

Inspection of The Old School House

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

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at The Old School House. They learn to improve and take responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils develop positive relationships with staff and each other. Pupils feel safe. They say that they have someone to go to if they have a problem. Bullying is rare. On the few occasions it happens, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy school. They rarely miss a day. Pupils re-engage with learning after not doing well in previous schools or after long periods out of education. They work towards achieving meaningful qualifications. Pupils like using what they have learned in practical projects such as developing the school allotment. However, pupils do not do as well as they should across the subjects that they learn. Teachers do not always build on what pupils already know to help them learn new things. Pupils have misconceptions and misunderstandings that teachers do not spot or anticipate.

The school is a caring and nurturing environment. Staff understand pupils' social and emotional needs well. Pupils learn about what is right and wrong. They learn about careers but do not receive high-quality guidance to help them make informed choices about future work or study.

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

Pupils study a broad curriculum. Leaders are revising and rewriting curriculum plans in a range of subjects. These plans are not complete in some subjects. For example, there is a broad policy for teaching physical education but not a curriculum plan that identifies precisely what knowledge and skills leaders want pupils to learn.

The quality of curriculum plans and how well these are implemented are too variable. Where subject planning is effective, such as in mathematics, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Staff teach this knowledge in an order that helps pupils build on previous learning. Pupils get opportunities to practise using knowledge to help them remember it. However, in some subjects, important knowledge is not identified. Teachers do not make clear how new learning links to what pupils already know or help pupils to understand new, more complex knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not make good progress in all the subjects they study.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Staff know pupils' needs well. They ensure that support and teaching help pupils achieve the outcomes in their EHC plans. However, staff have not had the training to help them teach all subjects in the school's curriculum well. Each staff member is responsible for leading several subjects. Staff have not had the guidance or training needed to help them to plan effectively for pupils' learning in all the subjects they lead. Teachers do not routinely use their checks on pupils' understanding to adapt their teaching or planning. They do not regularly spot where pupils have misconceptions or have

misunderstood. Sometimes, teachers do not know what pupils already know and can do. As a result, teachers do not always pitch learning at the right level and work is too hard or too easy. When this is the case, learning time is not used effectively, and pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised planned opportunities for reading. These help pupils develop fluency and understanding of what they read. Teachers introduce pupils to a range of well-known texts. Pupils who struggle with reading get extra help. Pupils who have had this help previously now read with confidence and understanding. Pupils use their phonics knowledge to read and spell unfamiliar words. However, staff have not had recent training to ensure all can teach reading effectively.

Leaders have set expectations for behaviour that pupils understand. Staff manage behaviour well and sensitively. They help pupils to make the right choices about behaviour. Pupils typically get on well with each other and staff. Mealtimes and breaktimes are sociable occasions. Pupils are polite and respectful to visitors.

Pupils' moral and social development is supported well. In the classroom and around school, staff show and explain how they expect pupils to behave and speak with others. They learn why they should show respect for others and show a genuine interest in world events.

Pupils learn about topics such as relationships, respecting difference and physical and mental health in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. However, teachers do not adapt their teaching routinely to account for pupils of different ages or stages of development. Pupils have weekly careers lessons but cannot say what they have learned from them. Pupils get help to apply for courses at college but do not receive independent careers advice to help them make informed choices about their futures.

Leaders and the proprietor have a clear aim to provide a nurturing environment that helps pupils re-engage in education. Parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about the difference the school has made for their children. Staff feel supported and valued.

The proprietor is responsible for ensuring that the independent school standards are met. He has not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently. He has delegated some of his responsibilities to other people. The proprietor has ensured that arrangements are in place to make available the information identified in the independent school standards while a new website is constructed.

Pupils are safe because safeguarding and health and safety procedures are in place and followed. However, there has been no risk assessment of current evacuation procedures to consider fully the risks and actions to mitigate them. There is not a suitable room provided for the medical examination and treatment of pupils. The proprietor has not ensured that suitable checks on the accuracy of the single central

record of those who work at the school are in place. Some pre-employment checks on staff that had been completed were not recorded.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures reflect the most recent published guidance. The checks required to ensure that adults are suitable to work in school are carried out. However, some of these checks were not recorded on the single central record. Staff receive regular training so that they are vigilant for the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They know how to raise concerns. Concerns are followed up appropriately and in a timely manner. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online and when in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In several subjects, leaders have not identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This does not help teachers to plan sequences of lessons that help pupils learn new knowledge and build upon what they have learned previously. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans clearly identify the important subject knowledge that pupils should learn.
- Leaders have not provided training to help staff develop knowledge of the subjects they teach or lead. This leads to variability in the quality of teaching across the curriculum. Teachers do not have the knowledge or guidance they need to teach with confidence across all subjects. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the training and guidance needed to teach leaders' intended curriculum so that pupils achieve well in all the subjects they study.
- Teachers do not consistently check what pupils know and can do. Systems that are in place are not used consistently well. Staff do not routinely adapt their planning and teaching to take account of what pupils already know, understand and need to do better. Leaders should ensure that teachers check what pupils already know and use these checks to inform their planning.
- The PSHE curriculum is not implemented as leaders intend. It is not adapted to account for pupils' different ages and stages of development or taught in a way that helps pupils develop a deeper understanding of what they learn over time. Pupils have weekly careers education lessons but have not had independent guidance about future careers. Leaders should strengthen provision for pupils' personal development by ensuring that the PSHE curriculum is implemented effectively and that pupils receive high-quality, independent careers advice.
- The proprietor does not ensure that all independent school standards are met. The proprietor has not ensured that all those who have delegated responsibility for maintaining the independent school standards have a detailed knowledge of these standards or that these are systematically checked. The proprietor should ensure that procedures are in place to check periodically that the independent

school standards are met and that all those with delegated responsibility understand the independent school standards fully.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	133651
DfE registration number	873/6032
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10210110
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Christopher Wright
Headteacher	Susan Clark
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,000
Telephone number	01945 861114
Website	No website
Email address	susan.clark@chartwellgroup.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 to 20 September 2017

Information about this school

- The Old School House is an independent special school for boys aged between seven and 16 years.
- The school provides education for up to eight pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils are in receipt of an EHC plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities. Some pupils are children looked after. Pupils often presented challenging behaviour at their previous schools. Most have missed long periods of education.
- The current headteacher took up the post in January 2020. She is supported by an executive headteacher.
- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor has delegated his responsibility for the oversight of the school to his son, who staff, and the proprietor, refer to as the co-proprietor. However, the proprietor remains registered as the sole proprietor of the school. There has been no request made to the Department for Education (DfE) to change proprietor.
- The proprietor was also the proprietor of another school, Chartwell House. This school closed in October 2021. The executive headteacher was headteacher of this school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision. The school does not use agency staff.
- At the school's previous standard inspection in September 2017, all independent school standards were met. A material change was also considered at this time to extend the lower age range of pupils to seven years. The inspector judged that the school was likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the change was granted. The DfE approved the change in the age range in October 2017.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and executive headteacher, staff, the proprietor and the proprietor's son, who acts as the proprietor's delegate. The

lead inspector spoke to commissioning officers from Cambridgeshire County Council.

- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, art and PSHE. These included visiting lessons, scrutinising pupils' work, checking curriculum plans and talking to staff and pupils. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work and visited lessons in several other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies, documents and records, including those for attendance and behaviour. The lead inspector held a meeting with school leaders to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements and procedures. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's single central record of checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work in schools.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes, when observing pupils' behaviour. Inspectors also considered six responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. Inspectors considered six responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with the parents of four pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and

- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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