to plug these gaps. As a result, pupils read with accuracy and decode unknown words accurately. The school is working hard to develop a love of reading, but for some pupils, reading is not something they enjoy.

The school analyses attendance information closely to identify any patterns and trends in relation to absence. The school keeps a close eye on the small number of pupils who have low attendance and works closely with their families to address this.

Nurture is the trademark of this school. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, including looking after the chickens and caring for the bees. The school council is active and has a voice. Currently, it is canvassing local shops to get donations for the summer fete. Secondary-age pupils look forward to the weekly visit to a local outdoor activity centre where they participate in activities such as archery and quad biking. Pupils say that everyone is welcome in their school, and they respect difference.

The school supports pupils to identify career aspirations linked to their strengths and interests. Supported by an external careers adviser, the school creates a careers pathway for individual pupils, which identifies the required qualifications and post-16 options. Work experience is arranged in a range of settings, and, at times, adapted to support the needs of the pupils. Pupils and their families are supported well to explore the range of post-16 options, including colleges, apprenticeships and employment.

Teachers and support staff enjoy working in the school and wear the Access School badge with pride. They value the family ethos that exists within the setting. Staff value the training they receive, particularly in relation to safeguarding, behaviour management and SEND. Leaders are considerate of their well-being, which makes staff feel valued and included.

The proprietor body has established effective systems and processes to keep it informed about what is happening in the school. This enables it to question school leaders and hold them to account, as well as inform it about any additional support that may need to be provided.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 as a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Some teachers lack the subject knowledge they need when teaching outside of their area of specialism. In these instances, work is not as well matched to pupils' needs as it could be. Leaders should ensure that relevant support and training are put in place for these staff to improve their subject knowledge.
- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not well sequenced. In these instances, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should identify and map out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn in these subjects so that they build well over time.
- In some cases, pupils' targets are too general and lack specificity. As a result, teachers are not clear on how best to support pupils. The school should ensure that pupils' targets are specific and closely matched to pupils' needs.

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

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| Unique reference number | 132772 |
| DfE registration number | 893/6096 |
| Local authority | Shropshire |
| Inspection number | 10299188 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent special school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 24 |
| Proprietor | Family Care Group |
| Chair | Andrew O'Reilly |
| Headteacher | Sarah Earing |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £42,705 to £85,705 |
| Telephone number | 01939 220791 |
| Website | www.family-care.co.uk |
| Email address | access@family-care.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 to 29 September 2022 |

Information about this school

- Access School is an independent special school for pupils aged five to 16. The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- A range of local authorities place pupils in the school. Most pupils arrive and leave the school by local authority-funded transport.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school's last full inspection was in September 2022. The school was judged as requires improvement.
- The school received a progress monitoring inspection in April 2023 where it met all the independent school standards that were checked during the inspection.

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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the proprietor body, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. He held a telephone conversation with a representative of one of the local authorities that places pupils in the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, provision for children looked after, pupils' attendance, careers and pupils' behaviour.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. Two separate groups of pupils accompanied inspectors on personal development learning walks around the school grounds.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check their suitability.

- 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 were unable to consider responses to Ofsted Parent View due to the small number of responses received, but they considered the free-text response received during the inspection. An inspector spoke to a parent at the end of the school day. In addition, the inspection team made telephone calls to a selection of parents and a manager of a care home.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, school policies, SEND records, curriculum documents, attendance information and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Matty

Ofsted Inspector

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