

Inspection of Shelldene House School

Shelldene House, 20 Main Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0HJ

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Shelldene House School receive a fresh start to their education. They join after facing difficulties in their previous schools. The safe and happy environment helps pupils re-engage with learning. Most pupils attend and behave better than at their previous schools.

Pupils praise how they are challenged and supported. They know that the caring and well-trained staff will not blame them if they struggle. However, pupils also understand the high expectations from leaders and staff. This balance of approach helps them thrive and contributes towards pupils achieving well.

Behaviour is calm. In lessons, pupils concentrate well, benefiting from the individual focus they receive. They treat each other and adults with respect. Pupils say there is little bullying. They learn to take responsibility for their part in any disagreements.

Pupils enjoy an extensive range of opportunities for personal development. They go on 'Iron Man' trips to Scotland. Staff take pupils paddleboarding on the local Fenland Waterways. Pupils share their woodwork and gardening with considerable pride. Activities and achievements such as these build pupils' characters. Pupils learn the skills they need to be successful as they move onto the next stages of their life as adults.

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

Leaders' ambition to help vulnerable pupils experience success underpins all their work. All staff share this agreed purpose. Within this positive culture, pupils develop high aspirations for their learning and future lives.

The curriculum is ambitious and effective. Leaders build it around the needs of each pupil. Leaders identify what pupils already know and the knowledge they want them to learn next. Leaders plan how pupils can learn this in a way that motivates them. As a result, pupils who were behind find learning interesting, and apply themselves well. That said, in a few subjects, such as in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education at key stage 4, leaders do not plan learning quite as precisely. Pupils do not have access to practical resources in science. This means they do not have as many opportunities as they could to build their knowledge in all areas of the subject. Consequently, pupils occasionally do not develop as full an understanding of the subject as they might.

Teachers have appropriate knowledge of the subjects they teach. They check on learning well. If pupils have misunderstandings, teachers correct these. Teachers keep revisiting learning until pupils remember it. This means that pupils become confident with what they have learned and achieve well. In geography, for instance, pupils talk articulately and in detail about tectonic plates. In English, they effectively use what they have learned about Freudian personality types in essays on literary texts.

Leaders prioritise reading. They ensure the weakest readers receive the support they need to develop their reading well. Leaders encourage all pupils to read texts that interest them. While this is the case, leaders are not as ambitious as they might be for fluent readers to read more challenging texts. This means that some pupils are not confident and successful with the more complex books they encounter in key stage 4.

Leaders are experts in supporting the specific learning needs of pupils. Leaders review pupils' needs, so that they can identify them more accurately. They train staff thoroughly in how to support pupils' social and emotional needs. Leaders and staff regularly review their plans and teaching for pupils. As a result, teachers know how to support pupils' learning effectively.

Leaders make sure that pupils have helpful guidance about their next steps. This includes well-planned guidance as they prepare to leave school. Because of this, most pupils have clear career aspirations and go on successfully to further study and employment.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. Leaders recently reviewed staff roles. Staff say this has helped both their workload and their effectiveness.

The directors' aspiration and involvement are central to the school's success. They ensure that school leaders have the knowledge they need to be successful. Directors support and challenge leaders well. Their involvement creates stability at times of transition.

The proprietor has ensured that the school has met the independent school standards. Strong health and safety policies and procedures mean that the school site is safe. Leaders ensure pupils receive well considered relationships and sex education. The school's website provides the information that parents and local authorities require. The single central record shows appropriate safeguarding checks on new and current staff. Leaders make sure that the school complies with the 2010 Equality Act.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained in keeping children safe. Staff know when and how to report concerns, including if these were to be about leaders. Leaders review all concerns regularly. They liaise with agencies promptly and appropriately.

Leaders are vigilant in ensuring pupils stay safe online. Leaders track closely what pupils do online and intervene and support if needed.

Pupils feel safe because of the skilful pastoral support they receive. Helping pupils with their mental health and well-being is an integral aim of the school. This work is very effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some aspects of the curriculum for the oldest pupils are less well developed. For example, in science, pupils' access to practical resources is more limited, and does not facilitate precise learning in areas of science well enough. On the rare occasion that pupils stay beyond Year 11, the curriculum is less well detailed in both the school's curriculum policy and in the schemes of work. Leaders should continue to work on developing the key stage 4 curriculum so that it tightly aligns with the school's curriculum policy and pupils' interests, abilities, and aspirations as they move towards adulthood.
- Although leaders prioritise reading, and support the weakest readers well, they are not as ambitious as they might be for fluent readers to read challenging texts. This means that some pupils are not confident with some of the more difficult reading they encounter as they move into key stage 4. Leaders should ensure they provide more opportunities for pupils to read a wider range of texts, including some more challenging ones, so that pupils develop greater depth in their vocabulary, comprehension, and cultural capital.

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	135380
DfE registration number	873/6044
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10230303
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Michael Coles
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Ruth Danbury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,000
Telephone number	01945 861122
Website	www.shelldenehouse.com
Email address	sally.grice@shelldenehouse.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school provides education for up to 12 pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. Pupils are funded by local authorities. All current pupils are children looked after. Pupils often presented challenging behaviours at their previous schools. Most have missed long periods of education.
- The headteacher was appointed on 3 March 2022.
- The school is registered for pupils aged 12 to 19. However, it caters for pupils aged 12 to 16, and only offers post-16 education in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, inspectors granted an amnesty regarding the sixth-form provision for this inspection.
- Pupils currently on roll are all boys aged between 13 and 16 years. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have a governing body. There are three directors on the proprietor board. The named proprietor and another director are actively involved in the running of the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school does not use agency staff.
- Pupils are taught design and technology off site.
- The school was previously inspected on 15 May 2018. At that time, all aspects of the school's work were judged good and all the independent school standards were met.

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.

- 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 of the school.
- Inspectors met with a director, school leaders, teachers, and other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and PSHE education. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to

teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans, 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 the school.
- To evaluate the governance of the school, the lead inspector met with a director who represented the proprietor.
- The lead inspector spoke to commissioning officers from Essex County Council, and social workers who support some of the pupils.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. Inspectors considered three responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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