

Hopewell School (Harmony House)

Harmony House, Baden Powell Close, Dagenham, Essex RM9 6XN

Inspection dates

25–27 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They take effective actions to improve the school. As a result of the improvements which leaders have secured since the previous inspection, pupils benefit from a good education.
- Pupils make good social and academic progress because of the school's sharp focus on their personal development and welfare. A strong ethos of care permeates the school's work.
- Teachers, support staff and therapists work well together to address pupils' individual social and emotional needs and barriers to learning. They adapt the curriculum and therapeutic support effectively. As a result, pupils learn to behave well and grow in confidence as they experience social and academic success.
- The school's curriculum offers pupils a range of learning experiences. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Furthermore, it enables them to achieve qualifications that allow them to progress successfully to the next stages of their lives.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers and other staff benefit from quality training. This helps them to deploy effective strategies to engage pupils in learning and to prepare activities that meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils make good progress from their typically low starting points.
- Leaders recently introduced a new assessment system. They use this to set ambitious targets and check regularly on pupils' progress. They also use the information well to arrange extra interventions, including therapies, for pupils who fall behind.
- Most teachers use assessment information well to prepare activities that meet pupils' needs. However, some teaching does not challenge pupils to achieve their very best. Occasionally, planned activities do not inspire pupils enough. They therefore disengage and fail to complete enough work.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with all the independent school standards.

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?

- Improve pupils' outcomes further, by:
 - ensuring that teaching and therapeutic activities routinely engage and challenge pupils to achieve their best
 - ensuring that teachers and other adults encourage pupils to complete their work
 - building on the work to improve assessment systems so that teachers consistently use information sharply to plan work that challenges pupils to reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and other leaders have created a positive ethos of care for both pupils and their families. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They firmly believe that by offering tailored therapies, providing an engaging curriculum and taking care of pupils' welfare needs pupils can succeed. Members of staff are overwhelmingly positive, and their morale is high, typically, as one put it: 'I thoroughly enjoy and look forward to the challenges I may face every day at this school; I get great satisfaction from seeing children achieve.'
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have recruited more therapists and created specialist provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This means that pupils now have access to a wider range of therapies and support to address their differing needs. Over time, therefore, they improve their behaviours, take responsibility for their actions and engage more positively in their learning.
- Furthermore, leaders commissioned consultants to support leaders and to deliver quality training to teachers and support staff. This has helped teachers to develop a better understanding of how to plan and organise activities that meet pupils' needs. In addition, they learned how to organise their classroom environments in ways that help pupils to concentrate and avoid distractions. As a result, teaching and support are now good, as is pupils' progress.
- Leaders check carefully on all aspects of pupils' behaviour and the impact of therapies and interventions. More recently, they introduced clearer systems for checking on pupils' academic progress. They have made a good start, but this remains work in progress. Leaders aim to refine systems so that teachers can use information even more sharply to target activities to enable pupils to make even stronger progress.
- The curriculum offers pupils a good range of academic and vocational subjects. In key stage 4, pupils have opportunities to gain qualifications including GCSEs in English, mathematics, biology and business studies. The vocational qualifications available to them include vehicle maintenance, carpentry and animal care. All pupils also study computing, art, design technology, and physical education. Leaders regularly review the curriculum. From September, pupils will be able to study for a GCSE in physical education and the vocational offer will expand to include tiling, painting and decorating, and electronics.
- The curriculum makes a very strong contribution to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders achieve this through the extensive personal, social, health and economic education curriculum, assemblies, visits and visitors. Pupils learn to respect people with protected characteristics. The school's work to help pupils understand people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and those who are transgender led to it being recognised as a Stonewall champion school. The school celebrates festivals of different faiths. Pupils have visited art galleries, the British Library and the theatre. They learn about democracy and moral issues. In these ways, the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents who responded to the questionnaire and who spoke with the inspector were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They were full of praise for how well all staff care for their children and help them improve their behaviour and make good progress.

Furthermore, they expressed great appreciation for the help that staff give them personally and for the almost daily communication they get from the school. They confirmed that the school involves them in determining goals for their children and in reviewing their outcomes.

Governance

- The proprietor and two other governors are responsible for governance of the school.
- Governors are in regular contact with leaders and support them in improving the school.
- Governors have expertise in social care and safeguarding which they bring to bear in their work at the school.
- Governors identified that they need to expand the governing body and broaden the range of skills represented. As a result, they commissioned work with a national leader of governance, who has helped governors audit their effectiveness and is providing training on effective governance. In addition, the proprietor has recruited two new governors, both with a background in education, who will join in September. These actions are adding capacity to the governing body.
- Governors makes sure that the school meets all the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The three designated safeguarding leaders make sure that they keep up to date with the latest safeguarding guidance. They regularly train all members of staff.
- In this small school, staff know the pupils and their families extremely well. There is a strong culture of vigilance. Staff meet twice a day and share any concerns that they have about pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders diligently follow up with the appropriate agencies when concerns arise.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies and parents to support pupils' safety and welfare.
- Through the curriculum, pupils learn about risk and how to keep safe in different situations. This includes many lessons on e-safety. Leaders also invite parents to workshops to help them understand the dangers to which their children might be exposed and how to help them stay safe.
- Leaders publish the school's safeguarding policy on its website. The policy takes proper regard of current government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is effective and helps pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers work closely with other adults and therapists to help pupils engage and stay on task in their learning. Support staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs. They not only support pupils' academic progress, but also their social and emotional needs.

- Teachers plan the classroom environment effectively to promote learning, including, for instance, workdesks for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- Teachers take time to make sure that pupils know, from the start, the sequence of activities that they will follow. This helps pupils to understand what adults expect them to do and how learning will evolve.
- Typically, teachers and other staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In the upper years, teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of academic and vocational courses and plan learning to help pupils achieve national qualifications and accreditation.
- The school undertakes baseline assessments of all pupils at the point that they join the school. Typically, teachers use this information and their own ongoing assessment to prepare activities that inspire pupils to learn well. Occasionally, however, the work teachers set is not focused sharply on pupils' needs and is not challenging or inspiring enough. In these cases, pupils do not meet their potential. They tend not to finish their work because they lose motivation and, therefore, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know the pupils well and take good care of them. Adults respond quickly and effectively to pupils' needs in a personalised way.
- Pupils typically arrive at this school with very low self-esteem, as they were unsuccessful learners in their previous schools. As pupils progress through the school, they develop trusting relationships with adults who they know care for them. They make great strides in improving their behaviour, which in turn helps them become more successful learners. As they develop stronger social skills and make academic progress, they grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- This year, leaders introduced into the curriculum a new personal development and achievement programme. Once a week, pupils go off-site to take part in a variety of activities. Staff choose activities that support pupils to develop a range of skills and characteristics such as teamwork, perseverance, communication and resilience. These experiences make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, including their physical and mental health. They also contribute to preparing pupils for independent living as adults.
- Pupils learn to take responsibilities. Tutor groups elect representatives for the school parliament. Each group chooses a national charity. This year they have prepared fundraising activities, such as cake sales and coffee mornings, to raise funds for Macmillan Nurses and Children in Need. Pupils also have opportunities to train as accredited sports leaders.
- Leaders arranged an anti-bullying day earlier this year, which included drama, art and poetry workshops. Leaders invited parents to attend, and therapists delivered sessions for staff and parents. Records show that on the odd occasion that bullying occurs leaders

deal with the situation through a restorative justice approach. As a result, it is rare for the same person to bully again.

- Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of impartial careers guidance and advice. For the first time in the school's history, most Year 11 pupils attended work experience this year. Members of staff accompany pupils, and sometimes their parents, on visits to post-16 providers to support their smooth transition.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Typically, when pupils first arrive at the school, they display highly challenging behaviour. As a result of effective therapies, mentoring and good behaviour management systems, they learn to improve their behaviour. They begin to engage positively in their learning, helping them to make good progress. Records show a sharp decline in behavioural incidents from the start of the year to date.
- During the inspection, pupils engaged in discussions about their work and they showed interest in the inspector, mainly in an appropriate and curious way.
- Pupils behave well when they arrive at school in the morning and during break and lunchtimes. This is because adults positively engage them in ball games or other activities which interest them.
- Most pupils who join the school had low attendance rates at their previous schools. In some cases, pupils had not attended school for extended periods of time. Because staff work with parents and help pupils to settle down, feel safe and enjoy school, pupils' attendance rates increase. Persistent absence decreases markedly over time.
- Leaders check very closely on the safety, behaviour, attendance and achievements of the few pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their typically low starting points, pupils make good progress across the year groups and subjects. This is because the curriculum meets pupils' needs, teaching is good, and pupils benefit from effective therapeutic interventions.
- School records show the positive impact of the therapies, mentoring and support on pupil's behaviour, attitudes and personal development. These improvements increase pupils' motivation to learn and to achieve well.
- Pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieve a range of academic and/or vocational qualifications, including either functional skills or GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- Leaders prepare pupils well to live an independent and successful adult life when they leave the school. This is because, during their time at school, pupils develop their social and emotional skills and other aspects of their personal development and achieve academic qualifications. Typically, pupils leave the school and continue their education or training at post-16 colleges.

School details

Unique reference number	134388
DfE registration number	301/6002
Inspection number	10092445

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	Special day school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Proprietor	Herman Allen
Chair	Herman Allen
Headteacher	Susan Douglas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000–£61,000
Telephone number	020 85936610
Website	www.hopewellschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@hopewellschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–17 November 2017

Information about this school

- Hopewell School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is located within shared premises, Harmony House. In April 2018, it acquired an additional site for the delivery of vocational education. It is located at Motorvations@hopewell, Romford RM7 0JB.
- The school provides placements for pupils with a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school does not offer sixth-form provision, though sometimes individual pupils stay beyond age 16.
- Pupils are referred to the school from four London local authorities.

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last standard inspection was in November 2017, when it was judged to require improvement overall, but with leadership and management judged as good.
- The school's motto is, 'restoring hope, releasing potential, rebuilding lives'.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a large turnover of staff. Leaders employed additional therapists and the senior leadership team has been reorganised and expanded.
- Additional off-site training activities are made available to pupils as follows:
vocational education at Lambourne End Centre for Outdoor Learning, Lambourne End, RM4 1NB and Evolve training, Havering.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's prior notice.
- The inspector observed learning and therapies in several sessions, all of which were visited with the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised samples of pupils' work. He checked the school's information about pupils' progress.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff. He spoke with the proprietor on the telephone. He spoke with pupils during social times and lessons.
- The inspector considered the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, which included some text responses. He also had conversations with four parents and considered letters sent in by two others. The inspector took account of 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector checked documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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