

Hope Corner School

70 Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4TD

Unique reference number (URN): 138597

Material change inspection report:

24 March 2026

Overall outcome

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

This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), which is the registration authority for independent schools. The school has applied to the DfE to make a material change to its registration. The school proposes to change the age range of pupils and change the maximum number of pupils attending.

The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out material change inspections of independent schools, we report on the school's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards (the standards) consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor, governors and school leaders have the knowledge and skills required to ensure that the standards are met securely over time. They have the knowledge required to carry out their roles successfully. For example, governors assist the proprietor in providing effective support and challenge to the school and establishing and sustaining the school's ethos and strategic direction. Leaders have fully considered how the vision to increase the number and age range of pupils at the school will ensure that it can provide high-quality education to pupils over a longer period of time. They have a well-thought-out-plan to extend education into

a post-16 provision that is carefully designed to meet the needs and interests of pupils.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' safety and wellbeing while using the café as an additional learning space, should the material change be approved. Leaders of the school, including the proprietor and governors, will maintain responsibility for the suitability and safety of both the school and café, as both are within the church building, managed by the same proprietor.

Leaders are committed to providing a high-quality education for pupils and actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. There are sufficient systems in place to ensure that the standards continue to be met consistently in both the school and café.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum and programme of study for students in post-16 provision. It takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils, who all have an education, health and care plan. Leaders have carefully considered how this curriculum will develop and extend pupils' knowledge and skills acquired during key stage 4, including in personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education. Leaders have also extended the school's careers programme beyond Year 11 to ensure that students in the post-16 provision continue to benefit from impartial, up-to-date careers guidance to help them make informed choices about future career options.

Furthermore, leaders have considered how this curriculum will better prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, training or employment and for adulthood. For example, students in the post-16 provision will have the opportunity to continue to gain accreditation in English and mathematics. Where appropriate, this will be alongside studying for accreditation in vocational subjects such as hospitality, media, finance and marketing. Leaders have designed a 3-year post-16 programme of study to enable students to gain a breadth of vocational experience in the first year, specialise in the second year and gain valuable work experience, work placements and supported internships in the final year. This deliberately designed curriculum provides students with clear progression through the post-16 programme.

Teaching

Leaders have ensured that teachers and staff have the knowledge and expertise required to deliver the post-16 programme effectively, should the material change

be approved. Curriculum plans and schemes of work will provide teachers with sufficient guidance to know what to teach and the sequence of learning. Moreover, staff are highly attuned to pupils' varying needs and aptitudes and design learning that is carefully tailored to motivate, interest and encourage pupils to engage with education.

Staff have a wide-ranging experience of supporting pupils aged beyond 16 years old and with special educational needs and/or disabilities, trauma and negative experiences of education. They are highly skilled in building positive relationships with pupils. Supporting them to manage their emotions, to act responsibly and to foster pupils' self-motivation and independence. This helps pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills and to make good progress through the curriculum.

Assessment

The school has ensured that there is a framework for pupils' performance to be evaluated. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and use assessment information to shape future teaching and learning. Learning activities are carefully tailored to meet the needs and interests of pupils and to ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge and make progress. This will continue in the post-16 provision, should the material change be approved.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school ensures that the current curriculum and wider activities support pupils' personal development. There are many opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop self-esteem, understand right from wrong and to take responsibility for their behaviour. The school plans for this to continue for post-16 students, should the material change be approved.

The school promotes fundamental British values, including democracy and the rule of law. Pupils are taught about the protected characteristics and different cultural traditions. They are encouraged to be tolerant and respectful citizens who make a positive contribution to their community and wider society. The proposed post-16 programme further encourages this by providing students with opportunities to complete work experience, work placements and supported internships in local organisations and businesses. The school ensures that teaching and other activities organised by the school preclude partisan political views.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proprietor has ensured that the school has suitable safeguarding procedures in place to promote the welfare of pupils at the school. These are known and understood by staff. The proprietor, governors and leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents and carers on the school's website.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the training they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. They have a clear understanding of local contextual safeguarding risks to pupils and ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Staff report and record any concerns that they may have in a timely way. Leaders act on these swiftly. Pupils benefit from strong and positive relationships with staff. They know that the staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils feel safe, heard and valued.

Health and safety, fire, supervision and risk assessment

The proprietor has ensured that the school complies with the relevant health and safety laws. It has a health and safety policy that is tailored to the premises, including the café that is intended to be used as an additional learning space, should the material change be approved. The policy is implemented effectively. Both the school and café are clean, bright and spacious environments. They are well-maintained and ensure pupils' safety and welfare. For example, both the school and café comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Leaders carry out regular fire-safety checks of the premises and these are suitably logged. Fire-evacuation routes are clearly lit and signposted. There are robust monitoring procedures in place to ensure that all health and safety checks are completed regularly. Leaders intend to employ an experienced café manager who will oversee health and safety in the café space, including food hygiene and environmental health.

A written risk assessment policy is in place. A range of risk assessments for the school, café and trips and visits show that the school takes appropriate actions to reduce any identified risks to pupils. These include additional risks that are likely to be present in the café. Leaders have carefully considered how visitors to the café will be managed to ensure pupils' safety and welfare while they are learning in this space.

The school has ensured that pupils are supervised at all times. High staff-to-pupil ratios ensure that pupils are properly supervised in lessons and at social times. It

is intended that 3 students will typically learn in the café space at any one time with a café manager and school staff, should the material change be approved. Pupils have individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans that identify risks, triggers and actions to take when they need additional help to meet their needs. Supervision and vigilance will continue as students in the post-16 provision move with school staff between the school on the first floor of the building and the café on the ground floor, should the material change be approved.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

The recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor and the single central record of these checks

The single central record is in place and contains all the necessary checks and information. The school completes all the required checks on the suitability of staff before they take up an appointment. All the suitability checks relating to the leadership and management of the school have also been carried out.

Leaders have completed appropriate safer recruitment training to support the appointment of suitable staff to work in a school. They have ensured that any new employees have the necessary knowledge that they need to meet the needs and ages of the pupils in the school.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers and medical room

There are suitable toilet facilities in the school and café spaces for the sole use of pupils. There are separate toilet cubicles that can be secured from the inside. There is a toilet suitable for people with a disability available for staff and visitors to use both in the school and in the café. There are sufficient toilet facilities to accommodate the proposed increase in numbers. There are changing accommodation and showers for secondary-age pupils to use.

There is a designated medical room for pupils in the school to use. It is used as an office space, but not a teaching room. There is easy access to the toilet and washing facilities. The room is equipped with a first-aid kit.

There is an adequate supply of hot and cold water. Drinking water is clearly labelled and available for pupils throughout the day, both in the school and in the café.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

Leaders have ensured that the school and café have ample space to cater effectively for the proposed increase in the number and age range of pupils, should the material change be approved. The school has a bright and airy communal area, kitchen, reading snug, 2 classrooms and toilet facilities. The café is equally a clean, spacious and welcoming area. All of the spaces used by pupils have appropriate acoustics, lighting and heating suitable for the purpose of the different rooms. Both the school and café are secure and safe, with appropriate locks, including thumb-turn locks.

Outdoor space

The premises provide sufficient outdoor space for pupils and will easily accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. All pupils have access to a safe and secure outdoor area to play in when not in lessons.

The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

This school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by their local authorities.

This school is registered as having a Christian ethos. It is registered to admit up to 12 pupils.

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

The inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body, a governor, the headteacher, staff and pupils during the inspection.

Lead inspector

Sally Timmons

His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

Proprietor/Chair of the proprietor body	Hope Corner Community Mark Finch
Headteacher	Sharon Beddow
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	12
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	0
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	4
Age range of pupils	14 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	£62,144 to £65,252
Email address	head@hopecorner.co.uk

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