

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ivy House School

Moorway Lane, Littleover, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 2FS

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

Ivy House School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Ian Armstrong. This school is part of Shaw Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jo Morgan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this nurturing school. Leaders and staff know the pupils exceptionally well. Consequently, pupils are set ambitious learning goals. Pupils achieve well. The relationships between pupils and adults are excellent. Staff consistently ask pupils to make choices. Staff skilfully use a range of communication methods to enable the pupils to express their views. Pupils' views are celebrated and valued.

All parents and carers who answered the Ofsted Parent View survey and who spoke with inspectors said that their child was happy at school. One parent said, 'The school feels like a family.' Parents are very positive about the communication between school and home. Staff write about pupils' learning in the home-school books. In addition, staff upload photographs and commentary of pupils' learning to an app. This enables parents to know what their child has learned. This is particularly appreciated by parents whose children are non-verbal.

Leaders and staff work closely with a range of professionals from health, social care and the local authority. This enables the pupils to receive the right support to meet their medical and well-being needs. Pupils behave well. Tailored support is provided to pupils who require further help to enable them to regulate their behaviours.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum. Developing pupils' communication skills is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff use a range of communication techniques to help pupils express their views. These include facial expressions, eye gaze, vocalisations, yes/no bands, symbols and Makaton. Staff are very patient with pupils. They know that,

for some pupils, it takes a lot of concentration and energy for them to respond to questions. Staff regularly check how well pupils are communicating. They change the techniques used if pupils respond using a different method.

The reading curriculum has been very well planned. Staff teach the prerequisite skills for reading. This includes focusing on pupils' ability to identify and respond to sounds and developing their working memory. Once pupils have developed these skills, staff introduce letters and sounds. Some pupils say the correct sounds to the letters. Some pupils, who are non-verbal, identify a sound from a range of sounds. Pupils learn to write the letters accurately. Staff provide pupils with appropriate reading books. Leaders promote a love of reading. Older pupils enjoy 'Watership Down' and Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Parents have been invited into school to find out how they can share reading books with their child at home.

Leaders have thought very carefully about how they build pupils' cognition skills to help them learn. Learning is broken down into small steps, and each pupil has a cognition learning goal. For example, in mathematics, pupils practise counting one to five in a variety of contexts. This can include jumping while counting to five. Older pupils apply their learning in real-life situations, such as using money at a café.

Pupils' personal development is prioritised. Staff ensure that pupils' views are sought. In the early years, children are asked who they want to sing to as part of the 'Good morning' song. Older pupils are asked, 'Is it ok for someone to hold your arm?' Staff stress to each pupil that people should ask permission before holding someone's arm. Enrichment activities complement the curriculum well. In the early years, pupils enjoy a visit to the park. Older pupils enjoy visits into Derby to go to the theatre and cinema. Pupils took part in a lantern parade through Derby city centre with pupils from mainstream schools. Regular visits to the supermarket, cafes and allotments in the local area help pupils to know more about the community. Different religions are discussed to help pupils understand diversity.

As part of preparing for adulthood, staff work very closely with pupils and families to find the right places for pupils after Ivy House. Staff accompany pupils and families on visits to potential new places. Where this may not be possible, staff video places so pupils can make an informed decision about their next step.

Pupils' physical development is promoted well. In hydrotherapy, staff skilfully help pupils improve their physical ability. In the early years, pupils are challenged to walk using their walkers and to stand for increasing lengths of time.

The school invites musicians into the school. Pupils use sound boards to clap and dance to the rhythm. These sessions can be noisy. However, this prepares pupils well for visits in the community, where noise levels can be higher than in a classroom.

Leaders work closely with health professionals to help pupils improve their behaviour. Staff understand that pupils' behaviour is a form of communication. Staff seek to understand the root of any poor behaviour and use a range of strategies to support

pupils. Leaders also work very closely with families and professionals to support good attendance. Attendance has improved.

Leaders provide opportunities for staff to express their views about well-being and workload. Staff can express their views anonymously via a QR code. Staff say that leaders respond to any concerns raised.

Leaders have benefitted from high-quality special educational needs and/or disabilities expertise from trust executives. Together, they have developed an ambitious curriculum, which is being taught very well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ivy House School, to be outstanding in March 2016.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147491
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10281529
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Meehan
CEO of the Trust	Jo Morgan
Headteacher	Ian Armstrong
Website	www.ivyhouse.derby.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ivy House School is part of Shaw Education Trust.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school caters for pupils with multi-sensory impairment, physical disabilities, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the designated senior leader for safeguarding and two associate assistant headteachers. Inspectors also met with the CEO, the trust's chief specialist and innovation officer and the trust's national director for special educational needs.
- Inspectors met with two members of the academy council, held a telephone call with the chair of the academy council and held a video call with a trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and early reading, cognition and mathematics and preparation for adulthood, with a focus on creativity. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at evidence of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. Inspectors heard pupils read and spoke to the school council, accompanied by adults from the school. Inspectors spoke with groups of teachers and support staff. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of school.
- 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.

Inspection team

Martin Finch, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Karen Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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