

# Inspection of The Old School House

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel part of a family community. They like social times and lunches, taking turns and sharing ingredients to make their own meals. Older pupils are supportive of the younger pupils and act as good role models. Pupils are happy and safe here.

Pupils' attitudes to school dramatically improve with time in this school. Many have experienced turbulence and periods of absence in their previous schooling. They are well supported to learn to regulate their behaviour. They concentrate in lessons and work hard. They value their education and attend regularly.

Pupils enjoy their learning across a broad and balanced curriculum. This has improved over the last year. They appreciate it when staff personalise it to their own interests. They are proud of their work and keen to share their successful school experiences with visitors. However, pupils are not well enough supported to learn as well as they should in some subjects, particularly in English.

Pupils particularly enjoy the range of trips and visits they experience. This includes taking part in adventurous activities such as paddleboarding.

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

Since the previous full inspection, leaders have worked to improve the quality of the curriculum. They now have comprehensive plans to cover most subjects taught in each year group. These are mainly commercial programmes, with detailed guidance for staff on how to teach the chosen topics. Staff deliver teaching with enthusiasm and engage pupils in lively discussions.

Despite leaders' actions, there remain weaknesses in the English curriculum. The English curriculum does not support pupils to access texts in full or to develop an appropriate understanding of different types of writing. Although pupils enjoy reading, they are not learning to write as well as they should. The pupil body is changing to have more key stage 2 pupils, but staff do not yet have the knowledge of how to support early readers in developing their reading skills.

Pupils are taught about democracy and life in modern Britain. They enjoy debating issues such as the war in Ukraine and about what rules we should have in society. Pupils have appropriate relationships and sex education. Leaders have ensured that the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

Leaders make sure that pupils access appropriate and high-quality careers guidance that is well planned and delivered. Pupils value the additional things that leaders provide to support this curriculum. For example, they have had several different visitors talk to them about a variety of careers that are in line with their abilities, interests and aspirations. Pupils are well prepared to move on to their next stage of education.

Leaders' chosen approach to behaviour means that staff are skilled and well trained in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils feel that staff value them as individuals. As a result, pupils learn strategies to help them regulate their behaviour and to concentrate. This means that pupils make progress in coping with their specific social and emotional needs. The school is a relaxed and calm environment where pupils are keen to learn.

Staff are positive about the support from leaders to manage their workload and well-being. Staff are very keen to develop their own skills and are undertaking various training programmes. However, they have had limited access to specialist training to deliver aspects of the curriculum as effectively as required. Staff at all levels need more support and guidance from experts to ensure they understand what good practice in an effective curriculum looks like.

The proprietor has made sure that the school meets the independent school standards. They have continued, since the progress monitoring inspection, to ensure that appropriate policies and processes are in place. This includes thorough comprehensive management of safeguarding, health, fire, first aid and risk assessments, and ensuring that the site is well maintained.

While day-to-day management of issues are undertaken well, there are weaknesses in leaders' strategic monitoring systems. Staff log pupils' behaviour throughout the day. They make comprehensive written records of any sanctions or physical interventions. They make sure that they listen to pupils and record their responses to incidents. However, these systems do not support leaders sufficiently to identify trends or patterns.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have had comprehensive safeguarding training. They understand how to keep pupils safe. Any concerns are followed through effectively. Leaders are tenacious in following through with external agencies where pupils need it. Records are comprehensive.

Pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe, including ways to keep safe when online.

All appropriate pre-employment checks are made on adults in the school.

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

- Leaders have not established an effective approach to supporting pupils in the earlier stages of learning to read. This means that staff are not able to teach

pupils the early stages of reading as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that there is a chosen approach to the delivery of early reading, appropriate staff training and effective monitoring so that pupils learn to read fluently.

- Curriculum planning and delivery in English does not routinely provide sufficient writing coverage. As a result, pupils do not learn well enough in English and make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders need to ensure that there is sufficient coverage in both the curriculum planning and staff training so that this curriculum provides sufficient support for pupils to achieve well.
- Leaders do not use their records effectively to gain a strategic view of their effectiveness. For example, although behaviour records of specific incidents are comprehensive, leaders do not review these over time to see whether there are trends or wider training needs. Leaders need to find ways to be more effective in their strategic monitoring while being mindful of workload for themselves and staff.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 133651   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 873/6032   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Cambridgeshire   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10267080   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7 to 16  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Boys   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 8  |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | None   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Jason Wright   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Susan Clark  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £68,000  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01945 861114   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.chartwellgroup.org.uk">www.chartwellgroup.org.uk</a>                       |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:Sharon.English@chartwellgroup.org.uk">Sharon.English@chartwellgroup.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 1 to 3 March 2022  |

## Information about this school

- The school provides up to 10 spaces for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils are in receipt of an education, health and care plan.
- Inspection history:
  - The school's first standard inspection was in March 2022. At that time, the school was judged to require improvement. Several independent school standards were unmet.
  - The Department for Education commissioned a progress monitoring inspection focused on the independent school standards that were deemed unmet at the previous inspection. This inspection occurred in October 2022. Inspectors judged that the school met all the independent school standards checked at that time.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The registered proprietor changed in May 2022.
- There is a headteacher at the school. There is also an executive headteacher.

## 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.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the executive headteacher. They met with members of staff. They also spoke with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also visited a sample of other lessons and looked at a wide range of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding files. Inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding leads, staff and pupils.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors undertook a site check. They scrutinised a wide range of professional reports and

policies.

- Inspectors considered the one response to Ofsted’s online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They considered four responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted’s survey for pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Rod Warsap

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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