

Hope Tree School

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

Inspection dates

27 June 2023

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(c), 2(2)(d)–2a(3)

- These independent school standards (the standards) were met when the school was inspected in November 2022.
- Leaders continue to develop and evaluate their curriculum. In preparation for the proposed expansion of the school, leaders have set out the end goals for curriculum planning in key stages 3 and 4. They understand there is work to be done to break these down into detailed sequences of learning in each year group. Currently, leaders are working collaboratively with external experts to do this. Leaders are being measured in their proposals for growing the school. They plan to admit Year 8 pupils first, and then build up the school year on year. This will allow leaders to complete their curriculum development in a detailed, measured way to suit pupils' needs.
- Leaders work tenaciously to ensure pupils' education, health and care plans remain up to date. To mitigate some pupils' targets being broad, leaders break them down into termly ones. Leaders' expertise ensures these targets are specific and measurable, helping staff, pupils and parents to recognise progress being made. Also, leaders work with staff to ensure an appropriate balance between academic and pastoral targets, recognising how both carry equal importance.
- There is a suitable personal, social and health education programme in place. Pupils regularly engage in thoughtful discussions about their place in the world. Leaders know that if their plans to extend the school were to be approved, they would need to quickly put in place appropriate careers and education guidance for their older pupils. Some of this work has already begun. Visitors expand pupils' knowledge of careers, including visits from a published author and a scientist who worked in Antarctica.
- Leaders' understanding of statutory guidance relating to relationships and sex education is sound. Staff use reasonable adjustments to ensure pupils learn this important content. Leaders foster positive working relationships with parents, too, allowing for consultation so that parents are on board with what their children learn.

Paragraph 3–3(j)

- Leaders continue to work carefully to recruit teachers and support staff with particular subject expertise. It then shows in lessons, where staff explain words and ideas clearly.
- Staff observe pupils carefully. By picking up on what pupils say and do, staff tailor their instructions to help guide pupils to the right responses. This serves to build pupils' confidence, encouraging them to take part in lesson activities more regularly. Also, staff understand the benefits of facilitating opportunities for pupils to recall previously learned content ahead of introducing new content. In this way, staff help pupils to build their knowledge and skills sequentially and securely.
- Staff are calm and kind. They promote an environment that is conducive to learning, rewarding pupils with 'gems' for the behaviours they wish to see. This helps pupils to recognise the progress they are making with behaviours they find challenging, such as being brave and trying new things. Also, staff make helpful adjustments to resources and the environments which help pupils to focus and learn, such as flexibility in seating to cater for pupils' sensory needs.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders introduced an assessment system. It records when a pupil achieves a lesson aim, along with other insights relating to pupils' behaviour. Teachers use this to determine which pupils are keeping up and which pupils need additional support. Additional support takes different forms, such as post-teaching to reteach a concept a pupil struggled to grasp in the lesson. This system also helps inform what teachers tell parents about the progress their children are making.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- These standards were met when the school was inspected in November 2022.
- Through the curriculum, pupils learn to understand and appreciate differences among people and places. To add to them learning about different religions, pupils visit places of worship. This allows them to socialise with a religious leader and see first-hand some of what they learned in their classroom.
- Though pupils find some social interactions difficult, the support from staff encourages them to 'push' themselves with this. For instance, pupils relish opportunities to fundraise for local and national charities, such as making and selling fridge magnets. Also, their regular trips facilitate supportive opportunities to engage with members of the public. Recently, pupils visited a local bookshop to buy a book for themselves and a book to give as a gift to someone else, practising generosity.
- Leaders and staff work well to develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem through the varied extra-curricular offer. For example, pupils visit an alpaca farm to learn about how to care for an animal. For some pupils, it takes considerable bravery to travel to the farm and then pet and handle the large animal. Pupils benefit greatly from how leaders and staff broaden their experiences, preparing them, in time, for the challenges of adulthood.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7(a)–7(b)

- These standards were met when the school was inspected in November 2022. Inspectors judged safeguarding to be effective.
- Leaders' safeguarding processes remain strong. Leaders keep theirs and staff's training up to date. This includes clear procedures for staff induction, so that all staff remain clear about how to spot and report a pupil at risk of harm. Pupils understand how to share their concerns. They know they can use the 'safeguarding friend' or secure e-mail if they would prefer to write down their worry for a staff member to read. Pupils feel reassured by the speed in which leaders and staff help to sort out any problems. With their plans to grow the school, leaders have elected to engage the local authority's advisory services to audit their safeguarding systems. The aim of which is to ensure no slippage in the priority that leaders and their staff give to keeping pupils safe.

Paragraphs 11–14

- Leaders' policies relating to health and safety are clear and workable. There is a suitable number of trained first aiders, one of whom is always on or off site with pupils. The record-keeping relating to injury and/or illness is up to date and suitably detailed. For example, it captures what happened and where, what treatment was given and why, and how this information was shared with a pupil's parent.
- Documentation relating to fire safety, including the logbook and fire risk assessment, are well maintained. For example, there are weekly recorded checks of the fire alarms and emergency lighting. All staff receive suitable training about fire safety. This includes the opportunity to use a fire extinguisher to put out a controlled fire. It ensures staff feel ready to respond if a fire were to occur. Leaders elect to complete half-termly fire evacuation drills to ensure those few pupils joining mid-year know what to do if there is a fire. It further demonstrates leaders' aim to keep everyone safe.
- Leaders ensure they and their staff supervise pupils well during on- and off-site activities. Leaders recognise how procedures will need to differ if the school expands across more than one building, to ensure, for example, adequate supervision during breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Paragraph 16(a)–16(b)

- Leaders carefully conduct risk assessments. For example, they will not merely adopt a company's model one for an educational visit. Instead, leaders consider their pupils' needs in relation to any risks posed, ensuring risk assessments are clear and concise so staff and pupils may follow them.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2)–18(3)

- These standards were met when the school was inspected in November 2022.
- Leaders oversee correct checks being completed on staff and volunteers ahead of them starting in school. Doing so ensures pupils and staff's safety, and compliance with statutory guidance.
- Leaders' processes for quality assuring safer recruitment work well, including regular checks to ensure compliance, along with a rigorous recruitment process to determine a candidate's suitability for the post.

Paragraph 19(2)–19(3)

- Leaders rarely engage agency staff. Still, procedures are in place for when they do. These include leaders requesting correspondence that specifies the checks completed on the individual by their employer. Then, staff witness the individual's identification documents on site, ahead of them engaging with pupils and staff.

Paragraph 20(6)–20(6)(c)

- The checks on proprietors are in line with statutory guidance, such as taking account of each proprietor's start date to determine which checks must be completed. These checks, like those completed on staff and volunteers, are recorded clearly on the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22–23(2), 25–28(2)(b)

- These standards were met when the school was inspected in November 2022.
- The additional premises are on site. They consist of a recently refurbished building with large classrooms, offices, toilets, changing facilities and outdoor space for recreational use. These facilities are appropriate if the proposed increase in age range and number of pupils is granted.
- Leaders make sure the existing and proposed premises are both spick and span and fit for purpose. Appropriate acoustics, lighting and ventilation in classrooms ensure pupils feel comfortable and focus on their learning. Drinking water is easily accessible and water used for handwashing does not pose a scalding risk.

Paragraph 29

- The existing and proposed outdoor grounds are well maintained. They include high-quality resources that encourage pupils to engage in active, positive play with their peers. For example, having trampolines side by side allows pupils to chat while they bounce.
- Staff teach physical education off site, making effective use of local facilities to deliver the curriculum. In addition, leaders consider how to provide opportunities in the school's outdoor grounds for pupils to further their learning. For instance, pupils learned to play badminton on a nearby badminton court, so staff erected a badminton

net in the school grounds for pupils to hone their skills during breaktimes and lunchtimes.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- These standards were met when the school was inspected in November 2022.
- The proprietor body continues to have a sound knowledge of the standards. It oversees clear, workable systems, such as those involved in the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Marrying a system-driven approach with an ability to build positive relationships ensures leaders manage the school well.
- The proprietor body accurately assesses the gaps in their skillset. The proprietor body engages an advisory board to provide guidance to mitigate these gaps affecting the smooth running of the school. The proprietor body has well-considered plans to extend the advisory board should the proposed changes be granted, for example appointing an individual with experience leading and teaching in the secondary age-phase.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	148733
DfE registration number	873/6057
Inspection number	10293816

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Hope Tree School Ltd
Headteacher	Rebecca Sands (Head of Learning)
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £45,000
Telephone number	07446 528644
Website	www.hopetreeschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@hopetreeschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	22–24 November 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 12	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	18	36	36

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Girls	Girls
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	18	36
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	18	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	18	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	18	36

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	2	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	10
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	Not applicable

Information about this school

- The school's registration with the Department for Education was approved in October 2021. It opened as an independent special school in June 2022. It had its first standard inspection in November 2022.
- All the pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health needs linked to a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Prior to joining this school, many pupils had significant periods of time out of education.

- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the head of learning and the head of pastoral care. These two individuals are also the only members of the proprietor body.
- The inspector held a discussion with some pupils with staff present to gather their views about the school, including what they learn, what they experience and how staff teach them to behave. The inspector also observed pupils during a lesson.
- The inspector held a discussion with two members of staff to gather insights into the work of leaders and staff to oversee pupils' learning, behaviour and wider development. The inspector also observed staff during a lesson.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed policies and procedures, checked the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, and read through records of safeguarding cases. The inspector also discussed safeguarding in meetings or discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other documentation, including the admissions register, curriculum plans, policies and procedures, and risk assessments.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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