

Inspection of Hazel Cottage School

2 New Hall Cottages, Longmoor Lane, Fazakerley, Liverpool, Merseyside L10 1LD

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 January 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Hazel Cottage School. Kind and nurturing staff greet them warmly as they arrive at school each morning. Pupils who are new to the school settle in quickly. Staff support them well to help them focus on their learning.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Staff take the time to get to know pupils. They understand their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and interests well. This helps staff work out the best way for individual pupils to learn the curriculum. Pupils receive different, personalised opportunities to learn new information. From their individual starting points, pupils achieve well.

Pupils behave well. Staff step in quickly when pupils need help to follow the school's rules or to regulate their own emotions. This ensures that pupils' behaviour is addressed sensitively and effectively.

Building independence is an important aspect of the school's ambition for its pupils. Skilled staff help pupils learn the knowledge and skills to realise this. For example, pupils learn how to complete jigsaws and make sandwiches independently. Pupils relish the opportunity to interact with a special 'robot.' This helps them to develop social skills, such as turn taking. These experiences contribute well to pupils' broader development.

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

The school, governing body and proprietor have diligently considered the needs and interests of all pupils in its curriculum design. They have worked together to develop ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum pathways in most subjects, from the early years to the end of key stage 2.

From the beginning of the early years, the school places a high priority on children's communication and language development. Staff ably use a variety of approaches to support pupils' understanding of daily routines, including by using sign language, symbols and real-life objects. Staff work in partnership with the school's speech therapists to regularly check how well pupils are developing their communication and language. They provide tailored support for pupils who need help to catch up. This helps pupils to communicate confidently with staff and others around them.

The school places great importance on ensuring that pupils learn to read. Staff share their love of reading with pupils. There is a dedicated reading session every day where staff read to pupils. This allows pupils to experience a wide range of books and stories. The school has also put in place a well-ordered phonics programme. Staff check pupils' knowledge carefully to ensure that they begin the phonics programme at the most appropriate point. This helps pupils to build up their understanding of phonics. Staff make sure that pupils read from books that include the sounds that they already know. Where pupils find learning phonics difficult, the school provides targeted support to help them to catch up with their peers.

In a few subjects, including some areas of learning in the early years, the school is still determining the precise knowledge that pupils should acquire and the order in which this should be taught. This means that, on occasion, staff do not place the right emphasis on the knowledge that pupils need for future learning. This sometimes prevents some pupils from learning as deeply as they could and making connections with what they have learned before.

The proprietor and leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver the curriculum effectively across a number of subjects. Staff use strategies to help pupils to learn in the most effective way. Typically, staff carefully check what pupils know and address any gaps in knowledge that pupils have. In the main, staff select activities that enable pupils to develop their knowledge in a logical and coherent way. Nevertheless, from time to time, the activities that pupils complete do not support them to deepen their knowledge as well as they could. Occasionally, this hinders how well some pupils learn.

The school is alert to the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending school regularly. It has developed clear procedures to manage attendance and punctuality. For some pupils who do not attend school regularly, the school works in partnership with external professionals to support families to reduce absence levels.

Staff skilfully and sensitively teach pupils the expectations for their behaviour. Pupils learn how to be kind towards others. Over time, they learn the importance of looking after equipment and following the school's rules.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils' individual education, health and care (EHC) plans are frequently reviewed and updated. The school makes sure that pupils with SEND receive the specialist support they need from a range of professionals.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. There is a clear focus on preparing pupils for life beyond the school. Pupils have the opportunity to try as many new activities as possible. For example, they take part in dancing, swimming and yoga. Pupils benefit from visits to the local community, for instance, walking to a park and travelling on a bus. They learn that rules, including road safety rules, are there to keep them safe. Pupils develop their understanding of the fundamental British values, such as democracy, through voting for menu choices. These opportunities help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Staff speak very positively about the school. They praise the support that they receive to reduce their workload so that they can be more focused on pupils' learning. They are proud to be a part of the school community. The school engages positively with parents and carers. Parents value the work that the school does to help their children to make progress in their learning and development. Many parents commented to inspectors about the kind and nurturing nature of the staff.

The proprietor is aware of its statutory responsibilities, including with regards to safeguarding. Policies, including an effective safeguarding policy that meets the

current statutory requirements, are made available to parents on the school's website and also on request. The proprietor has a clear oversight of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has ensured that all the independent school standards ('the standards') are met consistently and securely, including compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Moreover, the proprietor has appointed a local governing body. The governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, including areas of learning in the early years, the school is determining the precise knowledge that children and pupils should learn and when this should happen. This means that, sometimes, staff do not emphasise and revisit some important ideas and concepts. The school should make clear to staff the key foundational knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in each area of the school's curriculum.
- Occasionally, the activities provided to pupils do not help some of them to deepen their learning as effectively as they could. This hinders some pupils from learning all they should. The school should support staff in selecting activities that help pupils to acquire and remember knowledge securely 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	150480
DfE registration number	341/6029
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10342228
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Proprietor	P Bloom Limited
Chair	Ann Henderson
Headteacher	Laura Dickinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,050 - £91,606
Telephone number	0151 280 5704
Website	www.hazelcottageschool.co.uk
Email address	info@hazelcottageschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a small independent special school situated on one site.
- The school is owned by Options Autism 7 and is a fully owned subsidiary of P Bloom Ltd. The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 9 February 2024. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school is located at 2 New Hall Cottages, Longmoor Lane, Fazakerley, Liverpool, Merseyside L10 1LD.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autism.
- The school is registered to admit 35 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 36 pupils on roll at the school. The school has not notified the DfE that it is operating beyond its registration agreement. However, the school has provided assurances that this is a temporary situation that has now been resolved with the local authority.
- The school does not make use of 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 evaluation about the quality of a school's provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the proprietor body, the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of local authorities that have pupils placed at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, assessment, pupils' behaviour and provision for pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the standards, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' attendance.
- As part of their checks on the standards, inspectors made a tour of the school premises, accompanied by leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of the school, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and honest culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke with some pupils about their experiences of school life. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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