

Inspection of Ivetsey Bank Hospital School

Ivetsey Bank, Wheaton Aston, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 9QT

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students are safe, secure and well cared for in this school. Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' and students' behaviour which are gently but persistently applied. This helps pupils and students to settle in quickly. As a result, they are able to continue their learning as soon as they are well enough.

Pupils and students are calm, polite and considerate of each other. Their behaviour is good. Over time, they are helped to increase their ability to concentrate and to work independently. They say that bullying is rare and that leaders deal with it quickly when it does happen.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and students. Many have missed education due to ill health. Leaders here make sure they know the needs of each individual so that the right support is in place to help them achieve as much as they can. As a result, many pupils and students successfully complete their examination studies. This means that when they are well enough to leave hospital, they can resume their education and achieve their aspirations.

Pupils and students have access to a range of activities to support their personal development through the enrichment programme. They regularly take part in enterprise activities that develop independence, leadership, teamwork, resilience and citizenship.

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

The interim headteacher and the highly dedicated teaching staff work phenomenally hard. Their aim is to ensure that pupils and students who attend this school have the best experience possible. The impetus to ensure that pupils and students receive a high-quality education is driven by leaders' belief that education is a significant part of recovery. However, the interim headteacher is not supported well enough by the proprietor and those with responsibility for governance. This is because they have not recognised the full impact of staff vacancies on her workload and that of other teaching staff. Consequently, there has not been enough consideration of how the current quality of education can be sustained.

Governors have placed great emphasis on ensuring that the school complies with the independent school standards and other statutory duties. However, they have not demonstrated their ability to provide an appropriate level of challenge to school leaders in relation to the quality of education. As a result, long-term plans for further development of the school are not sharply focused on the most important areas for improvement.

School leaders, including those responsible for subject development, have made sure that all pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.

Whenever possible, the interim headteacher liaises closely with pupils' schools and colleges to understand their previous achievements as well as their current needs.

Assessment strategies are used very carefully to identify where there may be needs in addition to those that brought pupils to the school. Individual education plans are then constructed for each pupil or student. This means that the curriculum is highly individualised and supports pupils and students well to continue their studies successfully. Teachers take time and effort to ensure that they know as much as possible about each pupil or student to inform their choices of learning activities. However, not all are expert in using a wide range of assessment information to adapt the curriculum even further for those who have a broad range of additional needs. Occasionally, this means that a small number of pupils or students do not learn as much as they could.

Pupils and students are confident and fluent readers. The interim headteacher is keen to develop a love of reading across the school. Many pupils find long periods of concentration difficult so do not choose to read. However, teachers are persistent in offering additional opportunities to develop their enthusiasm for reading. This includes dedicated time to read or research tasks into their areas of interest and enterprise activities.

Pupils' and students' behaviour is good. When in the classroom, pupils and students try hard. They respond very positively to praise and encouragement. Teachers place great emphasis on motivating pupils and students to attend school when they are well enough to do so. However, this message is not always promoted by everyone involved in their care.

The interim headteacher has established an enrichment programme that supports pupils and students to broaden their experiences and understanding of the wider world. Pupils and students demonstrate a real understanding of equality, respect and tolerance through their behaviour to each other. They are well supported to build their self-esteem through opportunities to select, plan, and produce enterprise and community activities. Relationship and sex education is carefully planned and delivered to ensure that pupils and students have an age-appropriate understanding of safe, equal and caring relationships.

The interim headteacher has established a comprehensive careers curriculum that is usefully linked with enrichment activities and woven through subject teaching. Pupils' and students' interests and aspirations are central to the programme. Teachers make sure that they have many opportunities to find out about the breadth of options available. Pupils and students are prepared well for their next steps outside the hospital environment.

Teachers are very appreciative of the support they receive from the interim headteacher. They say that when they struggle with their workload, she always does her utmost to help them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is high priority in this school. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff are well trained. They refer and record all safeguarding concerns, no matter how small, and know that leaders will follow them up. Leaders work effectively with the hospital social worker to ensure that pupils and their families get early help when they need it.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both physically and when working online.

Appropriate checks are completed for all staff before they start working at the school. Safe recruitment is embedded at school and company level.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor and those responsible for governance do not engage well enough with staff to identify and take action to reduce very heavy workloads. As a result, the interim headteacher particularly is undertaking too many roles to sustain over time. Governors should ensure that workload for all staff is appropriate and manageable.
- The proprietor and governors do not provide an appropriate level of challenge for school leaders, particularly in relation to the quality of education. As a result, improvement planning is not as efficient or as effective as it should be. Governors should ensure that they develop the required expertise to challenge rigorously.
- Sometimes, pupils' and students' attendance is not as good as it could be. Teachers work tirelessly to encourage pupils into class, but not all other staff always promote the importance of education in pupils' overall recovery. Leaders should make sure that there is a clearly communicated message to this effect to all staff involved with pupils and students.
- Not all teachers make effective use of assessment information to shape the curriculum for those pupils and students with a number of additional needs. This means that occasionally, a few pupils and students do not learn and remember as much as they could. Leaders should make sure that all teachers have the opportunity to further develop their pedagogical skills with respect to assessment.

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	142013
DfE registration number	860/6041
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10254673
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Active Young People
Chair	Wiz Magunda
Headteacher (acting)	Laura Johnson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,000
Telephone number	01785 840000
Website	www.activecaregroup.co.uk/ivetsy-bank-hospital-school
Email address	ivetseybankschool@activecaregroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 March 2019

Information about this school

- Ivetsey Bank Hospital School is an independent special school within the Active Care Group. The school provides education for pupils who are admitted to the hospital. Many have missed significant amounts of their education.
- The school caters for post-16 students. However, the numbers are too few to provide a separate judgement.
- The school does not use 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.

- 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 interim headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator and the safeguarding lead. The lead inspector also spoke with those responsible for governance, including the proprietor and one other governor.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in mathematics, English, and personal, social and health education, which includes the enrichment curriculum and careers education. Each deep dive included discussions with curriculum leaders, who are also the subject teachers, and visits to lessons. A scrutiny of pupils' work in all subjects was carried out. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning and more generally about their experiences in school.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss the support they receive to develop their skills and knowledge and to manage their workload.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to curriculum and assessment. Inspectors also looked at school policies, minutes of governance meetings, development planning and self-assessment.
- The lead inspector scrutinised safeguarding documents, reviewed the school's processes for reporting concerns, checked recruitment procedures and checked complaints records.
- Inspectors checked all the independent school standards, including those relating to the school premises.

- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Mel Ford, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Pollitt

His Majesty's Inspector

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