

The Old School House

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

Inspection dates

4 October 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(1)(b)(i)

- At the time of the standard inspection in March 2022, these standards were not met. There were weaknesses in the planning of aspects of the curriculum. Some curriculum plans did not identify and detail the important subject knowledge that pupils need to learn. As a result, the curriculum was implemented in a way that did not sufficiently build up pupils' knowledge over time.
- The proprietor submitted an action plan which was intended to address the areas of weakness in the quality of education. This action plan was evaluated in July 2022. It was deemed unacceptable as it did not contain sufficient detail, with appropriate timescales and measurable success criteria.
- The proprietor has written and implemented a new action plan. This now contains considerably more detail about the actions needed to address weaknesses in provision. It has timescales for when the actions will be completed. It states who is responsible for the actions, and who will monitor this. It makes clear what the success criteria are, so the proprietor can measure how effectively the actions have been implemented.
- Leaders have reviewed their curriculum. They have planned and put in place a well-considered curriculum that identifies in detail what they want pupils to learn to be ready for their next stage. This takes into account pupils' needs more effectively. Learning builds on what they already know. For example, the schemes of work plan what vocabulary pupils will learn at each point, and how this connects to previous and future learning. The curriculum plans make clear what knowledge pupils will be assessed on. The greater clarity of planning supports teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively.
- These standards are now met.

2(2), 2(2)(d)

- In March 2022, these standards were not met. The inspection report states that the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum was not adapted to

account for pupils' different ages and stages of development. It was not taught in a way that helped pupils develop a deeper understanding of what they learn over time.

- Leaders have reviewed the PSHE curriculum. They have adapted the content so that it helps pupils learn what they need to, considering their age and stages of development. Staff have received training to support them to teach this better. For example, staff know how to help pupils connect their prior knowledge about healthy relationships to new, more challenging content. As a result, the curriculum supports pupils' understanding well. Pupils develop their knowledge in areas such as difference and consent in an incremental way over time. This helps them be prepared for the wider world.

- These standards are now met.

2(2)(e)(i)–2(2)(e)(iii)

- The standard inspection in March 2022 found that these standards were not met at the previous inspection. The report identifies that pupils had not had independent guidance about future careers.

- Leaders have reviewed how the curriculum content teaches pupils about their future options. Leaders check whether the provision meets the Gatsby benchmarks. Pupils encounter employers and have plans for their upcoming work experience. Older pupils have a clear plan for their next steps and know potential career options they might pursue. Leaders have made sure that pupils now receive independent careers advice and guidance.

- These standards are now met.

3–3(e), 3(g)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection. The report states that assessment was used inconsistently. Teachers did not check learning well, or adapt their planning and teaching to take account of what pupils already know. Staff had not had the training and guidance they needed to deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, pupils experienced a variable quality of education across the curriculum. Pupils did not achieve as well as they should.

- The proprietor's initial action plan did not address independent school standards 3(c) and 3(g). This has now been amended to include much more detail. This includes areas such as how teachers are supported in planning lessons and using assessment. The action plan identifies timescales, and measurable success criteria.

- Leaders have provided training for staff so they know how to put the curriculum in place successfully. This is ensuring that staff assess pupils' work more effectively. Staff plan appropriate learning activities that are suited better to pupils' needs. They now check closely how well pupils understand and remember what they learn. Staff correct misconceptions where these occur. They adapt what they do next based on what pupils know and can remember. Because of this, pupils are achieving better. They take pride in their work. Pupils are successfully building up what they know and can do over time.

- These standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 16–16(b)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection. The inspection report states that there had been no risk assessment of current fire evacuation procedures. Risks had not been fully considered or mitigated.
- The initial action plan was not clear on how the risk assessment would assure the proprietor that risks from having the doors locked were fully mitigated. There was no detail on training for staff and pupils about evacuation in the case of fire.
- The proprietor has addressed these weaknesses. Leaders have put in place a thorough and appropriate risk assessment for evacuation in the case of fire. This appropriately assesses the risk of having the doors locked. Staff and pupils now receive training on evacuation in the case of fire.
- Leaders have put in place a clear risk assessment policy. Staff use risk assessments regularly and appropriately to keep pupils safe and help them understand risk. These are regularly reviewed.
- These standards are now met.

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

Paragraph 21(1)–21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection. The inspection report states that the proprietor had not ensured that suitable checks on the accuracy of the single central record of those who work at the school were in place. Some pre-employment checks that had been carried out on staff were not recorded.
- The proprietor's initial action plan lacked sufficient detail. The plan did not make clear how the proprietor was assured that suitable checks on the single central record were now in place. The proprietor's action plan now addresses these issues.
- Leaders have corrected the errors in the recording of checks. The single central record is now compliant. The proprietor has put in place appropriate processes to check that it remains so in future.
- The standards are now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)

- These standards were not met at the previous standard inspection because there was not a suitable room provided for the medical examination and treatment of pupils.
- In the initial action plan, the proprietor proposed to locate a bed and screen in the laundry room, which has washing facilities. The proprietor has done this. The room is not used for teaching, and it is close to a toilet.
- The standards are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection. The report states that the proprietor had not ensured that the independent school standards were consistently

met. The proprietor had delegated some of his responsibilities to leaders without ensuring they had a detailed knowledge of the standards. The proprietor had not put in place a means of systematically checking if the standards were being met.

- The initial action plan for addressing these unmet standards was unacceptable because, as with other parts of the plan, it lacked detail, measurable success criteria and clear timescales for actions. The original plan proposed quarterly meetings with senior staff but did not elaborate on the purpose of these. The plan did not give assurance on how leaders would gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of the standards to ensure that they are met.
- The proprietor has addressed the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. He has engaged much more closely in the day-to-day running of the school. The proprietor holds regular meetings with leaders to review the progress to ensure all standards are met. As a result, leaders now know the standards well, and check they are met on an ongoing basis. For example, the proprietor works closely with leaders to check how well the curriculum is being delivered. He is therefore able to assure himself that the quality of education is improving.
- Leaders are reflective about the issues raised at the previous inspection. The proprietor has worked closely and effectively with leaders to rectify the issues regarding the standards that were unmet.
- Leaders support pupils' well-being. Pupils are safe. They behave well. Pupils are calm, show positive attitudes to learning and are polite.
- The standards are now met.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets 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; and
- 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

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
- 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.

School details

Unique reference number	133651
DfE registration number	873/6032
Inspection number	10252395

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Jason Wright
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Miss Susan Clark
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,000
Telephone number	01945861114
Website	www.thechartwellgroup.co.uk
Email address	Sharon.English@chartwellgroup.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	1 to 3 March 2022

Information about this school

- The Old School House is an independent special school for boys aged between 7 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 education, health and care plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities. Some pupils are children looked after.

- A request made to the Department for Education (DfE) to change proprietor was agreed in May 2022.
- The school does not use agency staff. The school does use any alternative providers.
- A standard inspection took place in March 2022. The overall effectiveness of school was judged to require improvement. The school did not meet five of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor submitted an action plan to the DfE in July 2022 to address the unmet standards identified at the standards inspection. This action plan was rejected.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the school's first additional inspection to monitor progress.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, the inspector met with the proprietor, the headteacher, the executive headteacher, staff and pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of curriculum documents, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. The inspector looked at the school's policies and range of documentation, discussed the safeguarding processes with leaders, scrutinised the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks, and checked records of child protection concerns. The inspector toured the school premises.
- The inspector evaluated the proprietor's updated action plan.
- As part of this inspection, the inspector considered the school's application to increase the number on roll from 8 to ten. In light of the evidence gathered, the inspector recommends that this granted.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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