

Inspection of The Quest School

The Hop Farm, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6PY

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 September 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils truly thrive at this school. They feel very happy and safe. This is because staff make every effort to know each pupil and their needs individually. The school is highly ambitious for all pupils to achieve their very best. Each pupil benefits from a personalised learning programme which meets their specific needs. As a result, pupils make great progress from their starting points. They learn the knowledge and skills that they need to lead fulfilled adult lives.

Strong relationships and highly consistent practices permeate the school. Enabling pupils to communicate effectively and to self-regulate their emotions sits at the school's core. Pupils benefit greatly from a calm environment and well-established routines. Staff provide a warm and welcoming start to the day. They use appropriate communication aids to help pupils to understand what their day has in store. This gives pupils a strong sense of security which enables them to settle well to learning.

All pupils, should they wish, have the chance to influence school improvements through serving on the school council. Through this, pupils learn how to collaborate, to become confident in group discussions and how to consider others' views. In addition, pupils enjoy developing their musical and sporting talents through performing in shows and sports events.

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

Leaders have a strong, palpable vision for all pupils to learn the knowledge and skills that they need to function effectively as adults who make a positive contribution to society. The school makes sure that pupils' additional needs and barriers to learning are identified exceptionally well. This includes expert, granular analysis of pupils' behaviour, therapeutic and academic needs. The school tenaciously seeks to optimise how well pupils learn. Expert teams of staff regularly review how well pupils are learning. They make immediate changes to pupils' learning programmes when necessary. This includes when pupils are making rapid progress towards their targets as well as when they are falling behind. As a result, pupils consistently receive the help that they need to succeed.

The school's curriculum identifies the important knowledge and skills that pupils must learn. Delivery of this carefully designed curriculum is specifically adapted for each pupil. It is bespoke, focused and purposeful. Staff benefit from highly effective, targeted training. They use a range of highly effective strategies which enable pupils to learn successfully. Pupils engage well in lessons. They learn a broad range of knowledge and skills very well.

Preparing pupils to thrive in adulthood is a crucial part of learning at this school. Pupils learn important mathematical knowledge such as how to use money, weights and measures as well as essential calculation skills. They also learn how to cook and how to keep themselves safe when out in the community. This includes knowledge

about how to navigate the world around them through learning the meaning of important signs and symbols that they will see when out and about.

Teaching pupils to read, write and communicate is also a clear priority. Pupils learn important phonic knowledge using a well sequenced programme. Staff read to pupils several times each day. Staff use highly effective strategies to enable pupils to engage with texts. Pupils willingly join in with familiar words and phrases and clearly enjoy sharing books. This helps to develop their vocabulary and understanding of language. Furthermore, adults expertly model spoken language to pupils. This shows pupils how to articulate their ideas clearly either through using their voice or through using a variety of other communication tools.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. Precise analysis of pupils' behaviour informs their bespoke behaviour curriculum. This means that pupils learn the social and emotional resilience that they need to learn well. In addition, consistently applied and clear boundaries ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. The school expects all pupils to attend regularly. It monitors pupils' attendance rigorously and provides appropriate support for families when necessary. As a result, most pupils attend well.

Supporting pupils' personal development is a particular strength. Through the life skills curriculum, pupils learn the knowledge that they need to live independently. For example, pupils learn about careers through taking part in volunteering projects such as at a local animal sanctuary. They also learn how to access health care and how to complete important administrative tasks. Pupils learn to respect and value difference. The school meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act. The school makes sure that pupils receive the information and knowledge that they need to keep themselves healthy and safe. All pupils receive individualised programmes for relationships, sex and health education as many of them have very specific learning needs in this subject. In addition, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when online through daily review of the school's online safety code.

The proprietor and the trustees work closely with leaders to ensure that the school provides a consistently high standard of education. The proprietor regularly checks that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards. This includes keeping the buildings well maintained and meeting all statutory health and safety requirements. The proprietor also seeks to keep staff and pupils safe through high staff to pupil ratios, sensible staff deployment and strong pastoral support for all members of the school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	134605
DfE registration number	886/6108
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10391736
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Quest School Ltd
Chair	Ian Martin
Headteacher	Louise Smyth Nicky Keyes (Co-headteachers)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,600 to £65,300
Telephone number	01732 522700
Website	www.questschool.co.uk
Email address	office@questschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 November to 1 December 2022

Information about this school

- The Quest School is an independent day special school for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. Most pupils also have complex and severe learning needs.
- All pupils have education and health care plans funded by their local authority.
- The school was founded by a group of parents and Applied behaviour Analysis (ABA) professionals in 2003.
- This school operates from one site at The Hop Farm, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6PY. A number of other businesses also operate from this site. However, the school buildings and facilities sit within their own secure premises.
- The teaching staff consists of teachers, tutors and highly qualified supervisors.
- Staff deliver sessions based on the principles of ABA.
- Pupils receive a variety of additional therapies as part of their individual programmes.
- The school does not currently 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteachers, senior leaders and representatives from the proprietor body including the chair of proprietors.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in: English and early reading, mathematics, and life skills. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also visited lessons and considered documentation and pupils' work from 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.

- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View. The views of pupils and staff were gathered through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of management meetings and behaviour incident logs. They also considered evidence of how the proprietor body ensures that the standards are met consistently.

Inspection team

Sue Keeling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ed Mather

His Majesty's Inspector

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