# School inspection report

21 November 2023 to 23 November 2023

# Mount House School

Camlet Way

Hadley Wood

Hertfordshire

EN4 0NJ

# Contents

# Summary of inspection findings

1. The school is governed by a board of directors who ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities are enabled to carry out their roles effectively. Senior leaders have identified a number of key areas for development to meet the school's aims. A wide-ranging school improvement plan signposts the direction of travel for the school's next steps. Many initiatives and strategies have been developed and introduced. Clear plans are in place to further embed these strategies throughout the school.

2. Relationships between pupils and adults in the school community are positive because of a willingness on the part of directors, leaders and teachers to listen to pupils' views, attend to their individual needs and provide an enriching experience through the curriculum and beyond.

3. Leaders identify and manage risk appropriately and a comprehensive approach to this area results in well-defined policies and assessments for physical as well as emotional needs. Leaders plan appropriately to ensure no pupil is discriminated against. Senior leaders listen carefully to concerns raised by parents and respond to them effectively. The school provides a wide range of information for parents to easily access from the website.

4. The school has created a broad curriculum which meets the needs of its pupils. Clear planning enables subjects to be delivered effectively. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is managed effectively by senior leaders in most, but not all, subjects.

5. The needs of individual pupils are central to the planning and delivery of the curriculum. The support offered to those with specific learning challenges is highly effective in ensuring they make progress in line with their peers. In many lessons, pupils are stimulated to reach their individual potential, but a lack of engagement sometimes leads to less effective learning and slower progress.

6. Pupils benefit from regular feedback, especially verbal, in most lessons. Senior leaders' and teachers' analysis of assessment data supports pupils' progress but this is not consistently utilised across all subject areas. As a result, pupils' progress in some subjects is inconsistent.

7. Pupils' experience of school is greatly enhanced by the extra-curricular programme which caters for a broad range of interests.

8. The school provides effective programmes to develop the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of its pupils. Leaders monitor behaviour effectively and are well aware of the need to establish strategies to ensure that instances of poor or disruptive behaviour do not impede other pupils' learning. Where these strategies are consistently applied, clear and measurable improvements have been made. However, a lack of consistency, particularly in a small number of year groups, affects those pupils' progress overall.

9. Leaders' management of bullying is highly effective. Pupils feel confident that the small number of issues which do occur are dealt with quickly. A clear and increasingly consistent use of the rewards and sanctions system is having a positive effect on pupils' conduct and social development.

10. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a satisfactory standard. There are effective systems in place for health and safety, fire, supervision and first aid. Pupils enjoy plentiful, nutritious and well-balanced meals.

11. Pupils have a clear understanding of the need for equality when considering others. They have developed platforms to discuss and review aspects of diversity and are successful at bringing about change. Opportunities for leadership and community involvement further support pupils' personal development. Initiatives are already in place to enhance this provision but are not yet fully embedded.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met

- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met

- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met

- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met

- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure the quality of teaching across all subjects is consistent with the most successful lessons to ensure all pupils make good progress

- ensure the implementation of the recently reviewed behaviour policy is consistently applied by all teachers so that pupils' progress is not impeded by the behaviour of others

- ensure the effective use of assessment data across all subjects to enable teachers to plan effectively so that pupils make the most of their learning opportunities

- fully implement the planned programme of pupil leadership opportunities.

# Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Directors are well informed about the school's work, development and performance through regular reports and meetings with senior leaders. As a result, directors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities are enabled to carry out their roles through careful recruitment of appropriate staff into key positions, regular appraisal of staff performance, and the identification of areas of accountability.

13. The school's aim to support pupils to be intellectually curious, resilient and independent, and to become responsible for their own development, is at the heart of the many initiatives which leaders have embedded or, more recently, initiated. In areas in which changes have had time to take root, they have been successful in bringing about improvement. For example, the reward and conduct tracking system enables pastoral staff to have dynamic and effective oversight of pupils and their behaviour. Leaders have identified groups whose behaviour does not meet the school's expectations and have managed initiatives to drive improvement.

14. Leaders have identified areas of the curriculum and teaching which need to be improved. They have initiated strategies, for example a series of 'learning communities' have been established to engage teachers in the development of key aspects of pupils' learning. Examples include ensuring all pupils are stimulated intellectually and develop their self-motivation, Enquiry-based and digital learning. Directors, senior leaders and heads of department conduct regular learning walks to assess the efficacy of the improvements made and to plan next steps. Leaders are self-critical. For example, they have decided to phase the introduction of new approaches in teaching and learning to ensure that each is embedded successfully.

15. The school's values are clearly put into practice and reinforced throughout all aspects of school life. Leaders and directors demonstrate a willingness and desire to listen to pupils' views and ideas. For example, a group of Year 8 pupils successfully presented a proposal to the directors requesting funding for a robotics club. Directors regularly review the content and implementation of policies, and they discuss with senior leaders the evaluation of the progress being made with each aspect of the wide-ranging development plan so that progress can continue to be made.

16. A comprehensive and broad programme of risk management is in place and the policy covers pupil wellbeing issues as well as practical aspects of the school's operations. In addition to a suite of risk assessments for buildings, trips and events, there is effective use of risk assessments for individual pupils with specific concerns, including physical and mental health issues. The accessibility plan ensures current and future planning enables compliance with the Equality Act to make the school and the curriculum accessible to all groups of pupils.

17. Staff respond effectively to parental concerns or complaints which are escalated for the headteacher's attention. They are dealt with effectively, with care, and in detail. Parents can access a wide range of information on the school's website as well as regular communication from the school.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

# Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders have designed and implemented broad curricular and extra-curricular programmes, and enabled an individualised approach to pupils' progress, which encourages pupils to engage in and enjoy their learning. Leaders' belief that 'every pupil deserves a chance' pervades teachers' careful guidance and support of pupils' development. As a result of committed planning and attention to the individual, pupils make good progress.

19. Leaders have created a curriculum policy which is supported by detailed schemes of work which cover all areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop an understanding of an increasingly broad range of subjects as they progress through the school. Heads of department communicate passion for their subjects, which further engages individual pupils' intellectual curiosity and self-motivation and which impacts positively on the progress they make.

20. A range of effective teaching methods enables pupils to be focused and engaged in most lessons. In some lessons, teachers' pose challenging questions in a way that engages pupils' interest. This approach enables pupils to participate in a highly positive manner and make rapid progress. In some lessons where pupils' focus and engagement have been less positive, leaders have introduced behaviour management techniques, which successfully enable those classes to remain focused on tasks and make progress.

21. Leaders and teachers place a great emphasis on the individual needs of pupils, and those who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported in lessons by their teachers, teaching assistants and by the learning support staff. Leaders have provided a supportive and relaxing venue (the 'Hive') for pupils to take time out or to socialise with friends or engage in activities informally during free time. Pupils who have SEND are highly cognisant of the effect the support they receive has on their progress. Pupils share with pride work that they had produced of a quality beyond their own expectations.

22. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) receive help with their written and spoken English, which helps pupils integrate into school life and supports their access to the curriculum. Leaders take care to support these pupils through a variety of initiatives including a buddy system and careful selection of GCSE choices.

23. Teachers mark work with clarity and use a range of feedback approaches. As a result, pupils understand both the standards they are achieving and how to improve. Teachers frequently discuss work with pupils, and pupils respond positively to the opportunities this gives for dialogue about detail. In addition to verbal feedback, which is used to great effect in all subjects, written comments, for example in science and maths books, encourage pupils to improve their work and in some cases, to apply greater effort.

24. Senior leaders meet regularly with subject leaders to analyse pupil performance and to plan strategies. Feedback from this process further supports pupils' progress and attainment. Data from regular assessments is used effectively in most subjects to identify intervention strategies and possible inconsistencies between different groups. Pupils make more rapid progress in subjects where leaders use assessment data analytically and strategically.

25. The extra-curricular activities programme is both extensive and well attended. A wide range of academic, sporting, creative and performing arts opportunities plays a strong part in enriching

pupils' lives and develops in them an additional range of skills. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance at these activities to ensure each pupil maintains a balanced school life. Pupils have requested more sports fixtures with other schools and leaders have endeavoured to achieve this in some sports. Pupils can exercise a degree of choice of which sports they participate in.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation:

All the relevant Standards are met.

# Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

26. Leaders plan physical education (PE), personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes which enable pupils to develop their understanding of themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. The PSHE programme, which includes RSE, is delivered by heads of year, enabling a bespoke approach that can respond flexibly to any emerging pastoral issues in each age group. The quality of these lessons is monitored by senior members of the pastoral team to ensure consistency across the team of tutors delivering the programme.

27. Pupils demonstrate self-knowledge when reflecting on their learning. Their self-esteem and self-confidence grow because of their achievements. Leaders provide a curriculum, extra-curricular programme and social activities that enable pupils to develop high levels of respect, understanding and empathy through their experiences. They are supportive of each other and intolerant of any discrimination against any groups of pupils.

28. Some pupils' social and emotional needs lead to low-level disruption in some lessons and between lessons. Leaders are aware of this and have developed an effective range of strategies to monitor behaviour. These ensure that behaviour is well managed in the classroom so that pupils' progress is not hampered. For example, the shape of the school day has been changed to enable more efficient transitions and a prompt start to lessons. Additionally, styles of teaching are adapted for different year groups and classes to better manage pupils' levels of concentration and engagement. Leaders' monitoring of data showed an initial sharp increase in the issue of the school's warning system and a steady fall over the term as the strategy took effect. Where suitable strategies are not effectively implemented by teachers, behaviour management is less successful, which can impact pupils' progress.

29. Pupils are suitably supervised across the site and clear protocols, which maintain their safety, are well-established and understood by all. Access to the playing field at breaks and lunchtimes is controlled by year group, which helps to facilitate physical exercise as well as supporting effective behaviour management.

30. Leaders organise activities, assemblies and visiting speakers which contribute to the successful implementation of the school's anti-bullying strategy. Pastoral leaders monitor incidents closely and this ensures that they are managed effectively and rapidly. Communication with parents regarding rewards and sanctions is managed electronically which enables immediate liaison between school and parents to deal with any issues as they arise, and as a result issues are quickly resolved.

31. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a suitable standard. There is a comprehensive, detailed and responsive approach to health and safety, reducing the risk from fire, and the provision of first aid. External providers audit and advise the school on required actions. Resources are then allocated appropriately, and action plans carried out.

32. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Pastoral leaders monitor attendance, and support pupils and families when issues arise. As a result, attendance rates have improved.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

All the relevant Standards are met.

# Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

33. Through the activities of the school council, *House of Equality*, house system, PHSE programme and global studies, pupils develop an awareness and appreciation of their place in the world. They successfully learn how to affect change and the impact they can have on their own community and the wider world. For example, as a result of proposals and discussions in school council, study leave and revision arrangements have been adjusted, the names of the school's houses have been changed and pupils make suggestions of favourite dishes at Thursday lunchtimes. Leaders have initiated an extensive, well-planned morning programme of social, moral, spiritual and cultural activities during form time, supported by regular assemblies, which are effective in expanding pupils' horizons and understanding of the world in which they live.

34. Leaders' planning ensures that social, economic and cultural understanding is well integrated in academic areas whenever possible. Pupils develop empathy and broaden their perspectives. For example, when studying *Romeo and Juliet*, pupils made parallels with contemporary British anti-social gang culture when considering appropriate societal expectations and behaviours. In criminology, pupils discuss the use of blogs and vlogs to engage with views other than their own, and in physics, when studying alternative sources of energy, pupils consider the impact on communities and the environment. Additionally, the role of public institutions, political leaders and the media is considered by pupils when discussing the Chernobyl disaster, its causes and impact on society and the world.

35. Leaders have recently introduced a careers programme which they feel will more successfully ensure that pupils are prepared for the next stages of their lives. The programme is still being developed. The current arrangements are successful in that pupils gain places at a wide range of UK universities to study a wide range of subjects.

36. Leaders coordinate opportunities for pupils to serve within and beyond the school community. Initiatives are beginning to extend these further. Pupils develop their personal contribution to school life through positions of responsibility. From digital leaders, librarians and form representatives to anti-bullying ambassadors and heads of house, these initiatives are beginning to be embedded into the school's culture. A service-learning programme has begun for pupils in the sixth form and plans are in place to extend this to lower years. A wide range of other initiatives to develop pupils' leadership skills, for example, leadership passports, are in the early stages of development and plans to establish these as firm components of school life are in place.

37. Pupils extend their activities beyond the school community and support younger pupils from local primary schools in PE, classics and cricket. Senior pupils act as sports leaders with a neighbouring primary school on a weekly basis. The pupil-led *House of Equality* addresses a range of equality, diversity and inclusion topics in assemblies and other events, including an annual cultural immersion day. Individual pupils take part in *Speaker's Corner* where they address the whole school on a range of topics from neurodiversity to English as an additional language. Sixth-form pupils raise money by making and selling gingerbread, having been moved and inspired by speakers from a visiting charity.

38. Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong from their understanding of the school's rewards and sanctions system and through studying the rule of law in British society as part of the morning programme. Pupils identify the school's close and supportive community as being of particular benefit to them and many highlight the pastoral team as enabling their personal progress.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

All the relevant Standards are met.

# Safeguarding

39. Leaders ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. They follow statutory guidance and arrangements are implemented effectively.

40. Directors have reviewed the safeguarding policy so that it is in line with the latest statutory guidance.

41. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including that for the safeguarding lead (DSL) and other members of the safeguarding team, are thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Staff have a secure and confident understanding of the safeguarding policy and are confident in how they ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. Staff understand their responsibilities. Staff are conscious of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school and use this understanding to inform the academic and PSHE curriculum and pastoral support. Staff are aware of the expectation of their conduct. Leaders have ensured that staff are well briefed on how to pass on concerns about pupils or adults, and in turn staff have confidence to follow the protocols. They take appropriate action when necessary.

42. The school listens to the views of individual pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe in their school. The physical and mental health of pupils involved in any incident are given a high priority. Effective communication is maintained with parents.

43. Safeguarding leaders respond to concerns effectively. The culture of safeguarding is one of openness, sharing and early reporting of any potential issues. There is close liaison between those leaders in safeguarding, leaders for provision for pupils who have SEND and those who lead on medical care. As a result, the wellbeing of individual pupils is identified and addressed, and action taken if necessary. Safeguarding leaders maintain suitable records when issues arise, and they liaise with relevant external agencies when appropriate. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders are included in safeguarding procedures.

44. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils are carried out and that these are accurately recorded in one place. The designated director with responsibility in this area has appropriate skills, experience and training and reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including the necessary recruitment checks.

45. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place and alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team. Directors, the senior leaders and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively. They know how to escalate concerns when identified.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

# School details

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| **School** | Mount House School |
| **Department for Education number** | 302/6014 |
| **Registered charity number** | 270147 |
| **Address** | Camlet Way<br>Hadley Wood<br>Hertfordshire<br>EN4 0NJ |
| **Website** | mounthouse.org.uk |
| **Proprietor** | Mount House School Limited |
| **Chair** | Mr Ian Davies |
| **Headteacher** | Mrs Sarah Richardson |
| **Age range** | 11-18 |
| **Number of pupils** | 262 |
| **Date of previous inspection** | 05 November 2021 |

# Information about the school

46. Mount House School is an independent co-educational day school. Established in June 2017 as the successor to St Martha's School for female pupils which was founded in 1903, it is situated in Hadley Wood in the London Borough of Barnet. Male pupils have been admitted since 2018.

47. The school has identified 77 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 15 pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans.

48. English is an additional language for 14 pupils.

49. The school aims to ensure teachers and pupils work collaboratively in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Pupils are supported to become responsible for their own development, becoming intellectually curious, resilient, independent young people with good moral character.

# Inspection details

**Inspection dates**                    21-23 November 2023

50. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

51. Inspection activities included:

- discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff
- visits to all areas of the school including lesson observations with senior staff, other independent lesson observations, registration sessions and extra-curricular activities
- scrutiny of a range of policies, records, logs and other documentation
- scrutiny and discussion of samples of pupils' work alongside pupils and staff
- discussions with groups of pupils from a range of year groups.

52. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.

- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.

- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.

- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

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