

Inspection of Magdalen Court School

Victoria Park Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4NU

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 October 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's vision is that all pupils will be ready for adulthood both academically and socially. This is reflected in all that it does. More pupils are now able to move on to education or employment that is well suited to them.

Many pupils have not attended school for long periods prior to starting at Magdalen Court School. Staff build warm, professional relationships with pupils. Pupils begin to enjoy school, many for the first time.

Aspirations of what pupils can achieve have increased. The curriculum is well suited to pupils' needs and interests in both primary and secondary phases. There are an extensive range of qualifications and accreditations on offer for older pupils. However, the curriculum is new and not well established, so pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Most pupils have responded positively to the raised expectations that the school has of how they should behave. Lessons are typically calm and purposeful. However, when pupils do not behave well this is not consistently challenged by staff, and so persists.

The extensive personal development offer prepares pupils well for the next steps in education and for adult life. Older pupils and sixth-form students undertake work experience and learn work skills.

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

All pupils at this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A new curriculum has been developed. It is broad and ambitious for what all pupils can achieve. Students in the sixth form undertake work placements that are well suited to their needs and aspirations.

The curriculum makes clear the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. However, staff are still building their own knowledge of the newly revised curriculum for some of the subjects they teach. This means they do not always explain new learning as clearly as they could. Sometimes, staff do not identify pupils' misconceptions and correct them.

Teachers design learning activities that are well matched to pupils' needs. However, they are not always well aligned to the ambition of the curriculum because staff are still developing their own knowledge. Pupils' emotional needs are well met, meaning they are more able to focus on learning. However, lessons do not always ensure that pupils revisit what they should already know and remember. This makes it harder for pupils to make connections between their learning.

Pupils read a wide range of books. These are carefully chosen to support their social and cultural development. Pupils who cannot read well enough get the help they

need to begin to read with fluency and comprehension. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils become confident readers.

Most pupils persist with learning when they are finding it hard. This is because they get the support they need to regulate their behaviour and manage their feelings. Nevertheless, lessons are sometimes interrupted by poor behaviour and social times can be boisterous. This is not always well managed by staff and so does not stop swiftly enough.

Many pupils have had negative educational experiences prior to joining this school. The school has a thorough approach to supporting pupils to get back into education. However, a minority of pupils do not attend well enough and so do not learn as effectively as they could, nor benefit from the personal development offer.

The school's work to prepare pupils for adulthood is a particular strength. Pupils know the importance of being active. They hone their cooking skills by making healthy foods. Pupils learn how to maintain their mental health, and learn how this links to active lifestyles and food choices. Pupils take part in cultural and sporting events that enrich their lives. They learn about positive relationships, consent and staying safe in an age-appropriate way. Pupils receive helpful information and guidance about careers and further education. This helps them to make informed choices about their futures.

Parents are welcomed into school to find out more about what their child is learning. They value the high levels of communication from the school. The proprietor and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and next steps. They have provided the resources needed for the school to succeed. External support and leaders with specialist expertise have brought about improvements. These are still at an early stage. It is too soon to see the impact of the changes that have been made.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. School policies reflect the latest statutory guidance. The safeguarding policy and the relationships and sex education and health education policy are available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Some staff do not have the subject knowledge they need to explain new learning clearly and to identify pupils' misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not always build their knowledge as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff continue to develop their knowledge of all aspects of the curriculum.

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge, or revisit what they have learned before. Consequently, they are not able to deepen their knowledge or connect new learning to what they already know sufficiently well. The school should ensure that pupils securely learn the curriculum.
- The poor behaviour of some pupils is not managed effectively by some staff. This worries some pupils and interrupts their learning. The school should ensure staff apply the behaviour policy consistently so that pupils' behaviour improves.

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	113623
DfE registration number	878/6045
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10341998
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Number of part-time pupils	14
Proprietor	Jeff and Jim Jenner
Chair of governors	Katie Howard
Headteacher	Rowena Schofield
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,960
Telephone number	01392 494919
Website	www.magdalencourt.org
Email address	office@magdalencourt.org
Dates of previous inspection	23 to 25 November 2022

Information about this school

- Since the last standard inspection, there has been an emergency inspection. This took place in February 2024.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- All pupils have SEND. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, and personal, social and health education.
- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the reading curriculum, visited lessons, including physical education and food, and looked at plans for the personal development curriculum.
- 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.
- An inspector met with the chair of governors, a member of the proprietor body and staff from the multi-academy trust that is supporting the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke to some parents in person and by telephone.
- There were no responses from staff or pupils to Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Esther Best

His Majesty's Inspector

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