

# Inspection of Old Farm School

Old Farm School, Stank House Farm, Kilton Lane, Brotton TS12 2TZ

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Inspection dates: 28 to 30 June 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

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

Pupils were keen to tell the inspection team how much they enjoyed attending school. Comments such as, 'It is great coming here. Staff listen to me and help me to understand myself', are typical of the views of pupils. Pupils also show how much they enjoy learning by behaving well in lessons and attending school regularly. Staff believe in pupils' ability and want them to do well. The curriculum is designed to help pupils to learn and be successful despite their wide range of needs. Most pupils enjoy learning and are successful in gaining the skills they need to make a successful transfer to the next phase in their education. However, school leaders agree that more could be done to improve the advice and support pupils get when choosing a career.

Pupils say bullying is very rare in school. If pupils have a concern they know who to turn to and are confident staff will take swift and effective action.

School leaders nurture pupils. Staff recognise that pupils often have low self-esteem. Many of the planned activities are designed to challenge pupils and develop their confidence. For example, pupils are offered a weekly opportunity to work with a local baker. They learn how to bake a wide variety of cakes and breads. This activity develops pupils' life skills including how to cook as well as how to live on a budget. One pupil reflected, 'I am really proud of the progress I have made since coming here.' Inspectors can see this; pupils achieve well at Old Farm School.

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

Leaders have put together a well-planned curriculum in most subjects. It is carefully sequenced so that pupils revisit important knowledge. This helps pupils to remember what they learn. In most subjects, staff have identified precisely what they want pupils to learn. For example, English is well planned and sequenced. Adaptations are made to take into account pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The curriculum is ambitious. Pupils study a range of texts that are age-appropriate and challenging. Clearly planned milestones help staff to assess pupils' knowledge. Key questions enable pupils to recall learning. For example, staff ask, 'How did the witches in Macbeth influence his decisions?'. These questions help pupils to know and remember more.

Reading, however, is not planned and taught as well. Previous gaps in pupils' learning can include their knowledge of phonics. This stops pupils from reading fluently and sometimes reduces their confidence in writing.

The art curriculum is exceptionally well structured and innovatively delivered. At the time of the inspection pupils were working on a community project designing and painting large display boards for a local park. Pupils clearly enjoyed working on this project. Through working collaboratively on this large project, pupils gain a range of skills including communication, drawing, shading, painting and teamwork. For example, pupils working on a particular area of the design left notes for the next

class explaining politely what they thought should happen next. These small exchanges help cement pupils' relationships and have improved pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are at the centre of all that the school does. Relationships and sex education is taught appropriately through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The requirements of Section 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are also met through the PSHE curriculum. This ensures pupils are aware of the groups of people protected by the act. Trips to a wide variety of places and activities such as walking, climbing and off-road biking take pupils out of their comfort zone and allow them to challenge themselves. This increases pupils' self-confidence and resilience and gives them the skills to succeed in life.

Careers education is at an earlier stage of development. This year, only Year 10 and Year 11 pupils received visits from the career advisor. Leaders are aware that this needs to be addressed but a firm plan is not currently in place.

School leaders greet pupils as they arrive in school. This enables them to assess pupils' feelings and attitudes which often indicate their likely behaviour. Circle time follows when the school day is discussed so both staff and pupils are aware of what is happening. This approach encapsulates school leaders' and the proprietor's philosophy that treating pupils with respect models the behaviour and attitudes which will enable them to be successful in the next phase of their education.

The headteacher joined the school in January 2022. Supported by the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the proprietor, the headteacher has brought about change at a fast pace. Their combined vision for the future is reflected in the school development plan which outlines further improvement. Staff spoken to during the inspection feel respected and valued by the leadership team who ensure their workload is manageable.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand the pressures and concerns within the community in which the school is situated. They regularly help families access support and advice. This approach helps to keep pupils safe. School leaders make sure that any safeguarding concerns raised by staff about pupils' welfare are followed up quickly. Leaders work very closely with other agencies to make sure pupils are kept safe.

Staff receive regular safeguarding updates which keep them informed about local issues. Pupils know who to speak to if they have a concern or difficulty. School helps them to understand how to keep safe when online. Leaders carry out the appropriate checks on new staff to make sure pupils are kept safe.

The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is published on the school's website.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some pupils lack an understanding of phonics. This makes it difficult for them to read text fluently and affects their writing skills. Leaders need to ensure that the gaps in pupils' knowledge are addressed so that they become able to read more fluently and improve their writing skills.
- Secondary pupils are required to receive independent careers education. This year, only pupils in Year 10 and 11 have received independent careers information. This has reduced the opportunities for younger pupils to access information about future career opportunities. Leaders need to increase the number of secondary pupils receiving careers information and put in place a secure system by which pupils can access work experience.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143429
<b>DfE registration number</b>	807/6001
<b>Local authority</b>	Redcar and Cleveland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212952
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	27
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	2
<b>Proprietor</b>	William Francis Ashton
<b>Chair</b>	William Francis Ashton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Graham
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£50,000 to £54,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01287 677178
<b>Website</b>	halcyon-ne.com
<b>Email address</b>	office@farmschool.co.uk
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 to 7 December 2017

## Information about this school

- The school last received a standard inspection in December 2017. It subsequently received an additional inspection in October 2018 when it was granted a material change. The school also received a further material change inspection in July 2020.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school caters for the needs of pupils with a diagnosis of SEMH needs. All pupils who attend have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is currently operating within its Get Information about Schools description.

## 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 headteacher and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE, and art. 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 the wider curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including history and geography.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The quality of the recording of safeguarding records on the online system used by the school was checked. Discussions were held with staff on training and checks were made on their knowledge of current government legislation. Checks were also made on the systems the school uses to recruit staff. Pupils were asked for their views on the school and how the school has helped them to stay safe online.

## **Inspection team**

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jen Cave

Ofsted Inspector

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