

# Inspection of Heather Field School

New Burton House, Burton Bank Lane, Stafford ST17 9JW

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Inspection dates: 12 to 14 March 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. Along with all staff, they share the same belief that their pupils will be the best that they can be. Leaders know that education for some pupils has been difficult in the past and that many have not attended school for some considerable time before joining Heather Field. So, staff do all they can to ensure that pupils experience success.

Attendance is high because pupils enjoy school. They arrive on time, ready to learn. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are safe and well looked after by staff who know them.

Pupils do well because teachers think about what to teach and when to teach it. This means that pupils can make connections in their learning. They learn and remember more because there are many opportunities to recap on previously taught content. Teachers and support staff know pupils well. They make sure that learning is accessible to all.

Alongside the taught curriculum, pupils experience a rich set of opportunities that develop their social skills, cultural appreciation and understanding of their local communities and the wider world. They are fully supported in making informed career choices. This means that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

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

Leaders and all staff are determined that pupils will leave the school equipped with the skills they need to lead fulfilled lives in modern Britain. They have carefully thought about the curriculum, ensuring that it matches the breadth and the demands of the national curriculum. They have designed it to allow for repetition and revisiting of key concepts. This ensures that pupils grasp and remember important knowledge.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They take into account what pupils need to learn and when and how they need to learn it. Curriculum content is sequenced well, building new learning onto existing knowledge. In English, pupils develop a range of grammatical skills and writing techniques over time. They write confidently for a range of purposes with increasing sophistication. In mathematics, pupils develop reasoning skills and secure the knowledge they need to solve increasingly challenging problems.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and all adults understand pupils' needs well. Staff make sure that learning is accessible. This means that pupils are well supported in their learning.

Reading is given the highest of priorities. Pupils who need to learn phonics are well taught by appropriately skilled and trained staff. Opportunities to read are frequent. Pupils not only engage well in daily sessions but also enjoy listening to stories and

actively participate in independent and group reading. The reading club is well attended. Pupils, therefore, read with confidence and fluency.

Expectations around behaviour are high. The behaviour policy is clear and understood by staff. It is applied consistently throughout the school. Pupils say that there is no bullying and that unkind behaviour is rare. They are confident that staff will resolve any problems. Pupils understand and appreciate the rewards system. They demonstrate positive behaviour and know what is expected of them. This means that the environment is calm and orderly because pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exemplary.

Careful consideration is given to pupils' social and emotional starting points. Many pupils arrive with limited social experiences. The school ensures that all pupils are provided with rich opportunities to develop their character. They enjoy trips to the seaside and the zoo. Learning is supplemented with educational visits so that pupils can deepen their understanding of different religions and cultures.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is carefully planned around the needs of the pupils. They learn how to keep safe and healthy and know about safe and appropriate relationships. Pupils learn about career opportunities and attend local colleges. This means they are well prepared for their future choices.

The proprietor and those responsible for governance have a sharp and comprehensive oversight of the school. They make frequent checks on all aspects of the school's work. The accessibility plan demonstrates that leaders meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.

Staff say that they are well looked after by leaders, who take their workload and well-being into account. They speak highly of the training opportunities available to them. Teachers and all staff feel proud and privileged to work at the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146981
<b>DfE registration number</b>	860/6050
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10299252
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	95
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Deaville
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Leech
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£52,861.70 to £90,936.86
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 550940
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.heatherfieldschool.co.uk">www.heatherfieldschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@heatherfieldschool.co.uk">office@heatherfieldschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 June 2021

## Information about this school

- Heather Field School is an independent school offering places to pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- There have been changes to the leadership team since the last inspection with the appointment of a new head of school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

## 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 judgment 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 met with the head of school and deputy head of school, the executive headteacher and the directors of education. A meeting was also held with the proprietor and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- 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 reviewed a number of documents and policies relating to attendance, admissions, behaviour, complaints, health and safety and first aid. A number of risk assessments were also sampled. The lead inspector toured the premises to check for compliance with the independent school standards.

## **Inspection team**

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector      Ofsted Inspector

Gwen Onyon      Ofsted Inspector

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