

Inspection of Hardwick House School

190 Forest Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3HU

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this inspirational school. Staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. Pupils like this consistency and the well-established routines. This helps the pupils to feel safe. Pupils like the extra responsibility of looking after various animals. These include degus, fish, the dogs, Monty and Oscar, and the rabbits, Dave and Bear. Pupils grow produce on the school allotment. For example, they recently made soup from award-winning pumpkins.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in classes and at social times. Pupils like saving up reward credits and spending them in the school shop. Staff cater for pupils' complex autism needs very well. Skilled staff adapt lessons should the need arise. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not occur. There are many adults with whom pupils can talk should any have a worry or problem.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that pupils leave the school with good qualifications. Pupils recently leaving Year 11 have moved on to appropriate further education or training.

Parents and carers have positive views of the school. One typical comment was, 'Our son is developing into a kind, thoughtful, understanding young man. This is due to the dedicated and hardworking staff. We can't thank them enough!'

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

Pupils receive an exceptional quality of education at this school. This is because subject leaders carefully plan out a bespoke curriculum for each pupil. Pupils have previously missed large parts of the curriculum. Despite this, pupils leave with GCSE passes in English, mathematics and science. Other qualifications they achieve are in subjects such as food, craft, design, Spanish and computing. Pupils also gain entry level and functional skills qualifications in a range of subjects. Pupils' attendance increases significantly when compared to their previous school or setting.

The science leaders have planned out the subject very well. In key stage 3, pupils develop their knowledge of materials through experiments. These include making crystals, extracting colours from sweets and testing different acids. Pupils enjoy these experiments and write them up in detail. In key stage 2, pupils develop their understanding of light and shadows. Staff are expert in giving clear instructions and explanations. Their subject knowledge is very strong.

English lessons are equally well planned. In Year 10, pupils made links with their GCSE book, 'An Inspector Calls', by watching a film about suffragettes. The film was also topical as the general election was taking place. Pupils enjoy reading and do so frequently. There is a good range of books from which pupils may choose. Pupils who find reading a challenge receive good support.

Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They listen well, readily answer teachers' questions and take pride in their work.

Staff use assessment well. Pupils receive frequent tests. These tests ensure that learned material is revisited. Any gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed quickly. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

All pupils have detailed education, health and care plans. Staff ensure that pupils receive very good help and support. Parents receive frequent information about the progress their child is making.

Some staff did not respond positively to questions on Ofsted's staff questionnaire. They said they did not feel valued and respected, and they are not motivated. Other staff told us school leaders support them well. They welcome the extra training and support they receive to help develop professionally.

There is a good range of activities to develop pupils' talents and interests. However, this range of activities is not exceptional. There are visits and visitors to the school which help to enhance pupils' learning. But, these opportunities could be increased. For example, pupils could have a clearer understanding of different faiths and cultures.

The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are met. School leaders regularly check that the standards are met. The premises are maintained to a good standard. All the necessary fire-safety requirements are in place. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils receive good, independent careers advice and guidance. School policies are up to date and make reference to the latest statutory guidance.

The new proprietor and directors of the trust are well trained, knowledgeable and experienced. They receive regular and detailed information from the headteacher. They are able to hold senior leaders fully to account for their actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leads and all staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. They are aware of the latest statutory guidance. Staff are aware of potential 'county lines' drug trafficking, radicalisation and extremism. Local authority safeguarding updates are shared with staff. Outside agency support is sought should a pupil or family need extra help. Leaders know to contact the local authority should a concern arise about a member of staff. All necessary checks are undertaken on adults before they can work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils' personal development is not exceptional. There is not a wide range of opportunities for all pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils might benefit from increased opportunities to visit places of interest and have more visitors to the school. Not all pupils have a good enough understanding of faiths and cultures that are different to their own. Leaders should ensure that all pupils have chances to experience more activities, visits and visitors.
- Some staff do not feel valued and respected. They are not as motivated in their roles as they could be. Leaders should ensure that all staff members are supported effectively and have their well-being considered.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	141127
DfE registration number	855/6033
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10124536
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Sarah Unwin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,500 to £67,000
Telephone number	01509 218 203
Website	hardwickhouseschool.com
Email address	info@hardwickhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–25 January 2018

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place 23–25 January 2018.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. A variety of local authorities place pupils at the school.
- Cavendish Education became the proprietor of the school in July 2019.
- There are currently no key stage 5 pupils on the school's roll.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

We 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 Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out this inspection earlier in the cycle than previously planned. The inspection was conducted without notice.
- Inspectors held various meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with two directors and held a telephone conversation with the proprietor.
- Inspectors undertook an in-depth analysis into English, science, mathematics, cooking and life skills. Inspectors met with the lead teacher for each subject, visited lessons, examined pupils' workbooks and, where possible, met with pupils.
- The lead inspector met with senior leaders to discuss safeguarding. Inspectors also met with staff to discuss their safeguarding training and their understanding of the school's procedures to keep pupils safe. The lead inspector checked the school's single central register.
- The lead inspector toured the school to check the school's compliance against Part 5 of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Innes-Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector

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