

Hopedale School

Hopedale House, Off West Drive, Cheddleton, Staffordshire ST13 7ED

Inspection dates

21–23 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Hopedale School is an outstanding school providing a unique education for pupils with complex needs. The sense of family and belonging is palpable across the school.
- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. They can explain and talk about their learning exceptionally well, including their next steps.
- Teachers' effective use of questioning deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils are consistently expected to think hard and to improve their learning.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages in their education and in life. Leaders and staff maintain a strong focus on developing pupils' independence skills to prepare them for their future.
- Leaders are relentless in securing appropriately ambitious destinations for pupils when they move on from Hopedale.
- A strong culture of safeguarding exists in the school. Staff are highly vigilant and consistently follow the school's policy and processes if they have a concern about a pupil.
- The highly personalised curriculum meets the needs of pupils exceptionally well, with spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities included throughout. Leaders have ensured that fundamental British values are promoted in all aspects of school life.
- The school is calm and purposeful and pupils' conduct is impeccable. Staff support pupils to manage their behaviour very well. As a result, behavioural incidents for individual pupils decline over time.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance teaching, learning and assessment by further developing staff confidence and subject knowledge in teaching mathematics so that they can set work for pupils which is challenging and deepens their understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders are relentlessly ambitious for all learners. They have the highest expectations of staff and pupils. There is a strong culture of excellence where everyone strives for the very best. This results in pupils making significant and rapid gains in their learning, including their development of social skills and their skills in managing their behaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school is accurate. Leaders have a very strong commitment to continuous improvement and a secure understanding of the school's performance. The senior leadership team involves all staff in developing the school's self-evaluation. The proprietor and the headteacher ensure its accuracy.
- There are clear lines of accountability in place through a leadership structure that has changed since the previous inspection. The new headteacher is very well supported by the senior leadership team. The team is highly focused and relentless in its pursuit of excellence for the pupils. Leaders have maintained the very high standards across the school noted at the previous inspection.
- Leaders are highly committed to the professional development of all staff to improve teaching. They link professional development to the school improvement plan and to staff performance management. Staff value leaders' use of professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement. Teaching is continually debated, reflected on and refined by leaders and staff. Consequently, staff are confident and skilled at adapting teaching to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is excellent across the school. It is stimulating and adults' expectations are consistently high. Observations in lessons are regularly carried out by leaders. Evaluations also take full account of pupils' progress data and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Feedback to staff helps them to understand their strengths and how they can continuously improve their teaching. As a result, pupils learn extremely well.
- Leaders have taken a thoughtful and rigorous approach to meeting the duties of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils benefit from planned learning experiences about equality, protected characteristics and diversity. These feature in wider enrichment days and are fully integrated into the curriculum. For example, key stage 3 pupils learned about the injustice of women not being allowed to vote in the early 1900s. Pupils were able to explain how this learning had contributed to their thinking about equality.
- The highly personalised curriculum design is exceptionally well matched to the needs of pupils. The school has a strong commitment to the SMSC development of pupils. This has a very high profile and is visible throughout the school. Learning opportunities for developing pupils' SMSC understanding are carefully planned and integrated into the curriculum. Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences that include supporting charities such as Comic Relief, learning about different faiths, trips to the theatre and to museums, fire safety day, residential trips and experiential learning days. As a result, pupils develop an appropriate level of understanding and make very good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that fundamental British values are promoted effectively in all aspects of school life. During the inspection, older pupils were able to link their learning

about equality to respect for others, including those with different beliefs. They showed a good understanding of the rule of law, such as not stealing from others. They described individual liberty as 'having your own say, opinions, beliefs and rights as a human being'. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- Staff are proud to work at Hopedale and say that the school is well led and managed. Responses to Ofsted's staff survey are extremely positive. Many of the comments relate to the positive culture and ethos that leaders have created and sustained, for example:

'All members of the school community, this includes all staff and students, are considered as individuals and given support and encouragement to achieve their best.'
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the transformational impact that the school has had on the lives of their children. They see their child thriving at the school, making rapid academic progress, managing their own behaviour, developing friendships and interests and being eager to attend school, often for the first time. Comments such as 'It's like my boy was given back to me' and 'I can't thank them enough really' demonstrate how strongly parents feel about the school.

Governance

- The school's proprietorial board has four members who are directors and also proprietors. Two of the proprietors established the school, one of whom was previously the headteacher. She and other members of the board are a regular presence in the school. They know the school well and ensure a strong oversight.
- The board meets twice a year and maintains a strategic focus on the aims and ethos of the school. Members appropriately consider the school's performance and any safeguarding issues at each meeting.
- Following the previous inspection, the proprietorial board established a 'critical friends' group. This group includes proprietors, the headteacher and external representation. The group feeds into the board meetings and supports the proprietorial board in holding school leaders to account. The headteacher is rigorously held to account at the meetings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leads ensure that pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority. The school has a safeguarding policy that has been updated to reflect the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The policy is published on the school's website.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks on the suitability of staff are carried out prior to employment.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Appropriate training for all staff ensures that concerns about pupils are raised in line with the school's policy and procedures. Training is tailored to meet the needs of pupils and the context of the school. Leaders are aware of the risks locally and all staff have been trained by the headteacher in preventing radicalisation and extremism. Where individual pupils may be at increased risk, it is identified on individual risk assessments.

- The open culture of the school supports pupils to communicate to staff when they feel unsafe or need support. Pupils are confident that the school is a safe place and that staff will help them to remain safe.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a rigorous approach to all aspects of health and safety. Risks are identified and well managed. As a result, pupils are kept safe in school and during off-site activities, such as work experience and physical education lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding and ensures that pupils make very strong progress in their learning. Teachers and support staff know the pupils exceptionally well. They skilfully respond and adapt to pupils' individual learning and social needs in lessons. All staff are uncompromising in their high expectations of what individual pupils can achieve. They use questioning incisively to assess and adapt learning to meet the needs of individual pupils. They assess pupils' progress continuously, moving them on when they are ready or intervening swiftly if progress slows.
- Leaders have established very strong partnerships with a wide range of schools. The shared learning from this work supports leaders and staff in continuously making accurate judgements about pupils' progress and attainment. This, in turn, enables staff to make accurate assessments and to provide learning opportunities that are exceptionally well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that most make strong progress in mathematics. Pupils benefit from a wide range of hands-on resources, such as place value apparatus, that secure and deepen their conceptual understanding. Pupils apply their mathematical skills very well across the curriculum. For example, pupils accurately weighed out their ingredients when cooking scones. However, on a few occasions, staff confidence and subject knowledge in the teaching of mathematics are less precise than in other subjects.
- Staff carefully track the progress that pupils make. The school's assessment systems extend to measuring progress in behaviour, emotional regulation and independence skills, which all contribute effectively to pupils' personal development. Carefully chosen targets are reviewed regularly, ensuring that pupils continuously make significant gains in their learning.
- Teaching staff make very effective use of time and resources in lessons. A carousel model of working ensures that pupils experience high-quality teaching for a focused period, as well as a range of timed learning experiences with less adult support. Teaching is well planned and delivered, highly personalised to meet the needs of each individual pupil. As a result, pupils sustain their focus and work hard to achieve the learning objectives. All make extremely strong progress in their learning.
- Learning environments are highly conducive to learning and their careful design takes full account of the needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils are able to focus on learning and rapidly make outstanding progress.
- Feedback to pupils is a continuous part of the learning process at Hopedale. Feedback confirms to pupils where they have been successful and what precisely they need to do to improve their learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know pupils exceptionally well and are vigilant to any behaviour change or other indicators that a pupil needs additional support. Staff judge the levels of support needed very well, making sure that pupils have the opportunity to manage their behaviour independently or with minimum support.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Pupils benefit from high-quality, independent and impartial careers advice and guidance. Older pupils all take part in interesting and meaningful work experience that prepares them exceptionally well for their next stage. As a result, they have a good understanding of the options open to them and are able to make informed choices, supported by staff where appropriate.
- The school's first-aid policy and a medication procedure outline the robust processes that are in place for administering first aid and medication safely, on- and off-site. Parents value the school's close work with them to ensure that pupils' health needs are met, including facilitating care such as physiotherapy at the school.
- The underpinning therapeutic approach at Hopedale enables pupils to gain in confidence and self-awareness and to have a stronger sense of self. Pupils bring this confidence and positivity to their learning, which supports the rapid and sustained progress that nearly all pupils make. Pupils also choose alternative therapies, such as therapeutic music, that foster new skills, interests and a strong sense of personal achievement.
- Teaching staff work closely with other professionals, such as the school's therapy team, to develop a deep understanding of individual pupils' needs. Additional support and interventions are used effectively and have a demonstrable impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Secure, professional relationships are at the heart of the school's work. In a recent pupil survey, all pupils could name at least one staff member that they would talk to about anything. Pupils are confident that staff will always deal effectively with any issues they may have. An example given to inspectors was related to telling an adult when they were upset by something online.
- Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe in a range of situations, including online, through the core personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. PSHE education engenders a culture of openness and debate in classrooms. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online. This adds to the very strong culture of safeguarding at the school.
- The curriculum is extremely rich, enabling pupils to learn a very wide range of skills. Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn and practise social skills and skills for independence, such as cooking and independent travel. Pupils are clear about the importance of this learning, stating that you have to learn to look after yourself. These opportunities contribute significantly to pupils' personal development and welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A very comprehensive behaviour policy details how behaviour is consistently managed. The policy is published on the school's website and appropriately includes reference to physical intervention. Staff are consistent in their application of this policy.
- Pupils' conduct is impeccable. This includes at the end of breaktimes, when pupils line up safely and calmly, returning to their classrooms in an orderly way.
- Staff support pupils to manage their own behaviour very well. Leaders record and analyse incidents effectively. There is clear evidence that incidents reduce over time and for individual pupils.
- Very well-established rehearsed routines and consistent expectations are in place in all classrooms. As a result, disruption is extremely rare.
- Pupils' progress in developing the behaviours that support learning, such as settling quietly and appropriately, is tracked by staff and pupils. There is clear evidence that pupils make significant gains over time. Most pupils who are new to the school make exceptional gains very swiftly. This supports the progress that they make in their learning.
- All staff are trained in de-escalation strategies and in physical intervention. Leaders' analysis demonstrates that the level of physical intervention reduces very swiftly once a recently admitted pupil has settled into the school. Some of these pupils have previously experienced high levels of physical intervention in their previous schools.
- Highly detailed and rigorous individual plans and risk assessments are in place for each pupil. Consequently, the whole team knows how to avoid escalations of behaviour by consistently recognising and responding to a pupil's individual triggers. Risk assessments carefully highlight pupils' health conditions and any implications for physical intervention. As a result, staff are able to protect the safety of pupils where physical intervention is needed as a last resort.
- Pupils enjoy calm breaktimes that are well organised and structured. Pupils rotate activities, such as trampolining and football, during their breaks. This is similar to the carousel of learning activities in classrooms. Staff provide high levels of supervision and have strong and enduring relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils manage themselves well and seek support from staff when needed.
- 'Safe spaces' have been created in the outdoor environment and close to classrooms. These enable pupils to leave a situation safely and to regulate themselves in the safe space, with support where appropriate. Supervision by staff ensures that pupils are always safe when they are in these spaces. Pupils return to class calmly when they are ready to continue their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate their commitment to learning at Hopedale through their very good attendance. There have been no pupil exclusions since the school opened. As a result, no pupils are disadvantaged by poor attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Many pupils arrive at the school with gaps in their learning as a result of missing out on education. Staff use a range of assessments to identify pupils' starting points on entry to school, enabling them to track pupils' progress. Pupils make rapid progress from these starting points and can explain and talk about their learning.
- Pupils achieve their appropriately challenging individual targets. They know and understand their targets and refer to them frequently in their books. In the secondary phase in particular, pupils know and understand their academic and social targets very well. They reflect carefully on their learning and evaluate their own success, with support where needed.
- Leaders ensure that reading and promoting a love of reading have a very high profile across the school. Pupils enjoy reading widely and often in school, including reading aloud with adults at least twice a week. They visit the library regularly and choose a wide range of books that interest them. Each class displays the books that both pupils and staff are currently reading. Opportunities for pupils to read widely across the curriculum are maximised. Most pupils display an excellent understanding of phonics. They use their phonics skills to successfully decode text when reading and to blend sounds to spell words when they are writing. As a result, pupils make rapid and significant gains in their literacy skills.
- Key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils make very strong progress. They benefit from studying a highly individualised curriculum of core and optional subjects. As a result, pupils continue to gain externally accredited qualifications in a wide range of subjects and relevant skills over time.
- Pupils leave the school exceptionally well prepared for life and for the next stages in their education, training or residential placements.

School details

Unique reference number	138243
DfE registration number	860/6040
Inspection number	10092465

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Sarah Deaville, Amy Hopkin, Viv Hopkin and Jon Armitage
Chair	Amy Hopkin
Headteacher	Sarahjane Cuncannon-Edwards
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,421 (average)
Telephone number	01538 361 886
Website	www.hopedale.org.uk
Email address	admin@hopedale.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 June 2016

Information about this school

- Hopedale School and Children's Home was founded in 2012. It provides therapeutic education for up to 58 pupils aged five to 18. The number of pupils has increased since the previous inspection, following approval from the Department for Education.
- All pupils have significant social, emotional and mental health needs. Nearly all have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Occasionally, pupils are placed at the school while awaiting their final EHC plan.

- The large majority of pupils are referred to the school by Stoke-on-Trent or Cheshire East local authorities. Some pupils are placed by other local authorities in the area.
- The school's previous inspection was in June 2016. It was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and one of the proprietors, who is also a director. The inspector met with staff, including those from the therapy team. The inspector spoke informally to staff throughout the inspection.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; policies; planning; pupils' progress information; and minutes of leadership meetings. Documents relating to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils were looked at, including the school's checks on the suitability of staff. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader, who is also the headteacher, and the proprietor.
- Pupils' records were scrutinised.
- The range of evidence gathered, along with a tour of the school, was used to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Visits were made to all classes when the inspector toured the school. Lessons were visited more formally, accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspector observed breaktimes and looked at a range of evidence of pupils' work across a range of subjects.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils to discuss their experience of the school. Two pupils also read to the inspector.
- The 24 responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff were considered.
- There were too few responses to consider on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. The inspector met or spoke on the telephone with a small number of parents and considered the findings of the school's own survey for parents.
- Ofsted's survey for pupils was not completed. The inspector considered the findings of the school's most recent survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Bev Petch, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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