

Inspection of Papworth Hall School

Ermine Street South, Papworth Everard, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB23 3RD

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 September 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Papworth Hall is a school that changes lives. Pupils typically join having developed negative views of education from the past. Many have not been to school for a long time. The school swiftly flips pupils' views of education, and the world around them, on their head. Pupils grow to see school as a place of happiness, kindness and warmth. A place where they can be themselves and thrive. High-quality therapeutic provision means that pupils receive individually tailored guidance to help them continue to develop socially and emotionally.

Adults want the best for pupils. These high expectations, which pupils rise to meet, mean that pupils learn well. They are guided equally well to develop their social and emotional skills. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exceptional. They build positive relationships with adults which result in them feeling safe and secure in school.

Pupils benefit greatly from a range of wider opportunities. Whether out and about volunteering in the local community, learning life-saving first aid, or working together on the local farm, pupils experience rich provision. These opportunities ensure pupils, both old and young, are preparing themselves for life in the wider world both now and for their futures.

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

Pupils typically join the school with significant gaps in their knowledge. This is because of the disjointed education they have experienced in the past. The school has designed a curriculum that effectively sets about helping pupils learn the important knowledge they have missed. Pupils learn well because the curriculum is well matched to their abilities and targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils build more secure foundations in their knowledge on which to build in the future.

The school's assessment of what pupils know and can do is rigorous and precise when they join the school. This means pupils start to access the right curriculum for them from the start of their time in school. At times, though, in lessons teachers do not always check how well pupils have fully understood. This means that sometimes pupils can be asked to attempt activities that may be too easy or too hard for them.

Pupils learn to read well. The youngest pupils are immersed with stories, poems and rhymes so they hear and start to understand more words. Adults are skilled in teaching phonics. Pupils practise and apply their new learning by reading books that are closely matched to the sounds they know. Those pupils who need extra help with their reading are very well supported to help them catch up.

The academic curriculum is extremely well complemented by the therapy team, which provides specific interventions. These are carefully planned, leading from accurate assessment of pupils need by the expert therapy and clinical team. This

means pupils received well-considered therapeutic provision to sit alongside their academic curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exceptional. A great majority of pupils have significantly improved their behaviour since joining the school. Pupils are motivated to learn – this was not the case for many in the past. In lessons, pupils take part and join in. Well-established systems are in place to help pupils with concentration and help to remain focused.

School leaders keep a laser-sharp eye on attendance. Pupils' attendance is extremely high. Many have gone from attending school sporadically in the past to now attending all day every day. The calm and welcoming approach from adults in school plays a significant role in supporting pupils to love coming to school.

Pupils benefit from an exceptional personal development programme. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is carefully considered. Pupils learn about a wide range of different religions, through lessons and assemblies. They learn about the differences between themselves and others, celebrating their own individual uniqueness. The programme of wider development is cohesively constructed. Pupils work closely with adults to try new activities. For some this could be getting dressed following a swimming session independently, and for others it could be having the courage to feed or stroke an animal at the animal care farm. Whatever the challenge, pupils are well supported by adults around them to take on new experiences. Older pupils receive useful guidance on careers and different options they have for their futures.

The school has well-established systems and procedures to make sure the site is safe for pupils and staff. Regular and rigorous health and safety checks are made. The school identifies relevant risks that may be faced by pupils and staff, such as when travelling or during the 'daily mile'. Sensible mitigations are in place to reduce these risks.

The proprietor board and governors work in harmony. They have a clear and accurate view of the school. The well-established monitoring and support processes ensure the right balance of challenge and support to school leaders. The strong oversight ensures that the school meets all the independent school standards. The buildings and school grounds are well kept and safe. They provide pupils with a rich environment in which to thrive. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- At times, teaching does not check precisely what pupils have understood. Teaching is not always well adapted to support pupils with different levels of prior knowledge and understanding. This means that some pupils do not always learn as well as they could. The school should make sure all teachers receive the training and support they need to consistently adapt the curriculum effectively for pupils' varying levels of understanding.

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	149845
DfE registration number	873/6062
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10342198
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Paul Sanderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,890 to £90,959
Telephone number	01223 641760
Website	www.papworthhallschool.co.uk
Email address	infopapworth@papworthhallschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered with the Department for Education on 8 September 2023. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school is registered to admit 30 pupils.
- Papworth Hall School is owned by Options Autism. It is one of over 50 other schools situated around the country.
- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school admits pupils with a diagnosis of autism, communication and associated complex needs.
- 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.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a range of staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and the regional director, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors had tours of the premises to review the suitability of school buildings. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- 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.

- The inspection team considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View and the lead inspector spoke on the telephone to some parents. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, as well as interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dave Gibson

His Majesty's Inspector

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