

# Inspection of Vbranch House School

Pinhoe Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 8AD

---

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

---

The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

At Vbranch House School, pupils flourish in all areas of learning. Through an expert and seamless combination of therapy and education, pupils excel in learning about a breadth of subjects. Leaders ensure that pupils learn in a highly nurturing, safe and inclusive environment. Staff know the needs of each pupil exceptionally well. Consequently, each pupil has a skilfully designed, personalised curriculum that enables them to succeed. One parent's view echoed that of many, 'She has the best possible chances in life because of this school.'

Staff and pupils develop exceptionally strong and trusting relationships. This ensures that pupils can communicate any concerns about their learning or pain management swiftly and effectively. Pupils develop very strong friendships through the curriculum. They are kind, empathetic and respectful towards each other. As a result, there are no behaviour issues at the school.

Pupils have many opportunities to learn about the world beyond school. For example, they visit the bowling centre, theatre and cinema. Theatre groups perform plays such as 'Oliver Twist'. Older pupils learn how to express their views about disability rights at public forums such as 'Champions for Change'. Pupils receive highly specialised support regarding their next steps beyond the school.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that blends therapeutic and educational learning exceptionally well. Pupils' lives are transformed at Vbranch House School. Through the highly specialised focus on communication, pupils learn to read symbols, pictures and words. They learn extraordinarily well to read and communicate their needs and understanding of the world. All pupils are expertly taught to sign. Speech and language therapy further supports pupils' speech development. Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained in teaching phonics sounds. Through a highly bespoke programme, where appropriate, pupils learn to read using phonics. Stories form the bedrock of the curriculum. Pupils are enthused about reading and read stories throughout the day.

Leaders demonstrate a powerful moral purpose in ensuring that every pupil receives the best possible learning opportunities. This purpose is shared by the staff. Children in early years receive exceptional support to develop their knowledge about school routines, socialising with others and communication. Through highly personalised approaches, pupils are immersed in play-based learning. They love learning and excel. For example, while engaged in hippotherapy, a child was observed enthusiastically communicating his knowledge of number and reading. Children love listening to stories and respond exceptionally well. Children learn to form trusting friendships with staff and pupils.

Leaders have created highly personalised learning programmes for each pupil. The curriculum skilfully blends therapy and class-based education to enable pupils to

succeed beyond expectations. For example, pupils study an excellent music programme. They learn to appreciate different genres of music. They also learn about rhythm and musical instruments. The music curriculum enables pupils to excel in their physical and sensory development. Similarly, leaders have structured an expert programme for pupils' physical education. Through therapies such as hydrotherapy and full-body robotic therapy, pupils learn how to improve their physical health.

There is a harmonious learning atmosphere in all areas of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the resources, equipment and tools to both engage and enable pupils to learn well. Staff are exceptionally well trained to adapt learning to meet the sensory, emotional and physical needs of each pupil. Staff continually check that pupils remember what they have learned. Each pupil has a bespoke programme enabling them to revisit their learning. Throughout the school day, pupils are immersed in learning through a breadth of therapeutic interventions and class-based lessons.

The needs of pupils drive the continually evolving curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school. For example, pupils learn how to communicate their choices. One pupil was observed writing an email to her teacher about her feelings. Pupils learn how to express their views about the world and their rights as citizens. Pupils learn about religions through visiting places of worship such as synagogues.

Trustees and governors are highly supportive of school leaders and staff. They share the same powerful vision of enabling pupils to receive the best possible learning opportunities. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the impact that the school has on the lives of pupils. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in their praise of the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are tenacious in ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all pupils. They are vigilant in following up on all concerns and liaising with external agencies to ensure pupils' safety. Leaders check meticulously to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

All staff receive up-to-date training in keeping children safe and know how to report any concerns about pupils' welfare. The use of personalised risk assessments ensures that all staff know how to respond to any concerns swiftly and effectively. Parents state that their children are safe in school.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113571
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/6007
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212871
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Vranch House
<b>Chair</b>	Julia Tolman-May
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Norton
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£29080 to £39540
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 468333
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.vranchhouse.org/">www.vranchhouse.org/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ian.norton@vranchhouse.org">ian.norton@vranchhouse.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 28 June 2018

## Information about this school

- Vbranch House School is an independent school for pupils aged two to 18. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority.
- All pupils, apart from two, have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have severe communication difficulties alongside complex medical needs.
- The school provides a range of therapies, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy, speech and language therapy and music therapy.
- The school does not 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.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the chief executive and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with three trustees, including the chair of trustees. She also spoke on the telephone with the officers of one of the local authorities which place pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and music. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The lead inspector spoke to some parents on the telephone and in person. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also considered safeguarding documents and records.

## **Inspection team**

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022