

Inspection of Hope House School

Barnby Road, Balderton, Newark, Nottinghamshire, Nottinghamshire NG24 3NE

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff are friendly and welcoming. They develop trusting relationships with pupils. Leaders make sure that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. Pupils benefit from learning in a caring and calm environment.

Leaders aspire for pupils to feel, 'valued, secure and able to learn'. They encourage pupils to socialise. Pupils learn to value the differences and similarities of their peers. They enjoy their weekly assemblies. They come together to celebrate their achievements and learn about fundamental British values.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Each pupil's curriculum is tailored to their individual needs. Yet, not all staff teach pupils consistently well. Some pupils do not achieve as highly as they should.

Staff support pupils to manage their behaviour. Pupils develop strategies to help them to understand and manage their behaviour. They learn what to do if they experience bullying. Leaders make sure that pupils always have an adult to go to if they are worried.

Pupils enjoy work experience opportunities. They relish the chance to attend the alternative provision where they learn to ride and care for horses. Some gain qualifications. Through this experience, pupils can build their self-esteem and self-worth in a caring environment.

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

Trustees have worked effectively with senior leaders to help the school through a significant period of challenge and uncertainty. They provide effective support to staff. Leaders are aspirational. They are keen to bring about further improvement to the school.

Leaders assess what pupils know and can remember when they join the school. They use this information to plan a personalised curriculum for each pupil. Each pupils' curriculum is matched well to the outcomes in their EHC plan. Staff work closely with external professionals to make sure that pupils receive the right support for their social, emotional and behavioural needs.

In subjects such as mathematics and horticulture, it is clear what teachers want pupils to learn and when. This includes students in the sixth-form provision. Pupils' learning builds well over time. For example, in horticulture, pupils learn how to select the right tools and how to use them safely. They learn how to plant seeds and consider the right plants to attract bees. They consider why this is important for the environment. In subjects such as English, leaders are in the process of reviewing the order that content is taught. They are trialling new approaches to teaching and learning. They plan to ensure that learning is coherently sequenced and consistently well taught.

Leaders have recently restructured the way that staff teach pupils. They aim for pupils to have increased opportunities to access a broad range of curriculum experiences. They want pupils to be able to socialise more with their peers. Yet, this new approach has only recently been implemented. Not all staff have received appropriate training. Middle leaders have not had the opportunity to check the quality and consistency of teaching. This means that some aspects of the curriculum are not yet consistently well taught. Some learning is too easy for pupils. For others, it is not challenging enough.

Middle leaders are new to their roles. They are eager to support leaders to drive necessary improvements forward. They are excited about the prospects that lie ahead for pupils and for themselves. However, some middle leaders have yet to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to lead their areas well.

Reading is not prioritised. Leaders recognise that pupils are not encouraged to read frequently and widely enough or to develop a passion for reading. Most pupils arrive at the school reluctant to read. Some are in the very early stages of reading. Leaders have revised the way phonics is taught. They aim to establish a consistent approach. They have trained staff. Phonics is to be taught daily for pupils who struggle to read. This new approach was only introduced during the week of the inspection.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. Topics of learning are focused to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils receive relationships, sex and health education appropriate to their needs and level of understanding. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They learn the importance of respect for those with protected characteristics. They learn leadership skills through their roles as members of the 'PRIDE Force'. Students in the sixth form enjoy preparing for independent living in the school's house. They learn how to travel safely when using public transport. Pupils are encouraged to take part in outdoor activities. These include gardening and through access to 'forest school' provision. They learn the importance of eating healthily and keeping physically fit. Older pupils enjoy membership of a local gym.

There is an appropriate programme to teach pupils about their options for future careers. Pupils receive advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about further education, employment and training. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Staff are supportive of the improvements made by the proprietor. They enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and listened to. They appreciate leaders' support to help them to develop their knowledge and skills. They feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Trustees have a comprehensive understanding of the school. They have provided high levels of support and challenge to leaders and staff. They have an ambitious

vision for the future of the provision. They are striving to ensure that the school provides good-quality education for pupils. However, plans to improve the quality of education are in the early stages of development.

Trustees and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. School policies and procedures reflect the latest statutory guidance. Risk assessments are carefully planned and pupils' needs taken into account. Health and safety checks are rigorous. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.

Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey and who spoke with inspectors are positive about the school. They consider their children to be kept safe and their needs met well. One parent summed up her feelings by saying, 'My daughter has come on so well since being at the school. She has become more independent. She is learning to use symbols to help her to communicate too. She loves coming to school. The staff are supportive. I couldn't ask for more as a parent.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are well cared for. They are kept safe. They learn about possible risks to their safety including peer pressure, knife crime and online safety. Staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding. They receive frequent updates about issues that may be of relevance to ensure the safety of pupils. They review assessments of risk for pupils regularly. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupils' safety. Leaders work actively with external agencies to get pupils the help they need. Records for safeguarding are detailed. Trustees ensure that safeguarding remains a high priority for the school.

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

- Leaders have identified that they do not promote the importance of reading well enough. Pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to read widely and often. They do not receive regular and effective phonics lessons. This means that some pupils do not develop the knowledge and skills they need to read competently. In turn, this limits pupils' ability to become fluent and confident readers. Leaders should ensure that the teaching of phonics and reading receive the necessary prioritisation so that pupils can practise and develop their reading skills and develop a love of reading.
- Middle leaders are new to their roles. They have not received the training they need to lead their areas of responsibility well. This limits their ability to improve how well teachers teach their subject so that subjects are taught consistently well across the school. Consequently, there is some variation in how well staff teach the curriculum in some subjects. Leaders should make sure that middle leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to lead their areas of responsibility, so

that they can ensure that teachers teach their subjects consistently well across all subjects.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	135393
DfE registration number	891/6032
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10232330
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hope House School Ltd
Chair	Brian Jones
Headteacher	Joanne Kiernan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £82,116
Telephone number	01636 700380
Website	www.hopehouseschool.co.uk
Email address	hopeadmin@hopehouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 January 2020

Information about this school

- A new interim headteacher was appointed in December 2021.
- The school no longer provides residential provision.
- The school currently makes use of one alternative provider. This provider is unregistered.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, the well-being and learning practitioner, the human resources manager and the chair of trustees. They met with several members of staff. Inspectors also met with some pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics, PSHE and horticulture. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, visited pupils who were attending alternative provision, spoke to staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed with leaders and staff the school's approach to safeguarding pupils. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, health and safety and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation and policies, including those relating to school improvement, curriculum, health and safety, and attendance and behaviour. The lead inspector toured the school site including the post-16 provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

During the inspection, inspectors checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at the progress monitoring inspection that took place on 10 November 2021.

The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school now meets the previously failed standards.**

- At the progress monitoring inspection, leaders did not ensure that staff always recorded the necessary information following an incident when pupils had behaved poorly. Some records did not record the de-escalation techniques used or the views of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that staff record the necessary information following an incident accurately. Records now clearly show the de-escalation techniques used. The views of pupils are considered and recorded following an incident.
- At the progress monitoring inspection, the inspector found that the daily report home did not always inform parents and carers about any incidents involving their children that were a cause for concern, including safeguarding incidents. This was contrary to the school's policy.
- Leaders have now ensured that there is daily communication with parents to inform them of any incident of concern, including those related to safeguarding. A revised daily reporting format provides timely and effective communication between home and school. This is now in line with the school's policy.
- At the progress monitoring inspection, leaders did not always raise safeguarding concerns with the appropriate authorities as quickly as they should.
- Leaders now raise safeguarding concerns promptly with external agencies. Safeguarding records show leaders seek appropriate and timely advice to get pupils the help they need to keep them safe.
- At the progress monitoring inspection, the inspector found that leaders had appointed an external company to support and advise in writing effective health and safety policies. These policies were still in the process of being completed. They had not been agreed by trustees. Draft policies did not include procedures to ensure that water was of an appropriate quality and temperature.
- These policies are now complete. They have been approved by the trustees and are appropriate to the context of the school. Key staff have been trained to undertake frequent health and safety checks. Procedures to ensure the quality and temperature of the water are included in the policy. Leaders have taken appropriate measures to ensure that the temperature of the water does not pose a risk from scalding.
- At the progress monitoring inspection, leaders did not ensure that there was a comprehensive and up-to-date risk-assessment policy. The risk-assessment policy on the school's website was out of date. A draft policy considered the school's site but did not include procedures for risk assessments for pupils. A separate policy outlined arrangements for educational visits and trips. As a result of these multiple policies, leaders' arrangements for managing risk were confused.
- There is now one comprehensive and up-to-date risk-assessment policy in place. Procedures for risk assessments for pupils are included. The policy is appropriate to the school's context and is published on the school's website.

- At the progress monitoring inspection, staff had received training in writing and interpreting risk assessments for individual pupils. These risk assessments were detailed. However, pupils' risk assessments were not reviewed routinely in response to incidents of concern, to ensure that the strategies to support pupils were still appropriate. This put pupils' welfare and safety at risk.
- Risk assessments for individual pupils are now routinely updated in response to incidents of concern or any relevant changes. Reasons for any updates are clearly recorded. Risk assessments show that leaders carefully consider pupils' welfare and safety.
- At the progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that previously failed standards relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety were met.
- The proprietor has taken appropriate actions to ensure that all the independent school standards are now met.

The school now meets the following standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Aileen King

Ofsted Inspector

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