

Inspection of Park House School

277 Cheddon Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7AX

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Park House School is transformational for the pupils who attend it. This is a view shared by parents and carers and pupils. Pupils thrive because of the level of care they receive. There are strong relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe enough to reflect on the negative experiences of education and society that they have had prior to attending this school. They value the difference that the approach used by staff makes to them. Pupils have confidence and trust in the staff. They have aspirations for the future that they did not have before.

Staff's expectations of pupils are high. They are skilled in making these clear. Pupils strive to achieve them because staff encourage and build their resilience and sense of worth. The main school site is a hub of learning and interaction. Staff develop these skills by carefully increasing the tolerance, trust and confidence of pupils in different learning spaces. Leaders consider the assessment of risk and knowledge of pupils' needs in order to promote this successfully. Staff know the pupils well. They ensure that, while challenging pupils socially and emotionally, they are responsive to their needs. The impact of this is clear in the decreasing numbers of behavioural incidents and pupils' increasing attendance.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils at Park House School. They have carefully considered their approach to ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage. Leaders make sure that all staff have the level of expertise and knowledge they need to meet the complex social and emotional needs of pupils. However, the curriculum is not yet as established and coherent as the other aspects of the school offer. Leaders have robust checking and evaluation systems in place. They use these to gather a range of information about the impact of the curriculum. However, they do not always make full use of this information to impact on curriculum improvements. Leaders are continuing to strengthen this to ensure that pupils learn as well as they can.

The school's 'another chance education' package supports teaching staff to work closely with pupils. This ensures that pupils are ready to learn. Staff then adapt learning effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils. Leaders understand the importance of core skills, including reading, in pupils' education. They prioritise reading and key knowledge in mathematics. Pupils work towards ambitious end-points. However, teachers do not have a secure enough understanding of how to sequence learning in some subjects to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Leaders have designed an effective curriculum to support the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Staff deliver this skilfully through the school's relational approach. The PSHE curriculum supports the successful personal development of pupils. It rightly includes the promotion of equality and diversity, for example by discussing same-sex relationships. The strength of relationships that staff have with pupils enables them to cover complex topics successfully. The

curriculum includes the required elements of relationships and sex education. Teachers promote moral dilemmas well, which pupils grapple with appropriately. All pupils learn about careers. Older pupils receive relevant and appropriate careers advice. As a result, they develop aspirations and future plans in readiness for adulthood. Staff make sure that pupils understand what they need in order to achieve these.

Leaders make effective use of alternative provision. It is used to enhance the wider development of pupils. Staff refer to these providers as external partners. They are a consistent and successful part of the education of each pupil. Leaders comprehensively oversee the offer pupils receive. This makes sure that it is appropriate and maintains the same ambition that school staff have for pupils.

Pupils show highly positive behaviours and attitudes in school and when learning off site. They appreciate the social interactions they have with staff and other pupils throughout the school day. Staff manage this well and consider all risks and pupils' needs. Leaders are responsive to patterns and trends in behaviour. They use this information to manage any risks in the light of pupils' individual needs.

Both the company founder and chair embody the relational and nurturing way in which the school educates its pupils. They are well informed with accurate information about the school and the success of the pupils. They ensure that the culture, underpinned by the vision 'to turn children's lives around', is shared by all. This is something that staff, families and pupils can attest to. Staff feel valued and that leaders are fully invested in their development. Staff say that they are well supported with their workload and well-being. In turn, this leads to staff being committed to getting the best for the pupils.

There is a robust and rigorous cycle of monitoring to quality assure the provision. This includes monitoring the independent school standards (the standards) to check for compliance. Leaders ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school is a safe place where pupils' health, safety and well-being are promoted.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that keeping pupils safe is the highest priority. All staff receive the training they need to be highly vigilant. They report any potential concerns that may indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff appreciate that the pupils who attend this school are particularly vulnerable. Staff are knowledgeable about these possibilities.

The systems in place to investigate and act on any concern raised are thorough. Leaders scrutinise these in detail to ensure that the action taken is swift and appropriate. Leaders make suitable referrals where necessary. They share information, collaborate well and seek advice from safeguarding partners.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not make full use of the curriculum information that is available to them. They do not have a fully informed, strategic overview of the quality of education in the same way as they do for areas such as behaviour and safeguarding. As a result, they do not impact as effectively as they could on improvements to the curriculum. Pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that they consider the checking and evaluation of the curriculum at a more strategic level to strengthen the bespoke learning for each individual pupil.
- Teachers do not have a secure enough knowledge of how to sequence learning successfully to make the strongest impact. Consequently, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Teachers are skilled in adapting learning to meet the needs of pupils. They identify gaps well, but in the light of the bespoke design for each pupil, leaders need to ensure that teachers fully understand how a well-designed sequence of learning will make sure that pupils learn and remember more over time.

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

Unique reference number	145308
DfE registration number	933/6009
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10254685
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Five Rivers Child Care
Chair	David Howard
Headteacher	Teresa Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£74,880 to £107,250
Telephone number	01823 282668
Website	www.five-rivers.org/education/schools/park-house/
Email address	teresa.brown@five-rivers.org
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 September 2018

Information about this school

- The school's most recent standard inspection took place in September 2018. In February 2021, there was a material change to the provision following an inspection, in which the school was permitted to increase pupil numbers from 14 to 20.
- Park House School is a specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans. Their placements are funded by several different local authorities.
- The school operates on one main site: 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton TA2 7AX. The school has an additional base with an alternative provider site: Conquest Centre, Conquest Farm, Norton Fitzwarren TA2 6PN. In addition, the school makes use of learning bases in pupils' local communities. This is also part of the social enterprise focus of the company that runs the school, Five Rivers Child Care Ltd.
- The school uses six unregistered alternative providers. The school refers to these as external partners.
- The school is not included on the list of approved independent special schools, in accordance with section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the education business manager, the head of education and the education adviser to the board. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor and company founder. In addition, the lead inspector discussed the school with representatives from two local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (with a focus on reading), mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with the curriculum leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector visited a second school site based at an alternative provider.

- Inspectors checked the safety and suitability of the premises at both sites. They considered risk assessments and the policies in place to promote the well-being of pupils.
- An inspector visited two alternative providers and spoke with two more on the telephone.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), the education business manager, other senior leaders and a wide range of teaching and support staff. The lead inspector considered the single central record and the school's wider processes for safer recruitment. Inspectors held discussions with pupils to gather their views of the culture of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. In addition, inspectors spoke with some parents on the telephone and considered responses to the school's own survey for parents.

Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Barnes

Ofsted Inspector

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