

# Inspection of Hope Tree School

Nursery House, Manor Farm, Impington, Cambridgeshire CB24 9NG

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Inspection dates: 5 to 7 November 2024

**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 Requires improvement

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

In this nurturing environment, pupils are supported to develop their social skills at their own pace. They enjoy making new friends and value the positive social interaction they have with their peers. They appreciate the range of activities on offer to develop these skills, such as axe throwing, ice skating and visits to an alpaca farm. Pupils are delighted to have found a school that meets their needs.

Before arriving at Hope Tree School, pupils experienced significant disruption to their education. Many arrive with gaps in their learning. Teachers are aware of this and are ambitious for pupils. They provide them with individualised support based on their specific needs. Pupils appreciate the clear routines which are in place to help them feel secure. They benefit from small class sizes and a quiet learning environment. This reduces their sensory overload and minimises their stress levels. This helps pupils to do well from their different starting points.

Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils receive a high level of care that helps them to remain very settled. If they do become upset, the adults quickly provide effective support to help them to feel calmer.

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

The school provides pupils with a welcoming and safe place to learn. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school's curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum. In the main, the curriculum is well constructed. It clearly outlines the knowledge and skills that pupils need to obtain.

Typically, teachers deliver the curriculum well. They build strong relationships with pupils. This positive atmosphere helps support pupils' learning. Teachers explain new information clearly and precisely. They frequently revisit the key knowledge that pupils need to understand. This repetition gives pupils additional opportunities to revisit and secure the learning. Teachers allow pupils extra processing time when needed. They regularly adapt the learning to meet pupils' needs. Where this happens, pupils do well from their starting points.

In a minority of subjects, the curriculum is not as precise as it should be. It is not always clear what knowledge and skills pupils will need to develop in these areas. As a result, pupils do not always benefit from work that allows them to make as much progress through the curriculum as they should.

Adults provide pupils with high levels of individualised support. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and wishes. For example, they check if pupils are comfortable with them looking at their work before approaching them. Adults verbally guide pupils in how they can improve their work. Many pupils find this helpful, and it supports them to do well.

However, some pupils find this verbal feedback overwhelming and difficult to retain. Where this happens, teachers do not always adapt the way they give feedback. This means not all pupils benefit from enough opportunities to process teachers' comments and improve their work. Subsequently, some pupils are not fully supported to meet the academic rigour of the curriculum.

The school's work to develop pupils' reading skills is of a high quality. Adults explicitly teach ambitious vocabulary to help pupils access challenging texts. Pupils benefit from an ambitious and varied reading curriculum, which includes a rich range of novels, plays, non-fiction texts and poems.

The school helps pupils to develop secure learning behaviours. The environment is well designed to meet pupils' needs. Any changes to normal routines are carefully prepared for. The school has regular communication with parents and carers to support pupils to manage new situations, such as a new member of staff joining. Pupils are supported to stay calm in lessons. They quietly engage in appropriate activities. They learn to develop their self-awareness and manage their emotions when they need to. Pupils access quiet spaces, such as outdoor swings, if they feel overwhelmed.

The provision for pupils' personal development is well established. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain. A recent trip to the Houses of Parliament deepened pupils' understanding about democracy. A visit to a London museum helped pupils build their confidence in using public transport and interacting with strangers. Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. They appreciate the visitors that come to school to teach them about different career options, such as being an entrepreneur or a writer.

The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Staff engage frequently with families. Parents are highly complimentary about the school and the positive impact it has on their child's education and well-being. Staff are extremely positive about the school culture.

The head of learning and the head of pastoral care are the only members of the proprietor body. There is no external governance. Subsequently, there is a lack of robustness in how effectively leaders are held to account for the quality of education. This has meant that some areas for improvement have not been addressed quickly enough.

The school complies with 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)**

- In some subjects, the curriculum lacks sufficient detail about the key skills and knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that, sometimes, pupils complete work that does not build well enough on their starting points. Subsequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently detailed, so pupils benefit from work that supports them to achieve well.
- Teachers predominantly use verbal feedback to let pupils know how they are doing and how to improve. Sometimes, pupils miss out on this information, particularly when they have difficulties processing the oral input. Where this happens, pupils do not have the information they need to improve their work and meet the rigour of the curriculum. The school must ensure that teachers provide pupils with a variety of ways to access feedback to meet their different needs.
- The proprietor body does not have a sufficiently robust system in place to check the impact of their actions. This means areas for improvement are not always acted upon quickly enough. The proprietor body must ensure that there are appropriate systems in place, so they are effectively held to account for the quality of education that pupils receive.

## **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>	148733
<b>DfE registration number</b>	873/6057
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342182
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	22
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hope Tree School Limited
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rebecca Sands
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	07446528644
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hopetreeschool.co.uk">www.hopetreeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@hopetreeschool.co.uk">admin@hopetreeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 November 2022

## Information about this school

- The school opened as an independent special school in June 2022. It had its first standard inspection in November 2022. It had an additional inspection in June 2023. The Department for Education approved the request to increase pupil numbers from 18 to 36 and to increase the maximum age of pupils from 12 to 16 years.
- All pupils at the school have an education health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school is a single sex school for girls.
- Pupils who attend the school have social, emotional, and mental health needs linked to a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Many pupils have experienced significant periods of time out of education.
- The school currently uses one 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 evaluation 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, art and design and personal, social, health 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 met with the head of learning and the head of pastoral care. They are the only members of the proprietor body. Inspectors also held discussions with staff.
- Inspectors also looked at a sample of curriculum plans for key stage 4.
- Inspectors spoke to a sample of parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to a member of the school's advisory board and scrutinised documents relating to meetings held by the board.
- 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.

## Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Dawes

Ofsted Inspector

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