

# Inspection of The Haven School

Cabins 24, 25 and 26, Dunston Business Village, Dunston, Staffordshire ST18 9AB

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Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

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

The school's name, 'The Haven', sums up exactly what it is for pupils: a safe place where pupils can be themselves without fear of judgement. Pupils think highly of their school and are proud to attend. Many have had negative experiences in other settings and praise how understanding the staff are at this school.

The level of care here is exceptional. Adults throughout the school get to know pupils very well. Strengths in relationships are pivotal in promoting positive pupils' behaviour; this proves highly successful. Staff help pupils improve their behaviour through a consistent and caring approach. Pupils are thoughtful and supportive towards one another. They and their parents and carers agree that attending this school transforms pupils' lives and prospects. Relationships are extremely strong between school, pupils and their home settings.

Those responsible for leadership and governance have a shared ambition for what can be achieved by the pupils. Leaders have high expectations, recognising that the school's initial priority is getting pupils ready to learn. This is achieved by offering high-quality pastoral support. Pupils do well here, gaining the qualifications they need for their next steps in education, training or employment.

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

When pupils first join the school, teachers and other staff quickly get to know pupils' strengths and the areas that they need to work on. Pupils appreciate how well adults, including their key workers, understand them and how they make them feel valued. Without these highly positive relationships, pupils would not achieve as well as they do.

The proprietor has ensured that staff are experts in making learning accessible and meaningful to pupils who were previously disengaged from learning. Teachers' strong subject knowledge is used in creative ways to engage and help pupils make strong progress in their learning. Leaders have high but realistic aspirations for pupils. These are reflected in a bespoke curriculum for pupils who have become disconnected from learning in previous settings.

The educational pathways that pupils follow are flexible and tailored to pupils' needs. Pupils learn in small groups and teachers provide personalised guidance and support to meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities. In turn, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes in lessons. Teachers provide meaningful activities and pupils try hard to complete them. However, teachers do not always make enough use of pupils' prior knowledge to inform what they need to learn next. This means that sometimes pupils are asked to complete work that does not help them progress as quickly as they could.

In some subjects, including English and mathematics, pupils do not spend enough time practising or applying what they have learned. For instance, pupils do not write

at length very often to give them enough opportunities to apply and consolidate their written skills. Although their work is mostly accurate, some pupils do not reach the depth of understanding or the quality of work of which they are capable. The school has introduced the expectation that language and literacy are promoted through all subjects; this is evident in lessons. Typically, pupils are articulate and develop and use accurate subject-specific vocabulary. This enables them to express clearly their thinking and reasoning across the curriculum.

Teachers carefully choose high-quality literature to study in English lessons. These texts provide wider opportunities for pupils to discuss social and personal issues. Pupils become confident to share their opinions and most are competent readers. When this is not the case, staff put in additional support to help them improve their reading.

The school has a sensible, measured approach to introducing new experiences and qualifications. Every decision is made with the best interest of pupils in mind. If there is something that will improve outcomes for pupils, the school quickly puts it in place, supported at all stages by advice from a clinical psychologist. Nothing at this school is left to chance.

While attendance remains low for a small group of pupils, this is improving. The school has a forensic approach to understanding exactly what pupils' barriers to good attendance are. The school's work with pupils and their families is proving successful in making pupils come to school more regularly.

The school extends its curriculum beyond the academic to promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils raise money for charity and prepare gifts for children in other countries. They take part in enriching, therapeutic activities such as bushcraft, yoga and caring for horses. Pupils enjoy learning to cook and taking part in regular sporting activities. They learn about equality through their personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are respectful of differences and discuss these thoughtfully and with empathy.

Pupils often arrive at this school not knowing what they want to do in later life. They receive impartial, invaluable careers advice and guidance. This has included visiting a careers show. Staff are relentless in supporting pupils and students to raise their aspirations. Pupils enjoy work experience placements in settings such as hospitality or agriculture. When they leave school, they nearly all go on to further education, training or employment. If this is not the case, the school actively maintains contact with them and their families to provide ongoing support and guidance.

The post-16 offer is well suited to the needs of students and enables them to gain the qualifications they need to fulfil their ambitions. They continue to take advantage of the school's nurturing ethos and key-worker support. When students leave The Haven School, they are well prepared for their next steps.

The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards have been consistently and securely met. Pupils and students benefit from well-resourced,

inviting accommodation that is a safe, calm place in which to learn. Leaders maintain strong working relationships with other bodies, including the local authority. They share good practice with, and provide advice to, other settings. The Haven School is very much part of the community.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The school does not ensure that pupils are given enough chances to apply their literacy or numeracy skills and knowledge. Therefore, some pupils do not reach the depth of understanding or quality of work they are capable of. The school should ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to apply new knowledge so that they produce high-quality work that demonstrates an increased depth of learning.
- Sometimes teachers do not make the best use of what they know about pupils' previous learning experiences. This means they do not always match the curriculum closely enough to pupils' needs to enable them to make the best possible progress. The school should ensure that assessment information is used effectively so that teachers consistently provide pupils with work that closely matches their needs and enables them to make even better progress.

## **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>	142516
<b>DfE registration number</b>	860/6042
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10284433
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	45
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	9
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Jane Spensley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Zoie Stevenson
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£35,988 to £71,900
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 214172
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thehavenschool.com">www.thehavenschool.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@thehavenschool.com">office@thehavenschool.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 to 12 March 2020

## Information about this school

- The Haven School opened in 2016.
- The school is an independent special school for pupils who have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is split over two sites that are a few miles apart. The address of the second site is: Wolverhampton Road, Stafford ST17 9DJ.
- Pupils are referred to the school by a commissioning local authority.
- Many of the pupils have experienced significant gaps in formal education.
- In September 2021, the school received a material change inspection to expand from 25 to 45 full-time places for pupils of compulsory school age.
- The school had a material change inspection in September 2021. Since the last standard inspection, the school has moved to new purpose-built premises.
- The school does not make use of any 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 judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second standard inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. 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 school leaders, the proprietor, members of the school's management board (governors) and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and art. 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 discussed the curriculum in 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.

- An inspector visited both school sites to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including governors' minutes, school improvement plans and the school's website.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and throughout the day. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.

### **Inspection team**

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Mann

Ofsted Inspector

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