

Inspection of Haven Nook

73-75 Castle Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2QD

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Haven Nook is a very special place. Pupils, along with parents and carers, talk positively about the difference this school has made to their lives. For most pupils, this is their last chance to experience success at school. Typically, pupils have spent long periods of time out of education, and most are very anxious about school. Pupils are well supported when they first join. The school's nurturing, caring and welcoming ethos helps them to settle in quickly. Staff work hard to develop highly positive working relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils feel understood. Pupils develop positive friendships and actively help and encourage each other. Bullying is not a worry for pupils here. Staff tackle any problems and quickly resolve them.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exceptional. Pupils are proud of their school. Some are actively involved in the school council. The improvement in pupils' attendance is significant. The way pupils behave is well understood and very skilfully managed by staff. Pupils are positive about learning and feel safe and happy here. Duke, the therapy dog, has a particularly calming influence on pupils. Lessons and social times are settled and there is a disruption-free environment in which pupils can learn.

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

Leaders have steadily grown the school since its first pupil started less than a year ago. They have made decisions that are in pupils' best interests. Leaders have developed a positive, ambitious culture that supports pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

Staff place great importance on developing trusting relationships. Transitions are very well managed. Staff subtly observe pupils and ask questions to find out about pupils' strengths, talents, interests and gaps in learning. They are careful not to place unnecessary stress on pupils. Staff use a consistent approach to find out about pupils' emotional levels, which helps them to put personalised strategies in place.

Pupils follow various curriculum pathways. These cater well for the different pupils who attend the school. While leaders have given each pathway some careful thought, they now need to define each of them more clearly. They also need to set out the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and when. More precise planning is required in each of the subject areas ahead of an expected increase in pupil numbers in September.

Reading is a priority. Pupils read regularly and staff also read to pupils. A range of books are carefully selected that appeal to pupils' interests. Pupils are all members of the local library and have been taught how to take out and return books. Staff check pupils' reading abilities regularly and provide support to pupils as needed. Leaders are aware that some pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge, and they

have rightly spent time identifying a suitable phonics programme. Leaders now need to implement this programme.

Classrooms are safe spaces that help pupils feel as comfortable as possible. Pupils talk about their learning, answer questions and give views and opinions about what it is they are learning. They receive regular feedback, which helps them to get better in each subject. Staff give this feedback with great care and compassion.

Pupils are supported to reflect on their achievements. One pupil told the lead inspector: 'My mental health has improved because of this school. I used to attend my previous school for a few hours each day and then stay at home. I felt isolated. Now, I attend school full time and I'm happier.' Another pupil said, 'I had a lack of confidence in the past and would rarely speak to anyone. This school has given me the confidence to talk.' This was evident as the pupil went on to show the lead inspector their GCSE photography portfolio while explaining the techniques they had used in each photo. They talked positively about how staff have helped them see the possibilities in the future.

Pupils' personal development is well thought out. Leaders take a bespoke approach to supporting pupils. Pupils learn about themselves and the world around them. They experience trips out of school that are carefully planned to develop life skills, such as using public transport or ordering food and drinks. Some pupils gain a first-aid qualification and learn how to use a defibrillator. During the inspection, pupils excitedly told inspectors about a recent trip to Margate and an art exhibition. These trips help pupils to develop their social and communication skills. Pupils follow a structured careers programme and receive one-to-one careers advice. Pupils achieve suitable qualifications and accreditations. Importantly, they are well prepared for later life and have a more positive outlook.

While leaders know the school's strengths and priorities, there is more for leaders to do to monitor and evaluate their work to help them set specific actions to improve aspects of the school's work going forward.

The proprietor and governors have clear roles and responsibilities and, through suitable challenge and support, hold leaders to account effectively. Leaders ensure that all statutory duties are fulfilled, including compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They place an emphasis on staff well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A clear recruitment process ensures that staff undergo the necessary checks prior to starting their posts. A structured induction programme helps to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of their posts. Regular training means that staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know what to do to pass on their concerns. Helpful systems and processes support this. Safeguarding leaders act promptly when they have concerns about pupils. They work well with partner

agencies. As a result, pupils and their families receive the support they need. Pupils regularly learn how to keep themselves and others safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is very bespoke and successfully meets pupils' individual needs. However, the curriculum pathways and the content and sequencing within each of them are not as precise as they could be. This means that occasionally the knowledge and skills that pupils learn are not as deliberate as they could be. As a result, in a very small number of areas, learning is not sequenced well enough. Leaders should define each curriculum pathway more clearly. They should set out the most important content pupils need to learn and when more precisely.
- While most pupils are supported well with reading, leaders have identified that some pupils have gaps in phonics but a suitable programme has not yet been put in place to address this. As a result, in a very small number of cases, pupils do not receive the most effective support. Leaders should further develop the support and intervention offered to pupils with gaps in phonics.
- Leaders' approach to self-evaluation is not as well developed as it could be. This means that improvement priorities have sometimes been a little reactionary. The school's priorities are not aligned precisely enough with leaders' self-evaluation of the school's work. Leaders should further develop self-evaluation and improvement planning.

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	149146
DfE registration number	886/6174
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10267719
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Ruth Minhall
Headteacher	Steff Dowle (Head of School)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000 to £56,000
Telephone number	01227 469156
Website	www.havennook.co.uk
Email address	info@havennook.co.uk

Information about this school

- Haven Nook is an independent special school catering for up to 18 pupils aged 11 to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health needs or autism. Some have other associated difficulties, such as high anxiety. All pupils have education, health and care plans. School places are funded by the respective local authority.
- Most pupils have spent significant periods of time out of education and have significant gaps in their learning.
- The school is led by a head of school who is line managed by the proprietor.
- The school has a governing body that meets regularly to challenge and support leaders.
- This was the school's first standard inspection since the first pupil started in September 2022.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision. However, some pupils attend a local farm and a local leisure centre on a part-time basis as part of their timetables. Pupils are accompanied by a member of staff to these provisions.

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 held a wide range of meetings with the head of school, other leaders and teaching and support staff at the school. The lead inspector also met with the proprietor and two governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils and staff during lesson visits. Inspectors also met with leaders to discuss the school's curriculum and other aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors met with a small number of parents and carers. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered evidence about the independent school standards during

meetings with leaders and the proprietor. Inspectors also considered other policies and documents and toured the school's buildings and grounds with the headteacher.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. They considered a wide range of documents, policies and records, including the pre-appointment checks for staff. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead and two governors.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Anne Allen

Ofsted Inspector

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