

# The Old School House

1 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0HA

## Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders provide a service that helps transform the lives of the pupils and their families.
- Pupils receive high-quality care that helps build their confidence and self-esteem. Staff support pupils to re-engage in education successfully.
- Pupils enjoy school and rarely miss a day. Their attendance is well above national expectations.
- Pupils are well taught because leaders check regularly to ensure that they receive good-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Staff instil fundamental British values and foster a sense of belonging amongst pupils. As one said, 'This is the only school I have been where I feel wanted and needed.'
- Staff understand pupils' needs well; they build positive relationships with pupils to help them develop both socially and academically.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' learning, progress and personal development well. Pupils' actions demonstrate its effectiveness.
- Leaders' regular checks on the effectiveness of the school have helped to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Teachers plan work carefully. Pupils find the work interesting; it helps them to fill in the gaps in their learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points and against the targets in their individual plans.
- Pupils feel safe and are taught how to stay safe. Staff regularly update pupils' risk assessments, helping to keep them safe.
- Monitoring systems do not enable leaders to produce information quickly and efficiently.
- Leaders' self-evaluation and development plan need to be broader and more detailed.
- A small number of teachers do not always challenge pupils' lack of effort quickly enough or show the skill required to drive rapid improvements in pupils' learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
  - making sure that any self-evaluation document is wide-ranging and linked to a strategic school improvement plan
  - establishing systems that allow leaders to produce information more quickly and efficiently.
- Improve teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations, and demonstrate the detailed subject knowledge to help pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders provide a highly effective service that meets the vast majority of pupils' needs extremely well. Their clear plan is for pupils to be happy, learn successfully and have a brighter future. They have had some real success stories, as highlighted by one pupil who said, 'This is the only school I have been where I feel wanted and needed.'
- Staff work patiently and caringly to ensure that pupils feel welcome. Pupils often arrive with a history of serious behavioural issues, low attendance and poor academic progress. Staff spend time with the pupils, build positive relationships and look after them well. This helps pupils to grow in confidence, build self-esteem and become more positive. In time, pupils' behaviour improves, they learn more, and they are better equipped for when they leave the school.
- Leaders use performance management effectively to drive improvement. Leaders are keen, wherever possible, to promote internally and all staff complete a personal improvement strategy following their annual appraisal. They support staff to study alongside pupils, and endorse the value of lifelong learning for all. Currently, staff are studying for further qualifications, up to degree level.
- The headteacher monitors standards of teaching, learning and assessment closely and effectively. A regular programme of lesson observations, book scrutinies and monthly supervision meetings with all staff keep her well informed of the latest developments. In addition, the close-knit team works well together and frequently shares ideas and discusses pupils. Information from leaders' regular monitoring is used effectively to identify staff training needs, which leads to improvements in the standards of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders monitor standards effectively. The headteacher reports monthly to the centre manager. The centre manager reports to the proprietor and the director. This helps keep leaders, and those responsible for governance, abreast of the latest developments. As a result, leaders ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils study a suitably broad curriculum that focuses on developing the core skills in English and mathematics. They access a full range of subjects, including science, geography, history, French, design and technology, physical education and religious education. Pupils complete nationally recognised qualifications including GCSE, entry-level certificates, ASDAN awards and functional skills qualifications that successfully prepare them for the next steps in their education
- Leaders successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils spoke very positively about the peer mentoring they receive on topics such as Diwali. Other curriculum opportunities, such as the fusion food menu in cookery, give them a greater understanding of other cultures. Pupils demonstrated that they think of others by organising a 'One Love Coffee Morning' for the victims of the Manchester bombing.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training. Consequently, they are able to meet pupils' diverse and complex needs highly effectively. As one pupil said, 'Staff are really supportive. They make school a really good place for all kids of different ages and

backgrounds.'

- The range of extra-curricular activities provided helps pupils to develop their social and team-working skills well. Pupils appreciate this, and spoke positively about the residential trip to France, trips to local churches, library visits and Harry Potter World.
- Parents and carers were full of praise for the high level of communication they receive. Daily briefings, end of day reviews, pupils' home-school books and frequent discussions give parents regular updates to keep them informed of how their children are doing. Termly reports inform parents of their child's social and academic progress.
- The questionnaires completed by staff were all positive, and highlighted a cohesive team which works well together and enjoys coming to school.
- While leaders accurately assess the effectiveness of the school, their self-evaluation and development plan would benefit from being broader, more detailed and longer-term.
- The school's systems for tracking attendance and pupils' progress are suitable for the close one-to-one work currently taking place. However, a more advanced information system would enable them to identify trends linked to pupils' progress more easily.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor, and the director of social care, provide the governance for the school.
- The directors visit the school regularly. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This helps them to ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The directors have ensured that the school has published a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders base their decisions on what is in the best interests of pupils – a core principle of good safeguarding practice.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies are up to date and provide useful guidance to staff on all types of abuse.
- Staff are aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about pupils' welfare or in the event of allegations being made. The school adopts a policy of 'it could happen here' and staff record concerns, even those that appear minor. The designated person has been trained and makes referrals timely and appropriately.
- Leaders carry out health and safety checks regularly and act appropriately upon any concerns raised. The school carries out detailed risk assessments on all aspects of school life.
- Staff are familiar with their responsibilities to protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and, as one said, 'staff teach us about cyber bullying and insist we do not have online contact with people we don't know.'

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers' high expectations help pupils make good progress. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school. As one parent said about their child, 'I've never seen him engage like this before, for the first time ever he wants to go to school.'
- Teachers use a range of different activities that help to sustain pupils' interest. Their use of the 'dictionary game' was particularly successful. Pupils were desperate to improve their vocabulary and extend their knowledge.
- Teachers build positive relationships with pupils and ask them questions that make them think. This helps teachers to check whether pupils understand the work; if not, teachers use a different approach. This ensures that pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers' effective use of practical demonstrations helps pupils overcome misconceptions. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher used a ruler to help pupils overcome confusion with units. Pupils could then interpret information from a stem and leaf diagram successfully.
- Pupils develop independent learning skills well because teachers guide them to the correct answers, rather than just supplying them with information.
- Pupils are motivated and hard-working. They answer questions and engage in discussion because teachers' effective planning ensures that the work is specifically matched to individual need.
- Teachers track pupils' progress regularly and frequently. Daily monitoring and recording of what pupils know and can do ensure that pupils experience a consistent level of challenge across subjects.
- Assessment is carried out in line with the school's policy. Teachers use 'Wow and Now' to highlight pupils' good work and set targets, effectively guiding pupils on how to improve their work.
- Pupils are willing to read aloud in class. They read confidently and fluently.
- The inspector noted a very small number of occasions where teachers do not display the detailed subject knowledge to stretch pupils fully. As a result, a very small minority of pupils make less rapid progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils told the inspector about the difference staff have made to their lives, and to that of their families, because they feel more confident and are now able to learn more effectively. As one said, 'They have helped with my education and supported me. I do not get as anxious as I used to.'
- Staff provide a friendly, family environment where mealtimes are an enjoyable and social occasion. Staff work hard to foster a sense of belonging among the pupils, and prepare good healthy meals that everybody eats together. Pupils value this and say that it makes

them feel happy, valued and cared for.

- When asked about bullying, pupils were unequivocal: 'We don't tolerate bullying here.'
- Pupils are safe. Staff are able to keep them safe because they know them well. They minimise risks through effective risk assessments that indicate a thorough knowledge of each pupil's conditions, circumstances and recent behaviours.
- Staff liaise with a range of agencies effectively to meet pupils' medical, physical, emotional and social needs. Parents acknowledge the difference this has made. As one said, 'He used to have extreme difficulties, but we are over the moon with the difference we have seen.'
- Staff provide impartial careers advice. Previously, pupils have completed successful work experience placements, helping them to be successful in the next stages of their education.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Some pupils do not always arrive at lessons in the right frame of mind to be ready to learn.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff know the pupils extremely well. They know their background stories, can see the trigger points that precede poor behaviour, and have appropriate strategies in place to support pupils. Staff help pupils to behave more appropriately by discussing with them what might work best, and pointing out the consequences of their actions on others.
- The attendance of all pupils is extremely high, and well above national expectations. Pupils rarely miss a day's schooling. This represents a sustained and significant improvement from that seen from pupils prior to them joining the school.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other. They support each other and get on well. For example, one pupil wrote to a new starter, 'Be positive, work hard and ask for help. Don't let anyone tell you that you are different.'
- The number of serious incidents recorded shows that pupils make significant improvements in their behaviour over time. However, on very few occasions, some pupils do not respond to staff requests as quickly as they should.
- Very rarely, pupils who take too long to start work are not challenged quickly enough.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils often arrive at the school having missed significant amounts of education, sometimes through repeated exclusions. All of the pupils have an education, health and care plan. Staff work patiently with pupils and build good relationships with them. This helps pupils to re-engage in learning and achieve far better outcomes than had seemed possible at one time. For example, one parent said, 'His reading and writing are now amazing.'
- The inspector judged pupils' rates of progress against the context of their individual

needs, by cross-referencing each pupil's progress against previous school reports, assessment on entry and education, health and care plans. Inspection evidence shows that the vast majority of pupils show very good levels of progress from their various starting points.

- Teachers assess pupils on entry to find out what they know and can do. This helps teachers identify the gaps in pupils' learning. Highly individualised tuition helps pupils to catch up, build on their prior knowledge and make good progress.
- Work scrutiny shows that pupils make good progress over time, particularly across mathematics and English. Pupils develop these core skills well and are then able to apply them in other subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in English. The inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' folders. Initially, some pupils' work is difficult to read and includes only the most basic of skill levels. Later work shows a marked improvement in handwriting, and the content is more expressive, with good use of adjectives. Some use paragraphs and punctuation confidently, alter tense effectively and write stories with a good sequence of events.
- In mathematics, early work indicates that pupils struggle with the four operations of arithmetic, and have low-level understanding of data, shape and space. In the short term, pupils' calculations are more precise. Over time, pupils' work indicates greater confidence and accuracy with number, fractions and area. Some pupils demonstrate an ability to extract information, draw inferences and make comparisons from different sets of data.
- At the end of the last academic year, the school did not have any Year 11 pupils on roll. However, since the previous inspection report, pupils have obtained qualifications including GCSE, entry-level and functional skill qualifications and bronze ASDAN awards. From pupils' different starting points, this represents good progress.
- In a very small minority of cases, pupils do not always display the same high standards of behaviour that would enable them to make the academic progress of which they are capable.

## School details

Unique reference number	133651
DfE registration number	873/6032
Inspection number	10038904

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Proprietor	Mr Chris Wright
Headteacher	Rebecca Fulcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,600
Telephone number	01945 861114
Website	<a href="http://www.thechartwellgroup.co.uk">www.thechartwellgroup.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:toshschool1@gmail.com">toshschool1@gmail.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	2–3 December 2014

## Information about this school

- The Old School House is an independent special school for boys aged between 9 and 16 years. The school provides education for up to six pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Some pupils at the school are children who are looked after.
- The proprietor, and the director of social care, provide the governance for the school.
- At its previous inspection, the school's overall effectiveness and all key judgement areas were assessed as good. All of the independent school regulations were met.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2016.
- Pupils often presented challenging behaviour in their previous schools. Many pupils have experienced disruption in their previous education. All pupils on roll have education, health and care plans.
- Local authorities fund pupils' placements at the school.
- Since the previous standard inspection, the school requested a material change to extend



the lower age range of pupils to 7 years. The inspector considered this during this inspection, and judged that the school was likely to meet the relevant independent school standards should the material change be implemented.

- This inspection was aligned with the welfare inspection. A copy of that report is published separately on Ofsted's website.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector scrutinised records of current pupils and those who had attended the school previously. This included folders, class books, displays, examination awards, records of attendance and assessment information.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards required for continued registration.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teaching assistants, the social care regulatory inspector, the proprietor and the director of social care.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire Parent View on which to report. The inspector took account of the four questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector met pupils separately to gain their views on the effectiveness of the provision. He also spoke informally to staff and pupils during the day, for example during mealtimes.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with parents, and staff from the children's services departments at local authorities.

## Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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