

# Inspection of The Secret Garden School

Shustoke Hall, Moat House Lane, Shustoke B46 2RJ

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Inspection dates: 15 to 17 October 2024

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**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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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?**

Pupils are happy and feel they belong at the Secret Garden School. Many pupils have struggled to engage in education in the past. The approaches staff use encourage pupils to find a love of learning once again. Staff understand each pupil and their individual needs very well. Highly effective therapeutic provision means that pupils get the support they need so that they are ready to learn. The school has high expectations for pupils' academic success. Pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Pupils know that staff will help them if they are upset or anxious. This helps to reassure pupils and eases their worries so they feel cared for and safe at school. Pupils thrive in the well-equipped environment. There are many areas for pupils to take a break including sensory spaces and an outdoor gym. The pupils engage with and care for a range of domestic and exotic animals including donkeys, ponies, snakes and degus.

Pupils behave well. They are respectful and understanding of how people are different. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated and pupils know that this would be addressed quickly by the school should it occur.

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

The school has developed a broad curriculum that enables pupils to build their knowledge progressively as they move through the school. For example, in mathematics pupils use language they already know such as 'commutative and inverse', to be able to describe what they are doing when calculating answers. When studying classic literature, older pupils use their recall of the story to infer what characters may be feeling or thinking. In personal, social, and health education (PSHE) pupils learn about finances and healthy minds and bodies. The PSHE curriculum provides activities that enable pupils to understand the wider world and their place in it. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and resilience. However, there are some areas of the curriculum that are not as well developed. This makes it difficult for staff to know what knowledge to prioritise when designing lessons. Consequently, in these subjects, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge.

Reading is a priority. Staff deliver an effective phonics programme for those pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. They ensure that these pupils receive the help they need to catch up quickly. The school promotes a love of books through daily reading of high-quality texts. This enables all pupils to develop fluency and accuracy in reading.

Staff have received a wealth of training that they use to expertly support pupils with their emotional development, mental health and therapeutic needs. Staff make sure that they know new pupils' starting points and their additional needs well. The school uses this information to adapt the curriculum and provide bespoke and highly effective support for each pupil.

Staff check regularly how well pupils are building their knowledge, skills and understanding. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to revisit and reinforce their learning so that pupils remember information over time. However, the school does not make enough checks on how well all staff implement the curriculum. This means staff do not always get timely feedback and support about how they could improve the delivery of the curriculum further.

Pupils benefit from many opportunities to expand their experiences within and beyond the school grounds. Much learning happens outside in the extensive grounds. This enables pupils to enjoy the natural world. The school provides pupils with off-site opportunities such as horse riding, trampolining and rock climbing. Pupils visit butterfly farms, zoos, factories and museums. These trips broaden pupils' knowledge of the world and prepare pupils to be confident and optimistic about life beyond the school.

The school ensures that pupils receive suitable independent careers advice and guidance so that they are fully informed about the post-16 options available to them. There are no limits put on their aspirations. The school listens to pupils' opinions and uses annual reviews, assessments and pupils' wishes to provide appropriate work experience.

Adults are highly respectful of the individual needs of pupils. In turn, pupils learn to be respectful of each other. They talk to each other and adults politely. Pupils thrive in an environment in which their individuality is accepted and celebrated by staff and pupils alike. Pupils are all engaged in learning when in the class. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work.

The school places a high priority on working with parents and carers to promote good attendance. This starts at the point of admission where it is clearly communicated that good attendance is an expectation. Many of the pupils in school now attend regularly, when in previous settings this was not the case.

The strong oversight and involvement of the proprietor ensures that the school meets all the independent school standards. The proprietor has established a nurturing and pleasant school environment which is well suited to the needs of the pupils. It is maintained to a very high standard. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Staff are committed and proud members of the Secret Garden family. They work cohesively as a team and put the pupils at the heart of all they do. They value and appreciate the efforts taken by leaders to support their workload and well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education and care their children receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The school has not identified the precise knowledge that pupils should learn and remember in some foundation subjects. Consequently, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could in these subjects. The school should ensure that it identifies the important knowledge that pupils need so that staff can focus on delivering this effectively.
- The school does not consistently monitor how well the curriculum is being implemented. As a result, sometimes leaders do not identify where staff would benefit from guidance and support to improve their pedagogical knowledge. The school should ensure that it identifies where the curriculum is not being delivered as intended and provide additional support and guidance for staff where needed.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148243
<b>DfE registration number</b>	937/6033
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342174
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent School
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	58
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Annette Gadd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elle Guest
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£63,030 to £125,880
<b>Telephone number</b>	01675488825
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thesecondgarden.org.uk">www.thesecondgarden.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:agadd@thesecondgarden.org.uk">agadd@thesecondgarden.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 to 17 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The school is registered to admit 76 pupils aged six to 19.
- A material change inspection took place in October 2022 to change the age range of pupils from 7 to 14 to 6 to 19 and to increase the number on roll to 40. A further material change inspection took place in May 2023 to increase the number on roll to 76 pupils.
- The proprietor is also the executive headteacher.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school admits pupils whose main area of need is social, emotional and mental health or communication and interaction.

## 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor who is also executive headteacher, the headteacher and a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, PSHE and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons where available, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 had tours of the premises to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website. They scrutinised school records, including attendance and behaviour information.

- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors gathered the views of staff through surveys, as well as interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Keri Baylis

His Majesty's Inspector

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