

Inspection of Heather Field School

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

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy at this school. They enjoy learning and are motivated to achieve as well as they can. Highly skilled staff provide the right support for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Everyone has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils thrive at this school because their individual needs are exceptionally well met.

Pupils feel very safe. They know that staff will help them with any worries or problems. Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive. Pupils said there was no bullying, but if there was, staff would deal with it.

Most pupils behave very well. Pupils said that at this school 'they want to behave'. Staff provide effective support for pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour so that they can get back to learning as soon as possible.

Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and future lives. For example, they complete work experience, participate in activities to support the local community and learn how to manage their own money. They also enjoy the wide range of experiences that are well matched to their interests. These include gardening, hobby crafting and horse-riding.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that is exceptionally well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils who join the school have often experienced disruption to their education and may have fallen behind academically. Leaders prioritise reading, writing and mathematics but ensure that pupils spend plenty of time learning in a broad range of subjects. Teachers check how well pupils are learning the planned curriculum. They use this information to review the targets on pupils' individual education plans and their education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Subject plans are carefully sequenced so that pupils build and deepen their knowledge. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit learning and complete a wide range of tasks to apply what they know. This strengthens pupils' understanding of what they are learning about. Leaders have designed the curriculum so that pupils can transfer knowledge between different topics to help make sense of new learning. For example, pupils used and applied their knowledge of how medieval kings ruled England to their learning about world leaders' actions during the Second World War.

In science, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan learning so that pupils can apply knowledge to plan and carry out investigations. Pupils make strong progress in mathematics because the curriculum is tailored to their individual needs. Pupils have frequent opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. This includes the annual enterprise competition where each class receives a 'start-up loan' and pupils work together to turn this into a profit.

Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read benefit from daily phonics sessions. Staff are experts in teaching reading and help pupils become more fluent readers who understand what they have read. Pupils enjoy reading and can talk about favourite books and authors.

Many pupils are enjoying physical education (PE) for the first time. Staff support pupils to manage their behaviour so that they can fully participate in team games. The curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils develop and practise specific sports and motor skills. The wide range of sports include rugby, swimming, athletics and archery.

Leaders' plans for pupils' personal development are linked to the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The content is well organised so that pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to be successful citizens in the future. They are respectful of differences and would welcome anyone regardless of religion, ethnicity or disability. The independent living skills programme prepares pupils well for their future lives. They know how to plan a healthy diet, keep mentally and physically well, access services and manage a budget. Pupils receive excellent independent careers guidance. They visit local colleges and receive support to apply for courses and attend interviews.

Pupils in key stage 4 experience a curriculum that is bespoke to their individual needs. All pupils continue to study English, mathematics, PSHE, religious education (RE) and PE. They complete a vocational studies BTEC course and choose another subject which is linked to what they aim to study at college.

Pupils have excellent attitudes towards school and learning. They respond well to teachers' high expectations. Pupils are resilient and work hard to produce the best work they are capable of. Overall attendance is high.

The proprietor body is knowledgeable and experienced. The independent school standards are met in full. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils who come to this school know that they 'fit', grow in confidence and achieve as well as they can. The school building is maintained well. It is beautifully decorated and well resourced. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff enjoy working at the school and feel valued. They said leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being. Parents are full of praise for the school. They are very pleased with the social, emotional and academic progress their children have made since joining the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive training in keeping pupils safe. Staff know how to report concerns about a pupil's welfare and do so promptly. Records show that leaders take effective action to ensure that pupils get the help and support they need.

The safeguarding policy includes the most recent statutory guidance and is available to parents on the school website. Leaders make all the necessary checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are online or out in the community. Older pupils have an excellent understanding of what makes a safe and healthy relationship.

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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	146981
DfE registration number	860/6050
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10193305
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Heather Field School Limited
Chair	Mrs Sarah Deaville
Headteacher	Alison Prosser
Annual fees (day pupils)	£43,500 to £79,490 depending on level of need
Telephone number	01785 550940
Website	www.heatherfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	aprosser@heatherfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2019

Information about this school

- Heather Field School opened in August 2019. This is the first standard inspection. Ofsted conducted a material change inspection in March 2019 following which the school were given permission to increase the number of pupils from 50 to 100.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, pupils with cognitive learning difficulties and some pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. There are some pupils who have complex needs.
- All pupils at the school are in placements funded by the relevant local authority and have EHC plans.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the chair and one other member of the proprietor body. They also met with four members of the 'critical friends' group. This body provides ongoing support and challenge to each of the schools in the group. Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and the business manager to evaluate all aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, PSHE and PE. They spoke to subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They visited lessons and looked at subject planning and at examples of pupils' work. They also considered science, RE and history as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of information provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluations, the school improvement plan and their behaviour, safeguarding and attendance records. They spoke to pupils, staff and the designated safeguarding leads about procedures to keep pupils safe.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, for inspectors to consider. They took note of the four responses to the parental free-text facility and the 43 responses from staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Jo Evans, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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