

Inspection of Hope Corner School

70 Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4TD

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

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

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a warm and friendly atmosphere at Hope Corner School. A strong sense of community permeates the school. Pupils trust the staff and value their support. This helps pupils to feel safe, happy and cared for.

Most pupils behave well. Overall, they rise to the school's high expectations. Staff deal with any occasional poor behaviour swiftly and fairly. Pupils learn about how to build positive relationships and work well alongside each other.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' academic achievement. All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils who join the school have been out of education for significant periods of time. Staff support these pupils to regain their confidence with learning.

Over time, pupils start to engage well with their education. As a result of the school's improvements to the curriculum, pupils develop their subject knowledge and understanding well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The school's offer to promote pupils' personal development is well thought out. This programme includes a range of trips and visits that prepare pupils well for their future lives. For example, pupils enjoy trips to a local observatory, which enhances their learning in science. Regular visits to a local climbing wall help to build pupils' confidence and resilience.

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

In many subjects, the curriculum is well developed. In these areas, the school has carefully considered the precise knowledge that it wants pupils to know and remember. The school's curriculum design takes account of gaps that pupils may have in their knowledge, as well as considering their specific needs.

Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils know and, for the most part, pupils remember what they have learned. For example, pupils spoke confidently about the themes of a novel that they had studied and could describe the features that made this a dystopian text.

Teachers generally use assessment well. They check carefully and regularly in lessons on how well pupils learn the curriculum content. As a result, over time, teachers build a detailed picture of how well pupils are learning and where they need extra support.

In the main, pupils achieve well across the curriculum. However, the school is in the process of refining the curriculum in a small number of subjects. In these areas, pupils cannot recall knowledge in as much depth.

Reading is a priority in this school. Staff quickly identify pupils who need extra help with reading. These pupils get the support that they need to read with accuracy and fluency. Pupils and staff enjoy reading the well-chosen, good-quality texts in 'book-study' lessons.

The school accurately identifies and meets the additional needs of pupils. The school ensures that staff are familiar with the targets in each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school reviews the needs of pupils regularly. It makes sure that effective support is in place so that pupils can access the curriculum successfully.

Overall, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance significantly improve during their time at the school. Staff carefully review any behaviour incidents to identify the triggers for pupils' poor behaviour. Staff use this information well to enable them to deploy effective behaviour strategies. Pupils learn to better regulate their own behaviour. Consequently, incidents of poor behaviour reduce over time.

Some pupils have a history of poor attendance. Most pupils improve their rates of attendance when they join the school. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school is persistent in its work with these pupils' families to remove barriers to pupils' attendance.

The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The personal, social and health education offer is carefully mapped out to ensure that pupils receive a wide variety of relevant experiences. The school uses real-life examples to ensure that learning is relevant for the pupils. For example, when pupils learn about democracy, they visit the Houses of Parliament so that they can see democracy in action. Pupils grow vegetables on the school's allotment. Staff use this activity to teach pupils about keeping themselves healthy.

The school makes the provision of careers guidance for pupils a high priority. Pupils receive effective support and advice around possible future career pathways. This includes accompanying pupils on college visits and providing support with college applications. Parents and carers are grateful for the comprehensive transition arrangements that the school puts in place for their children at the end of Year 11.

Leaders, including the proprietor body and those responsible for governance, are keen that pupils in the school have every opportunity to succeed. The proprietor body and governors understand what is working well and what could improve at the school. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders to improve the quality of education.

Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being when making decisions. They ensure that staff have the training and support needed to do their jobs well.

The proprietor body ensure that the school complies with statutory requirements, including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. It makes sure that the school meets all the independent school standards (the standards) consistently well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not finalised its thinking about the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. As a result, in these subjects, pupils do not develop the depth of understanding that they should. In these subjects, the school should identify the key information that pupils should learn and by when.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. These pupils miss out on important learning, and some develop gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure that they improve the rates of attendance of these pupils.

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	138597
DfE registration number	876/6014
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10286437
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Hope Corner Community
Chair	Mark Finch
Headteacher	Matthew Finch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,960 to £43,036
Telephone number	01928 580860
Website	www.hopcornerschool.co.uk
Email address	head@hopecorner.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 November 2021

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection took place from 10 to 12 November 2021.
- The school is located in premises at 70 Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4TD.
- Hope Corner School caters for pupils with SEND, including autism, moderate learning difficulties, and social, emotional and mental difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The proprietor body is Hope Corner. Hope Corner is registered with the Charity Commission. This name does not match the name on the Department for Education's 'Get Information about Schools' (GIAS) website. The name of the proprietor body on GIAS is Hope Corner Community.
- The school has a Christian faith ethos.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- There were no students in the sixth form at the time of the inspection.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the chair of the proprietor body, the chair of governors and a range of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke with some parents to gather their views.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

- There were no responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents and information relating to the standards. She also made a tour of the school premises.
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Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Julie Morley

Ofsted Inspector

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