

Haven Nook

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

Inspection date

12 November 2025

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(b)(i)

- Since the last standard inspection in July 2023, the school has experienced significant changes in leadership and staffing. The school is in the process of recruiting permanent staff to fill some leadership roles. During this period, the proprietor has become the acting headteacher for the school.
- In the interim, the proprietor's central team has taken charge of day-to-day responsibilities for managing the arrangements for pupils with SEND. This has ensured that the school continues to provide a broad curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils receive the support they need to achieve ambitious individual targets.
- The school has ensured appropriate systems are in place to ensure EHC plan targets are broken down into smaller steps for pupils to achieve. These are reviewed termly. The ongoing targets set for each pupil are appropriate and reviewed regularly. For example, pupils' behaviour profiles are reviewed systematically. Assessment notes from intervention lessons are reviewed by the leader to ensure consistency. The impact of support for pupils is regularly discussed and provision is reviewed accordingly. Teachers are provided with helpful information to adapt provision for support, the curriculum and teaching.
- The independent school standard (the standard) checked in this part is met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7(a) & (b), 32(1)(c)

- At the last standard inspection in July 2023, safeguarding was judged to be effective and all relevant independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils were found to be met.

- The proprietor has strengthened its oversight of safeguarding. The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and is published on the school's website.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and underpinned by clear protocols. Staff understand how to raise concerns, and all issues are logged systematically on the school's electronic recording system. Those responsible for safeguarding monitor attendance and behaviour closely, review concerns and escalate matters appropriately. Records are detailed and demonstrate a secure understanding of thresholds, with consistent evidence of timely referrals to external agencies.
- Staff report confidence in safeguarding procedures and describe an open safeguarding culture. They spoke positively about recent improvements in oversight, including the review of the closed-circuit television policy.
- The school promotes a proactive safeguarding culture through comprehensive training and preventative education. Staff receive regular updates on statutory guidance and emerging risks, including artificial intelligence and deepfakes, alongside statutory training. Pupils benefit from age-appropriate education on online safety, healthy relationships and conflict resolution, with adaptations for SEND needs. Pupils spoke openly about their experiences and were clear about who to approach if they had concerns.
- These standards continue to be met.

Paragraph 9

- The school implements its written behaviour policy effectively and complements it with an approach that promotes pupils' social and emotional development. Staff systematically log behaviour incidents. There is clear evidence of appropriate actions, follow up and communication with parents. Protocols for absconding are in place and staff act on them when necessary. All staff receive regular training on strategies to help pupils manage their behaviour. There have been no suspensions or exclusions this year.
- The school maintains a calm and welcoming ethos. Pupils behave well in lessons and during unstructured times. Behaviour remains calm and focused, both off site and on the school premises.
- This standard continues to be met.

Paragraph 14

- Staff are deployed effectively across the school, ensuring appropriate supervision in all observed areas. This contributes to a calm, positive culture, where pupils consistently demonstrate respect towards each other and staff. The environment is orderly and purposeful, and supervision actively reinforces this climate. Off-site visits, such as farm trips, are well managed. Staff are deployed appropriately and maintain effective supervision throughout activities. This ensures pupils' safety and wellbeing.
- In the proprietor's absence, the central team's leaders have ensured the operational routines for the school. This includes the deployment of staff to ensure the continuity of safeguarding and SEND provision.
- This standard continues to be met.

Paragraph 15

- The school maintains accurate admission registers containing all required information, including emergency contacts and destination details for pupils removed from roll. Attendance is monitored through the proprietor's electronic system, which records all relevant pupil details and applies the correct Department for Education (DfE) attendance codes. This system enables leaders to analyse attendance patterns for individuals and groups effectively.
- This standard continues to be met.

Paragraph 16(a) & (b)

- Leaders ensure that all activities undertaken by pupils are subject to appropriate risk assessment. When external partners identified that some aspects of outdoor learning at the farm lacked sufficient detail, leaders acted promptly. They commissioned external reviews and implemented a suite of comprehensive risk assessments. Until these are fully embedded, pupils do not participate in any activity where risks have not been clearly identified and mitigated.
- Leaders implement individual risk assessments that are appropriate and regularly reviewed. These are adapted promptly following any incidents to ensure they remain effective. For example, risk assessments for pupils at risk of absconding are updated to include additional risks. Risk assessments are also in place for pupils with allergies and those linked to personal support or behaviour plans. This ensures risks are identified and mitigated in line with safeguarding requirements.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)(a) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(6)

- The proprietor ensures that all staff are recruited safely in line with guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' DfE, September 2005 and the school's policy. All required pre-employment checks are completed before staff take up their posts, and there is clear evidence that these checks are carried out appropriately. The school maintains a single central record (SCR) that includes all statutory information. However, the school's SCR is currently being transferred to a new system. This resulted in some minor administrative errors, which did not compromise the integrity of the checks or the school's compliance with safeguarding requirements.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(3)(f), 32(1)(g)

- The proprietor and school leaders were unable to provide the inspection team with sufficient information requested under section 109 of the 2008 Act.
- The proprietor who is also the acting headteacher was unable to make themselves present for the inspection due to personal circumstances. Staff did not have the

suitable authority or access to some of the information needed to support the inspection, such as complaints management information.

- The school's website does not provide the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- The requirements of this standard are not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The school was unable to provide any records of complaints to the school or supporting documentation to inspectors. The proprietor had not ensured that leaders present during the inspection had appropriate knowledge or the authority to access complaints information in their absence.
- The proprietor was unable to provide the inspection team with access to supporting documentation around the management of complaints.
- Governors could not provide sufficient information regarding the management of formal complaints.
- Due to the lack of evidence provided by the proprietor and leaders, inspectors are unable to confirm compliance with all requirements of Part 7 of the Independent School Standards.
- For this reason, the standard in this part is not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- While the standards were met at the time of the school's standard inspection, leadership has been significantly weakened by the absence of a permanent headteacher since September 2025. This has reduced leadership capacity.
- During this period of instability, the responsibilities of the headteacher's role have been distributed among the proprietor and leaders from the wider group, including central leads for safeguarding and SEND. However, some of these staff do not have the necessary authority or access to key information to discharge these wider leadership responsibilities effectively. Consequently, the school does not currently have sufficient leadership capacity to provide robust oversight or ensure full compliance with all of the standards.
- In addition, governance arrangements have weakened since the summer term. The governing body is not currently functioning at capacity. There are a number of vacancies on the governing body. This has diminished its ability to provide effective oversight of the school's work and its compliance with the standards.
- For this reason, the requirements for paragraphs 34(1)(a) and (b) are not met.

Paragraph 34(1)(2)

- Despite recent instability in leadership, staff continue to prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They have ensured that pupils with complex needs receive high levels of support. The

provision for pupils with SEND remains effective. The improvements to safeguarding arrangements have ensured these are robust.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from wider opportunities, such as well-planned and supervised off-site visits. Pupils present as happy and safe in school. They maintain trusted relationships with staff and are confident that adults will intervene and support them if they have a concern or worry.
- This standard continues to be met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	149146
DfE registration number	886/6174
Inspection number	10425125

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent day 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	17
Proprietor	Ruth Minhall
Chair	Celia Buxton
Headteacher	Ruth Minhall (Acting headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,000
Telephone number	01227469156
Website	www.havennook.co.uk
Email address	reception@havennook.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 July 2023

Information about this school

- Haven Nook is an independent special school providing education for up to 18 pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs or autism. A number of pupils also present with additional challenges, including high levels of anxiety. Prior to admission, most pupils have experienced prolonged periods out of formal education, resulting in significant gaps in their learning.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. School places are funded by the respective local authority.

- The school's previous standard inspection took place in July 2023, when the school was judged to be good.
- There has been a change of leadership since the last inspection. The proprietor is currently the acting headteacher.
- The school has a governing body that meets regularly to challenge and support leaders. However, the size of the governing body has reduced since the last inspection.
- The school does not currently commission any alternative provision. However, as part of their personalised timetables, some pupils access activities at a local farm and a local leisure centre on a part-time basis. Pupils are always accompanied by a member of staff during these sessions.

Information about this inspection

- This was an emergency inspection carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The inspection was commissioned by the DfE as a result of concerns. It was conducted without notice.
- The inspection team checked the school's compliance with the standards relating to the quality of education for pupils, including those with SEND; safeguarding and welfare arrangements; behaviour policy and record-keeping; staff deployment and supervision; admission and attendance registers; risk assessment processes; safer recruitment and the SCR; complaints management and the effectiveness of leadership and governance.
- Not all the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.
- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors considered any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with proprietor's central team leaders for safeguarding and SEND and other staff. The lead inspector also spoke to the proprietor, who is the acting headteacher, via the telephone. Inspectors also met with a group of staff in addition to holding informal discussions with staff throughout the inspection. The inspectors also met with representatives from the admitting local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors visited lessons to see pupils' learning and interactions. They also observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Where possible, inspectors spoke directly with pupils.
- Inspectors had a tour of each of the school sites to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. A range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website, were reviewed by inspectors.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 32(1)(g) any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act which is required for the purposes of the inspection is provided to the body conducting the inspection and that body is given access to the school's admission and attendance registers;
 - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year; and

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is-
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
 - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and-
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
 - 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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