

Inspection of Lavender Field School

Lavender Field School, Lincoln House, Samuel Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3AE

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who join Lavender Field school have often experienced difficulties in their previous education settings. The move to this school is transformational for pupils. They benefit greatly from strong, caring relationships with staff. Each pupil is known as an individual so that expert support and therapy can be targeted to help their unique needs. This allows pupils to learn well, and to thrive socially and emotionally.

The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour. For example, staff skilfully and consistently use shared strategies that reinforce rewards for pupils' positive attitudes and actions. Over time, staff teach pupils how to recognise and regulate their own emotions. This helps to create a calm, well-ordered environment where pupils feel safe, and they treat each other with respect.

Pupils rise to the high academic expectations that the school sets for them. They experience a broad and balanced curriculum that is adapted effectively to meet their interests, as well as their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps pupils to develop strong foundations in literacy and numeracy and complete appropriate qualifications. From their starting points, pupils achieve well.

Beyond the academic curriculum, staff successfully support pupils to build their confidence and social skills. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They actively delight in contributing widely to school life. For example, pupils enjoy becoming representatives of the school council, writing articles for the school newspaper, or volunteering to be reading buddies for their younger peers.

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

The school has created a specialist curriculum with differing pathways to meet the wide range of pupils' individual needs and abilities. Many pupils join the school with large gaps in their learning. The school prioritises gathering accurate and important information to better understand pupils' starting points prior to them joining the school. Staff use this information to skilfully remove any barriers to pupils' learning.

The school promotes pupils' social and emotional needs, as well as supporting them to secure a strong grounding in literacy and numeracy. For instance, opportunities for pupils' wider personal development are carefully identified in each subject. Pupils study a breadth of subjects and access a range of experiences in each area of learning set out in the independent school standards ('the standards').

Across the curriculum, the school ensures that teachers receive a wide range of suitable resources and subject guidance to enable them to deliver learning effectively. However, in a few subjects, the school has not provided sufficient clarity about the knowledge that pupils should learn. In addition, the order in which some staff deliver learning does not allow pupils to make strong enough links with what they know already. From time to time, this hinders some pupils from acquiring a rich subject-specific body of knowledge.

In the main, staff deliver the curriculum well. For example, they use a common approach to help to structure pupils' learning and provide individual support that is linked to targets on pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers use effective assessment strategies to identify and close gaps in pupils' learning so that they can successfully embark on their next steps.

Reading is prioritised in all key stages. Pupils have access to a wide range of high-quality texts and they have the opportunity to read and be read to regularly. The school uses a phonics programme that is delivered by staff consistently well. On joining the school, irrespective of their age, pupils receive appropriate support from staff to improve their reading knowledge and fluency.

Prior to joining the school, pupils have often experienced trauma or difficulties in managing their behaviour. Staff are adept at quickly forming warm and trusting relationships with pupils. They consistently model positive behaviours for pupils. The school provides extensive therapeutic support. Over time, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning improve considerably.

The programme that the school provides to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional and central to pupils' learning experiences. For example, the school provides specialist resources for pupils to enable them to participate in music lessons, sporting events, technical projects and practical crafts. These opportunities help to spark pupils' interests and hone their talents, while teaching them important life skills and developing their levels of independence. Pupils are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school provides specialist careers information, advice and guidance for pupils throughout key stages 3 and 4. Pupils are supported well by staff to engage in relevant work experience. For example, pupils benefit from meaningful encounters with employers and higher education providers. Added to this, pupils receive carefully targeted support to make informed decisions about their next steps when they leave the school.

The proprietor body provides effective support and challenge to the school. For example, together, those responsible for governance ensure that the school's statutory responsibilities for safeguarding remain a high priority. The proprietor body also ensures that the standards are regularly reviewed and met and that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Staff appreciate the strong support that the school provides to enhance their well-being and ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, the school has not ensured that there is sufficient clarity for teachers about the subject-specific knowledge that pupils should learn. In addition, the order in which staff deliver aspects of subject content does not support pupils to build logically upon what they already know. On occasion, this hinders how well some pupils learn. The school should ensure that these subject curriculums are well designed so that pupils can build their knowledge securely over time.

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	147896
DfE registration number	895/6016
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10298729
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd.
Chair	Sarah Deaville
Headteacher	Neil Smith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,540 to £86,693
Telephone number	01270 439005
Website	www.lavenderfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	office@lavenderfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 June to 1 July 2021

Information about this school

- All of the pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school provides for pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum disorder and/or cognitive and learning difficulties.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place between 29 June and 1 July 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school operates from premises in Lincoln House, Samuel Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3AE.

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 of 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 the school and have taken this into account their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the head of school and the executive headteacher of the school. They also met with the executive directors of education for Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to school leaders about the curriculum and looked at curriculum plans in a range of other subjects.
- An inspector met with subject leaders for science, history, physical education and geography to discuss the curriculum in these subjects. Some of these leaders hold substantive posts in other schools in Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd. They are responsible for the leadership of a subject curriculum in a number of schools within the group, including Lavender Field School.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the school's critical friends' group and the proprietor body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.

- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. An inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss the support that they receive from leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils about their experiences of school life. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- An inspector carried out a tour of the premises.
- Inspectors viewed a range of evidence to evaluate the proprietor's compliance with the standards.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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