

Inspection of Hopedale School

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

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Hopedale school is a very special school where pupils thrive. Many pupils arrive at the school after significant periods of disrupted education. Staff know and understand this, so they take the time to get to know the pupils individually. They develop strong and trusted relationships.

Leaders have the highest expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. After pupils arrive, staff quickly identify pupils' interests and gaps in their knowledge, and put in place a highly personalised learning programme. Pupils rise to these expectations because staff carefully support each pupil to help them achieve their very best.

Pupils feel very safe in school because they know that staff care for them. Leaders have put in place strong pastoral systems that help to keep pupils safe. Pupils say that bullying can sometimes happen, but if it does adults ensure it is dealt with quickly.

All staff are relentless in developing pupils' independence and resilience. They carefully identify gifts and talents that pupils did not realise they had. For example, pupils learn to play piano, drums and sing, and then perform at a local hall. Pupils are incredibly proud of their achievements and proudly shared these with inspectors.

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

Leaders have carefully designed a broad and engaging curriculum that meets the individual needs of all pupils. Staff are highly skilled in identifying the important knowledge that pupils need to know, and build a curriculum around this. All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff carefully break down the targets from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan into small achievable steps. Staff carefully check if the pupils retain their learning, then adapt activities if pupils need additional practice. This approach ensures that all pupils make excellent progress through their individual curriculums during their time in the school.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. They are passionate about helping pupils to overcome their negative attitudes to reading. Staff plan numerous opportunities throughout the day for pupils to listen to stories, read books and to practise the skills of reading. Leaders carefully identify pupils who need additional support. A well-structured phonics programme is in place for all pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge. All staff are highly skilled in delivering this approach. As a result of reading being such a high priority, pupils are able to access the full curriculum. A typical pupil comment was, 'I did not like reading before, but I have got so much better. I could not read before I came here and now I can.'

The school's curriculum is aspirational both academically and pastorally. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities available to support their social development. The school's

expert therapeutic team ensures that all pupils receive regular and very appropriate support. For example, pupils have access to relaxation sessions with a trained therapist.

Pupils' behaviour in the school is excellent. Most pupils arrive at the school having found it difficult to manage their own behaviour. All staff are experts in supporting and teaching pupils to manage their own behaviour. They skilfully work with pupils to help them to understand potential triggers and support them to regulate their emotions. As a result, there is a notable improvement in pupils' behaviour during their time in school.

Pupils are kind and tolerant. They learn about equality and diversity. They show an understanding of different religions, sexuality and beliefs. In relationships and sex education, pupils learn about topics such as consent, substance abuse, gaming and gambling and appropriate touch.

Pupils' personal development is first rate. Leaders recognise that some pupils have limited access to opportunities before coming to school. Therefore, they make sure that pupils access a rich set of experiences. For example, the whole school stayed at a hotel together. This stay was the culmination of a carefully sequenced programme of learning, where pupils learned how to behave at dinner, how to act in public areas and also how to access a breakfast buffet appropriately.

Pupils access a high-quality careers programme. They receive regular, impartial advice that begins in Year 7. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school in innovative ways. For example, pupils in Years 10 to 13 learn how to take care of themselves during 'independence fortnight'. During this time, pupils are taught how to complete certain tasks needed when living independently. For example, pupils learn to use a washing machine, how to use an iron safely and how to apply for a provisional driving licence. This ensures that pupils are equipped with the knowledge and skills to help them to flourish in adulthood.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. Staff morale is high. They said that this is because leaders ensure they consider workload and well-being when making decisions about the school.

Proprietors, leaders and staff share a moral purpose to improve the life chances of pupils in their school. Proprietors are skilled and bring a wealth of expertise to the management of the school. They effectively hold school leaders to account and ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards in full and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture where safeguarding is at the heart of what they do. Staff are vigilant and aware of safeguarding at all times. They understand the

additional vulnerabilities that pupils at the school may face. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need.

Pupils learn how to keep safe through a well-planned curriculum. The curriculum includes a range of topics that teach pupils about how to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about how to keep safe online, knife crime and gang culture.

The safeguarding policy meets current government guidance. This policy is published on the school's website.

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

Unique reference number	138243
DfE registration number	860/6040
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10267659
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	58
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hopedale Children & Family Services Ltd
Chair	Sarah Deaville
Headteacher	Hannah Holford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,276 (average)
Telephone number	01538 361886
Website	www.hopedale.org.uk
Email address	admin@hopedale.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 May 2019

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with significant social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- An unannounced emergency inspection commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) was carried out in September 2022. The last independent standard inspection of the school took place in May 2019. The overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding.
- Leaders do not make use of any 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.

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

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the head of school, the executive headteacher, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, 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.
- The lead inspector met via video call with the chair of the proprietorial board and met with representatives of the 'critical friends' group.
- Inspectors toured the premises and accommodation of the school. They checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, and health and safety of pupils and staff, linked to the independent school standards.
- Inspectors talked to pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included two formal meetings with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted's online parent survey. Ofsted's staff survey was also taken into account.
- The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to meet the

relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- **The school's proposed change is twofold. Firstly, to broaden the age range from 5 to 18, to 4 to 18. Secondly, to increase the number of pupils on roll from 58 to 70.**
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Moran

Ofsted Inspector

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