

Inspection of Kisimul School

The Old Vicarage, 61 High Street, Swinderby, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN6 9LU

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Kisimul School. Staff know pupils and their needs very well. Relationships between staff and pupils are calm, purposeful and nurturing. Pupils build self-awareness and self-confidence. They feel safe. Staff care for pupils very well.

Many pupils learn to recognise when they feel unsettled. They often manage their own behaviour well. Staff also support pupils to manage behaviour. On some occasions, pupils are unkind to each other. Bullying rarely happens. Staff continually supervise pupils and help them to get along.

Staff provide pupils with therapy sessions, appropriate to their needs. Leaders thread therapy through the timetable; it is integral to pupils' learning. Pupils' experiences in music therapy are joyful and beautiful.

Pupils develop their talents and interests through a range of activities. For example, they like gardening, horse riding, trampolining, shopping and cooking. Some pupils enjoy their time on the school farm. They love looking after the horses, goats, sheep and pigs. Clover, one of the pigs, is particularly popular.

Staff broaden pupils' learning and life experiences. Staff help pupils interact with the world around them. Pupils like and trust the staff.

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

Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have a clear vision for the curriculum and for pupils' experiences. Leaders have introduced a new and ambitious 'meaningful life' curriculum. In some subjects, such as numeracy and physical education (PE), leaders identify precisely what pupils need to know and when. For example, pupils learn to know and recognise number sequences. Teachers enable pupils to apply their learning in different situations, for example when counting money. Pupils know and remember more over time. However, leaders have not ensured that teachers know the precise knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn in all subjects.

Leaders and staff strive to overcome the barriers to learning that pupils experience. Specialist staff, including educational psychologists, speech and language, occupational, and music therapists make significant contributions to pupils' learning. They know the pupils extremely well and use this knowledge to think carefully about each pupil's planned curriculum.

Teachers show good knowledge and present subject matter clearly. They adapt their approaches to meet pupils' additional needs. Teachers make sure that learning is well structured. Staff use resources well. They continually check pupils' learning. Pupils learn well. They show understanding appropriate to their stage of learning and additional needs.

Pupils behave well. Staff intervene quickly to calm pupils when they struggle to manage their own behaviour. Staff use physical intervention as a last resort. Leaders review all behaviour incidents thoroughly. They use these reviews to inform pupils' support plans and risk assessments. The school is orderly and pupils develop good habits for learning.

Sixth-form students enjoy a curriculum that prepares them well for adulthood. They gain qualifications that help them learn how to look after themselves and be as independent as possible. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to explore different jobs and the world of work.

Staff encourage pupils to make choices and express their opinions. Staff and pupils use a range of suitable methods to communicate. Staff provide very effective support to help pupils use these approaches. Pupils improve their communication skills. Leaders encourage and enable pupils to have a say. Leaders value the opportunities pupils have to share through the independent pupil advocate.

Leaders enable pupils to develop a love of stories, books and reading. Teachers teach pupils phonics, when appropriate. Some pupils use their phonics knowledge to read books that interest them. Pupils enjoy listening to stories.

Leaders make the most of every opportunity to enhance pupils' development. Staff think carefully about the learning experiences they provide for pupils. Movement between activities and lessons is well thought through. Trips and visits to the supermarket, farm market, woodlands and church enhance pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development is a strength. Staff provide opportunities for pupils' wider development. They enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well. For example, pupils learn about different religious festivals. They learn to greet each other. Pupils recognise each other's strengths. They receive support to develop healthy lifestyles and respectful relationships. Pupils have opportunities to understand differences and the importance of respect. They benefit from experiences that prepare them effectively for their next steps.

Members of the proprietor body have a clear vision for the school. Senior leaders share the common vision. They understand the need to be more considerate in managing change and being mindful of staff workload. Most staff are proud to be part of the school. They work well together. There is a strong sense of community focused on pupils' learning and well-being.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the independent school standards. They meet these securely and consistently. Policies and key information are readily available on the school's website, including the school's complaints and safeguarding policies. Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act. The premises are well maintained. Risk assessments reflect the school's policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is prioritised in the school. Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across both sites. Staff are well trained and know their responsibilities. They receive regular safeguarding updates and understand the risks pupils may face. Staff know what signs to look for when pupils are unable to communicate verbally. They enable pupils to share any worries. Leaders take appropriate steps and deal with concerns swiftly and appropriately. They work with external agencies when additional support is needed. Leaders ensure that pre-employment checks are in place before an adult starts working with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not mapped out consistently well across all subjects the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. This makes it difficult for teachers to know precisely what they need to teach and when in each of the school's four curriculum pathways. Leaders should ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils need to learn in all subjects, so that pupils achieve as highly as they can.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	120740
DfE registration number	925/6034
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10266722
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	31
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kisimul Group Limited
Chair	Anita Andrews
Headteacher	Farah Quinn (Executive headteacher) Terry Lawson (Headteacher, head of school) Tamsin Bennett (Headteacher, head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£114,000 to £124,000
Telephone number	01522 868279
Website	www.kisimul.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@kisimul.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Kisimul School provides education to pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils' additional needs include severe learning difficulties, a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and associated challenging behaviour.
- The school is registered to admit 102 pupils. There are currently 55 pupils on roll, most of whom have an education, health and care plan. The large majority of pupils are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school has two sites in Lincolnshire. They are at: The Old Vicarage, High Street, Swinderby, LN6 9LU; and Acacia Hall, Friesthorpe, LN3 5AL. The site at Swinderby provides education for pupils aged eight to 19 years. Acacia Hall provides education for pupils aged 14 to 19 years.
- Residential provision is available at both sites. The residential provision was not considered as part of the inspection.
- There have been many changes in senior leadership since the previous inspection. One headteacher started their post last September. The interim executive headteacher was appointed in November 2022. The second headteacher has been in post for two weeks.
- The substantive executive headteacher was not present during the inspection.
- Three of the four members of the proprietor body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in June 2019.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out the inspection earlier than had been planned due to concerns raised with the DfE related to pupils' welfare. These welfare concerns were thoroughly considered as part of the inspection.

- Inspectors met with both headteachers and interim executive headteacher. They met with other senior leaders, including leaders who have oversight of the educational and therapy provision for pupils with SEND, and designated safeguarding leaders. They met with a range of staff, including therapy staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the proprietor body and company officers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in literacy; numeracy; personal, social, health and economic education; and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with teachers and curriculum leaders, visited sample lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, and spoke with pupils when appropriate.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other subjects, including science, creative learning, animal husbandry, cooking and life skills. They visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work. Inspectors visited speech and language, and music therapy sessions.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including policies related to safeguarding, curriculum, teaching, health and safety, and complaints. Inspectors reviewed the single central record and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors toured both premises to review the suitability of the accommodation.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who submitted written comments on the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Poole

His Majesty's Inspector

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