

# Inspection of Heathermount School

Devenish Road, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 9PG

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Inspection dates: 1 to 3 October 2024

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Outstanding</b> |
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| The quality of education | <b>Outstanding</b> |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | <b>Outstanding</b> |
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|                      |                    |
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| Personal development | <b>Outstanding</b> |
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|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Leadership and management | <b>Outstanding</b> |
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| Does the school meet the independent school standards? | <b>Yes</b> |
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

High aspirations and ambition permeate every aspect of this school. Pupils achieve well academically. They benefit equally from the school's commitment to their personal development. They thrive and grow to become young people who contribute to society. There is a careful balance achieved between providing the right support whilst also giving pupils the skills they need to be able to successfully break the 'Heathermount bubble'.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are incredibly well supported to recognise and manage their emotions and show empathy to others. Pupils have an understanding about their autism and their own individuality. The school shares its therapeutic 'READY' framework with families. This helps parents and carers replicate the language and approach outside school.

Parents and carers describe Heathermount School as transforming lives. One parent summed up the views of many, 'It is an incredible school, and it has literally changed our child's life and given us optimism about the future.' This does not happen by accident. It is firmly rooted in the school's precise understanding about each pupil's needs and an unrelenting focus on preparing them for their future. The robust transition processes mean that new pupils are set up for success. They attend well because they enjoy coming to school.

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

The school offers high quality education to pupils with autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils on roll have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They are supported exceptionally well with their learning across the curriculum pathways. In every subject, across each pathway, there is absolute clarity about what pupils learn. This is skilfully flexed to meet pupils' needs but with no sense of compromise. Every decision is made with pupils' best interests at heart.

Pupils become fluent readers. Their reading journey begins with highly effective phonics teaching. Pupils learn letter sounds and are skilled at blending them to read words. Across the school, pupils read with confidence. They use their understanding of characters and their actions to read with emotion and expression. Younger pupils accurately read their phonics matched books. Older pupils show in-depth understanding of more complex texts. For example, when studying Shakespeare, they engage in mature discussion about Lady Macbeth's character and the themes of masculinity and morality. Pupils read in their leisure time. They enjoy choosing books to be included in the school's library.

Pupils acknowledge and regulate their emotions incredibly well. This is because the staff are experts at noticing changes in pupils' actions or behaviours. Staff model

language and vocabulary to describe physical and mental feelings. This supports pupils in a calm and unobtrusive way. As a result, pupils understand how their body physically feels and reacts to situations. They develop the strategies they need in response. Pupils benefit from an onsite therapy team who provide highly effective personalised provision.

Teaching staff have excellent subject knowledge across all subject areas. They use this, alongside their high-quality questioning skills, to deepen pupils' learning. All pupils are well supported by expert staff, appropriate resources, and personalised adaptations. Pupils' learning and personal development are robustly reviewed against the targets in their EHC plans. Parents are fully involved in this process. They place great value on the abundance of information they receive about their child's schooling.

The personal development programme is impressive. It is skilfully woven through the entire curriculum and includes many additional rich and varied opportunities. For example, in physical education lessons, as well as learning technical skills, pupils learn how to participate in competition. This means that they show resilience. In forest school sessions, pupils work together to achieve common goals. Pupils have opportunities to go on trips and residential with the school. For many, this is their first successful experience of such opportunities. The 'Heathermount Herald', a pupil-led newspaper, includes pupil reviews of these experiences. They celebrate and share their pride about the impact of these events on their confidence and self-belief.

Pupils receive high-quality careers advice which prepares them extremely well for their next steps in education and future employment. There is a highly bespoke approach to this work, based on how well staff know each pupil. As a result, pupils move on to a wide range of aspirational destinations. Local services and businesses are invited into the school to speak to pupils. Through this engagement work the school also skilfully shares a wider understanding of autism with potential employers.

The school's tag line, 'building confidence and preparing students for life' is keenly felt by all. Staff are incredibly proud to work at the school and of the difference they make to pupils' lives. They welcome their extensive professional development opportunities and the consideration given to their workload and well-being. There is a shared sense of joy and privilege about being part of the Heathermount team.

The proprietor and those responsible for governance understand and carry out their role effectively in setting strategy, holding school leaders to account, and meeting statutory obligations. They ensure that the school meets the independent school standards and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 149727   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 868/6031   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Windsor and Maidenhead   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10342196   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent day school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5 to 18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 84   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Cavendish Education Ltd  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Aatif Hassan   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | David Stewart  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £67,146 to £79,293   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01344875101  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.heathermount.co.uk">www.heathermount.co.uk</a>     |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:admin@heathermount.co.uk">admin@heathermount.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2023. The proprietor body is Cavendish Education Ltd.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, specifically with autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 90 pupils.
- Many pupils join the school with significant gaps in their learning. Some pupils have experienced disrupted school attendance prior to joining this school.

## 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: reading, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. 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.
- The inspection team also considered the quality of education across other subject areas, including physical education and forest school.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with the school leaders and representatives of the governing body and proprietary board.
- The lead inspector completed a tour of the premises, accompanied by a school leader and the site manager, to check the school's compliance with the standards.

- The inspection team considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. One of the inspectors also spoke with a group of parents via an online call.
- The inspectors analysed responses to the staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- The inspectors evaluated responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and spoke to pupils during the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

James Stuart

His Majesty's Inspector

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